

Determinants of Newsroom Use of Staff Expertise: The Case of International News

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Literature on news construction acknowledges that newspapers create specialized content, but there is little speculation as to why specialties arise and why expertise in a particular content area may be greater at one paper than at another. This study is an attempt to explain variability across newspapers in the degree of expertise and specialization in one content area — the coverage of international news. In this study expertise is treated as a sociological construct, shaped by structural characteristics of news organizations and their communities.

Scholars who have studied the coverage of international news have typically looked to global factors to explain variability in coverage. Much of this research assumes that the structure of influences on international news coverage reflects the structure of power among nations. Models of media production show, however, that the crafting of media messages is also subject to influences of a more local nature. These influences exist on a variety of levels, from organizational influences, to influences in the local community's power structure, to corporate influences. These influences are likely to affect not only the type of foreign news that appears, but also the quality and depth of this coverage. In this study it is assumed that the quality of coverage of international news is a product of the expertise available for decision making in news organizations, and that the degree of expertise itself is a product of several different levels of social influence.

Expertise in this study is considered an organizational-level rather than an individual-level concept. While background of the international news editor is considered a reflection of expertise, the decision to hire the international editor was made at the organizational level. Likewise, daily decision making in the organization's work flow also reflects degree of available expertise.

The literature

Factors shaping levels of expertise: extra-media factors

Frameworks for media production place influences on several different levels of analysis, typically arranged in a hierarchical fashion, such that more macrosocial levels constrain decision making at more microsocial levels (McQuail, 2000; Shoemaker and Reese, 1992; Dimmick and Coit, 1982). For example in Shoemaker and Reese's (1992) model, media messages are shaped at levels in the following descending order: ideological, extra-media (e.g., community influences) organizational, media routines and individual media worker. In McQuail's (2000) model, levels range from the international level down to the "mass-communicator" level. Whether the researcher emphasizes extra-media influences or organizational influences reveals the way the researcher conceptualizes organizations. In the classic perspective, organizations are closed systems, relatively impervious to outside influences, in which managers gather available

information and make rational decisions. These decisions are followed by staff at lower levels in a hierarchy (Scott, 1992; Perrow, 1986). However, organizations may also be perceived as “open systems” (Scott, 1992), or as open to environmental influences (Aldrich, 1979; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Open systems are accessible to influences from the organization’s environment. Such organizations are not necessarily driven by the rational goals of hierarchical decision making (although such goals continue to play a role in decision making), but are rather composed of segments that are only weakly connected with one another, and which have separate connections with structures beyond the organization.

Literature on the relationship between community power structure and news coverage falls within the open-systems or environmental perspective on organizations and is relevant to this study. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) see newspapers as “creations of the community they serve” (p. 49). They are “mechanisms for community social control that maintain the norms, values and processes of a community and...their functions necessarily fit into a pattern that varies predictably according to size and type of community.” According to this viewpoint, the expertise residing within a media organization is largely a function of the degree to which the powers in the newspaper’s community require this expertise for their own information-flow purposes. Larger, more “structurally pluralistic” communities have a greater number of decision-making segments, and a greater need by these segments for knowledge of other segments. Community size also correlates highly with degree of occupational differentiation and level of education, which in turn heightens readers’ expectations of level of expertise in media content. Community size also enables critical size for social organization and influence. An ethnic group, for example, can be in the minority in a large community, yet still have the necessary numbers to organize and make its presence felt (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1980).

Griswold (1999) adopts the community power structure perspective in a study of the development of newspaper reporter specialization and expertise. He speculates that reporter specialization may develop in response to pressures from specialized experts in a newspaper’s community. Such specialization makes work easier to accomplish for newsroom managers in several ways. By specializing reporters, editors shift the burden of dealing with daily demands from specialist sources to reporters. Specialization may also evolve because sources insist on dealing with particular reporters in whom they have invested training and time. Such “training” may consist of knowledge about the specialized field’s jargon and issues. Editors who have reporters trained in these areas are more likely to avoid critical feedback on the part of powerful specialized interests.

Scholars have analyzed various aspects of news work within the community power structure perspective. For example, community variables have been used as predictors of newspaper coverage slant. In one study a positive association between percent of city budget devoted to health care and degree to which newspaper coverage of Dr. Kevorkian was negative was found (Pollock and Coughlin, 1997). In a similar study, degree of education and political

awareness in newspapers' communities were found to be positively associated with coverage condemning China's bid for the 2000 Olympic Games. Percentage of Asian and foreign-born populations was also found to be positively associated with the degree to which condemned the bid (Pollock et al., 1998).

Degree to which newspaper communities are structurally pluralistic also has been found to be associated with variability in coverage. A community rates as more pluralistic if it comprises a higher number of potentially influential interest groups. In one study, degree of structural pluralism was found to be positively associated with the degree to which newspaper content was critical of community sources, thus supporting the proposition of Tichenor et al. (1980) that conflict is more normalized in such communities and that the media in these communities are more likely to express individual and controversial thought on community issues (Demers, 1998). Another study found that while structural pluralism was not related to the likelihood that newspaper editors would perceive ethnic-group leaders as powerful players in the community, percentage of community population that was ethnic was a significant predictor of these perceptions (Hindman, et al., 1999).

