

**THE PERSONALITY OF THE PAPER:  
AN ANALYSIS OF NEWSPAPER COLUMNS, EDITORIALS AND LETTERS  
TO THE EDITOR IN THE 1990S**

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The role of "opinion pieces" in an age in which people are drowning in data is one of the less-than-fully explored themes of newspaper research. While much has been written about editorial endorsements and policy, relatively little work has explored the modern function or roles of columns, editorials and letters in the 1990s.

Today's newspapers face greater challenges than ever before, as is evidenced by the dwindling number and the changing nature of papers. The editorial and op-ed pages are not exempt from these challenges. Rather, recent literature would argue, they are at the forefront, leading the race to combat challenges of modern life such as decreasing readership, increasing competition from television, the higher educational level of readers and the influence of increasing chain ownership.

Furthermore, "the need for enlightenment in the present era of technological complexity, ideological crosscurrents and population explosion is greater than it has ever been before," said Merlo J. Pusey, former associate editor of The Washington Post in The Editorial Page. (p. 198)

In the early days of newspapers there was no need for opinion pieces, let alone opinion pages. Papers were openly partisan, inextricably intertwining news and opinion. In the 1830s, with the emergence of the penny press, editorials could be found in many papers, although opinion and news were generally still inseparable in other parts of the paper. As readers became more literate and sophisticated, editors began to produce highly personalized editorial pages.

Since then editorial pages have gone through a metamorphosis, shedding their partisan cocoons for the wings of freedom.

The emergence of the op-ed page came long after that of the editorial page. It was not until the 1920s that editors recognized the need for opinions other than their own or their papers. And still it took about 50 years after this discovery for editors to open up the still-evolving op-ed page to people other than professional journalists.

## METHOD

This paper is an attempt to explore and define the role of the editorial page and op-ed page going into the 21st century. In an effort to compensate for the lack of academic material available on this subject, this paper combines a journalistic and academic approach, including interviews with local editorial writers and columnists and a review of available scholarly materials. It is divided into three sections, the first of which explores columns. The second section examines editorials and the third looks at letters to

the editor. Finally, the paper concludes with a look at the editorial and op-ed pages as a whole, exploring some thoughts on what editors and writers must do to foster and maintain interest in opinion pieces.

# I

## COLUMNS

### AN INTRODUCTION

With the Depression and World War II, the twenties and thirties were a time when issues were becoming increasingly complex. This trend was reflected in the news, and newspapers needed a means of deciphering the vast amount of information for their readers. Furthermore, "many journalists observed with cgrowing anxiety that facts themselves, or what they had taken to be facts, could not be trusted. One response to this discomfoting view was the institutionalization in the daily paper of new genres of subjective reporting, like the political column." (Schudson, pp. 6-7)

Columns, although they have undergone numerous changes, have remained vital parts of American newspapers. In fact studies have found that 87 percent of daily readers "open to or pass through editorial or opinion pages," said Mark Fitzgerald in "Editorials still have impact." (p. 21)

Historically opinion pieces were intended not only to decipher and analyze news but also to influence readers. However, due to several factors of modern life such as television and higher education, influencing or persuading readers is becoming less acceptable as other goals such as informing and educating the public

take priority. "The power of the press is not in its persuasion by opinion, but in its dissemination of information and its arousal of interest in important issues hitherto submerged in public apathy," said Michael and Edwin Emery, authors of The Press and America: an Interpretive History of the Mass Media. (P.71)

Thus, in the age of newspaper chains and, "tv and of the so-called communications explosion when the attention of the average reader is increasingly overtaxed," (Geyelin, p.11) the newspaper columnist comes to the rescue, not by exerting his or her influence but by, as columnist Ellen Goodman said in her book Making Sense, attempting to "make sense" of the increasingly complex "personal and public world in which we live."

Recent interviews with five local columnists, from the Arizona Daily Star and the Tucson Citizen, reveal their goals, influences, readership, methods and roles.

#### THE GOALS OF COLUMNS AND COLUMNISTS

Generally speaking columns meet several goals of a newspaper. They can fill up space on a slow news day, syndicated material is economical and many columns are syndicated, they can bring prestige to the editorial or op-ed pages and they provide alternate view points. Often columns are used to provide a global view point or to give balance to the opinions presented in editorials, thereby creating a well-rounded newspaper. Harry W. Stonecipher said:

Highly regarded writers such as James Reston and Joseph Kraft, for example, are viewed by

some editors as adding prestige to an editorial page while, at the same time, providing new sources and points of view not produced by the regular staff at most community daily newspaper editorial pages. (p. 198)

Furthermore, syndicated columns often provide those who do not share the philosophy or politics of a newspaper with a chance to read opinions that affirm their own. And as Stonecipher said, they provide an element of comfort for readers who have grown accustomed to reading them.

Popular syndicated columnists such as Jack Anderson, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak provide a comfort factor, some editors say, which helps a news reader, who perhaps has just moved from another city or state, to feel comfortable reading a columnist he has grown accustomed to elsewhere through the years. (p. 198)

The goals of a newspaper and those of the individual columnist greatly differ. In order to assess the other goals of columns, five local columnists were asked what they were trying to achieve with their column.

Arizona Daily Star political columnist Tom Beal replied, "I didn't come to it with any frequency of notion of trying to make sense out of a disorderly world or anything . . . I don't have any grand ideal about making sense out of the world. I would just like to be able to go out and look at a few things and give my opinions after doing some research."

On the other hand, former Tucson Citizen columnist and Editorial Page Editor Peter Bronson tries to educate his readers by

playing devil's advocate. "I try to use my column to address issues that I don't think are being addressed or from a different view point than what seems to be the prevailing wind out there," said Bronson, who in addition to his other responsibilities writes a column twice a week. "I read the news and I see things that don't answer all my questions, or that raise questions. I'm trying to answer those for readers."

The primary goals of the individual columnists may be influenced by their placement in the newspaper. For example, entertainment was most important to Arizona Daily Star columnists Bonnie Henry and Ed Severson, whose columns appear in the Accent section. Whereas Beal, Bronson and occasional Citizen columnist Jill Blondin appear on the page opposite the editorial page.

None of the columnists interviewed cited influencing or persuading readers as the goal of their column. However, one goal they all claimed was humor.

"I don't have any illusions that what I'm writing about is going to change the world or make the people grab their slogans and their pace pots and head for the streets, but if it gives them a laugh I'm happy," said Bonnie Henry who alternates between writing a personal column and an historical column about Tucson.

Beal said, "people do like to be entertained, especially on that boring op-ed page. I do run right above the Far Side so people who are there are expecting humor."

"What I try to do is be entertaining in about 850 words," said Severson about his column. Severson's column generally takes the form and style of a story that reveals his personality, which is what,

he said, people expect. "People like stories and that's what I like to write."

