

THE EFFECTS OF COMPETITION ON THE BELOIT DAILY CALL
AND A COMPARISON WITH ITS COMPETITOR, THE SOLOMON VALLEY POST

by

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I. INTRODUCTION

Whether competition has an effect on the quality of newspapers a community receives has been debated in this country for several decades, particularly in the late 1960s. This was the time of Congressional testimony supporting and condemning the then-pending Failing Newspaper Act.

The question of whether competition has a positive effect on newspaper quality or a negative effect was unanswered at that time, as it is today, although Congress, in 1970, did pass the act under a different name, the Newspaper Preservation Act. However, the trend of one-newspaper cities and communities continues.

This study adds to the body of research already accumulated which seeks to describe the effects of newspaper competition, useful in supporting or refuting positions taken regarding this trend.

The study also will be useful as an example for the group or person wishing to start a newspaper in a city or community in which an established newspaper already is being published.

It is a familiar complaint in many cities in Kansas that the local newspaper, daily or weekly, is not serving the needs of the community. Business leaders in many communities have expressed desires to support weekly papers which would offer alternatives to the established newspapers. Beloit is one of the few communities in which someone actually carried out that wish.

This review of the Beloit situation should be of benefit to those considering challenging the established newspaper in any community.

This study asks two basic questions:

— What changes have occurred in the content of the Beloit Daily Call since the establishment of a weekly competitor?

— Are there notable differences between the content of the Beloit Daily Call and its competitor, The Solomon Valley Post?

More specifically, this research looks at this competitive situation with respect to advertising lineage and percentage, the locality of nonpaid content, the amount of country correspondent content, duplication of information between the two newspapers, controversiality of content, a classification of nonpaid content by type, and sensationalism of content.

The approach of this study is exploratory. No hypotheses have been stated. Research methods employed are quantitative and qualitative content analyses and interview.

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

The present study is part of one specific area of mass communication research which seeks to describe any correlation which might be found between newspaper competition and newspaper content. Primary research methodology in this area has been qualitative and quantitative content analyses. From 1945 through 1974, eight studies were found in this area utilizing these content analysis methods. To determine if any hypotheses could be stated, and to see if any specific methods of content analysis from past research could be adopted in the present study, these eight past studies were reviewed.

Nafziger and Barnhart

In this, the earliest study of newspaper competition found, Ralph O. Nafziger and Thomas F. Barnhart,¹ then both of the University of Minnesota, concluded that two newspapers were not necessarily better than one. While the authors, in 1945, were making an extensive study of presentation by the Red Wing, Minn., Republican-Eagle of news of World War II, they also traced the days of competition between the Republican and Eagle before they merged in 1940.

They found that while in the early 1900s the two papers had taken widely divergent stands, by the mid-1930s, there became little reason for the existence of two newspapers. The news policies of the two newspapers became nearly identical. Local events recorded by the two newspapers were many times identical; both newspapers emphasized national wire copy on their front pages; both had their shares of country correspondents.

¹Ralph O. Nafziger and Thomas F. Barnhart, "Red Wing and Its Daily Newspapers," No. 9 in the Community Basis for Postwar Planning (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, May 1946), cited by Barrie Hartman, "The effects of competition and the decline of competition on the contents of a daily newspaper," unpublished master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1965, pp. 11-12.

Thus, in the final years of competition between the Republican and Eagle, the authors found competition did not allow readers of the papers to be exposed to diverse views.

Bigman

In 1946 and 1947 Stanley K. Bigman,¹ then of Rutgers University, conducted qualitative and quantitative content analyses on two newspapers in Pottsville, Pa., the Republican, with a circulation of 18,000, and the Journal, with a circulation of 10,000. In answer to the question "What do competing newspapers look like?" he discovered, in this situation, the two newspapers studied looked very much the same.

Bigman conducted a qualitative analysis of the two papers over a six-week period, paying close attention to editorial voice and news about potentially controversial subjects, such as politics, labor, business and industry, and minority groups. The quantitative segment of this research involved only one week of publication for both papers.

While not reporting specifics of the research in Journalism Quarterly, Bigman wrote:

The findings of the quantitative analysis embodied in numerous tables and charts are monotonous in their sameness.²

Qualitatively, he also found a sameness in the newspapers. Meeting stories of the local boroughs and city councils read like minutes of the meetings — the same in both newspapers, he wrote. He found both newspapers ran press releases

¹Stanley K. Bigman, "Rivals in Conformity: A Study of Two Competing Dailies," Journalism Quarterly, 25 (June 1948): 127-31.

² Ibid., p. 128.

verbatim — even to the point of each running the same error in the original release. Sometimes news stories were verbatim twins with only the lead paragraph rewritten.

There were some editorial comment differences between the two newspapers, but according to Bigman only about secondary issues. Issues of real controversy were not touched. In the six-week sample period, of the 68 editorials in the Republican 11 were about local issues; for the Journal two were of local content out of 78.

Bigman's conclusion:

If Pottsville is any criterion, it is hard to see why life would be more lopsided with one newspaper than with two.¹

Willoughby

Wesley F. Willoughby² hypothesized in 1954 that not only would he find no essential differences between two competing newspapers in Washington, Ind., but also that two newspapers are no better than one. He believed he proved both.

The two newspapers studied here, the Herald and Democrat, were both afternoon dailies and had nearly equal circulations. Washington, according to Willoughby, in 1954 was one of only 10 cities of 10,001 to 25,000 population left in the United States with competing daily newspapers.

Using qualitative and quantitative content analyses, Willoughby reported in Journalism Quarterly primarily the amount of duplication in the two papers.

Finding that 98 per cent of display advertisers advertised in both papers, he also determined that at any one time nearly one-half of the ads in either paper were duplications of ads in the other.

¹Ibid., p. 131.

² Wesley F. Willoughby, "Are Two Competing Dailies Necessarily Better Than One," Journalism Quarterly, 32 (Spring 1955): 197-204.

Willoughby broke nonadvertising copy down into 13 categories and found that nearly 25 per cent of this was duplicated in each paper, and if editorials, editorial columns, non-news features and pictures were removed, one-half of the remaining content was duplicated.

Qualitatively analyzing opinion copy, he found the Democrat ran 55 editorials during a three-week period and the Herald ran only three. However, of the Democrat's 55, Willoughby indicates all but four were "canned." Of these editorials, he wrote, they almost never took stands on controversial issues.

Only once did the editorial views of the two newspapers ever conflict.

Neither did Willoughby believe readers of these papers were exposed to opinions on issues through columns or letters. Columns carried by both papers were primarily "interpretive news dispatches." Neither paper carried opinionated columnists.

Of the 30 letters published by the two papers during the three-week sample, he wrote, all but two were apolitical, 19 dealing with a local stray-dog problem. Six letters were duplicated. Willoughby added, both editors said they did not print all letters and that they threw away those they considered "too radical."

Looking at correspondent columns, Willoughby found that one-half of the Herald's 45 correspondent columns were duplicated in the Democrat; 64 per cent of the Democrat's 28 were duplicated in the Herald. The publishers indicated, he added, that the correspondents for the most part were the same for the two papers.

Willoughby concluded:

There seemed to be no essential differences between the two, and during the period covered, two competitive daily newspapers did not appear to be necessarily better than one.¹

¹Ibid., p. 204.

He further asked the publishers if they believed two newspapers were better than one. He reported one believed "one paper is all that is needed to serve Washington; one could do a better job than two." The competitor dissented: "Competition is good, for it keeps the politicians in line, although it is not so good from the advertisers' viewpoint." ¹

Borstel

With a sample of 20 newspapers in cities of under 25,000, Gerald H. Borstel² reported on a Columbia University study to find if differences of ownership and competitive status relate to differences in editorial comment in small-city daily newspapers. Borstel found some minor differences were present, but concluded that "no consistent differences in the comment were found which follow along the lines of ownership or competitive status." ³

Of the 20 papers sampled, six were noncompeting, absentee-owned chain papers; six were noncompeting home-owned papers; eight papers in four cities were competing papers, not members of chains. The sample was taken for a six-week period.

These were the only differences found:

— Letters appeared least frequently in the competing group. This was of some interest, Borstel wrote, since the other papers were all noncompeting papers and thus open to the charge that they represented only one point of view in their columns.

— In competing situations, one paper always had a relatively high proportion of local comment, Borstel found. Thus, each of these four cities had a vehicle for local opinion. He found, however, that not all noncompeting papers had this vehicle.

¹Ibid., p. 204.