Factors shaping levels of expertise: Organizational factors

While the literature indicates that community factors are an important influence on media decision making and the development of expertise, the open-systems perspective of organizations does not suggest extra-organizational factors are all-determining. Studies of organizations have demonstrated that factors on the organizational level, such as the size, structure and resources of individual media organizations, also play a role in the development of expertise.

Organizational size has been found to be perhaps the most important predictor of variability in organizational decision-making and output (Hall, 1999; Perrow, 1986; Blau and Schoenherr, 1971). Of relevance to the present study is the effect of organizational size on degree of specialization of tasks in organizations. As organizations grow in size, the span of control under managers widens, and managers find they must shed responsibilities to subordinates in order to function effectively and maintain control. Also, organizational growth results in the growth of task and technological complexity, which facilitates the development of new areas of specialization, thus necessitating the development of expertise around these tasks (Hall, 1999; Perrow, 1986). Mass communication scholars have applied these principles to the study of newspaper work. Solomon (1995) argued that the appearance of managing editors in newsrooms in the 1850s signaled that the tasks of editors were being divided as newsrooms added more staffers. Russial (1998) maintained that as newspapers became bigger, they organized labor by subdividing jobs and developing special expertise in more narrowly defined areas. Becker et al. (2000) noted that organizational size appeared to be an important determinant of reporters' beat specialization.

It is also the case that larger organizations tend to have more resources for operation, thus enabling greater dispersion of resources to individual areas of specialization within organizations

(Hall, 1999). Finally, increased organizational size leads to greater vertical differentiation, which means managers must resort to bureaucratic, policy-oriented forms of control rather than direct forms of control. Studies have found that bureaucratic control is less constraining, and that under such conditions, lower-level managers are more free to exercise autonomy and expertise (Blau, 1968). Demers (1999) speculated that this was the case in larger, more hierarchically structured corporate-owned newspaper organizations.

Managerial decision-making may also impact task specialization in a more direct way. The human resources literature on organizations suggests that agency, through managerial decision-making, shapes organizational structure, rather than structure shaping agency (Perrow, 1986). Managers may assign an employee to a specialized task, not necessarily because the employee possesses superior expertise, but because the manager wants to reward the employee to improve morale and motivation. One such reward is vertical promotion, which involves a pay increase. Another method is to laterally transfer, or rotate, employees from one position to another in order to combat an employee's boredom or fatigue (Campion et al., 1994; Miller, Dhaliwal and Magas, 1973). Becker, Lowrey, Claussen and Anderson (2000), in a comparative study of beat assignments among three newspaper organizations, found little support for the proposition that specialized assignments were made for the purpose of rewarding employees. In fact the authors speculated that employees gained rewards by moving from smaller to larger papers, supporting research conducted on "craft" labor markets in which workers advance by moving among similar companies (Baron, Davis-Blake and Bielby, 1986). Becker et al. posited that this may be another reason to believe degree of expertise correlates with organizational size. Authors found some evidence, however, that beat assignments were made in order to accommodate workers' lifestyle needs rather than because of a match between employee expertise and the knowledge area of a beat.

Literature on news construction has emphasized the importance of routines to the ability of workers to accomplish work on a daily basis. In knowledge industries – such as the news industry – workers may develop complex routines for accomplishing organizationally mandated work that substitute for externally acquired "expert" knowledge. These organizationally derived conventions for knowledge have been found in various media industries, including news (Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980), book publishing (Powell, 1982), the music industry (Ryan and Peterson, 1982) and even the fine arts (Becker, 1980). The degree to which work knowledge is routinized in these studies is partly a function of the degree to which an organization devotes resources (time, staff, etc.) to work processes. Individual workers, faced with a combination of time constraints and uncertainty will search for templates for decision making, relying on them in times of crisis (Ettema, Whitney and Wackman, 1987). Much organizational decision making is based on the quest for the reduction of uncertainty for the organization and for individual workers (Pfeffer, 1981).

The literature on hiring is also relevant here, and both organizational and community size impact organizations' hiring methods. The literature indicates that larger organizations have more

resources than smaller organizations to devote to “formal” hiring methods, which include mass advertising, campus visitation and the use of placement agencies. Such searches are more likely to use concrete, rational criteria in assessing job candidates, including measurable achievement in school and in past jobs. Also, the larger the organization, the more likely its needs will run deeper than the talent pool of the local community, thus necessitating more large-scale, formal searches (Marsden, 1996).

Once a wide talent pool has been attained through formal hiring methods, informal methods and general assessment of “fit” with an organization’s culture or with idiosyncratic “hot-button” issues tend to take over in the final states of decision making (Coverdill and Finlay, 1998; Kanter, 1993). Consistent with the work-routines literature cited earlier, a candidate’s familiarity with tasks and routines peculiar to those required by the hiring organization is often judged to be more important than the candidate’s general expertise or command of an area of abstract knowledge (Bills, 1998; Kanter, 1993). Studies on the mass communication labor market reveal similar results, showing that internships with media organizations are more important to job-finding success than success in the classroom (Becker, Lauf and Lowrey, 1999; Becker et al., 1993). Research on white-collar hiring has found that “informal” methods of hiring can dominate the entire process, which include word of mouth among those with “weak ties,” of the sort forged at professional conferences or that exist among networks of acquaintances of a similar class or culture (Coverdill and Finlay, 1998; Granovetter, 1995; Kanter, 1993). Whether hiring is perceived as an informal or formal process has much to do with whether one sees organizational decision making as rational, utilitarian, and comprising episodic, unrelated events, or as based on social networks and to some degree, affect (Granovetter, 1995).

