

Abstract

Title of Dissertation: THE INTERPLAY OF EDITORS' NEWS
VALUES AND BUSINESS VALUES:
A 50-YEAR CASE STUDY OF THE
WASHINGTON POST SUNDAY MAGAZINE

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How do editors of a Sunday newspaper magazine, a section first developed in the late 19th century to increase circulation, manage the interplay between editorial values and business values in producing a weekly publication for a daily newspaper? How did these editors' values change when other newspapers began eliminating their own Sunday magazines due to high costs and low advertising revenues? This project answers these questions through a 50-year case study of *The Washington Post's* Sunday magazine, from 1961-2011. In particular, this study examines the attitudes, perceptions and motivations of Sunday newspaper magazine editors in producing a section that is unlike any other.

Sunday newspaper magazines “challenge classification,” writes magazine historian William Howard Taft (1982), because they blend the aesthetics and editorial packaging of a magazine, but are produced in newspaper newsrooms that are rooted in traditional journalistic values such as objectivity and public service to society.

This study accomplishes three things. First, it provides a broad history of Sunday newspaper magazine sections, including their technological, economic and cultural

influences on the newspaper industry. Second, the case study of *The Washington Post's* Sunday magazine, starting with the founding of *Potomac* in 1961, illuminates for the first time the various business strategies, editorial opportunities, challenges and personalities that defined the publication over a 50-year period. Finally, this qualitative study reveals that *Post* magazine editors' pursuit of positive recognition and professional acceptance by the daily newspaper's most respected reporters and editors largely informed their professional values, which often included a strong distaste for the business of publishing. Moreover, *Post* magazine editors often sought to protect or bolster their internal status by copying the editorial approach of the most highly regarded Sunday magazine in the industry, *The New York Times Magazine*. Through the lens of institutional theory, such actions can be seen as highly irrational given that the *Times* serves a distinctly different audience (namely, national) and enjoys a much broader advertising base.

Newspapers across the country have been eliminating their locally produced Sunday magazines over the past 30-plus years due to economic reasons, as opposed to a lack of reader interest. High costs and weak advertising revenues often receive the blame from publishers who announce the shuttering of their magazines. For the once venerable Sunday magazine to survive, and perhaps even enjoy a resurgence of sorts, this study shows that editors will need to reevaluate their professional motivations and find a better balance between the application of editorial and business values.

THE INTERPLAY OF EDITORS'
NEWS VALUES AND BUSINESS VALUES:
A 50-YEAR CASE STUDY OF THE
WASHINGTON POST SUNDAY MAGAZINE

by

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Preface

As I write this, on Sunday, February 17, 2013, a copy of *The New York Times* sits nearby on the floor of my home office. Inserted within the massive Sunday edition is the *Times*' high-end monthly style magazine, titled simply *T*. It is physically substantive and elegant; its pages are perfectly bound by glue, in the same way most thick magazines are.

The first hint of editorial copy can be found on page 70. Between the cover and 70 is nothing but full-page advertisements. Giorgio Armani. Ralph Lauren. Chanel. Gucci. Prada. It goes on and on and on. Eventually, there are a handful of feature stories and many more short items; this month's Sunday magazine is dedicated to women's fashion and totals 226 pages in all. This is in addition to the *Times*' separate weekly general-interest Sunday magazine, which comes in at "only" 56 pages.

Page 70 of *T* is the Editor's Letter, which is titled "Welcome to Change." It's mildly clever because this is the first issue produced by new editor Deborah Needleman, who left *The Wall Street Journal*'s luxury and style magazine *WSJ* to join the *Times*, and also because the issue is introducing the spring season's new fashions. But to media observers and scholars alike, the title could represent something else. In looking out across the thinning national landscape of Sunday newspaper magazines, "Welcome to Change" could be read as a sign of things to come for the entire newspaper industry. With fewer than 10 locally produced weekly Sunday magazines still in publication—down from approximately 225 in 1979, due to a variety of reasons that are almost entirely economic—it is quite possible that the secret to the section's survival lies in the willingness of editors and publishers to change how they view and approach their jobs.