Ellen Goodman's and Anna Quindlen's columns could be characterized as circular. After reading several of their columns it is evident that they make an effort to have the endings return to the beginnings. "I also tend to write in a circle," said Anna Quindlen in an interview with Virginia Young. "The ending comes back to the lead. I don't feel comfortable unless I've completed the circle." (p.130) Moreover, both Goodman and Quindlen tend to combine general ideas with specific anecdotes to form their columns.

However, not all columnists have a formula for style, which is often determined by topic. Bronson said that he tries to vary style just as he does subject matter.

"One of the theories I've had is: never get in a rut," he said. "I've seen lots of columnists get in a rut where they always write about politics, or they always write about their kids, or they always write about congress. They just get one hobby horse and keep riding and riding it until the legs fall off. Me, I just try to move around. If I've done two or three columns that are kind of investigative or very well researched and full of facts, I try to break up the monotony by doing one that's just humor, just for the hell of it."

He defines the style of his column as that which speaks to the common person regardless of his or her beliefs. Bronson categorized his columns into four broad topics: local politics, issue of the month, every day things for humor, and ongoing controversy.

Not all columnists have the privilege of choosing their topics because often subject matter is influenced not only by the goals of

the columnist but by those of the newspaper, and possibly even the newspaper chain. The next section of this paper will examine the columnists independence and the various influences and pressures on columnists.

#### THE COLUMNIST AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH: INFLUENCE OR INDEPENDENCE?

University of Arizona professor of journalism Donald W. Carson said that after World War II 80 percent of newspapers were independently owned, whereas now only 20 percent, or about 300 newspapers, are independent and they are increasingly becoming a rarity.

Both the Tucson Citizen and the Arizona Daily Star are owned by chains- Gannett and Pulitzer respectively.

Therefore, a feature of utmost importance to the column is the columnist's independence. Unlike editorials, which express the opinion of the newspaper, and news, which should be objective, columns should express the opinion of a lone individual. In fact a common belief, although not necessarily a correct one, said Bronson, is that columns should oppose views presented in editorials.

"To inform, to illuminate, even to educate - - that is the primary purpose of an editorial page," Geyelin said. "That, and the increasingly important purpose of presenting both sides at a time of crumbling confidence in all our institutions, including the press."

Geyelin said he tries to do this at The Washington Post by presenting "a broad spectrum of opinion by columnists." (p. 20)

In order for the achievement of this individuality necessary to present opposing views, columnists must have a great deal of freedom. They must not fear that what they say will be rejected by editors or publishers or that they will be punished for their opinions.

All the columnists interviewed commented on the freedom they enjoy. Bronson said he has never heard anything from Gannett about his columns or editorials. Likewise, Beal said he had not received direction from Pulitzer.

Blondin said, "I have never written a column that has been killed. We all have pretty much a free hand in terms of personal columns. The column is a more personal point of view," she said. "You have much more freedom to express your thoughts. I have personally found them to be the most fun thing to do in journalism, just because of that lack of constraint. There's great freedom of expression in them."

However, Blondin has been asked to write about a topic that she did not wish to write about. She said she refused and that was accepted.

Of all the columnists interviewed only one had a column outright rejected. Severson said he had a column poking fun at the car industry rejected about eight or 10 years ago. It was refused, by an upper-management person no longer with the Star, because car dealerships were big advertisers in the paper, Severson said.

"It so happened at that time the people in charge didn't want to offend them (the dealerships), so it didn't run," he said. "It's the only column that I've had refused." Severson declined revealing the name of the person who refused the column.

When Bronson is in disagreement with Citizen editor and publisher C. Donald Hatfield about his columns, he said he finds himself in the role of a reporter who must answer to his editor.

"He (Hatfield) reads all of my columns and he makes suggestions from time to time," Bronson said. "Usually they're suggestions that I think make the column stronger. Every now and then, though, we disagree. Maybe I want to write such and such and he thinks that what I'm saying is too strong or I haven't backed it up enough. And in that case I find myself in the role of reporter to editor. So I have to either back it up or change it."

However, as long as he supports his arguments, Bronson said he has freedom to write about what or whom he chooses.

"Ninety-five percent of the time I have a very free range to write what I want and about what I want," he said. "I have never been told that any subject is off limits or that any target is off limits. It's open season."

Asked if there exists a conflict of interest by being the main column writer on the Perspective page and the editorial page editor, Bronson said there is no conflict. In fact, when he disagrees with the editorial board, he writes a column presenting the alternate point of view.

"It kind of cross-fertilizes," Bronson said about his dual role as editor and columnist.

Sometimes Blondin, who considers herself to be quite liberal, will write a column opposing a conservative editorial she disagrees with. "If I'm not on the prevailing side of an editorial point of view, I can always express it in another way, in a personal column, and

I've often done that," Blondin said. "I think, particularly at the Citizen, I try to give a point of view that isn't offered by some of the other writers at our newspaper," she said. Also I think I bring a somewhat more liberal view to the Citizen than what is expected of us because we're considered more of a conservative newspaper."

Censorship appears to be a rarity at the Tucson dailies. In fact Tom Beal said that he suffers from a lack of attention from editors.

"As far as picking subject matter, I pick it," he said. "In fact, right now on that page I think I suffer from some inattention because the people who are editing it are very reluctant to change a word. When I first started writing (my column) they were a little more prone to suggest changes. I'm not talking about changes in content or argument, but changes in style, changes in some offhand remark that someone might find offensive." Beal also said, "They've never refused to run a column. I have also never given them a column that I knew they would refuse to run. I'm not sure what that is."

Henry said that none of her columns have been refused, but that "one probably should have." Early in her career, Henry wrote a column in which she sprang to the defense of then Tucson Unified School District superintendent Paul Houston when he made, what some readers considered to be, an off-color remark in his address welcoming the teachers back to school in the fall of 1986. Houston's comment was imitative of The Little Rascal character Buckwheat, which many people found insensitive or even racist, Henry said.

"I did run that by my two top editors here at the paper, and neither one of them saw anything wrong with it and it ran," she said. "The proverbial you-know-what hit the fan soon after."

Henry describes her experience with that column as, "sort of a sadder and wiser situation. I found out that you cannot write about a certain subject if you yourself are not part of that subject group, in today's climate where people are hypersensitive and easy to take offense," she said.

Thus, although she is not censored by her editors or publisher, Henry imposes a self-censorship of sorts.

However, not all columnists are as lucky as those at the Tucson Citizen and the Arizona Daily Star. Pat Kite, author of "Newspaper columnists: An up-close look," polled columnists who belong to the National Society of Newspaper Columnists and found that some of them had been censored.

Kite asked, "Have you ever been told not to write about a particular subject?" The following are the responses he received:

"1. 'Under the previous administration, any topic the a----- I worked for didn't agree with.'

2. 'Politics, religion, National Guard.'

3. 'Sex.'

4. 'Realtors.'

5. 'Cow manure.'"

Kite said, "At lease one-third of respondents have been assigned, at least once, to do a specific column topic."