²Gerard H. Borstel, "Ownership, Competition and Comment in 20 Small Dailies," Journalism Quarterly, 33 (Spring 1956): 220-2.

³Ibid., p. 221.

Nixon and Jones

The authors of this study, Raymond B. Nixon and Robert L. Jones,¹ reflecting on previous research cited here, hypothesized in 1955 that there would be little difference in daily newspaper content which appears to be related to local newspaper competition. Their research generally supported this hypothesis.

The study was the final stage of a three-part "Continuing Study of Newspaper Reading." While the first stage of this continuing study has little relevance here, the second indicated noncompetitive papers studied stood generally higher in the esteem of local readers than competitive papers studied.

The third stage of this research began by using 97 (53 competitive dailies and 44 noncompetitive dailies) of the newspapers used in the first two stages of this research. From these newspapers, another systematic sample of 13 matched pairs of competing and noncompeting dailies was drawn.

Nonadvertising content of samples of these papers was coded in 17 categories. In addition to these categories, nonadvertising inches in pictures, editorials and letters to the editor were coded. Pictures were further broken down into human-interest pictures, and editorials were coded as to whether the subject was local. The advertising-to-nonadvertising ratio also was computed.

Although some slight differences did emerge, Nixon and Jones concluded that the differences were not large enough to disprove their null hypothesis.

Nixon and Jones wrote:

While this study reveals no definite evidence that noncompetitive dailies differ from competitive dailies in the kinds of subject matter printed, neither does it support the contention of single-ownership advocates that these papers as a class have been taking advantage of their more favorable economic position to improve their news, editorial and feature content.²

¹Raymond B. Nixon and Robert L. Jones, "The Content of Noncompetitive vs. Competitive Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, 33 (Summer 1956): 299-314.

²Ibid., p. 312.

Rarick and Hartman

In research at the University of Oregon for his master's thesis in 1963, Barrie Hartman¹ sought to clear up the following problems he found apparent in earlier research that sought to describe a relationship between newspaper competition and content:

Some studies of this sort have been made, but so far as can be determined by an extensive examination of the literature, they have always involved either examining the performance of the competitive dailies without comparison with noncompetitive dailies or the comparison of competitive dailies in one set of cities with noncompetitive dailies in another set of cities.

We reasoned that it would be better to compare the contents and performance of a given newspaper when it was in a highly competitive situation with the contents and performance of the same paper when it was noncompetitive. Furthermore, the ideal situation would be one in which the chief executives of the paper were the same for both periods.²

The Tri-City Herald filled all of these requirements. The paper, which started daily publication November 13, 1947, served the cities of Kennewick, Pasco and Richland, Wash. It gained a competitor on March 14, 1950, when the Columbia Basin News appeared.

Although this was as far in Journalism Quarterly as Rarick and Hartman took the reader into the background of this competition, in his master's thesis, Hartman added much more detail.

The Tri-City Herald evolved from the weekly Pasco Herald. At first, the paper was printed in Pasco, but in 1948, when a larger building was available in Kennewick, the newspaper's offices were moved out of Pasco. Residents had not yet been sold on their area being a "Tri-City" area. Area weeklies did everything possible to undermine the efforts of the Herald to project the Tri-City image.

¹Barrie Hartman, "The effects of competition and the decline of competition on the contents of a daily newspaper," unpublished master's thesis, University of Oregon, 1965.

²Galen Rarick and Barrie Hartman, "The Effects of Competition on One Daily Newspaper's Content," Journalism Quarterly, 43 (Autumn 1966): 459.

The bitterest opposition came from the Pasco News, a semiweekly publication started by angry Pasco merchants when the Herald moved its printing plant to Kennewick . . . Such tirades reached their greatest severity when in 1950 the Pasco News compared Lee's (Herald Publisher Glenn C. Lee) brain with that of a lower animal.¹

The evolution of the daily Columbia Basin News from the Pasco News took place only 11 days after the Herald was struck by the International Typographical Union. The News became ITU-owned.

The ITU bankrolled the paper until 1962, when it withdrew its financial subsidy from the News. Records show the ITU had lost \$3 million in the Tri-Cities during the period. During this time, too, a judgment was rendered in the News' favor in an antitrust case leveled by the Herald against the News. Such was a period of far-greater-than-normal competitive strength.

In this study two hypotheses were made:

— A daily newspaper will devote a larger proportion of its nonadvertising space to local content under conditions of intense competition than it will when it has no competition or when it clearly has the dominant competitive position.

— A daily newspaper will devote a larger proportion of its news and feature space to sensational and human interest content under conditions of intense competition than it will when it has no competition or when it clearly has the dominant competitive position.

Data collected in this study supported both hypotheses.

Samples were drawn from each of three nine-month periods: The first period began a year after the Herald had begun daily publication, but before it had daily competition. The second period was in 1953-54 when the two papers had similar circulations. The third period was in 1962-63, a time during which the News declined to the point of its death. During each month of each sample

¹Hartman, unpublished master's thesis, p. 33.

period, issues of the Herald, and the News where applicable, were selected to code in one-week blocks according to a rotating system.

Each item was measured and classified according to its locality (local, state, national, international) and content (crime-vice, politics, human interest, etc.). Sports news, women's news, special sections, comics and advertising were not examined. No content breakdown was made of international news. Computations also were made to show what proportion of space was devoted to news and features, pictures, editorials, local columns of opinion, syndicated columns of opinion and editorial cartoons. For each item, it also was determined whether the item was duplicated in the competing newspaper. Duplication was defined as reporting the same facts even if in different language.

A greater proportion of the editorial hole was used for local content during the period of intense competition than during either the period of no competition or the period of declining competition. In 1953-54 the Herald used 50.6 per cent of its available space for local content. In 1948-49 the Herald used only 40.8 per cent local content, and in 1962-63 the statistic was 43.4 per cent.

When broken down further, this finding proved true for news and features, pictures and columns of opinion.

That the proportion of space devoted to local editorials steadily decreased over the three periods had little relevance, Rarick and Hartman wrote, because the absolute amount of space devoted to editorials increased steadily throughout the three periods. In 1948-49 only 639 column inches of editorials were found; in 1953-54, 1,082; and in 1962-63, 2,088. Over these periods, the percentage of local editorials steadily decreased from 72.07 per cent to 56.61 per cent to 25.10 per cent. However, absolute space devoted to local editorials was greatest in 1953-54, with 612.5 inches, compared with 460.5 in 1948-49 and 524 in 1962-63.

Also, immediate reward news was given greatest emphasis during the period of intense competition. By defining three subjects (crime-vice, accidents-

disasters and features-human interest) as immediate reward news, it was found the Herald put immediate reward news in 29.7 per cent of its news and feature space in 1953-54, compared with 21.6 per cent in 1948-49 and 22.3 per cent in 1962-63. This finding was consistent for each locality of news analyzed.

The most interesting comparison of the Herald with the News was in the area of content duplication. Here, Hartman pointed out that even where duplication existed, stories were far from verbatim twins. Even handouts were rewritten and given a different angle, he explained. For each paper, total duplication measured near 50 per cent. In the category of local news only, 55.26 per cent of the local news appearing in the Herald was duplicated in the News. For the News this statistic was 56.16 per cent. In other locality categories this statistic ranged from 36.7 per cent of state news appearing in the Herald duplicated in the News to 64.61 per cent of international news appearing in the News duplicated in the Herald. Hartman found this amount of duplication lighter than he expected. Figuring duplication of local news in another way, the two papers combined ran a total of 21,500 inches of local news during the 1953-54 sample. Of this only 39 per cent was published twice.

While these findings were different than earlier studies, Hartman and Rarick believed this not surprising, considering that in previous studies the problem was examined in a static context, while this situation was examined over a 15-year period.

Also, they pointed out that while other studies made comparisons of different newspapers in different cities under different managements, in this study it was the same newspaper in the same city under the same management that was studied. Finally, while previous studies did not consider degree of competition, this study did.¹

¹It seems Rarick and Hartman are overlooking the incredible tension involved in this situation that was not present in earlier studies. That tension may account for the inconsistency of these results with earlier ones.

Still, they caution against generalizing these findings from this study of the Tri-City Herald to newspapers of all sizes in all parts of the country.

Weaver, Mullins and McCoombs

The authors, David H. Weaver, L. E. Mullins and Maxwell E. McCoombs,¹ conducting this study sponsored by the American Newspaper Publishers Association Research Center, were trying to determine if daily newspaper content and format were correlated with success (defined as higher circulation) in a competitive situation. More specifically, they undertook the study to see if there were systematic content and format differences between the leading and trailing newspapers in competitive newspaper situations. Again, in this study few significant differences were found.