The study of international news coverage

Previous research of this study’s exemplar -- international news coverage -- has tended to look at influences on what McQuail (2000) calls the international level, and Dimmick and Coit (1982) call the “supra-national” level. Most of these studies focus on variability in amount of coverage rather than variability in staff expertise used in coverage. As content is a reflection of expertise, these studies provide insight into possible explanators for the present study. Research on international news coverage has looked primarily at questions of representation and equitable coverage – what news from what nations gets covered most and why. Many of these studies adopt the structural theory of foreign news laid out by Galtung and Ruge (1965) as a conceptual starting point. This theory posits that social, political and economic characteristics of the nations being covered are the major determinants of amount of coverage given to these nations – that international news judgment is not simply a reflection of an inherent newsworthiness in the events being covered.

Studies since have tested this theory with mixed results, and they have further specified predictors. In general, trade between nations being covered and nation of news origin, GNP of nation being covered, distance between nations, and population size of country being covered have proved important (e.g., Dupree, 1971; Rosengren, 1977; Kareil and Rosenvall, 1984). Wu (2000) found trade

between guest (nation being covered) and host country (nation of news origin) to be the strongest predictor of amount of coverage, followed by number of international news agencies stationed in host countries and the physical distance between host and guest countries. The study shows that factors strengthening the connection between host and guest countries – economic connections, technical connection and physical connection – are more important than characteristics of the guest countries themselves. Geographical and cultural distance has been found to be a significant predictor in many of these studies (e.g., Rosengren, 1977; Chang et al, 1987; Nnaemaeka and Richstad, 1980) The importance of geographical distance and availability of news agencies suggests availability of organizational resources may be a significant determinant.

Only a few researchers have looked at difference in international news coverage across news organizations in the same country. Johnson (1997), in an analysis of coverage of Mexico by U.S. papers, found that geographic proximity between the paper and Mexico mattered little, but that “cultural proximity,” as measured by percentage of a newspaper community’s population of Mexican heritage was an important predictor of amount of coverage devoted to Mexican issues. Size of the newspaper organization, however, rather than cultural proximity, was a stronger predictor of story length, or whether the story derived from staff writers or from the wire. Lacy, Chang and Lau (1989) found no relationship between the percentage of city population that was foreign born and whether a newspaper is located in a coastal state and percentage of news space given to foreign news coverage.

Organizational size has been looked at in other studies of international news coverage, most often in comparison with impact of corporate ownership. Akhavan-Majid and Boudreau (1995) found that organizational size was a significant predictor of whether editors saw their roles as “global interpreters” for readers, while size of the owning corporate chain mattered less. Hollifield (1999), however, found that circulation size – a measure of organizational size – was not a predictor of amount of coverage given to Canadian issues by papers in the United States. Whether a paper was owned by a Canadian-based corporation also did not predict amount of coverage of Canadian-based news, but it did impact the extent to which a single major Canadian issue – the Quebec independence vote – was covered, as well as the likelihood the paper would editorialize about this topic.

Research on “borrowed” international news, which is news disseminated by one news medium and picked up and cited in another without verification, is relevant to the search for predictors of international news expertise. A high use of borrowed news by a news organization would be an indicator of a lack of expertise in international news coverage. Riffe (1984) and Riffe, Aust, Gibson, Viall and Yi (1993) found evidence of shrinking international news hole in two major U.S. dailies, but contrary to expectations, found no evidence tying staffing resources to increased publishing of borrowed news. Not surprisingly, Riffe (1984) found a correlation between use of wired service news and publication of borrowed news from the major geopolitical regions.

Concepts and hypotheses

This study adopts a hierarchical model of media message production, similar to models suggested by McQuail (2000), Shoemaker and Reese (1992) and Dimmick and Coit (1982). This study assumes organizations are open systems, subject to environmental influences, but still constrained by factors intrinsic to the organization.

While hierarchical models establish levels of analysis, a mechanism is needed to link these levels and to thereby explain why community factors may or may not lead to the hiring of expertise in international news coverage. It is suggested here that the concept of organizational goals serves as such an explanation. According to scholars of the sociology of organizations, organizations can be said to have a philosophical commitment, or orientation, to certain goals. Hall (1991) discusses the way in which environmental influences shape goals:

Goals involve intents and outcomes and serve as constraints on decision making . . . The collectively determined, commonly based goal seldom remains constant over time. New considerations imposed from without or within deflect the organizations from its original goal, not only changing the activity of the organizations, but also becoming part of the goal structure. . . The goal of any organization is an abstraction distilled from the desires of members and pressures from the environment and internal system.

In newsrooms, such a goal may represent a commitment to a particular area of news coverage. This goal exists as an intermediate variable between community factors and hiring decisions. Community pressures come to bear on this goal, shaping decisions made about commitment of resources.