None of the local columnists interviewed had ever been assigned a specific topic. Tom Beal said he has never been asked to

write about something he did not want to write about but he does receive suggestions. "I get suggestions from the people that I work for: 'You ought to look into this,' that kind of thing," he said. I can't remember a suggestion that ever seemed to be serious enough to be mistaken for direction."

However, there are certain things that Beal is expected to write about. "I'm the columnist on the Op-Ed page that deals with politics and government in Arizona, so I am expected to do something about the legislature," Beal said. "I'm expected to do something about the governors and their zany antics in this state, and I'm expected to write about elections when they come up. But it's not really a direction as much as it is just sort of accepted that this is my role there."

It is not only editors that have expectations. Readers too have certain wants and expectations from the columnists they read. The following portion of this section focuses on readership -- who reads columns and what they want from the columnists they read.

## READERSHIP

In The Editorial Page, Washington Post columnist George Will said, "What most readers want from a columnist is the pleasure of his company." Beal and Henry concur with Will. "I think that's a very good assessment, the company," Henry said. "People have told me that reading my column is just like having their friend or their neighbor sitting at the kitchen table with them. So I try and establish that, a real personal one on one."

Severson said his readers expect "up-beat" stories from him.

Asked what her readers expect, Blondin said, "I think that they expect an articulate point of view, no matter what the opinion is that is being expressed. I think they expect it to be well researched and something that provokes their thinking." Bronson expressed a similar sentiment. However, he added that what he most hears from his readers is "Keep giving them hell," and "Tell it like it is," and "Don't ever quit kicking ass and taking names."

Although the columnists appear to know what is expected of them, they all said it is difficult to know if a column will be well received.

Asked how she gauges response to her column Henry responded: "You can't. Some of the things I have written about and thought were dynamite and I would get a big response response from, got zilch. And other things, the stupidest things, you get lots of response. Things like why don't men put down the seat on the toilet, earth shaking stuff like that, really brings them out. I can't predict."

Bronson said he has had columns that generated letters for weeks, and others that he thought would be "block-busters that just sank away without a ripple."

Beal said that although he has an internal gauge that lets him know if he has written a good column, sometimes he is surprised by which columns are well received. "I'm sometimes surprised that columns I dash off in the morning when I'm very busy and have to get somewhere turn out to be the better ones," he said.

The columnists agreed that reader response depends more on subject matter than on the quality of the column.

Henry said, "if I write anything about snowbirds, I will always get letters, and the more negative it is the more letters you will get."

Bronson said that sometimes the fastest written and least researched columns are most popular. The columnists said that it can take anywhere from 15 minutes to three weeks to write a column depending on the topic and amount of research required. The average writing time for an 800-word column was about four hours.

Although the columnists feel their readers have certain expectations of them, they do not know precisely who those readers are or how often they read their columns. Asked who reads his column, Severson replied, "I don't really know." Henry responded, "Old people."

Bronson said, "Because I'm conservative, I tend to attract readers that are conservative also, and they tend to be middle-aged or older. We were a little surprised. The last time we looked at the reader numbers, to find out that more women read my column than men."

However, a recent readership survey of Bronson's readers shows that almost an equal number of men and women read his column. (See Appendix 1.) The survey showed that 51 percent of Bronson's readers are women and 49 percent men. The readership for the Citizen as a whole is 52 percent women and 48 percent men.

The survey also revealed that the majority (43%) of Bronson's readers were 55 and older, earned between \$25,000 and \$35,000 (37%), were college graduates (41 %), and were married or had a partner (65 %). Sixty-five percent had been living in the United

States for 10 years or more, and 46 percent were conservative in their personal philosophy.

Whereas 20 percent of the Citizen's readers regularly read Bronson's column and 40 percent occasionally read it, Tom Beal's column was read regularly by 22 percent of the Star's overall readership and occasionally by 48 of Star readers. (See Appendix 2.)

The Star's market survey shows that the majority of Beal readers fall into the same categories as Bronson's with the exception that they choose a more middle or liberal personal philosophy. (See Appendices 3 and 4.)

An April 13, 1992, memo from TNI Partners marketing manager to Star editor Stephen E. Auslander about Beal/Bronson column readership said, "Neither do well among younger people, single adults, newcomers or Hispanics. Unfortunately, those demographic groups were identified as the largest opportunity groups in building readership for both papers." (See Appendix 4)

The demographics for the other columnists were not available. However, Henry said she beat out Dr. Ruth in a readership survey a few years ago. Beal and Bronson are proud, they said, that they were better read than the sports section.

Knowing who reads columns and what they expect from the columnists they read, assists in providing a basis on which to determine what the role of the column is in the last decade of the twentieth century. The remainder of this section on columns examines that role.

#### THE ROLE OF THE COLUMN IN THE 1990S

So, what is the role of the column in the 1990s and will it remain a vital part of newspapers in the future?

If events and issues were complex enough in the twenties and thirties to bring about the genre of subjective reporting, they are equally if not more complex and confusing today. Modern readers need columnists to keep them abreast of what's happening so that they can make educated and well informed decisions, thereby fulfilling their duty as citizens in a democracy.

Today's columnists are writing about, among other things, the death penalty, abortion, presidential candidates, health care, AIDS and other important issues that cannot be adequately covered by news alone. The public needs to read reasonable arguments about subjects such as these so that they can come to their own opinions. Columns meet that need by focussing thoughts and pointing out trends and patterns.

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. summarizes the modern role of the column by saying, "In its new but limited form and function, the column is at best a chance to watch a mind and style at work, through time, on the topics of the day." (p.12)

Although the role of the column has changed with time, as long as they continue to inform, educate, entertain and allow readers to feel as if they are participating in events, columns will remain an intricate part of reader's lives.

Whereas the first portion of this paper was concerned with the opinions of individuals as expressed in columns, the next section of this paper focuses on the views of the newspaper as an institution.

It looks at the role editorials play in the age of television, advanced education and corporate ownership.

## II EDITORIALS

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

American editors have been commenting on public issues for nearly three centuries, documenting the social evolution of society as they attempt to explain the most important issues of the day. The first formal editorial -- an unsigned institutional opinion on an issue or event that appeared in approximately the same place each day -- appeared in the late 1780s, but even before they were formally recognized as such, editorials influenced public opinion and helped to shape the face of America. For example, editorial protests opposing the Stamp Act of 1765 are said to have assisted in its repeal in 1766. "(Editorials) may not thunder as they once did, or have the influence sometimes attributed to them in the past; but they are read, and many persons assert that they do still have an impact on public opinion," said Ernest C. Hynds in "Editors Expect Editorial Pages To Remain Vital in the Year 2000." (p.441)

Kenneth Rystrom documents the progression of the editorials in his description of five phases through which, he said, American newspapers and editorial pages have passed. In the first phase, during the colonial era and the period immediately after the Revolutionary War, opinion and fact were inextricably intertwined in the pages of the press, which openly proclaimed its partisanship. In her historical account of editorial development, Katherine Graham describes this era as one in which "Few editors even tried to separate opinions from the news: their articles were a stew of facts, gossip,

propaganda, and what John Adams once called 'the most base, vulgar sordid fishwoman scurrility.'" (p.2)