Their original sample included 66 competing daily newspapers in 31 cities which in 1973 were separately owned from their competitors, were not part of a joint operation and in which no newspaper had as much as twice the circulation of its competitor. The sample was further reduced to only 46 newspapers in 23 cities because of difficulty in acquiring some publications.

To determine which issues of the newspapers would be selected, the sample year (July 1, 1972, to June 30, 1973) was divided into quarters to control for seasonal differences. Then one week was randomly selected out of each quarter, and each city, in alphabetical order, was assigned a week on a rotating basis. This was done to ensure even distribution across the sample weeks, and assignments were made by city instead of by newspaper, so comparisons of content could be made while controlling for the news of the day. Samples were analyzed for front-page format and 23 categories of editorial content.

Overall, in only one category out of 23 was a statistically significant difference found between trailing and leading newspapers. That was news about

¹David H. Weaver, L. E. Mullins and Maxwell E. McCoombs, "Competing Daily Newspapers: A Comparison of Content and Format," News Research for Better Newspapers, 7 (July 1975): 45-79.

the home, for which leading papers used 5.2 per cent of their editorial hole and trailing newspapers used 3.3 per cent.

When the newspapers were divided into smaller categories by size and region, still, few significant differences were found, and the same differences did not hold true in the same content categories throughout the analyses. When this further breakdown was made, only human-interest news, sports and total editorial content differed significantly in more than one analysis; when broken down further, news of the home was significant only in one region.

Space allotted to total editorial content was significantly smaller for the leading newspapers in the West, Northcentral and Northeast.

The authors indicated that since the leading newspapers in some areas had a greater percentage of news of home, human interest and sports, these may have had some relation to higher circulation. They cautioned against placing much faith in these differences, however, and stuck by their basic finding of few significant content differences between leading and trailing competing daily newspapers.

In looking for format differences, greater differences were found among leaders and trailers, although again, when all regions were combined, the differences became minimal. However, there seemed to be a tendency for the trailers to be more modern (no column rules, fewer stories on the front page, six-column layout and few dingbats) than the leaders.

Other differences noted included a slight relationship between date of establishment and circulation. Here it was the trailing newspapers that were more often the older newspapers. Also, more of the leading newspapers were published in the afternoon and they subscribed to more wire services than trailers.

Many of these differences are very much chicken-and-egg-like, the authors pointed out, in that it was impossible to say if the differences caused increased circulation or if increased circulation caused the differences.

Schweitzer and Goldman

With a research staff of a Management Operations Seminar at Indiana University in the summer of 1974, the authors, John C. Schweitzer and Elaine Goldman,¹ set out, in part, to replicate the Hartman study.

In Bloomington, Ind., they again found a situation in which the periods of intense competition, declining competition and no competition were present.

Here the Herald-Telephone, the established newspaper, was challenged in September, 1966, by the Courier-Tribune. The Courier-Tribune died in December, 1972. Both were locally owned afternoon dailies.

Two Hartman hypotheses were adopted:

- A daily newspaper will devote more of its nonadvertising space to local news in an intense competitive situation.
- A daily newspaper will devote more of its news and feature space to sensational and human-interest content under conditions of intense competition than under no competition.

To determine reader perception of changes, the authors added two more hypotheses:

- In a small daily newspaper market where two newspapers are competing for the same audience, the majority of readers will perceive no difference in the quality of the two newspapers. Readers who do perceive a difference will only in immediate reward news categories.
- When one paper in a competitive situation is no longer publishing, readers of the surviving newspaper will perceive no difference in the amount of local news, regardless of whether there is more or less.

Again, in this study a systematic random sample was drawn from each of the three periods of varying competition. The news content in each period was coded

¹John C. Schweitzer and Elaine Goldman, "Does Newspaper Competition Make a Difference to Readers," Journalism Quarterly, 52 (Winter 1975): 706-10.

into 23 categories, seven of which were considered immediate reward categories.

Additionally, a systematic random telephone survey was conducted in Bloomington to determine reader perception of change.

The results indicated no support for either Hartman hypothesis. The proportion of local items to all news and editorial items did not change. Checking the immediate reward categories of sports and recreation, crime and violence, accidents and disasters, vital statistics, society, awards and kudos, and human interest stories, there was no difference found in proportion of space given these items from one period to another.

The authors' own survey hypotheses were supported. Readers perceived little difference between the papers and in local coverage after the Courier Tribune died. The little difference seen between the papers was in immediate reward news.¹

This study tended to support earlier research and a claim that the Hartman study cannot be extended beyond the Tri-City area — that elements unique to that situation caused any differences found there.

Summary

The eight studies discussed here can be divided into four even more specific research types. The Nafziger and Barnhart, Bigman, and Willoughby studies each looked at only two competing newspapers in one city. The researchers can only be said to have described each competitive situation in terms of whether opposing views and divergent news were presented in one city. No claim can be made that the results of these studies can be extended beyond these particular cities, although it does begin to become noteworthy that all three found the same results — a sameness in the news and views presented in competing newspapers.

¹It should be remembered no changes in content were recorded. Therefore, the readers accurately perceived reality — not a startling find.

The studies conducted by Borstel, and Nixon and Jones form another type of research in this area. They used the approach of sampling competitive and noncompetitive newspapers across the country to determine if there were differences in the types of content carried by competitive and noncompetitive newspapers. With results indicating competition has little effect on newspaper content again in this study, a claim can be made that these results can be extended beyond the bounds of this study.

A third type of research, such as that conducted by Weaver, Mullins and McCoombs, again uses the large-sample approach, but this time in getting at this question: Is there a difference between the two newspapers involved in a competitive situation? Specifically, this study attempted to discover if there was a difference between leaders and trailers. And again, no difference was noted in content, although some difference was noted in format. This wide-sample research may be extended to the general competition-content situation.

The fourth type, using a case-study approach, seeks to answer two questions. The Rarick and Hartman study and the Schweitzer and Goldman study compose this type. The research provided data to determine any differences between the papers in a competitive situation and any differences between competitive and noncompetitive situations.

The Schweitzer and Goldman study backed the previous findings of no competitive effect; the Rarick and Hartman study did show an effect. The studies cannot be generalized, however, and there were peculiar tensions present in the Rarick and Hartman study which may account for differences found there.

It is this fourth type of research to which the present study is most similar.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the research was to determine the history of this particular competitive situation. This phase simply supplemented the second phase of the research by placing the situation in its proper context and by giving an idea of what events may have taken place involving each newspaper which may have affected the results of the second phase of the study. In other words, were there variables which may have caused content changes in the two newspapers not related to competition. Extensive interviews were conducted in Beloit of townspeople and the papers' editors and publishers during this phase.

The second phase was to examine the content of the Call during two periods and the Post during one period and to break down the content into several categories. After tabulation of the findings, comparisons were made.

The periods picked to compare precompetition Call with the Call at the height of competition were October 1, 1971, through March 31, 1972, and October 1, 1974, through March 31, 1975. During this last period, the Call also was compared with the Post.

The first period for sampling of the Call began two years before the Post started publication. This gap was considered to be good, because it was thought if the period was closer to the first publication of the Post, the knowledge that another newspaper was being considered might have had an effect on the Call.

The last period was picked because it was a time when the two newspapers' circulations were about equal, thus representing strong competition. Also, there was a fire in the Call's letterpress shop in October, 1975. After the fire the Call shifted to offset printing. To avoid another variable, it was thought best that this change in printing process not be within one of the study periods.

Each of these periods is six months in length, with the same months being picked for each sampling period to eliminate any seasonal variation in content. Each sample was a week long to account for daily content variance, and the weeks were selected on a rotating basis, beginning randomly, to account for weekly variance in content within each month. For instance, for October the random starting point was the third week, for November the week sampled was the fourth week; for December the first week was used. Because the Post was weekly and the Call daily, the issues of the Call examined were for Wednesday through Tuesday. The issue of the Post examined for that week was for that same concluding Tuesday. The week was judged to be within a particular month if the Tuesday Call publication date of that week was within the month. The same rotating week pattern was used for each newspaper and each sampling period. All content in the sample was classified and coded.

Two individuals, the author of this study and an assistant, coded separate parts of the samples, using bound files of the newspapers kept by the Kansas State Historical Society Museum in Topeka, Kan. To check intercoder reliability, the same week of the Call and Post, as defined above, was coded by both coders.