However, it is very difficult to measure goals directly. Official goals are “vague and abstract” (Perrow, 1961). For example, asking a top editor about commitment to international news coverage is not likely to result in a valid assessment of this concept. However, the *consequences* of this commitment to the goal – e.g., hiring expertise – may be measured. These consequences stem directly from what Perrow calls “operative goals.” Operative goals “designate the ends sought through the actual operating policies of the organization; they tell us what the organization actually is trying to do, regardless of what the official goals say are the aims (Perrow, 1961). Organizational commitment to a goal is, then, an unmeasured intent. It is a sort of background variable that explains the relationship between environmental influences and the hiring of expertise. Its consequences – what the organization actually does – *are* directly measured.

While the hiring of personnel with expertise is one of a number of measurable consequences of the degree to which a news organization is committed to content specialization, it is not the only one. The focus of this paper remains on the hiring of expertise, but other aspects of content specialization will be explored as well. These include other ways in which resources are devoted to international news coverage, such as: the existence of foreign correspondents, number of trips

abroad taken by local staff, number of wire services purchased and size of news hole devoted to international news coverage.

Organizational commitment is itself impacted by the orientation of the newspaper's community. As the literature on community structure indicates, editorial decision making about issues is influenced by the way a community's influential groups are structured in regard to those issues. Therefore the degree of international orientation in a community is likely to affect the degree to which newspaper managers commit available resources to the coverage of international news. Measures of international orientation include economic interests such as internationally oriented businesses, amount of tourist travel from other countries, percent of community population that is ethnic and the prevalence of ethnic organizations. A community may also have a more suitable infrastructure for foreign travel, as exemplified by, for example, the existence of an international airport. Conceptually then, the degree to which a community is internationally oriented is the degree to which the community's power structure is connected with social and economic structures that originate beyond the fifty states.

Where internationally-oriented groups are more abundant and prominent, they are likely to wield more influence. Influential, well-funded groups are more likely to play a role in building expertise in their interest areas within news organizations. As Griswold (1998) suggested, this is partly because editors whose reporters are trained in the knowledge areas of these interest groups are less likely to have to deal with daily criticism from these influential groups about coverage. In addition, with the increase of marketing-oriented approaches in newsrooms, editors increasingly have an eye on the demographic make-up of their communities. A high percentage of ethnic population signals a need to respond to perceived reader needs through higher levels of international expertise. Literature on international news flow also indicates that greater cultural proximity between editors and the nation being covered predicts more thorough international news coverage. A community's international orientation is an indicant of cultural proximity.

It is proposed then, that the extent to which a community's structure is internationally oriented impacts the degree to which an organization is committed to the goal of covering international news. The degree of international expertise in the staff hired is a consequence of this commitment.

Three factors affect the degree to which community orientation impacts organizational commitment. Two of these factors have to do with the availability of resources. One factor is the availability of resources on a local level. At a newspaper organization that has experienced recent profitability, resources should be more plentiful, and it is more likely that community orientation will influence commitment of resources. The second contributory factor is the availability of resources on a more remote level -- the corporate level. A newspaper that is one of many newspapers owned by a single corporation is more likely to receive resources for the coverage of international news because these corporations typically pool resources of the many papers. In contrast, a paper owned by a small corporation or an independently owned paper is less able to benefit from an economy of scale.

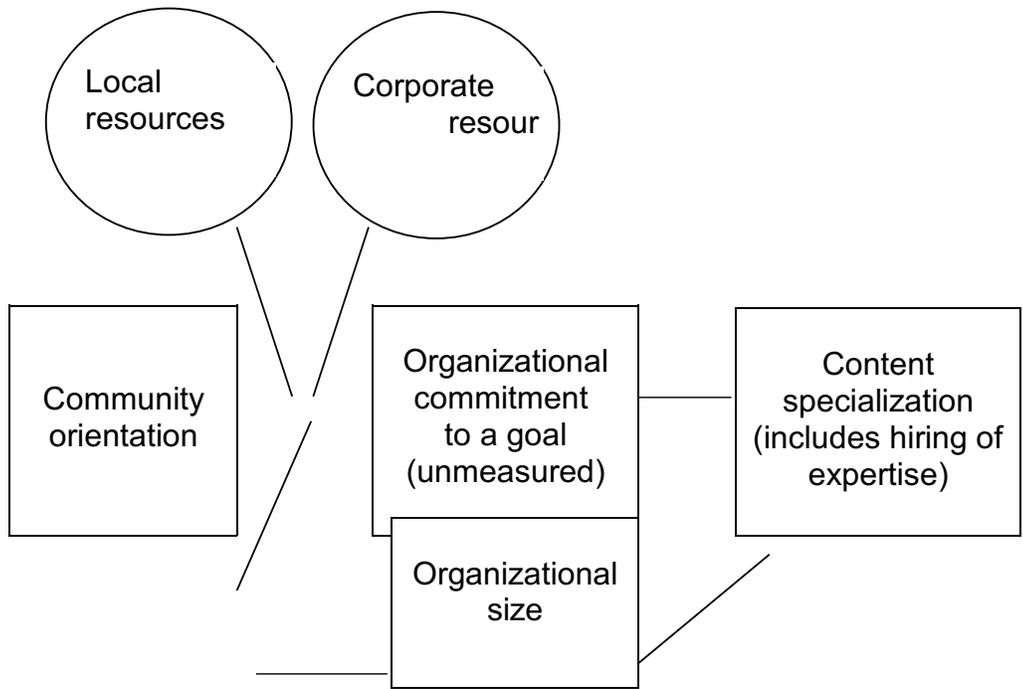
The third contributory factor is community size — the impact of community orientation should vary according to how large the community is. The larger the community, the more likely that interest groups such as ethnic populations will be able to reach the critical mass necessary to make their presence felt by newspaper organizations.