The second phase coincides with the writing of the new Constitution. In 1787 editorials began to appear as a distinct form, but fact and opinion were still presented as one in other columns. By 1800 the Philadelphia Aurora was using the editorial "we." The third phase, Rystrom said, is characterized by the emergence of the penny press and yellow journalism. During the 1830s the great editors, such as William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer and Horace Greeley, used the pages of their papers and their editorials as personal mouth pieces. Ties to political parties began to weaken during this time, and editors "produced highly personalized editorial pages -- and better news products as well." (p.12) Of this era Graham said:

In the century of brash, intensely competitive journalism that followed (the days of the Republic), the editorial voices were those of the great entrepreneurs -- Horace Greeley, Joseph Pulitzer, William Randolph Hearst and the like. Their power was based on circulation; their papers were essentially extensions of their strong original personalities. (p.2)

Rystrom's fourth phase follows the turn of the century. During this time anonymous editorial staffs began to replace the famous editors, and "writing became more bland." (p. 12)

When the days of the great editors began to pass, following the Civil War, it became less clear who was writing the editorials and for whom the editorials spoke. As the era of corporate newspapers emerged, editorial writers retreated anonymously into their

ivory towers and took to writing what a publisher or an editorial board asked them to write. (p. 83)

When "the great editors" said "we" in their editorials, they meant I, but with the demise of yellow journalism the collective "we" came to mean the newspaper.

His final phase begins in the 1960s. In this fifth phase, Rystrom describes the modern editorial writer as younger, nonpartisan, more aggressive and more pragmatic. This phase is characterized as a time of political activity and corporate press. However, research suggests that the editorial evolution has not come to a halt. Thus there exists the need for a sixth phase, which would more accurately account for the state of today's editorials.

This phase takes into account the influences of a generally higher educated public, competition from other media sources, a waning newspaper industry in which corporate ownership is growing and private ownership withering, and the constant worry of decreasing readership.

The intent of this paper is to focus on that sixth stage -- the factors that account for the changes that occurred, and the reasons for those changes.

The days of Hearst, Pulitzer and Greeley, when newspapers reflected the personality and ideology of their owner are long gone. For three main reasons that has changed: competition, education, and an increasing complexity of news. The remainder of this chapter focuses on each one of those factors.

COMPETITION:  
THE RISE OF CORPORATE OWNERSHIP AND THE THREAT OF  
EDITORIAL HOMOGENEITY

In 1990 there were 1,611 daily newspapers in the United States. In 1991 there were only 1,586, according to Carson. This decrease, although slight, reflects what some refer to as the slow death of the newspaper. It also reflects the trend of the decreasing number of newspapers in the United States and a decreasing readership. Furthermore, many of the papers that have folded in that last 25 years were privately owned. This has a direct affect on competition between the remaining newspapers, an affect which echoes on the editorial pages.

"Newspapers are no longer so numerous. There is less competition among them, and in many communities no press competition at all. At the same time, there is more competition from television, radio and magazines," Graham said. (pp.2-3)

Rystrom concurs and said, "In most communities today's readers have little or no choice of a daily paper; they take the one that is available or none at all." (p.41) And what papers are available are more often than not corporately owned. An overwhelming majority of the 30 companies that control the preponderance of media revenues in the United States are owned by media conglomerates. The diminishing number of newspapers and the decrease in newspaper competition has created a new role for editorials and editorial pages: to provide a forum for the debate that used to occur between competing newspapers.

In part because more and more of our larger newspapers flourish in markets without direct competition, today's opinion pages have a special responsibility to provide within themselves a forum for the sort of debate that used to come naturally when both the morning and evening papers of a given city were more likely than not to have lively opposition. (p. 13)

However, with chains -- a single owner of more than one daily newspaper in more than one city -- becoming increasingly prevalent, some press critics fear homogeneity, which could hinder debate.

In "The Lords of the Global Village," press critic Ben Bagdikian explains the threat of corporate ownership to the plurality of voices, and therefore democracy.

True freedom of information requires three conditions: the opportunity to read and watch anything available; a diversity of sources from which to choose; and media systems that provide access for those who wish to reach their fellow citizens. In democratic countries the first condition is generally met. But the media titans are reducing the scope of the other two everywhere as they take over more and more once-independent companies. (p.812)

While there is good reason to fear corporate influence on editorials, there is not a preponderance of evidence to suggest that corporate ownership has a negative impact on editorials. In fact, research findings are mixed. In a 1977 study, Ralph R. Thrift Jr. found that independently owned dailies' editorials declined in vigor after being purchased by a chain. Moreover, he discovered that papers used a smaller proportion of argumentative editorials on local

issues after being purchased by a chain. Whereas editorial writers for independent papers used "a far higher proportion of local editorials with topics in controversial contexts than did writers for chain-owned dailies." (p.329) Furthermore, Thrift suggests that as corporate ownership began becoming more prevalent, independently owned newspaper editorials became more vigorous.

On the other hand, Akhavan-Majid, Rife and Gopinath, in their 1989 study comparing 56 Gannett papers with 155 other newspapers, found "that Gannett newspapers were more likely to take positions, but also less likely to vary in the positions taken." (p.59) However, Gannett, the study said, denies any editorial interference and is committed to maintaining the diversity and autonomy of their affiliated newspapers.

Gannett's current (1988) Annual Report, for example, displays the following statement on its cover page: "Diversity is strength. By encouraging and expecting a mix of opinions, backgrounds, sexes, races, and ideas Gannett improves results." (p. 60)

According to the study, Gannett owned about 82 newspapers across the United States and with a readership of about six million, "represents by far the largest and potentially most powerful media conglomerate in the United States." (p. 61)

The study's results suggest that in fact there does exist a homogenizing effect on editorial position and policy resulting from chain ownership. But Bronson said although his paper is owned by Gannett, he has never heard from anyone at Gannett regarding editorials or editorial policy. He has, however, received direction

from the paper's publisher, C. Donald Hatfield. Bronson's replacement, the Tucson Citizen's present editorial page editor John Langford, said he too has never received any direction regarding editorials from Gannett. "I've never been influenced by Gannett or any other papers as a newsman," said Langford, who in addition to Gannett has worked for the New York Times in California, as well as Knight Ridder, and Cox. Drew's research supports this noninterference policy. (See Appendix 5)

Drew found: "Writers working for newspapers owned by publicly-traded corporations are about 10 percentage points more likely than are those in private or family-owned companies to say they never have to write an opinion that does not match their own." (p. 30) Drew said owners of independently owned organizations have "moderate-to-great influence on what (editorialists) write about." (p.31) (See Appendix 6)

He also noted a difference between who corporate or independent editorial writers view as their audience. Those editorial writers working for a chain are more likely to see themselves as writing to an elite audience, whereas independent editorialists are more likely to perceive their audience as the average citizen. He found no difference with respect to the perceived impact of their work. But Langford said just the opposite. Although he occasionally targets various elitist groups, such as the City Council, generally his editorials are geared toward the average citizen. And, he said, when he does target specific groups, he does so on behalf of the citizen. (See Appendix 7)

But even in the absence of intended control, chain ownership may set into motion a number of other mechanisms that could, either individually or collectively, lead to homogeneity in editorial content. There is always the danger, Carson said, that those promoted in newspaper conglomerates will think like their superiors, thus advancing corporate conformity, which likewise leads to homogeneity. Langford said that is not the case in Gannett, or at least only in upper management on the business side. "Gannett is a leader in the industry in hiring minorities and women," he said. "We are the leading advocate of cultural diversity in the newsroom."