Since the beginning of my doctoral studies at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland, I knew I wanted my dissertation to be directly relevant to the newspaper industry. I entered academia from the journalism profession, most recently as managing editor of *Presstime* magazine, a trade journal that covered the business operations of newspapers.

During my time at Merrill, I wrote a research paper on how the journalism trade press portrayed the founding and early development of *USA Today*, which premiered in 1982 and married colorful magazine-like page designs with relatively short, often upbeat stories (Lemberg, 2009). The trade press was downright hostile toward the self-proclaimed “nation’s newspaper,” dubbing it McPaper, or fast-food journalism that was big on style and short on substance.

While researching that paper in the stacks of the Levin Library, I came upon a *Columbia Journalism Review* article from 1986 that questioned whether locally produced Sunday magazines deserved to survive. The author, Michael Shields, argued that Sunday magazines were expensive to produce and often served little editorial or business value to the newspapers that published them. Shields seemed to ask more questions than he provided answers, and so I moved on because I had a research paper to finish.

A few months later, I was teaching an undergraduate magazine writing course at Merrill and invited *The Washington Post*’s Sunday magazine editor, Tom Shroder, to speak to my class. He was witty, insightful and self-deprecating; the students loved him. Tom and I talked for a while after that class, and I told him about the *CJR* article from 1986 that I had found. Sunday magazines were still in grave trouble, he explained. Since the mid-’80s, numerous newspaper publishers had eliminated their Sunday magazines for

financial reasons, despite the sections' popularity with readers. Tom was the last editor of *Tropic*, the award-winning Sunday magazine of the *Miami Herald*. The magazine was eliminated in 1998 because of high production costs and low advertising revenues.

Moreover, Tom told me, he was about to accept a buyout from *The Washington Post*. The newspaper had a new publisher and a new editor, and it was clear to Tom that the *Post* wanted to take the magazine in a new direction: shorter articles, and more special editions about such topics as home design and travel. He wasn't interested in helping the *Washington Post* make more money; he was an editor who wanted to tell interesting stories.

It was then that I decided to study Sunday newspaper magazines, specifically the interplay between their editors' journalistic values and business values. This dissertation is a 50-year case study of *The Washington Post's* Sunday magazine.

Acknowledgments

My earliest memory of my time at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism wasn't when I began my doctoral studies in the fall of 2007. It was actually in a Starbucks in northwest Washington, D.C. nearly one year earlier.

I was considering changing careers, leaving my life as a journalist to become a full-time professor. I eventually reached out to the then-director of Merrill's doctoral program, Dr. Carol Rogers. After a few email exchanges, she offered to meet me for a drink, talk and answer whatever questions I had. That coffee changed my life.

Dr. Rogers later introduced me to Steve Crane, then assistant dean of the college, and I began teaching a news-writing course as an adjunct. Upon acceptance into Merrill's doctoral program, Tom Kunkel, then dean, offered me a part-time salaried teaching position. Combined with a generous three-year fellowship from the Scripps Howard Foundation, I was ready to take the leap. So thank you, Carol, Steve and Tom, as well as the Scripps Howard Foundation, for helping me embark on a wonderful journey.

Like many doctoral students, I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to study at first. Tom Kunkel and I met on a number of occasions just to talk and brainstorm. It was through Tom that I first learned about "angels dancing on the heads of pins," an expression to describe beautiful yet esoteric scholarship. Tom encouraged me to avoid all pins. Angels, too, for that matter. Instead, be a bridge-builder. Write to be read. Pursue scholarship that might be of actual value to those who work in the news media industry, he implored. This study is my attempt to meet those challenges.

I would like to thank the many people who shared their time and memories in helping me develop this 50-year case study of *The Washington Post's* Sunday magazine.