Finally, organizational size should be another predictor of the hiring of expertise. Growth in size necessitates that managers subdivide tasks so that they may maintain control over work processes. This subdivision leads to increased specialization, and as tasks become narrower in scope, it becomes more practical for expertise to form around these specializations. Large organizations are also more likely to use formal hiring methods, which means measures of abstract knowledge of international news will be more likely to be a factor in the decision making (e.g., school records, evidence of continuing education). Hiring based on informal familiarity or fit should be less prevalent in larger organizations. Even if contacts are made informally, through networks of “weak ties,” larger organizations should have more resources to devote to facilitating professional ties among those covering and editing international news. Well-connected organizations are more likely to receive information about job candidates with expertise.

The relationship of these factors is summed up Model 1. As mentioned previously, the concept of expertise is considered an organizational-level rather than an individual-level concept. Degree of expertise is conceptualized here not as a quality of an individual news worker, but as a consequence of organizational commitment to pursue these qualities when hiring. It is also presumed that an organization measuring high on expertise will have a greater ability to produce content that reflects this expertise.



Model 1: Predicting the hiring of expertise



The following hypotheses follow from this model.

H1: The more internationally oriented a newspaper's community, the greater the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

H2: The greater the local resources available to a newspaper organization, the stronger the relationship between international orientation of a newspaper community and the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

H3: The greater the corporate resources available to a newspaper organization, the stronger the relationship between international orientation of a newspaper community and the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

H4: The larger the newspaper's community, the stronger the relationship between international orientation of a newspaper community and the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

H5: The larger the newspaper organization, the higher the level of expertise of the person who handles international news at the newspaper.

Method and Results

Data were gathered through a national telephone survey of international news editors at large U.S. dailies, and data were also obtained from existing data sets. The survey sample consisted of 229 newspapers, representing a complete population of daily city papers¹ in the United States with average weekday circulation of over 50,000, according to a 1999 Editor and Publisher database. The telephone interviews began the first week of February 2000 and continued through the third week of April, encompassing 12 weeks. Each interview lasted approximately five to ten minutes. Five trained undergraduate research clerks and one graduate assistant assisted in the interviewing, which took place in the same research office, during daytime and evening hours. The survey was pretested on international editors at two papers, and some minor changes in the survey were made as a result. Because many papers did not have staff members designated solely for the purpose of editing

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international news, interviewers gathered data from the staff member most often responsible for editing foreign news on a daily basis. At smaller papers this person was often a wire editor or copy editor.

Ultimately, completed surveys were obtained from 223 of the 229 newspapers for a return rate of 97.4%. Four newspapers that had a national audience were excluded from the sample, as the concept of community impact was not relevant for these papers. It is reasonable to assume results from 100% of respondents would not differ significantly from results from 97.4% of respondents. The sample is therefore considered to be a census of the population.

Data from existing data sets also were used to measure variables. A 1999 *Editor & Publisher* database provided circulation figures, information on corporate ownership and community population data for the newspapers in the study. Community orientation was measured via a number of subindices. Information on ethnic population was gathered from Census data and information on ethnic organizations was taken from *Minority Organizations: A National Directory* 1998. Data on military bases were obtained from Army Times Publishing, a military information service owned by Gannett, and data on Fortune 500 companies in communities were obtained from the Fortune 500 Web site. Data on foreign travel were obtained from the Travel Industry Association of America (1997). Data on international flights were obtained from the U.S. Department of Transportation (1998).

The independent variable **Degree of International Orientation of the Community** was measured in six different ways. First, **Presence of Ethnic Organizations** was coded, at the state level, for each of the 223 newspapers. The use of state data is justifiable because many organizations do not have only a community organization. Many of these organizations actually exist only at the state level, though they may have a number of offices around the state. Organizations of three types were included: Hispanic, African American, and Asian American. The number of Hispanic organizations ranged from 0 to 237, with a mean of 64.8 and a median of 27. The number of African American organizations ranged from 0 to 160, with a mean of 42.8 and a median of 27. The number of Asian American organizations ranged from 0 to 301, with a mean of 45.3 and a median of 9. These measures were highly intercorrelated (Pearson correlation coefficients of .89, .85 and .73), so the items were summed into a single index, with a range of 0 to 656, a mean of 152.9 and a median of 76.

Three measures of **Population Diversity** of the community were used: percent of the population that was Hispanic, African American and Asian American. The data used were by metropolitan area, where such data exist. That is to say, if a newspaper was located in what the Census Bureau defined as a Metropolitan Area, the data for that metropolitan area were used. If the newspaper was not part of a Census Bureau Metropolitan Area, county data were used. In those cases where the *Editor & Publisher Yearbook* for 1999 listed more than one county for a newspaper, the data for the listed counties were combined.