However, editorials and the editorial pages provide a perfect opportunity for editors to simultaneously combat homogeneity while defining their papers' individuality. "As we look at the sameness that is coming over American newspapers, it seems to me that the editorial may be the one thing that distinguished one from another," said Calder Pickett, a professor at the University of Kansas' William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications, in "Editorials still have impact." (p.21) Former Editorial Page Editor for the New York Times John B. Oakes has a similar view of editorials.

If a newspaper is a living thing, as I think it is, its news content may be its life blood, the front page may be its face, but its editorials -- its criticism and its commentary -- are its very soul. And when the editorials are flabby or complacent or irresponsible, then that newspaper has lost its soul -- and also lost its character. (p.11)

Research shows many editors agree that it is their editorial page, more than any other single thing, that defines a newspaper's personality. For example, Graham said,

That editorial voice may be olympian or chatty. It may thunder, exhort or chide. At best it will be eloquent, perceptive and persuasive; at worst capricious, uninformed or dull. Whatever its nature, it is that voice, more than any other single aspect of a newspaper, which day by day expresses the institution's convictions and conveys its personality. (p.1)

Even on a local level, editors agree that the editorial pages best express the newspaper's personality, and define the paper ideologically to its readers. "The soul of the paper is the editorial pages. The heart and mind is out there on Page One with the stories, but the personality is on the editorial pages," Bronson said.

In times of corporate expansion and shrinking competition, it is essential that newspapers make clear their individuality and their place amid the communication explosion. However, expressing a newspaper's personality is merely one of the many roles modern editorials play. Although competition between newspapers is decreasing, competition from other sources is at a record high and is greatly influencing the function of editorials. The next section of this paper examines the effects of the greatest source of competition on editorials.

TELEVISION:

## A SOCIETY WEANED ON TV NEEDS THE SOLID FOOD ONLY A NEWSPAPER EDITORIAL CAN PROVIDE

Although every form of media has had some influence on the development of the modern editorial, television, in particular, has helped define the its role. Most surveys show that a majority of people get most of their news from television, David Shaw said. (p.6) However, television leaves many holes that some researchers and editorial writers suggest can only be filled by newspapers. Geyelin asserts that the increasing influence of television has had a great affect on editorials, and is contributing toward the role editorials will continue to play.

For millions and millions of people, the morning and evening news on TV defines what's news. Like it or not, this is almost certainly a fact, and it's my view that this creates a whole new mission for editorial pages -- to redefine the news by standards other than what may fit conveniently into four or five short bursts in somewhat less than a half-hour of air time of an evening. . . if television is all-pervasive, it is also, if you'll pardon the expression, phantasmagorical. What that means, in this sense, is that television news bombards the viewer with a 'shifting series of illusions and deceptive appearances' so that newspaper readers, no more than ever, need somebody to follow along and tidy things up, to take the phantasms and examine them and rearrange them so that they begin to make some sense. (pp. 18-19)

The role of the editorial, Geyelin said, then becomes telling readers not how to think, but what to think about. Shaw concurs, stating, in "The Death of Punditry:"

Television, in particular, has created a truly mass media, and in the foreseeable future, I suspect, the media's role in the opinion-making process will be limited to the setting of the public agenda--telling readers, viewers and politicians what deserves attention and action. (p. 7)

Bronson takes the role one step further, asserting that the role of the editorial is not only to act as a sorter for an overwhelming amount of information, but also to provide opinions about it. Bronson said,

In this day and age, what I'm seeing more and more, is that we're in a society where people are just inundated with news and information everywhere they turn, and what they're just desperate for is somebody to help them sift through it and come up with opinions about it. Opinion pages put the pieces of the puzzle together and that's where they have a role. I don't think you're going to find that on broadcast. It takes newspapers to really do a good job of that.

Langford takes a similar stand, citing an increase in newspaper readership this year ( the first in many years, he said) as a signal that viewers are not satisfied with "infotainment" and are therefore returning to newspapers. "The American public is no longer happy with the quantity or quality of information from TV," he said. "They want more and newspapers provide more. That's why they are turning back to newspapers, because it's the intelligent choice."

Rystrom also said that television does a less than adequate job of providing news. "Because of the time limits and the fleeting nature of messages on film and tape the broadcast media are not able to carry varied view points in depth. That responsibility," he said, "must fall to the print media."

Merlo J. Pusey agrees that television has greatly influenced editorials, but asserts that the editorial will not be side tracked by it.

I think it is improbable that the editorial will be sidetracked by television or radio, or by the blizzard of magazines, newsletters, handouts and fliers that beats upon a thoughtful citizens conscience. None of these serves precisely the same purpose as the thoughtful, carefully researched and well-written editorial. (p. 198)

Thus, while television may be all-pervasive, editorials are necessary to fill in the holes television creates, to dispel the myths and deceptions television creates, and to tell people what they ought to be thinking about and, most importantly, why.

Another reason people need more to be told what to think about than how to think is that people generally have a higher of level of education than in the newspaper phases preceding this one. The next section of this paper will examine the affects a higher level of education has had on the role of the editorial.

**EDUCATION:  
THE MODERN READER CAN THINK FOR HIMSELF**

"Many American citizens are finally applying their own common sense to the issues of the day, instead of taking their cue from elitist pundits," Shaw said. One of the reasons for this turn of events is that people are generally attaining a higher level of education. Hence, whereas it was once acceptable for editorials to preach and tell people how to act, today's editorials will be better received when they set out with the primary goals of informing and educating, and the secondary goal of persuading.