I am indebted to your generosity. These people include *Washington Post* magazine editors Paul Herron, Walter Pincus, Robert Wool, Shelby Coffey, Laura Longley, Steve Petranek, Jay Lovinger, Bob Thompson, Steve Coll, Glenn Frankel, Tom Shroder, Debra Leithauser and Lynn Medford; magazine business executives Steve Corty, Anne Karalekas and Leslie Morgan Steiner; Washington Post Co. Chairman Donald Graham, former publisher of the newspaper; and Phyllis Cavalieri, CEO of Metro Newspaper Advertising Services, formerly the Sunday Newspaper Magazine Network. In addition, thank you to the many newspaper and magazine professionals and former colleagues whose brains I picked at every opportunity in search of additional insights.

My dissertation committee is an amazing group of individuals. Each person represents the best of what I aspire to become in my second career.

- Carl Sessions Stepp is an educator. He plies his craft in the classroom, but also through the pages of the *American Journalism Review*. When people talk about the bridges that need to be built between academia and the journalism industry, I always think of Carl. His writing speaks to the people who most need to hear it.
- Dr. Kalyani Chadha is someone who has carved out her own path in academia. In addition to her teaching and scholarship, Dr. Chadha directs the Media, Self and Society program at the university and also used to manage a professional journalism association through the school. She has shown me that there are many different avenues to a fulfilling career in academia.
- Maurine Beasley is a giant in the world of media history. This study has helped me realize my love for historical research, and the thrill of uncovering yellowing records and long-forgotten facts that can be used to make sense of the past—with

- an eye toward informing the future. I cannot imagine ever enjoying the kind of professional success Dr. Beasley has. But what a wonderful example to aspire to.
- I stumbled upon Dr. Jeff Lucas' small-group leadership course in the Sociology Department, and was surprised to find out that the entire class consisted of military personnel from the U.S. Naval Academy. Still, Dr. Lucas encouraged me to stay because he is a teacher who enjoys teaching, and I was a student eager to learn. Thank you for letting me stick around for so long.
 - Without question, Dr. Linda Steiner, my adviser, is the hardest working scholar I have ever met. She absolutely loves her work, and she is forever busy. Yet, whenever I walked into her office during our time together at Merrill, she always, ALWAYS stopped what she was doing and gave me her undivided attention. Even after I moved to the Boston area for a full-time faculty position in 2010, Dr. Steiner continued to always be there for me. This dissertation is profoundly better thanks to her guidance and wisdom.

At Curry College in Milton, Mass., where I have served as an assistant professor since the fall of 2010, there are many people who have supported and encouraged me throughout the final stages of this dissertation. But two friends in particular have been especially wonderful. Whether it was a box of chocolate Dunkin' Donut munchkins when I was low on energy, or a pep talk and a hug when I was low in spirit, Professors Sharon Sinnott and Dorria DiManno always seemed to know what I needed. Thank you.

Perhaps my daughters, Ellie (6) and Isabel (2 ½), will one day choose to read this study. If so, I want them to know there isn't a single page in this dissertation more

important than this one. I love you, I love you, I love you! I live for your laughter, and your happiness gives me the greatest joy. You girls mean the world to me.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wonderful, brilliant and beautiful wife, Mora Segal. I honestly cannot imagine a more supportive and loving spouse. You have tolerated this project, and me, for what must feel like an eternity. You gave me time to work and space to think. You were there to listen to my frustrations and share in my breakthroughs. You are my best friend, and I love you. Thank you, bb.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Lindsay Ess had a passion for clothing. As a high school student, she would often spend up to an hour choosing the right outfit for an evening out with friends. Ess went on to study fashion merchandising at Virginia Commonwealth University, earning her bachelor's degree in 2007, and lined up a job following graduation to teach fashion marketing at an area high school.

But on the first day of school, Ess was not in a classroom sharing her thoughts on clothing. Instead, she was lying in an intensive care unit following the amputation of both her arms and both her legs.

Weeks before the start of the school year, Ess underwent surgery to remove part of her intestines. In 2006, she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, a chronic disorder that causes severe inflammation of the digestive track. The surgery was a somewhat common procedure for Crohn's patients. However, Ess quickly became severely ill and immediately had to undergo a second surgery to remove more of her intestines. In addition, she developed a bacterial infection that caused sepsis, a life-threatening blood disorder, and doctors were left with little choice but to amputate all four of her limbs in an effort to save her life (Lohmann, 2008).