The percentages for Hispanic population ranged from 0.4% to 69.6%, with a mean of 7.9 and a median of 3.7%. The percentage for African American ranged from 0.3% to 53.2%, with a mean of 12.2% and a median of 9.0%. The percentages for Asian American ranged from 0.4% to 63.0%, with a mean of 3.4% and a median of 1.8%. To create a measure of **Population Diversity**, these three measures were summed. This procedure double weights African American community residents who were also Hispanic. The range for this new community diversity variable was from 1.9% to 74.4%, with a mean of 23.5% and a median of 20.0%.

Number of International Corporations was measured by using the Fortune 500 list of corporations, on the assumption that major corporations have significant international activity or competition. These data are by newspaper city and surrounding areas. The range of number of international corporations was from 0 to 51, with a mean of 6.5 and a median of 1.

Presence of Military Bases was measured by counting the number of military bases. The data are by newspaper city and surrounding areas. The range of number of bases was from 0 to 18, with a mean of 1.2 and a median of 0.

Foreign Visitor Expenditure for travel was measured by amount spent in dollars in 1997 by foreign visitors, in thousands of U.S. dollars. The data are by state. The range of expenditures was from \$32,400 to \$16,573,800, with a mean of \$3,780,558 and a median of \$835,900. The justification for using the data by state is that states largely promote and benefit from tourism as a state. For example, any newspaper in Florida would be expected to be sensitive to the fact that Florida is the top state in the country in terms of expenditures by foreign travelers.

International Air Travel was measured by counting the number of flights to a foreign destination to and from the city in which the newspaper was located. Communities with more than one airport flying internationally, such as metropolitan New York, were given credit for all airports in that community. The data are by community. The range of outbound flights was 0 to 46,376, with a mean of 2,872.6 and a median of 2. The range of inbound flights was 0 to 64,374, with a mean of 3,540.5 and a median of 2. These two measures were summed to create a single index with a range of 0 to 98,798, a mean of 6,413.1 and a median of 5.

The independent variable **Organizational Size** in hypothesis five was measured by circulation figures, and **Community Size** in hypothesis four was measured by population figures. Amount of **Corporate Resources** used in hypothesis three was measured by the number of papers owned by each corporation. It is assumed that corporations with more extensive holdings have more flexibility to shift resources from one paper to another. So, for example, Gannett papers would score higher on this variable than Scripps Howard papers. Amount of **Local Resources** in hypothesis two was measured by readership penetration figures for each newspaper, under the assumption that high readership figures are an indication of financial robustness of organizations. These figures, collected from Audit Bureau of Circulation reports, were recorded for each paper for the years 1994 and 1998 and averaged.

The dependent variable **Organizational Commitment** to the Goal of International Coverage is not measured directly. Rather, the survey instrument contained a number of measures of the consequences of organizational commitment. These are termed **Content Specialization**, and two types of specialization were measured. One group of measures focuses on general strategies for gathering international news. These include: the number of wire services used, the space devoted to international news, the number of foreign correspondents, the amount of foreign travel by reporters and photographers, the frequency with which the newspaper uses locally generated news analyses pieces on international topics, and the percent of international news taken from the wire services. The second group of variables focuses specifically on the characteristics and assignments of the international news editor. These include: the amount of influence the international editor had on the selection of wire services, the duties of the international editor beyond international news itself (measured in two ways), special post-graduate training for the international editor, the years of experiences of the international editor in handling international news, the level of formal education of the international editor, and the formal, university training of the international editor in international affairs.

The amount of influence of the international editor on selection of wire services was measured via self-report. The international editors were asked if they had additional duties beyond handling the international news. They also were asked their job title. The former was one measure of specialization; job title was classified to create a second, with those with only an international assignment scored higher. The editor was asked if she or he had had any special training (other than in formal university studies) before taking over the international news assignment. Years handling international news was measured by self-report, as was years of formal education. The majors and minors of the respondents who attended university were classified. An individual with either a major or minor (at the undergraduate or graduate level) in international affairs or something else with an international focus was scored the highest, followed by those with foreign language majors or minors, followed by those with political science majors or minors, followed by all others.

H1: The more internationally oriented a newspaper's community, the greater the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

The first hypothesis predicted a relationship between community orientation and the organizational commitment of the newspaper as represented by its content specialization. Table 1 presents zero-order correlations that speak to this expectation. In general, the presence of ethnic organizations in a community is a predictor of organizational content specialization, while population diversity is not. The number of international corporations and the presence of military bases are also predictors. Foreign travel expenditures are somewhat inconsistently correlated with the criterion variables, while amount of international air travel from the community is related rather consistently to the content specialization as hypothesized.

In general, this patterns holds in Table 2 as well, which shows the bivariate correlations between the community variables and personnel policies related to the coverage of international

news. In general, however, better predicted is the specialization of the international editor (as represented by the two measures of duties), and the amount of specialized, post-graduate training in international affairs. Rather unrelated to any of the predictors is the amount of formal training in international expertise and the amount of time actually spent covering international news.

H2: The greater the local resources available to a newspaper organization, the stronger the relationship between international orientation of a newspaper community and the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

Tables 3 and 4 look at the impact of the control for local organizational resources on the relationship between community variables and the three personnel measures of organizational content specialization that were most consistently related to predictor variables in Table 2. Newspaper penetration levels are used to measure local organizational resources. The results are rather inconclusive. The number of military bases clearly is a better predictor in the case where local organizational resources are above the median (used in this and subsequent tables to partition the sample). The number of international corporations appears to be somewhat better here as well. Otherwise, however, it is difficult to make a case for this hypothesis. In fact, the amount of international travel is a better predictor when local resources are weak than when they are not.