What better education has done is to equip more and more people to make up their own minds. The aggregate effect is that, increasingly, while people may not mind being told what a newspaper thinks, they don't feel they need to be told what they should think--and still less to be told what to think in a categorical, dogmatic, pompous or patronizing way. (p.18)

Thus the role of the editorial becomes that of a catalyst for thought. Oakes asks the question, "What is the 'critical responsibility (of editorials)'" He answers, "I think it can be put quite simply. It is the responsibility of every newspaper through its editorial page to try to make its readers think." Blondin agrees. She said people turn to editorials to start thinking about their own opinions and views. "I think they sort of bounce off what they're reading on those pages and it helps them to form a view." Drew quotes Leo Bogart to make the point that provoking discussion is the real purpose of editorials. Bogart said, ". . . the function of editorials and critical commentaries is not to carry the public along with whatever argument is being upheld, but rather to provoke discussion, to create issues where

there were formerly none." (p. 22) Fitzgerald agrees that although editorials retain a good deal of influence, "newspapers these days want to inform and educate readers as much as to influence them." (p.100) Rystrom said,

"There is still room for strong editorial leadership -- for editorial crusades -- but the best chance for editorial writers to achieve credibility and to be persuasive lie in being informed, reasonable, articulate and sensitive to the feelings and opinions of others. (p.42)

A consensus among editorial researchers and readers alike is that editorials are used to help form opinions and to involve readers in current affairs. A 1980 survey by the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Co. research analyst Elsa Mohn and then-Syracuse University professor Maxwell McCombs found that 85 percent of people who read a paper on a daily basis, read the editorial page "to feel I am participating in current affairs." (Fitzgerald, p.21) Other reasons for reading editorials were to assist readers to make decisions on issues, to use the information in discussions and to help form opinions. Many editors polled by Fitzgerald said newspaper editorials focus public discussion.

A greater level of education also means that readers are more demanding of editorials than they have been in the past. Today's educated readers, Langford said, "still want strong opinion, but they do demand more logic and reasoning behind the opinion. They expect reasoned thinking." Hynds said, "The need for more editorials that present well-documented, well-written arguments as benchmarks for readers has been increasing." (Changes in Editorials:

A Study of Three Newspapers, 1955-1985. p.302) Guido Stempel analyzed 100 editorials and discovered that informative editorials significantly outnumbered persuasive ones. (Drew, p.20) But not all studies show informing readers as the editorial writers' primary goal.

In his study, Drew found the perceived roles performed by editorial writing to predominantly be the "rhetorical function," which focuses on persuasion and logic. About one half of the editorials writers he polled, saw the foremost role as that of educator, and small minorities thought their role to be that of entertainer and provocateur.(p.20) He did, however, note that often a writer's perception of essential editorial role differed from actual performance.

From his experience, Langford said, the purpose of editorials is to try to lead people in the direction that the newspaper, as an institution, thinks they should go. "Ideally you do that by making reasonable arguments and the use of intelligence, logic and reasoning to mold opinion." Thus like many of the editors polled in Drew's study, Langford still feels influencing readers and inspiring or inciting action are the foremost goals of editorials today. Editorials should get readers thinking about the topic of the day, and inspire them to act. He said the Tucson Citizen has been running the editorial pages like this for about 20 years, and people are happy with the results. "Frankly, these pages don't look a lot different than when I came to Tucson in 1974," he said. "If something's not broken, don't fix it." Langford does, however, make the allowance that although things may appear the same on the outside, today's

editorials are more fortified and substantive than those 100 or even 20 years ago.

One means of establishing the effectiveness of the influence of an editorial is by the response it incites. Langford said he knows the Tucson Citizen is doing a good job with its editorials because of the number of phone calls and letters to the editor he receives. The next section of this paper will examine and provide an overview of the function of the letters to the editor column.

### III LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

If the newspaper is to be an effective voice of leadership and an instrument of persuasion in the community it serves, it must accept the responsibility of providing an open forum through which readers can express their views concerning issues of public interest and importance. Such an open forum will serve an important role in the marketplace of ideas from which truth hopefully emerges. (Stonecipher, p. 229)

Letters to the editor have been integral parts of American newspapers since the days of Publicolas and Catos. They have contributed greatly to society by providing a voice for the people. They play as crucial and vital a role today as in the days when Benjamin Franklin anonymously contributed his "Silence Dogood" letters and John Dickinson penned his "Letters from a farmer in Pennsylvania" against Great Britain. Ralph Nader and Steven Gold said:

Ever since portions of the Federalist Papers were published as letters to the editors of post-revolutionary era newspapers and gazettes, letters columns have functioned as transcripts of the town square, echoing with responses, corrections, amplifications, and interpretations from readers ranging from blacksmiths to cabinet secretaries. A reader's search for enlightenment is incomplete without the option of reading a robust letters column. (p. 52)

The letters to the editor column provides the forum necessary for democracy to survive and prosper. It is the one place in the newspaper where free speech is honored daily. Its importance is

multifaceted ranging from providing an open forum for debate to acting as a catharsis for readers to helping editors gauge the success of their editorial pages and newspaper. In "Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters," Hynds said:

Letters to the editor perform an increasingly important role in newspapers' efforts to provide the public forum that is essential to the effective operation of the democratic system. They cannot accurately measure public opinion, but they can help identify public issues and concerns, and can foster an exchange of ideas and information concerning action or inaction by government and others. (p. 124)

In addition to the fostering and exchange of ideas, the letters column acts as an amplifier, allowing the writer's voice to be heard by thousands of people. And for many people, this is the only opportunity they have to share their opinions and views with people outside their inner circle of family and friends.

Letters also give the unsatisfied reader a chance to blow off steam. David L. Grey and Trevor R. Brown explain that "one of the functions of the letters to the editor in a democratic society is that of catharsis. A letter column gives the irate, the antagonist, the displeased, a chance to speak out and to be heard." (p. 454) Half of the editors Hynds surveyed said "letters can serve as a safety valve for people who are unhappy with some aspect of community life and need an outlet for their emotions. (Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters, p. 135) Moreover the letters column gives the reader who disagrees with the editorials and columns a chance to vent his

opinion, and hence increases the number of voices on the editorial pages. Washington Post writer Colman McCarthy said:

The wealth of the community is in the breadth of its citizens' ideas. Anything sharing that wealth is good, and the daily package of letters has to be seen that way -- a richness of thought from people who care about the direction society is taking. (The Editorial Page, pp. 167-168)

Letters also exposes the writer to judgement from other letter writers, thus acting as a sounding board for that writer's views. About this McCarthy said, "If the letters column gives space for reader to make judgements on the editorial writers and columnists, it also exposes the judges to judgement. One reader questions another." (p. 168) In his study, Michael Singletary also found many writers "might well use the letter as a sounding board for evaluating their own positions" (p. 537) He said:

This 'sounding board' might provide a reader a kind of feedback, a map of his ideas or opinions in relation to those of others, in regard to, for instance, logic, popularity of the idea, appropriate emphasis, and strength of feeling. (p. 537)

In a 1991 study, Hynds found that most newspapers run letters to the editor "to help provide the public forum expected of newspapers in a democracy." Other reasons for running the letters column, he said, ranged from "helping readers feel represented at the newspaper, to adding variety to the editorial pages, to helping to identify public concerns and issues. But most studies agree that one

of the main purposes for running letters to the editor is because it has a high readership that attracts readers to the page.

In fact, the letters to the editor column is the most read portion of the editorial pages. A 1976 study by Singletary shows that about 33 percent of newspaper readers read the letters column. In 1975 Hynds found that letters were the best-read item on most editorial pages. In 1983, he found, they remain the best-read item and editors are getting and using more letters. ("Editorials, Opinion Pages Still Have Vital Roles, p.639) And in 1985, Nader and Gold found that 60 percent of respondents to a newspaper survey usually read the letters section, from which they concluded that "A significant majority of readers seems to appreciate the indispensability of letters to the editor." (p. 52) McCarthy best describes the readers' fondness for the letters column.