At the age of 24, Ess was a quadruple amputee living at home with her single mother. Ess could not bathe, brush her hair or get dressed without assistance. Going to the bathroom was a major undertaking. Yet, one year later, Ess was not only walking again, with the help of prosthetics, but also teaching an undergraduate fashion course at her alma mater.

Freelance writer and photographer Matt Mendelsohn had spent months in mid-2008 documenting the life and challenges of Ess, and successfully pitched it as a cover story to editors of *The Washington Post Magazine*. Despite their initial interest in and commitment to the feature, however, editors of the *Post* magazine opted not to run it. In September 2009, Mendelsohn speculated as to why, saying his piece was killed because new *Washington Post* Publisher Katharine Weymouth believed that advertisers didn't like "depressing" stories (Kurtz, 2009, C3). Mendelsohn said he did not think Weymouth actively sought to have his feature squashed. Rather, he believed that by voicing her opinion about wanting to see more stories with a happy tone in the magazine, it "set the stage for the piece to get killed" (Kurtz, 2009, C3).

"Whatever Katharine may have felt about the piece was immaterial to the editorial process," said the *Post's* executive editor, Marcus Brauchli, in the 2009 news story. Disputing Mendelsohn's account, Brauchli explained that the Ess article was killed because of the magazine's shifting editorial strategies. "We are not driven by what one of our business-side colleagues, or even our publisher, thinks about a piece. We follow a journalistic compass" (Kurtz, 2009, C3). Brauchli explained that the Sunday magazine was in the midst of a shift in editorial emphasis, away from long, narrowly focused stories. To suggest he was trying to please advertisers was simply "nonsense," Brauchli said (Kurtz, 2009, C3).

Based on this rationale, the primary point of conflict in the *Post* not publishing Mendelsohn's story was the notion that business interests somehow trumped journalistic interests. But whether the decision was based on creating a more inviting content environment for advertisers or improving Sunday circulation, I believe business

considerations were central to the shift away from stories like Mendelsohn's. After all, newspapers make almost all of their money through two revenue sources: advertising and circulation. For nearly two hundred years, newspapers have earned the lion's share of their revenue through advertising, with circulation revenue typically accounting for less than 20% of earnings (Pew Research Center, 2011). Yet, the two revenue streams are directly connected; advertising rates are based largely on the number of newspapers sold. This is the very foundation of the "penny press" business model, starting in the 1830s, whereby newspapers were sold for one cent—as opposed to the then-typical six or eight cents—to generate a wider audience and enable publishers to charge advertisers more to reach that audience. In the *Post* article, Weymouth even explained that her paper's Sunday magazine was created some 50 years earlier "to drive readership, to draw people into the Sunday paper" (Kurtz, 3C). In short, the magazine section's very existence was and remains a business determination.

Purpose of Study

This study is an examination of the attitudes and perceptions of former and current magazine editors at *The Washington Post* to better understand how and why they navigated the gray areas between news values and business values. I define "business values" broadly as the pursuit of revenue and profit, either through circulation or advertising. Ultimately, I sought to answer the following research questions:

- * How did editors of the *Post* magazine perceive the primary purpose of the publication?

* What were magazine editors' motivating factors in determining editorial content?

* How did the magazine editors navigate the internal politics and culture of *The Washington Post* in producing a Sunday section that was both a part of and distinct from the rest of the newspaper?

Sunday newspaper magazines are interesting subjects of study because they “challenge classification” (Taft, 1982, 223) and must attempt to straddle the line between the two media. They typically package and produce content in the manner of a magazine, but operate in a newspaper newsroom environment where professional journalistic values reign supreme. Among other things, these values have historically included a willing and often gleeful ignorance of the advertising and business operations of their own newspaper (Schudson, 1981; Meyer, 2004). To maintain their credibility with readers and their editorial independence from commercial pressures, journalists have long purposely shielded themselves from their paper's financial workings. The problem is that the financial positions of locally produced Sunday magazines are in a long downward spiral.