The number of items in each test on which the coders agreed was compared with the maximum number of items coded in each test. The following results were displayed: paid vs. nonpaid space, 100 percent agreement; locality of content, 99 percent agreement; country correspondent content, 99 percent agreement; duplication of local content, 96 percent agreement; controversiality of content, 98 percent agreement; editorial type, 99 percent agreement; and sensationalism of news, feature content, 96 percent agreement. This high level of coder agreement appears to represent high coder reliability and consistency.

Every item during each sample week for each newspaper was measured and classified following this coding chart:

- (1) Length: _____ column inches
(Go to 2)
- (2) Paid/nonpaid: (a) _____ paid space
(Coding completed)
(b) _____ nonpaid, not codable
(Coding completed)
(c) _____ nonpaid, coded
(Go to 3)
- (3) Locality: (a) _____ local
(Go to 4)
(b) _____ nonlocal
(Go to 6)
- (4) Country correspondents: (a) _____ yes
(Go to 5 if 1974-75, 6 if 1971-72)
(b) _____ no
(Go to 5 if 1974-75, 6 if 1971-72)
- (5) Duplication: (a) _____ yes
(Go to 6)
(b) _____ no
(Go to 6)
- (6) Controversial: (a) _____ yes
(Go to 7)
(b) _____ no
(Go to 7)
- (7) Editorial type: (a) _____ art
(Coding completed)
(b) _____ editorial
(Coding completed)
(c) _____ column of opinion
(Coding completed)
(d) _____ letter
(Coding completed)
(e) _____ news, feature
(Go to 8)
- (8) Sensationalism: (a) _____ immediate reward
(Coding completed)

(b) _____ delayed reward
(Coding completed)

It should be explained why some of the detours were taken while an item was traveling through this chart. First, country correspondent copy is only local copy (a definition of local is given later). So there was no reason to take all items through that question. With duplication, only the Call runs a large percentage of nonlocal wire service copy. The Post subscribes to no wire service, and therefore runs little nonlocal copy. Because of this there seemed to be no reason for checking for duplication of nonlocal items.

Of the editorial types, only news and features were run through the sensationalism question. Art, columns of opinion and letters were judged to be inherently immediate reward; editorials were judged to be delayed.

These are the definitions for terms used in the coding chart:

- Length was defined in column inches on an eight column page. All measurements were rounded to the nearest column inch.
- Paid vs. nonpaid space was defined by Second Class postal guidelines.
- Nonpaid, not codable space, included the newspapers' flags, logos, mastheads, etc.
- Locality was defined with local referring to the newspapers' circulation areas, primarily Mitchell and bordering counties.
- Controversial referred to any item in which opposing opinions were expressed or implied.
- Country correspondent copy was defined as those labeled columns from communities other than Beloit which contained mainly social notes.
- Duplication was defined as any story carried by both papers which expressed the same information, even if in different words.
- Editorial types were defined traditionally; however, art included all photographs and line art.

— Sensationalism was defined by immediate and delayed reward, as defined by Wilbur Schramm.¹ Sensational, or immediate reward, content is content which rewards the reader by a reduction of tension or discomfort (e.g., curiosity, worry) or an increase in satisfaction (e.g., from a vicarious enjoyment of the achievements of the winning team). Such stories include those of crime and corruption, disasters and accidents, human interest stories, sports and society. Delayed reward content increases tension, increases discomfort, brings dissatisfaction and causes worry. Reading is necessary to avert harm, danger, discomfort and unpleasant circumstances. Such stories include those of public affairs, economic affairs, science and social problems.

After the study was completed and data transferred to a computer readable form, comparisons were made of the Call in 1971-1972 with the Call in 1974-1975 and of the Call in 1974-1975 with the Post in 1974-1975. These comparisons were performed by computer.

For the Call alone these comparisons included:

- (1) total column inches examined
- (2) total column inches in the sample devoted to each of the following content types and its percentage of total column inches examined as reported in 1 above:
 - (a) total column inches of paid space and its percentage of total column inches examined
 - (b) total column inches of nonpaid, not codable space and its percentage of total column inches examined
 - (c) total column inches of nonpaid, coded space and its percentage of total column inches examined
- (3) total column inches of nonpaid, coded space devoted to each of the following content types, and its percentage of total nonpaid, coded space as reported in 2c above:
 - (a) total column inches of local space and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space

¹Wilbur Schramm, "The Nature of News," Journalism Quarterly, 26 (September 1949): 259-69.

- (b) total column inches of nonlocal space and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space
- (4) total column inches of country correspondent space and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space
- (5) total column inches of controversy coded space and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space
- (6) total column inches of nonpaid coded space devoted to each of the following content types, and its percentage of total nonpaid, coded space as reported in 2c above:
 - (a) total column inches of art and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space
 - (b) total column inches of editorials and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space.
 - (c) total column inches of letters and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space
 - (d) total column inches of columns of opinion and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space
 - (e) total column inches of news, feature and its percentage of total column inches of nonpaid, coded space
- (7) total column inches of news, feature space devoted to each of the following content types and its percentage of total news, feature space as reported in 6e above:
 - (a) total column inches of immediate reward space and its percentage of total column inches of news, feature
 - (b) total column inches of delayed reward space and its percentage of total column inches of news, feature

For the Call in 1974-1975 with the Post in 1974-1975 the comparisons were the same with the addition of:

- (8) total column inches of duplicated space and its percentage of total column inches of local space.

It was found necessary to break down these results further to examine the amount of controversial and immediate reward-delayed reward space which was local and nonlocal; also, to determine the amount of art, editorial, column of opinion, letter and news, feature space which was local and nonlocal. Percentages were determined of each when related to total local and nonlocal space.

IV. THE SITUATION¹

The history of newspapers in Beloit, a northcentral Kansas town of approximately 4,200 population, dates from the 1870s. In 1872 the weekly Beloit Gazette was founded by A. B. Chaffee and J. J. Johnson, consolidating with the Beloit Times, formerly the Cawker City Times, in 1909 and publishing until 1910 as the Gazette and Times. In that year Beloit's oldest newspaper attempted daily publication as the Daily Gazette, returning to a weekly format in 1911 and continuing independent publication as the Beloit Gazette under the ownerships of J. R. Harrison, Athol B. Dunham and L. F. Brewer, and John Dunham, until its purchase in 1963 by the Beloit Daily Call.

The Beloit Daily Call traces its geneology to the Democrat, later the Western Democrat, which was published weekly from 1873 to 1890. The paper was purchased in 1890 by P. G. Chubbic and Seward A. Jones, who changed the name to the Western Call, later changing to daily publication as the Beloit Daily Call. In 1903, A. B. Adamson bought the Call. Formerly having worked for H. K. Houghton's father on a farm south of Beloit, Adamson hired H. K. to work for him in operating the Call. In 1913, H. K. bought half interest in the Call. Adamson retired in 1923 and H. K. operated the newspaper until he sold it to his son, Alan Houghton, and D. L. Wicks in 1954. Wicks sold his interest to Houghton in 1969. Houghton's ownership continued through the time of this study.

¹Information contained in this chapter obtained from personal interviews in June, 1976, with Alan Houghton, then editor and publisher of the Beloit Daily Call; Earl and Elaine Loganbill, editors and publishers of The Solomon Valley Post; 12 Beloit businessmen; and also, Kansas Press Service, Kansas Newspaper Directory, 1952 to present; Kansas State Historical Society, History of Kansas Newspapers, 1916; and Kansas State Historical Society, A List of Kansas Newspapers and Periodicals, 1877-1950.

While not appearing to be parts of the geneology of the Gazette or Call, at least two other newspapers were published in Beloit in the late 1800s. They were the Courier, publishing from 1879 to 1895, and the Record, 1877 to 1879.

With the purchase of the Gazette by the Call in 1963, Beloit became a town with single newspaper ownership. It remained so until October, 1973, when Earl and Elaine Loganbill started The Solomon Valley Post, a weekly newspaper which was conceived to introduce competition into the Beloit media market and to provide an alternative to the long-established Call. The Loganbills believed their publication could lead to the demise of the Call.

It should be noted that the Call, after purchasing the Gazette, continued publication of a weekly edition, the Call-Gazette, circulated primarily to rural areas outside of Beloit and to former Beloit residents living outside of the area, with its contents, according to Houghton, being primarily a summary of news and a repeat of ads which had appeared in the daily Call.

Alan Houghton saw a marked difference between the competition he experienced with the Gazette and the Post. In a June, 1976, interview Houghton said:

When we were in competition with the Gazette we cooperated very closely. Grocers would advertise one week with one, the next week with the other. We traded ads. Newswise, we were very competitive. We never gave them any; they never gave us any. But they would go to our typecases and pick out letters and we would go back to their's. We always got along very graciously with the Gazette. We printed the paper for them for several weeks after Athol's (Dunham) death.