H3: The greater the corporate resources available to a newspaper organization, the stronger the relationship between international orientation of a newspaper community and the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

Data relevant to this hypothesis are shown in Tables 5 and 6. Size of the newspaper group was used as the measure of corporate resources; the sample was divided at the median. Again, there is little consistent evidence to support this hypothesis.

H4: The larger the newspaper's community, the stronger the relationship between international orientation of a newspaper community and the level of content specialization by the newspaper.

Community size is used as a control in Tables 7 and 8 to test this hypothesis. Where a newspaper was in a metropolitan area, the size of the metropolitan area was used as the measure of community size. Where it was not, county size was used as the measure. The median was used to partition the sample to test the hypothesis. Rather consistently, the predicted relationships between community factors and organizational commitment as indicated by personnel decisions is greater in large communities than in small ones. The data support the predicted impact of community size on the initial relationship.

H5: The larger the newspaper organization, the higher the level of expertise of the person who handles international news at the newspaper.

As predicted, organizational size is correlated with each of the three criterion variables shown in Tables 3 through 8 to measure organizational content specialization. The bivariate relationship between size and the first measure of duties beyond international news is .493, while it is .619 for the second measure. The relationship between size and specialized training in international affairs was .290, as shown in Table 9.

With a correlation of .578, it is clear that community size is highly related to organizational size. The importance of community size is underscored by a regression analysis in which specialized training in international affairs was the dependent variable and the community characteristics shown in each of the tables and community size were the predictor variables. If the community characteristics shown in the tables are entered as the first block in the analysis, the adjusted R Square for the equation is .10. Entering community size does not change the coefficient. In other words, the other community characteristics include the variance accounted for by community size. If community size is introduced first in the equation, the adjusted R Square is .05. Entering the other variables into the equation brings the adjusted R Square to .10. Community size is not the sole contributor to the explanation of content specialization represented by the training specialization.

Conclusions

It is clear that size – both organizational and community size – are highly related to the impact community factors have on organizational-level and personnel-level content specialization. Almost all the predictors of personnel expertise are stronger in larger communities than in smaller communities. This finding could be interpreted as support for the idea that local groups (ethnic organizations, international corporations, military institutions, and tourist-industry institutions) reach a critical mass in larger communities and therefore make their influence felt more strongly in larger communities. Education levels and degree of occupational differentiation also tends to be higher in larger communities, thus suggesting that editors would hire expertise in international news in order to satisfy their readers. However, the strong correlation between community size and organizational size suggests another possibility. It may be that the relationship between factors of international orientation and level of personnel expertise is due to the fact that larger organizations tend to reside in larger communities, and organizational size is a strong predictor of degree of specialization. This interpretation is consistent with findings by Johnson (1997) and . Akhavan-Majid and Boudreau (1995) that organizational size had a significant impact on international news coverage.

The regression results suggest that size is not the sole explainer. The differential impact of amount of resources (Tables 3-6) on the relationship between community factors and personnel expertise also offers a rival explanation. In general, resource availability strengthens the relationship between “institutional” predictors and level of personnel expertise more than it does the relationship between “non-institutional” predictors and level of personnel expertise. The presence of international corporations and military bases are institutional predictors because they represent organizations that can use considerable resources to influence decision makers at newspapers. Managers at these organizations also possess agency. Non-institutional predictors in this study include population diversity, travel expenditures and number of flights. These influences are measures of a community’s international orientation, but these influences do not obviously represent active organizations. It seems then that newspaper organizations are more likely to activate their resources in response to pressures from active community organizations. They are less likely to respond to some vague

impression that their community is internationally oriented, no matter what the level of available resources possessed by the newspaper. This finding lends support to the community structure perspective of Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien – newspaper decision making reflects the leanings of the power structure in its community.

It also seems that the presence of international corporations has more effect when corporate-level resources are high, while military bases have more effect when local resources are available. This may reflect the greater likelihood that influence from international corporations is felt at the corporate level in the newspaper organization. The anomaly to these findings is the fact that availability of resources does not strengthen the relationship between presence of ethnic organizations and level of personnel expertise. This may mean ethnic organizations have little influence relative to large corporations and military bases. It may also be due to the fact that data on ethnic organizations was gathered at the state level rather than at the community level, thus perhaps watering down its influence relative to corporations and military bases, for which data was collected at the community level.

One unexpected finding was the difference between the effect of community variables on the degree to which news organizations hired expertise and the effect of community variables on the degree to which personnel gained expertise after hiring. This finding suggests that if managers in news organizations feel they need to increase personnel expertise, they believe expertise can be grown within the organization. There is much less regard given to expertise gained in educational institutions before hiring. This finding is consistent with the hiring literature that suggests hiring institutions are much more likely to emphasize firm-specific knowledge than more general types of knowledge, such as knowledge gained in school.