A letter-to-the-editor is the reader's 13 cents' worth, and for the newspaper this unsolicited manuscript is the daily best buy. The reader pays for his newspaper and he is entitled to all the delights of his purchase, and that includes telling the know-it-alls that on some days they are know-nothings. (p. 167)

Nader and Gold report that about 13 percent of newspaper readers have written at least one letter to the editor. That figure, they said, was only eight percent in 1970. (p. 52) In Hynds' study of the use of letters, he reported that editors describe their typical letter writers as "rooted in the community; involved in special interest groups; well-informed; and educated." (p. 129) Singletary found that the profile of the letter writer has changed over the years.

About 35 years ago, he said, one study found writers to be in the middle and old age groups, their median age being 59. But in his 1976 study, Singletary found there to be slightly more writers in the under 35 age group than in the 35 to 60 age group, and the number of writers in the under 35 group were twice that of those in the over 60 group. "If this is true generally, then the burden of letter writing, and hence of influence, may be shifting to a younger level of the population," Singletary concluded. (p. 537)

#### TRENDS: THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Just as Singletary concluded that influence may be shifting to a younger generation, editors can also make conclusions from the letters they receive. And if the letters column can act as a sounding board for writers, it can also perform the same function for editors. "The date ( in letters to the editor) provide bench marks for editors to use in assessing their editorial page operations, and they suggest changes editors could consider to make their operations better," Hynds said. (Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters, p.135) Langford said he gauges the success of the Tucson Citizen editorial and perspective pages by the number of letters received. As editorial page editor, Langford receives 3,000 letters a year, which he said was "extraordinary." "It's a sign that people are not only reading our pages, but thinking about them," he said. The Tucson Citizen prints 95 percent of the letters it receives. Those not printed are often anonymous or profane.

Bronson also noted the letters column as an important indicator of public opinion about the editorial pages. He said:

Another indication of how vigorous your editorial and op-ed pages are is how many letters you get that are directly talking about what was on those pages. Open up a lot of newspapers around the country and you'll find letters about this and that topic, but they never bring up anything they saw there. Whereas ours, I would say on any given day you're going to find at least one or two letters talking about something that we've written or that we've had to say in our pages.

Most newspapers report receiving and printing more letters to the editor than ever before. In 1983 Hynds said that most newspapers were getting and using more letters than they did in 1975. In 1989, he reported that an increased number of letters to the editor used was a trend among newspapers. And from his 1991 survey, Hynds found that a majority of editors polled indicated that "they are receiving and using more letter now than they did 10 years ago." (p. 127) Moreover, "all those with past and current information said they are printing more letters now than 10 years ago." (p. 128)

The size of the newspaper and the size of the community it serves influences the number of letters a newspaper receives, and thus the number of letters a newspaper prints. In his study of editors working for newspapers with a minimum circulation of 100,000, Hynds found that almost 75 percent of the editors said they get at least 5,000 a year, and 31 percent said they get 10,000 or more letters a year. However, only 82 percent said they run at least

half of the letters received. Fifty-three percent said they run 30 percent; 32 percent said they run at least 40 percent, and 26 percent said they run at least half of the letters received. (p. 128)

Nader and Gold said:

A 1981 survey of 667 working editors, reported in Leo Bogart's The Press and the Public, listed the number of letters published in a newspaper as the fourth most frequently mentioned criterion of quality, and in 1980 Professor Pasternack found that 59 percent of 212 editors believed that newspapers should devote more space to letters . . . But most major publications are not responding adequately to the growing popularity of the letters column with the public and are not heeding their own eloquent endorsements of this "essential" forum. (p. 54)

Many editors complain that they do not have enough space to print the number of letters they believe should be printed. Most editorial page editors only have two pages, which are fought over by many competing parties. In The Editorial Page, former Post assistant editorial editor in charge of make-up, David R. Legge describes the battle over space on these prestigious pages:

Column inch for column inch, the editorial and opposite editorial (or op-ed) pages are among the most sought-after in the daily newspaper. Among the competitors for this territory are (1) the "word" people, made up of editorial writers and letter writers; (2) the "picture" people, made up of cartoonists and illustrators, photographers and layout editors; and, in some cases, (3) the advertising people, who have historically paid a premium for the

privilege of appearing on these high-demographic pages. (p. 179)

Nader and Gold report that many of the most-read newspapers in the United States publish only eight percent of the letters they receive each year. The New York Times publishes an average of only about 4.5 percent of the 250 to 300 letters it receives daily. The Wall Street Journal, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Washington Post all receive between 500 and 1,500 letters a week and not one of them publishes more than eight percent.

However, most editors predict that more space will be devoted to letters in the future, and they will receive better play. In times when newspapers are battling for readers, this finding suggest that letters sections can help newspapers hold and attract readers. Furthermore, Hynds said letters sections can enhance a newspapers credibility with readers. (Editorial Page Editors Discuss Use of Letters, p. 134) (See Appendix 8)

## IV CONCLUSION

In the face of challenges greater than ever before, newspaper editorial pages have answered the call of the people and remained an integral and vital part of newspapers. The editorial and op-ed pages both attract and maintain readership. "Despite reported concerns over newspaper costs and shrinking newsholes, it appears that many newspapers are increasing the space devoted to editorial page materials," said Hynds in "Editorials, Opinion Pages Still Have Vital Roles at Most Newspapers." (p. 635) In times of tight budgets and decreasing advertising revenue, this suggests the importance of the editorial pages to newspapers and newspaper readers.

The editorial pages provide the enlightenment needed in the information explosion age, making sense of current affairs by providing data and opinions from a variety of sources. The material on the editorial pages performs a multiplicity of functions. It does everything from entertaining the reader to providing a voice for the reader; from stimulating thought to helping form opinions; and from filling in the holes left by television to focusing public opinion. Researchers agree, that if the editorial pages continue to perform these functions, they will maintain their vigor and readership, and continue to be an essential part of newspapers. Hynds polled many daily newspapers and found that "almost every one strongly agreed

(74%) or agreed (25%) that editorial pages will remain an essential part of daily newspapers in the year 2000." (p. 442) Other research supports this finding.

However, if editorial pages are to remain vital they must target local issues as much as if not more than national concerns. Retired chairman of the editorial board of The Tampa Tribune James A. Clendinen said:

Despite its moral validity and the satisfaction given the writer, an editorial damning the racial policies of the government of South Africa has little value. The same space and fervor could be better applied to a local, regional, or state issue. Those are the areas in which the average newspaper editorial page serves its highest purpose and has its greatest impact. (p. 5)

In addition, editorial pages must focus on the issues of the day and be less reactive. They must express strong, well-thought out and evidenced opinions. Today's educated reader will accept nothing less. Furthermore, editorial pages must continue their commitment to providing a more diverse spectrum of opinion than that provided by their own editorialists or columnists. Importantly, this includes providing more space for letters to the editor. Editorial pages must continue to define the personality of the newspaper.