With the Post we just more or less leave each other alone. While we used to exchange ads with the Gazette, if Earl (Loganbill) draws up an ad, he would sell it to us . . . We are very competitive; we are two separate entities. But I do not like to think we are to the point of being vindictive.

If Houghton believed the Gazette and Call had been competitive in their newsgathering, interviews with 12 Beloit businessmen did not bear this out. Only

one believed Gazette - Call competition caused the newspapers to "go to bat for the good of the community."

Regarding the reporting of controversy, Houghton stated, "I have a philosophy that if you write something up of conflict, those who remember it will be those who are the maddest. . . . I find I can make enough people mad accidentally. I feel in a community this size you need to have the full community behind you."

This philosophy was not shared by the publishers and editors of the Post and was a major factor in their decision to begin publication of a competing weekly newspaper. Earl Loganbill worked in public relations with the Farmway Farmers Cooperative Association of Beloit. Elaine taught in an area school.

"When we moved to Beloit in 1970 I was astounded the community had accepted such a low standard in its local newspaper," Loganbill said.

Loganbill explained others in the community shared his view. Some businessmen had formed an organization to either purchase the Call or start a competing publication, he said.

"But when it got down to the test," Loganbill said, "most did not want to do anything to offend Alan (Houghton). They still wanted someone to buy him out."

Although Houghton was in ill health, he refused to sell to the Loganbills, who relate it was at the suggestion of another area editor that they determined to begin publication of a competing weekly newspaper.

The Solomon Valley Post began publication in Beloit as a Tuesday (later Wednesday) weekly newspaper October 30, 1973. The Post won reader acceptance quickly. By the end of its first complete year of publication Post circulation reached 2,712 compared to the Call's 2,799, each by publisher's report.

"And advertising was much better than we thought it would be," Loganbill explained. "We found advertising we did not even know existed. The reason we

are The Solomon Valley Post is that we did not just want to be a Beloit newspaper. We wanted to be an area newspaper."

Loganbill believed a "Solomon Valley" newspaper could appeal to many in rural areas surrounding Beloit.

"We have always been a Beloit promoter," Loganbill said. "There are a lot of small towns around Beloit from which people might as well shop in Beloit."

That the Post had a greater appeal outside of Beloit itself was noted by advertisers interviewed as well.

"There's no doubt about it," one advertiser said, "certain types of advertising will do better in the Post than the Call — car dealers for example."

Another advertiser related, "Over the trade territory, the Post does more good, and in Beloit itself the Call does more good." Still another advertiser stated, "The Call, you cannot do without it because people right here in town insist you advertise in it. The Post does go out farther, though."

Houghton said, "Some of the ads he (Loganbill) takes, we wouldn't because they are outside of our trade territory."

While Loganbill found enough advertising revenue in the Beloit area to support his fledgling publication, Houghton reports his ad revenue was not decreased.

"When two separate newspapers ask for ads, I think the businessmen become a little more conscious of advertising," Houghton said. "Earl (Loganbill) hasn't really hurt us. Our income has gone up the last couple years."

Shortly after his first year of publication, Loganbill found advertisers can be fickle. The Post's editorial stands began to conflict with the beliefs of its advertisers.

"We are so vulnerable," Loganbill said. "We are so dependent on the advertisers."

Loganbill had successfully implemented a news policy of covering meetings of local government -- something he claimed had not been the previous practice of the Call.

"They had never had a paper that covered a city council meeting or a county commission meeting," Loganbill said. "So they thought they were under special investigation. They liked to keep it submerged when they acted on issues."

But the Post's advertising revenues were not seriously threatened until Loganbill took two strong editorial stands. One, in March, 1975, involved gambling and a gambling raid at a local veterans' organization. Loganbill suggested that local youth who received the organization's Citizenship Awards should return them because the sponsoring organization "made a farce of law and order." He pointed out what he saw as hypocrisy in gambling being accepted as the norm for the organization.

Second, and following the gambling issue, Loganbill lent his editorial support to the controversial construction of a regional shopping center proposed to be built on Beloit's outskirts, against the objection of downtown businessmen and several city council members.

While the gambling editorial upset many Beloit readers and advertisers, the shopping center issue was an issue which some downtown Beloit businessmen believed threatened their very livelihood.

"Most people who read the Legion (gambling) editorial and were alarmed did not see my main point (hypocrisy)," Loganbill said. "They heaped criticism on the paper because it was an affront to the norm of the community, and the norm had been gambling for 15 years.

"I feel the Legion issue has not hurt us as much as the shopping center issue. It was more lengthy and severe."

Loganbill said he lost "some" advertising as a result of the two issues, but was unable to estimate the amount.

The businessmen interviewed, whether they believed a newspaper should report and take a stand in local controversy or not, unanimously agreed Loganbill's stands were too strong.

One businessman who claimed to have supported an alternative Beloit newspaper said he "had in mind a more positive alternative type operation."

Another believed a newspaper in Beloit should not delve in controversy. "We need a newspaper which helps us bond together as a community," he said.

A third businessman stated, "As small as Beloit is I think a paper would get in trouble if it got partial one way or another."

Still another stated, "If Earl (Loganbill) had kept his nose clean he really could have been successful."

Finally one offered Loganbill this advice: "You should never put anything in the paper when you are mad."

The Call took no stand on these issues. Regarding the shopping center, Houghton said, "I was personally opposed, but we kept the paper out of it."

Loganbill remained philosophical regarding the role of advertisers in shaping news and editorial policy.

"I wouldn't get any fun out of it if the news was all bland, if we took it the way they would write it," Loganbill said, "If you are thinking of survival, compromise is probably best. I keep thinking about my mission in my vocation. I have a belief that survival is not the only thing. To bear testimony to the truth is more important than survival."

The physical appearances of the Call and Post were vastly different. The Call previous to and during the time of this study was a traditional-looking letterpress newspaper with vertical layout and column rules. Normally a four-page afternoon paper (six pages with Wednesday's grocery ads), it ran an abundance of Associated Press human interest stories, cut to approximately six

inches each. Local copy was mainly locals (who visited whom), club notes, weddings, engagements, births, deaths, weather, markets, local sports and announcements.

The Post since its inception has been offset produced, using larger headlines and more local pictures, horizontal makeup and concentrating on local copy. In addition to the locals, club notes, births, deaths and other "necessities" of small town newspapering, it included accounts of local government and its meetings, occasional features and local issue-oriented stories.

The Post editor and publisher believed he had an impact on the Call and regretted it.

"They've learned a lot from us, and that's been very disappointing," Loganbill said. "They will watch us and take the same picture we do, then by coming out before us, scoop us." He saw similar "copying" in news and advertising sales.

Beloit businessmen were split in their opinions of whether the Post had created change in the Call. Most who did see change were unable to express in detail the change they perceived.

"I think competition makes each paper a better newspaper," stated one businessman. "The Call has upgraded theirs."

"The Call has definitely improved its area coverage," said another businessman.

"As far as I can see there hasn't been any change in the Call," said a third. "Everybody says there isn't much in it, but there isn't much going on. It carries the markets, weather and deaths."

Change is continual. As the purpose of this chapter was to supplement the more quantitative examination of the Call and Post, which was the major emphasis of this study, this chapter detailing "The Situation" has not looked far beyond the March, 1975, conclusion of the sampling period. Changes which have occurred since then will be discussed in an addendum which follows this study.

V. RESULTS

Data collected in the quantitative portion of this study was transferred to keypunched computer-readable cards and computer analyzed. The results of that analysis appear in tabular form following the text of this chapter.

Paid vs. Nonpaid

Table 1 displays the division of total space analyzed through content analysis into the three broadest categories of paid space (advertising); nonpaid, not codable space (flag, masthead, logos); and nonpaid, coded space (the news hole). Also represented there is the total space appearing in each of the samples examined.

The first point which can be made in reviewing this table is that the total inches of space examined for the Call before competition was greater than during competition. The reduction in total inches of space published by the Call was 1,518 inches, or 5 per cent. Because of the representative nature of this sample, it can be said that Call subscribers received a 5 per cent smaller paper a year after competition than they did only 18 months before the Post began publication. The analysis of the weekly Post revealed it published approximately one-half the volume of the daily Call during the competitive period examined.