Finally, as noted above, population diversity was not a predictor of content specialization, either on an organizational level or personnel level. This finding was consistent with findings by Lacy et al. (1989) that ethnic composition of community population had little impact on international news coverage. It however contradicts Johnson's (1997) finding that percentage of population that was Mexican did impact coverage of international news. Johnson's finding points to the possibility that the impact of individual ethnic groups may be noticeable, while a combined measure of different groups may not be. Because population diversity in this study was created as an index of different types of ethnic populations, the differences in impact by certain types of ethnic populations may be masked. Perhaps for example, Asian-American populations have a stronger influence than Hispanic populations, or vice versa. A differential analysis of the influence of these groups is worth further study.

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Table 1. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and the level of Content Specialization at Newspapers

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Number of Wire Services	223	.131	223	.090	223	.069	223	.127	223	.111	223	.082
Space Devoted to International News	223	.205	223	.058	223	.141	223	.050	223	.216	223	.115
Number of Foreign Correspondents	223	.265	223	.079	223	.63	223	.123	223	.162	223	.560
Foreign Travel by Reporters & Photographers	223	.002	223	.070	223	.115	223	.175	223	.054	223	.178
Frequency of International News Analysis Pieces Written	223	.161	223	.038	223	.320	223	.205	223	.081	223	.400
Percent of International News from Wire Services	223	.229	223	.102	223	.406	223	.203	223	.116	223	.535

Table 2. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and Hiring Expertise at Newspapers

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	R	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Editor's Influence on Wire Services	223	-.065	223	-.053	223	-.043	223	.131	223	-.044	223	.039
Duties beyond International News (1)	223	.255	223	.122	223	.318	223	.243	223	.106	223	.295
Duties beyond International News (2)	223	.208	223	.081	223	.311	223	.234	223	.075	223	.368
Special Training in International Affairs	223	.149	223	-.013	223	.236	223	.185	223	.100	223	.222
Years Editing International News	223	.072	223	-.093	223	-.013	223	-.067	223	-.032	223	.011
Level of Education	223	.008	223	.079	223	.066	223	.067	223	.017	223	.079
Formal Training in International Affairs	223	.077	223	.007	223	.079	223	.035	223	-.036	223	.074

Table 3. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and Hiring Expertise at Newspapers, with Average Penetration Figures as control Variable (Penetration Average = Low)

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Duties beyond International News	109	.271	109	.082	109	.243	109	.099	109	.154	109	.338
Duties beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization	109	.174	109	.047	109	.223	109	.068	109	.063	109	.393
Special Training in International Affairs	109	.283	109	.047	109	.304	109	.109	109	.142	109	.341

Table 4. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and Hiring Expertise at Newspapers, with Average Penetration Figures as control Variable (Penetration Average = High)

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Duties beyond International News	110	.196	110	.046	110	.420	110	.569	110	.045	110	.215
Duties beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization	110	.235	110	.037	110	.542	110	.658	110	.083	110	.282
Special Training in International Affairs	110	-.015	110	-.080	110	.267	110	.337	110	.065	110	.078

Table 5. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and Hiring Expertise at Newspapers, with Corporate Ownership of News Organization as control Variable (Corporate Ownership =Low)

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Duties beyond International News	118	.283	118	.269	118	.237	118	.296	118	.130	118	.166
Duties beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization	118	.271	118	.210	118	.228	118	.303	118	.133	118	.212
Special Training in International Affairs	118	.186	118	-.054	118	.248	118	.201	118	.117	118	.282

Table 6. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and Hiring Expertise at Newspapers, with Corporate Ownership of News Organization as Control Variable (Corporate Ownership = High)

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Duties beyond International News	105	.225	105	-.008	105	.409	105	.193	105	.080	105	.501
Duties beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization	105	.131	105	-.037	105	.407	105	.104	105	.013	105	.628
Special Training in International Affairs	105	.102	105	.035	105	.219	105	.171	105	.085	105	.124

Table 7. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and Hiring Expertise at Newspapers, with Community Size as Control Variable (Size is below 741,889)

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Duties beyond International News	111	-.083	111	-.004	111	-.034	111	.059	111	-.078	111	-.017
Duties beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization	111	-.061	111	.005	111	.000	111	.017	111	-.051	111	-.010
Special Training in International Affairs	111	-.099	111	-.179	111	.007	111	.011	111	.068	111	-.045

Table 8. Correlations Between Community Level Forces and Hiring Expertise at Newspapers, with Community Size as Control Variable (Size = 741,889 and Above)

	Presence of Ethnic Organizations		Population Diversity		Number of International Corporations		Presence of Military Bases		Foreign Travel Expenditure		International Air Travel	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Duties beyond International News	112	.263	112	.118	112	.282	112	.238	112	.117	112	.252
Duties beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization	112	.173	112	.041	112	.246	112	.223	112	.044	112	.316
Special Training in International Affairs	112	.246	112	.094	112	.305	112	.255	112	.097	112	.276

Table 9. Correlations Between Organizational Size and Hiring Expertise

	Duties Beyond International News		Duties Beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization		Special Training in International Affairs		Total Circulation Figures	
	N	r	N	r	N	r	N	r
Duties beyond International News	223	1.0	223	.752	223	.277	223	.493
Duties beyond International News Editing Based on Title in Organization	223	.752	223	1.0	223	.330	223	.619
Special Training in International Affairs	223	.277	223	.330	223	1.0	223	.290
T o t a l Circulation Figures	223	.493	223	.619	223	.290	223	1.0