In summation, the first chapter of this paper examined and analyzed the roles, goals and readership of columns, concluding that though the role of columns has changed with time, they continue to meet the needs of the reader by focussing thoughts and pointing out trends and patterns. The second chapter reviewed the effects of

chain ownership, television and a general increase in education level on editorials. The findings of this chapter were that whereas editorials may not thunder as they did in the days of the great editors, they are better written, more logical and more informative. Furthermore, the evidence of chain ownership influence on editorials was inconclusive. Further study is necessary to evaluate whether corporate ownership reduces the diversity of editorial opinion. The third chapter looked at the various roles of the letters to the editor section, finding that letters serve a variety of functions all the while performing the important role of providing a forum for the marketplace of ideas essential in a democracy. And finally, the paper concluded by affirming the vitality of the editorial pages in present and in the future.

Appendix 1  
**PETER BRONSON REGULAR READERS**  
 for week of April 13, 1992

	<u>Total Market</u>	<u>Peter Bronson</u>	<u>Bronson vs. Market Index</u>
<u>Age</u>			
18-34	39%	24	62
35-54	32	33	103
55+	28	43	154
<u>Income</u>			
Less than \$25,000	44	30	68
\$25,000-35,000	26	37	142
\$35,000+	30	33	110
<u>Education</u>			
High School or Less	37	32	86
Some College	33	27	82
College Graduate	30	41	137
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	48	49	102
Female	52	51	98
<u>Marital Status</u>			
Married or Partner	58	65	112
Single, Never Married	25	13	52
<u>Years in Country</u>			
Less than 3 Years	16	4	25
10 or More	58	65	112
<u>Hispanic</u>	14	9	64
<u>Personal Philosophy</u>			
Conservative	32	46	144
Middle	38	34	89
Liberal	23	19	83
D/K	7	1	14

"Regular" Bronson readers = 37,300 or 21 percent of Citizen readers

Appendix 2

COLUMN READERSHIP: BRONSON VS. BEAL

	<u>% of Readers</u>		<u>Net Regularly or</u>
	<u>Regularly</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>	<u>Occasionally</u>
Peter Bronson	20%	40%	60%
Tom Beal	22%	48%	70%

Appendix 1 to 4 were made available by the TNI marketing department.

Appendix 3  
 TOM BEAL REGULAR READER  
 for week of April 13, 1992

	<u>Total Market</u>	<u>Tom Beal</u>	<u>Beal vs. Market Index</u>
<u>Age</u>			
18-34	39%	17%	44
35-54	32	39	122
55+	28	44	157
<u>Income</u>			
Less than \$25,000	44	29	66
\$25,000-35,000	26	37	142
\$35,000+	30	34	113
<u>Education</u>			
High School or Less	37	25	68
Some College	33	31	94
College Graduate	30	44	147
<u>Sex</u>			
Male	48	42	88
Female	52	58	112
<u>Marital Status</u>			
Married or Partner	58	65	112
Single, Never Married	25	123	48
<u>Years in Country</u>			
Less than 3 Years	16	12	75
10 or More	58	61	105
<u>Hispanic</u>	14	6	43
<u>Personal Philosophy</u>			
Conservative	32	17	53
Middle	38	42	111
Liberal	23	36	157
D/K	7	5	71

"Regular" Beal readers = 55,100 or 22 percent of Star readers

## Appendix 4

April 13, 1992 Memo

To: Steve Auslander

Re: Beal/Bronson Column Readership

From: Mark Conley

Attached is the profile of the "regular readers of both Peter Bronson (at the time of the measurement -- one per week column) and Tom Beal

About one in five of the past week newspaper audience for the Citizen and the Star define themselves as "regular" readers of either Bronson (21%) or Beal (22%).

In general, both do relatively better among older, better-educated people with more income.

However, neither do well among younger people, single adults, newcomers or Hispanics. Unfortunately, those demographic groups were identified as the largest opportunity groups in building readership for both newspapers.

Compared to the Tucson population, Bronson's readers are far more likely to describe themselves as "conservative" (46%, index - 144). Beal's readers, not surprisingly, are far more likely to identify themselves as liberals (36%, index - 157).

Please give me a call if you wish to discuss.

Thanks

cc: Tom Henry  
Sima Veiner

Appendix 5  
 OWNER OR PUBLISHER INFLUENCE ON PRIORITY OF TOPICS ON THE  
 EDITORIAL PAGE BY NEWSPAPER OWNERSHIP TYPE

Influence Perceived by Writers	Family or Independently Owned	Group-Owned Private	Group Owned Public
Great	30%	7%	5%
Moderate	16	9	8
Some	27	12	10
Very Little	19	28	27
None	8	44	50
Total	100% (N = 146)	100% (N = 181)	100% (N = 195)

Exact wording of the question: "Which of these best determines the influence of your newspaper owner in determining the priority given to editorial topics?"

Totals may not be exact because of rounding to nearest percentage point.

(Drew, p. 31)

Appendix 6  
 FREQUENCY OF EXPRESSION OF IDEAS CONTRARY TO EDITORIAL  
 WRITERS' BELIEFS

Frequency	1971	1979	1988
All of the time	.9%	.6%	.9%
Most of the time	.9	1.2	.9
Some of the time	13.6	14.7	19.8
Seldom	38.3	44.4	41.9
Never	46.3	39.1	36.5
Total	100% (N = 337)	100% (N = 649)	100% (N = 542)

Exact wording of question: "How often, if at all, do you feel compelled to express ideas in your editorials contrary to your personal beliefs?"

(Drew, p.14)

Appendix 7  
GOALS OF EDITORIALS FOR 1988

Reaching ordinary citizens	68%	
(instead of)		
Opinion Leaders	21%	
Government Officials	11%	100%
Serving as a catalyst	58%	
(instead of)		
Creating consensus	23%	
Adding to diversity	19%	100%
Provoking discussion	46%	
(instead of)		
Convincing to adopt a position	27%	
Outlining arguments for understanding	16%	100%
Pointing out public policy problems	46%	
(instead of)		
Recommending solutions	30%	
Critically analyzing them	18%	
Constructively criticizing	6%	100%

Questions asked subjects to rank the importance of each of the four sets of items above.

The figures list the percentage of the sample that ranked the response as most important.

(Drew, p. 21)

Appendix 8  
 PREDICTED ALLOCATIONS OF SPACE

	More Space	About Same Space	Less Space	No Answer
Editorials	3%	87%	8%	2%
Local Cartoons	26%	66%	8%	0%
Syndicated Cartoons	11%	67%	21%	1%
Local Columns	59%	30%	8%	3%
Syndicated Columns	7%	39%	53%	1%
Letters to the Editor	74%	20%	3%	3%
Guest Experts Articles	69%	25%	2%	4%

(Hynds, 1989, p. 444)

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