An examination of advertising percentages shows the Post ran 54 per cent advertising during the competitive period, while the Call, during the noncompetitive and competitive periods ran 62 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively. The Call's 1 per cent reduction in ad percentage does not appear meaningful, but it is meaningful to compare the Post and Call ad percentages. The analysis is two-pronged. The first is financial, with the Call having collected revenue for a greater proportion of space published. But in looking at the quality of the product offered the reader, the Post devoted a greater proportion of its

space to the news hole. It is noteworthy that while the Post published approximately one-half the total space of the Call during the competitive period, by devoting more space to news, this weekly newspaper provided its readers with a news hole 63 per cent as large as that of the daily Call.

Finally revealed in this table is an 8 per cent decrease in advertising for the Call after the entrance of competition into the market. Projecting this decrease over a year's time and using the 63-cents-per-column-inch rate published for the Call during both periods in the Kansas Newspaper Directory, this 8 per cent decrease in advertising would represent over a \$7,000 annual decrease in revenue for the Call after competition entered the market. The Post ran 46 per cent as much advertising as did the Call.

Local vs. Nonlocal

Table 2 shows the division of the news hole into local vs. nonlocal content. As a percentage of the total news hole, the Call increased its emphasis on local content by 5 per cent after competition entered the market, having run 58 per cent local content before competition and 63 per cent after competition. Because the total news hole shrunk after competition, the actual increase in local content was somewhat greater. The increase from 5,736 local inches sampled before competition to 6,190 local inches competition was an increase of 8 per cent.

The content of the Post was vastly local, 97 per cent vs. 3 per cent nonlocal. It is interesting to note that because of this overwhelming emphasis of local content in the Post, the amount of local coverage in the Post was much the same as in the Call. During the competitive period the Post offered 96 per cent as much local content as did the Call, and actually offered 4 per cent greater local coverage than the Call did before competition.

Editorial Types

Tables 3A, B and C all deal with editorial type of content — art, editorial, letter, column of opinion and news, feature — presenting these categories in total (A), and by local (B) and nonlocal (C) content.

In both periods the Call ran no editorials, while the Post devoted 2 per cent of its news hole to editorials. The Call only ran one letter seven inches long during the first sample period and no letters during the second, for a rounded 0 percentage during each period. The Post again devoted 2 per cent of its news hole to letters. In regard to columns of opinion, the Call and Post were comparable, the Call having given columns 6 and 5 per cent of its news hole during the two periods, and the Post 7 per cent in its sample.

In comparing the Call and Post during competition, the Call ran approximately twice the percentage of art as the Post, 19 vs. 10 per cent. If the Call made any attempt at all to run at least one front-page photograph each day of its daily publication, it could be expected that it would exceed the weekly Post in this area. When comparing the per cent of the news hole devoted to news, feature during this same period, the Post exceeded the Call by 3 per cent, 79 to 76 per cent.

A finding when examining this table is that the Call drastically reduced the amount and percentage of art it used and correspondingly increased its space devoted to news, feature after competition entered the market. Before competition the Call devoted 29 per cent of its news hole to art; during competition it only devoted 19 per cent to art. Correspondingly, the news, feature category increased from 65 per cent to 76 per cent. When comparing total space devoted to art before competition with total space devoted to art during competition, the reduction was 38 per cent. This same comparison of news, feature results in a 15 per cent increase.

When examining these editorial types which were also local in content, it is noteworthy that while reducing the total amount of art it used, the Call actually increased by 17 per cent its local art, when comparing total inches of art before competition with art during competition. Additionally, it increased the total inches of news, feature by 9 per cent. Because the total inches of local content

increased as well, the percentages of local content devoted to each editorial type remained roughly the same during the two periods.

Column of opinion, the only other category to which the Call devoted significant space, was very much split between local and nonlocal content.

Because the Post was vastly local in content, it is only meaningful to make a comparison between the two papers in the area of local content and not in the area of nonlocal content. The Post exceeded the Call in local editorial, 2 to 0 per cent, local letter, 2 to 0 per cent, and local column of opinion, 7 to 5 per cent. In regard to local art, the Post ran 68 per cent as much as did the Call. As a percentage of local content, the Call devoted 15 per cent to local art, the Post 11 per cent. In regard to local news, feature, the Post ran 94 per cent as much as did the Call. As a percentage of local content, the Call devoted 80 per cent to local news, feature, the Post 78 per cent.

In comparing the pre-competition Call with the Call during competition, the reduction of nonlocal art is most noteworthy. Before competition 51 per cent of the Call's nonlocal content was devoted to nonlocal art. During competition that percentage fell to 25 per cent. The comparison of total inches of nonlocal art before competition with nonlocal art during competition revealed a 59 per cent reduction.

One other meaningful change is represented by this table. That is an increase in nonlocal news, feature. When represented as a percentage of all nonlocal content, the news, feature category increased from 45 to 69 per cent, in comparing the pre-competition Call with the competing Call. This was a 30 per cent increase in total nonlocal inches devoted to nonlocal news, feature.

Country Correspondents

Table 4 details the amount and percentage of local content devoted to country correspondents. In comparing the Call before competition with the Call during competition, a slight drop was shown in country correspondent copy, from 11 per cent of local content to 10 per cent, a decline of 37 inches.

A meaningful comparison shown by this table is the greater amount of country correspondent content carried by the Post when compared with the Call. During the sample period 29 per cent of the Post's local content was devoted to country correspondents. In total inches, the Post carried nearly three times the amount of country correspondent content as did the Call.

Controversiality

Table 5 examines the controversiality of content of the total news hole and local and nonlocal content. When examining controversiality of the news hole, it is most noteworthy that the amount of controversial content in the Call was cut in half both as a percentage of total news hole (18 vs. 9 per cent) and in total inches (1,785 vs. 837 inches) in comparing the pre-competition Call with the Call during competition. Also, the Call, which was thought to be noncontroversial in nature compared to the Post, exceeded the Post in percentage of controversial content of the news hole. The Post only recorded 4 per cent controversial content.

However, when controversial content was further broken down into local and nonlocal categories a predictable pattern was revealed. All controversial content identified in the Post was local, accounting for 4 per cent of the Post's local content. For the Call, 98 and 97 per cent of its controversial content was nonlocal. It carried only a negligible amount of controversial local content, rounded to 1 and 0 per cent of all local content. Considering the controversial nature of much international, national and state wire service news, and the amount of wire service news carried by the Call, it was not surprising to find that it carried a sizable portion of controversial nonlocal content, 41 per cent of nonlocal content in the pre-competition period and 23 per cent during competition. This decline in the Call from 41 to 23 per cent, a reduction of 54 per cent in total inches of controversial nonlocal content, also was noteworthy.

Sensationalism

Table 6 which lists the results of the immediate reward-delayed reward sensationalism test run on the news, feature category of content revealed little

difference either between the competing Call and the Call before competition or between the competing Call and Post. A high percentage of content in all three samples was labeled immediate reward. This was not surprising because of the large amount of weddings, engagements, obituaries, sports and country correspondents run in both papers.

In looking at overall sensationalism of news, feature content, it may appear there was a meaningful difference between the Call and the Post. The Call recorded 84 and 83 per cent immediate reward as a percentage of news, feature content, to the Post's 95 per cent. A further breakdown to local and nonlocal immediate reward content provided an explanation. The percentages of immediate reward content in the local news, feature category were identical for both Call periods and the Post, 95 per cent. Even total inches devoted to this category were similar, with the Call recording 4,292 and 4,731 and the Post recording 4,459.

With respect to nonlocal content, primarily wire service news, the Call did show a significant amount of delayed reward content, 42 and 41 per cent, but this can be explained by the very nature of state, national and international news. Because of the small amount of nonlocal content used by the Post, 183 inches, a breakdown of this content into immediate and delayed reward categories was not meaningful.

Duplication

Table 7 reveals that each newspaper duplicated the other in approximately the same percentage of local content, 31 per cent for the Call and 29 per cent for the Post. This percentage can be explained by the amount of weddings, engagements, obituaries and certain country correspondents which were identical in the two newspapers. Other community service news and sports, while written in different words, contained substantially the same information and were therefore counted as duplicated. It is perhaps more meaningful to say that Call

and Post readers were offered 69 and 71 per cent local content which differed between the two newspapers.

TABLE 1
PAID vs. NONPAID SPACE

	<u>Call ,</u> 1971-72	<u>Call ,</u> 1974-75	<u>Post ,</u> 1974-75
Total inches examined (percentage)	27,965 100%	26,447 100%	13,816 100%
Paid space (percentage)	17,427 62%	16,063 61%	7,408 54%
Nonpaid, not codable space (percentage)	577 2%	614 2%	260 2%
Nonpaid, coded space (percentage)	9,961 36%	9,770 37%	6,148 44%

TABLE 2
LOCALITY OF NONPAID, CODED SPACE

	<u>Call ,</u> 1971-72	<u>Call ,</u> 1974-75	<u>Post ,</u> 1974-75
Total nonpaid, coded space (percentage)	9,961 100%	9,770 100%	6,148 100%
Local content (percentage)	5,736 58%	6,190 63%	5,965 97%
Nonlocal content (percentage)	4,225 42%	3,580 37%	183 3%

TABLE 3A
EDITORIAL TYPE OF NONPAID, CODED SPACE

	<u>Call ,</u> <u>1971-72</u>	<u>Call ,</u> <u>1974-75</u>	<u>Post ,</u> <u>1974-75</u>
Total nonpaid coded space (percentage)	9,961 100%	9,770 100%	6,148 100%
Art (percentage)	2,943 29%	1,817 19%	637 10%
Editorial (percentage)	0 0%	0 0%	134 2%
Letter (percentage)	7 0%	0 0%	117 2%
Column of opinion (percentage)	555 6%	501 5%	407 7%
News, feature (percentage)	6,456 65%	7,452 76%	4,853 79%

TABLE 3B
EDITORIAL TYPE OF LOCAL CONTENT

	<u>Call ,</u> 1971-72	<u>Call ,</u> 1974-75	<u>Post ,</u> 1974-75
Total local content (percentage)	5,736 100%	6,190 100%	5,965 100%
Art (percentage)	796 14%	935 15%	637 11%
Editorial (percentage)	0 0%	0 0%	134 2%
Letter (percentage)	7 0%	0 0%	117 2%
Column of opinion (percentage)	399 7%	293 5%	407 7%
News, feature (percentage)	4,534 79%	4,962 80%	4,670 78%

TABLE 3C
EDITORIAL TYPE OF NONLOCAL CONTENT

	<u>Call ,</u> 1971-72	<u>Call ,</u> 1974-75	<u>Post ,</u> 1974-75
Total nonlocal content (percentage)	4,225 100%	3,580 100%	183 100%
Art (percentage)	2,147 51%	882 25%	0 0%
Editorial (percentage)	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Letter (percentage)	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%
Column of opinion (percentage)	156 4%	208 6%	0 0%
News, feature (percentage)	1,922 45%	2,490 69%	183 100%

TABLE 4

LOCAL CONTENT DEVOTED TO COUNTRY CORRESPONDENTS

	<u>Call ,</u> <u>1971-72</u>	<u>Call ,</u> <u>1974-75</u>	<u>Post ,</u> <u>1974-75</u>
Total local content (percentage)	5,736 100%	6,190 100%	5,965 100%
Country correspondents (percentage)	631 11%	594 10%	1,703 29%
Other local content (percentage)	5,105 89%	5,596 90%	4,262 71%

TABLE 5
CONTROVERSIALITY OF NONPAID, CODED SPACE;
LOCAL, NONLOCAL CONTENT

	<u>Call,</u> <u>1971-72</u>	<u>Call,</u> <u>1974-75</u>	<u>Post,</u> <u>1974-75</u>
Total nonpaid coded space (percentage)	9,961 100%	9,770 100%	6,148 100%
Total controversial content (percentage)	1,785 18%	837 9%	241 4%
Total noncontroversial content (percentage)	8,176 82%	8,933 91%	5,907 96%
Total local content (percentage)	5,736 100%	6,190 100%	5,965 100%
Controversial local content (percentage)	32 1%	26 0%	241 4%
Noncontroversial local content (percentage)	5,704 99%	6,164 100%	5,724 96%
Total nonlocal content (percentage)	4,225 100%	3,580 100%	183 100%
Controversial nonlocal content (percentage)	1,753 41%	811 23%	0 0%
Noncontroversial nonlocal content (percentage)	2,472 59%	2,769 77%	183 100%

TABLE 6
SENSATIONALISM OF NEWS, FEATURE CONTENT;
LOCAL, NONLOCAL CONTENT

	<u>Call ,</u> 1971-72	<u>Call ,</u> 1974-75	<u>Post ,</u> 1974-75
Total news, feature content (percentage)	6,456 100%	7,452 100%	4,853 100%
Immediate reward news, feature content (percentage)	5,399 84%	6,194 83%	4,619 95%
Delayed reward news, feature content (percentage)	1,057 16%	1,258 17%	234 5%
Total local news, feature content (percentage)	4,534 100%	4,962 100%	4,670 100%
Immediate reward local news, feature content (percentage)	4,292 95%	4,731 95%	4,459 95%
Delayed reward local news, feature content (percentage)	242 5%	231 5%	211 5%
Total nonlocal news, feature content (percentage)	1,922 100%	2,490 100%	183 100%
Immediate reward nonlocal news, feature content (percentage)	1,107 58%	1,463 59%	160 87%
Delayed reward nonlocal news, feature content (percentage)	815 42%	1,027 41%	23 13%

TABLE 7
DUPLICATION OF LOCAL CONTENT

	<u>Call ,</u> 1974-75	<u>Post ,</u> 1974-75
Total local content (percentage)	6,190 100%	5,965 100%
Duplicated local content (percentage)	1,901 31%	1,713 29%
Nonduplicated local content (percentage)	4,289 69%	4,252 71%

VI. CONCLUSIONS

This study found perhaps more meaningful changes in a newspaper corresponding to the entrance of competition into the media market than any previous study. Additionally, it found differences between the two newspapers in this competitive situation. Until this time, of similar studies, only Barrie Hartman in his Tri-City research in Oregon found changes corresponding to competition which he believed were meaningful. Other studies found few changes corresponding to competition and few differences between competing newspapers.

This research lent support to one of Hartman's hypotheses, but did not bear out a second Hartman hypothesis. Like Hartman's, this study demonstrated an increase in local content in the original newspaper corresponding with competition. Hartman, however, hypothesized there would be an increase in immediate reward content in a time of competition. His study demonstrated there was; this study did not, although Hartman did eliminate a considerable amount of inherently immediate reward content from his study by not coding sports, women's news, special sections and comics. It is impossible to say if any changes in immediate reward would have been demonstrated had similar content been removed from this study.

Beyond Hartman's, this study broke considerable new ground in demonstrating changes corresponding to competition. Whether these changes also were due to competition cannot be stated conclusively. However, this study did not uncover other variables occurring during or between the study periods, so it is likely competition played a major role in creating these demonstrated changes.

In addition to the increase in local content shown in the Call, it was equally noteworthy to find that the Call drastically reduced its use of nonlocal art,

allowing for sizable increases in the use of local art, local news, feature and nonlocal news, feature. The increase in local art and news, feature and the need to reduce some nonlocal segment of the paper to accomplish this seemed perfectly consistent with Hartman's first hypothesis. The switch of a large portion of the Call's nonlocal art content to nonlocal news, feature was puzzling, however. It may simply have been an attempt on the part of the Call to provide more news, even if that news was mainly wire service copy.

It also was somewhat surprising that the Call, while increasing the amount of nonlocal wire copy it used, reduced the controversial nature of the wire copy it selected for use. In looking for an explanation, a comment from a Beloit businessman was recalled, who said that Beloit residents believed "they were getting too many wire service stories from the Call that they get out of larger papers." A second businessman had stated, "If the Call would run stories like the Salina Journal about those senators and their sex scandals a lot of people would quit taking it." As a response the Call may have shied away from controversial wire copy, selecting lighter news for its daily fare. Additionally, the reduction in nonlocal controversy may have been a reaction to the local controversy appearing in the Post, with which the Call editor disagreed.

Finally, a change recognized in the Call by this study involved a reduction in the newspaper's size and advertising. This can be viewed as a pretty straightforward result of competition for the advertising dollar. This finding did conflict, however, with statements by the former Call editor that the Post had not damaged the Call financially, additionally claiming revenues had increased.

In regard to a comparison of the Call with the Post it can be said that the two newspapers provided readers with different types of content. Judgment of an author obviously comes into play in determining how meaningful percentages of duplication are. Hartman found that approximately 50 per cent duplication was not excessive and that the papers involved in his study strove to offer readers a

choice. Wesley Willoughby, in examining two Indiana newspapers, seemed to believe that the 25 per cent duplication he demonstrated was excessive. This author believed a demonstration that approximately 70 per cent of the local copy in each newspaper was not duplicated is meaningful. It appears the two papers did provide readers with considerably different news and information.

Results of this study showed other differences between the Call and Post. The Post regularly ran local editorials and letters to the editor (2 per cent of its news hole was devoted to each); the Call did not. The Call, even after a major reduction in art after competition entered the market, devoted nearly twice the percentage of its news hole to art than did the Post. The Post, striving for readership in outlying areas, carried nearly three times the amount of country correspondent content as did the Call. The Call, even after having reduced its level of controversy after competition entered the market, still devoted over twice the percentage of its news hole to controversial content than did the Post, 9 vs. 4 per cent. But more importantly the Call published only a negligible amount of controversial local content. All controversial content published by the Post was local.

One finding of this study tends to bear out a minor point made by David Weaver, L. E. Mullins and Maxwell McCoombs in their study of several competing newspapers. They found that in three geographic areas studies, leading newspapers ran a higher percentage of advertising than did trailing newspapers. It is clear that in Beloit the Call maintained a lead over the Post, a considerable lead in advertising, and at the time of this study a slight lead in circulation. And it was found that the Call used a larger proportion of its total space for advertising than did the Post, 61 to 54 per cent. Because the two Post editorial stances mentioned in "The Situation" chapter as being extremely controversial occurred at the end of the quantitative study, their effect in reducing Post advertising would not be reflected here.

This study revealed some similarities between the Call and the Post. The two papers devoted identical percentages of their local content to news which was of immediate reward. The volume of local content in the Call and Post was nearly identical as well.

The percentages of local vs. nonlocal content differed greatly, however. But this difference, as well as others, resulted from the Call being a daily newspaper and the Post a weekly. The daily ran a sizable amount of nonlocal wire copy; the weekly strove to run all local content. Inherent daily-weekly differences also may explain the Call's higher percentage of art. With six front pages a week vs. one for the Post, the Call likely would use more pictures.

It appears likely that in Beloit, competition caused a change in newspapering, as well as having offered readers more variety in content. While very much a subjective judgment, it appears changes were of such a nature that it can be said that the quality of Beloit newspapering improved as a result of competition.

ADDENDUM¹

In 1981 both the Post and Call remain in publication in Beloit, but only after much change in each. It cannot be measured how much change was the result of competition, but there certainly has been change in each independent of competition.

The Call burned in October, 1975. Within a week after the fire, the Call, temporarily located in another downtown Beloit building, installed photocomposition equipment, printing on an offset press located in a nearby community. By November, 1976, back in its original location, it first ran that year's election coverage on its own new offset press.

Also, in July, 1976, Houghton's son-in-law, Gary Hilt, who had worked for the Call since 1970, became the paper's managing editor.

The fire was a blessing in disguise for the Call. The new offset production it forced gave the paper a competitive boost in vying with the Post for ad revenue. By the Seventies letterpress "mats" of ads had become a device of the past. The Call was at last able to utilize "slicks" and more flexible ad format, and that was a convenience appreciated by its advertisers.

On February 8, 1981, Alan Houghton died, leaving Hilt in charge of the paper. By June of that year he bought the paper from the Houghton estate, the third generation of the family's ownership of Beloit's daily newspaper.

A student of more modern journalistic techniques, Hilt says he has strove toward a more modern layout, changed the Call's flag and begun using more local

¹Information contained in this chapter obtained from telephone interviews November 20 and 21, 1981, with Earl Loganbill, editor and publisher of The Solomon Valley Post, and Gary Hilt, editor and publisher of the Beloit Daily Call; and also, Kansas Press Service, Kansas Newspaper Directory, 1981.

photographs. He started an editorial page, using syndicated columnists and occasional editorials. He added more news of outlying smaller towns, particularly more regional sports. He has attempted to provide more balance between local and national news.

"The first thing I did was take the weddings and wedding pictures off the front page," Hilt said.

The Call added a Friday television log section, and to boost ad revenues special hunting, football, school, lawn and garden, and lake editions were sold periodically. Rather than typically producing four-page papers, the norm became six pages.

Circulation of the Call was boosted in 1981 to over 3,000, indicating recognition of an improved product.

Of the competition created by the Post, Hilt says he does not believe today ad revenues of the Call are greatly affected, but adds, "I think the competition is good. It makes us strive to try a little harder. It's good to have someone there to push you a little."

The emphasis of the Post also has changed since this study was performed. In May 1977, the Post began publication of The Valley Shopper, which is generically a shopper. It is today included as a supplement to the Post, is circulated to rural areas by Third Class mail and is thrown by carriers in 16 towns.

"We could see that a weekly newspaper was not going to swamp the Call," Loganbill said. "The fire (at the Call) did us a lot more damage than it did them."

"We lost our offset advantage and all the advantages of the daily were enhanced when they went offset."

Improvements in the Call — improvements which Loganbill believes the Post prompted — also were noticed by the community. The Call began to look more and more like the Post. Loganbill had not been able to "swamp" his competitor, and he believed to survive he had to try to further differentiate the Post from the Call.

"I now understand (Beloit) advertisers who don't want to put an ad in the Post," Loganbill said. "They want to keep a daily paper here."

As a means of differentiating the two publications, Loganbill arrived at the decision to try publishing a shopper, which has become successful, now publishing 16 to 20 tabloid pages a week filled with display ads sold at \$2.38 per column page.

"Our objectives have changed," Loganbill said. "We started out to fill a need, to provide better coverage of the community. We found — and it was kind of a surprise to us — that what we would do ourselves, we would force the competitor to do as well.

"Our objective now is to emphasize the shopper. The paper (Post) is kind of marginal. I put all my efforts to sell advertising into the shopper; it makes more money."

Still the Post continues publication, normally running eight to 10 pages a week, with few ads except for the shopper supplement. Its circulation, by publisher's report, dropped to under 2,300 in 1981. Its meeting and issue-oriented coverage continues, and its columns and editorials continue. Loganbill admits it may be necessary to publish only one paper, the shopper, in the future, but for now he continues to believe there is a role for the Post.

"We've always been kind of the gadfly type," Loganbill said. "I want to be there to say what the competitor may be too cowardly to say."

The most recent development regarding Post - Call competition is that the weekly Call-Gazette is now being circulated throughout neighboring towns to Beloit as a shopper as well. This development first occurred in May, 1981. Its advertising percentage continues to run much lower than The Valley Shopper, and while Hilt says he thinks "it's pretty well received," it is too early to predict its success.

While the trend may appear clear — the Call has regained its competitive edge — the Post and Earl and Elaine Loganbill have had their effect on Beloit

newspapering. The community is receiving a better newspaper today because of their "push." And the Post itself, while it cannot be considered economically strong, continues to be a lively editorial voice. Competition appears to have had a profound effect on newspapering in the Beloit community.

The Post may itself not survive, but it appears its editors and publishers have found another niche in the "Solomon Valley" with The Valley Shopper.

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THE EFFECTS OF COMPETITION ON THE BELOIT DAILY CALL
AND A COMPARISON WITH ITS COMPETITOR, THE SOLOMON VALLEY POST

by

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Whether competition in a media market has an effect on the content of newspapers in that market, and whether two newspapers are better than one are questions research has failed to answer conclusively, although several studies were performed between 1945 and 1974 regarding these subjects. This study examined a competitive newspaper situation in Beloit, Kan., to find whether any changes were made in the long-established Beloit Daily Call corresponding with the entrance of competition into the Beloit media market, and whether the Call and its fledgling weekly competitor, The Solomon Valley Post, offered the community different types of news and information. No hypothesis was stated.

A search of historical records revealed Beloit had more than one newspaper for much of its history. Only during the 1960s and early 1970s did it have single newspaper ownership. Interviews disclosed townspeople were split in their assessments of the Call before competition, although dissatisfaction of some Beloit businessmen encouraged the Post editor to begin publishing an alternative competing newspaper.

A sample was drawn of the Call before competition and the Call and Post during a period of intense competition. Qualitative and quantitative analysis of newspaper content during those sample periods revealed in the Call a reduction in advertising; an increase in local content; a drastic reduction in use of nonlocal art; an increase in the use of local art, local news and features and nonlocal news and features; and a decrease in the controversiality of nonlocal content, all coinciding with the advent of competition. The Call and Post each ran approximately 30 per cent duplicated local content, approximately the same amount of local content (although the Call ran a large amount of nonlocal copy as well and the Post did not) and approximately the same percentage of immediate reward news. The Post ran local editorials and letters; the Call did not. Controversial content of the Post was all local; the Call all but a negligible

amount nonlocal. The Call ran a higher percentage of advertising and a higher percentage of art than did the Post.

The study found changes occurred in the Call which were likely due to competition. Generally these changes resulted in an improved product. It was also found the Call and Post offered readers different types of news and information.