In 1977, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* and the rotogravure printing company Standard Gravure, which printed many of the country's Sunday magazines at the time, commissioned a study to explore the future of the Sunday supplement. Conducted by the Institute for the Future, the study found that Sunday newspaper magazines were facing something of an identity crisis, with general-interest editorial content that wrongly attempted to appeal to all Sunday newspaper readers, as opposed to a distinct audience like most sections of the newspaper. Advertisers were not necessarily interested in reaching every type of newspaper reader, and the study's authors correctly envisioned a

time in the near future when advertisers would have more media options to target their messages to distinct audiences. In the late 1970s, advertisers were buying space in Sunday magazines because these were often the only sections that could publish in four color. The authors noted that advances in printing technologies would soon enable newspapers to print color in other sections, thereby greatly minimizing Sunday magazines' draw.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 looks at news values in the journalism industry, and the evolution of editorial decision making due to technological and economic changes in publishing. The chapter explores the advent of professionalism in the news media industry and the various market forces that have influenced content creation over the years. Chapter 3 examines the history of Sunday newspaper magazine sections, from their conception in the late 1800s, to the rotogravure photo sections of the early to mid-1900s, to the modern Sunday magazine. The chapter will also examine the various factors that have led to the decline and near elimination of locally produced Sunday magazines in U.S. daily newspapers. Chapter 4 is a history of *The Washington Post* and its Sunday magazine, as well as the business behind the newspaper. In addition, this chapter examines magazine-style storytelling at the *Post* and its influence on the Sunday magazine. Chapter 5 explores two theories, institutional theory and social identity theory, and their application in furthering understanding of individual and organizational behavior within a news media company. Institutional theory serves to explain the pursuit of social and economic legitimacy through conformity to established practices, even when the adoption of such practices is inefficient or irrational, and how this drive for sameness leads to a codification of norms and practices that become difficult to change

over time. Social identity theory attempts to explain the pursuit of positive distinctiveness, and how individuals measure and continuously self-evaluate their identity through their perceptions of different social groups. It is a self-evaluative process, as identity is measured in comparison between the perceived social standing of one's own group and that of other groups. These are highly relevant theories for a study that seeks to examine professional attitudes within a competitive newspaper newsroom environment.

Chapter 6 outlines the methodology of this study. In triangulating the data, I blended the case study method, which I used to examine a 50-year history of the *Post's* Sunday magazine—starting with the launch of *Potomac* in 1961—with the grounded theory method, which I used to analyze in-depth interviews with 13 editors who have led the *Post's* Sunday magazine. In addition, I analyzed news accounts, internal company documents and interviews with various *Post* business-side executives, largely for the case study portion of this study. The final two chapters, 7 and 8, contain Findings and Discussion. The Findings of this study suggest that *Post* magazine editors' attitudes toward content creation were largely rooted in a desire to earn greater professional respect from colleagues throughout the *Post* newsroom. Almost all magazine editors came to the job from other sections at the *Post* and they routinely maintained traditional newspaper newsroom values, including distaste for the consideration of business values in editorial decision-making. In addition, because magazine editors were afforded a high degree of editorial autonomy over their section and matters of editorial decision-making—such autonomy was the norm for all *Post* section editors—the magazine struggled to maintain a consistent and coherent editorial identity. In the pursuit of status within the newsroom, editors often attempted to mimic *The New York Times Magazine*,

despite the fact that the *Times* served a very different readership and advertising base than the *Post*.

In the final chapter, I discuss an extension of institutional theory through the use of social identity theory to explain how and why *Washington Post* magazine editors were able to pursue editorial strategies that were often misaligned with their two main audiences: local readers and local advertisers. In addition, Chapter 8 discusses why editors were allowed to operate a magazine that routinely lost money, and the possible implications for the future of Sunday magazine publishing as newspapers' print advertising revenues continue to shrink due to heightened digital competition.

Background and Context

During my 13-year career as a journalist at newspapers and magazines, and having seen a number of differences in the working relationships between the editorial and business departments at each type of media—it was largely nonexistent at the newspapers and routine at the magazines—I was always fascinated by the organizational and cultural norms that shape the behavior of different newsroom professionals. By examining a locally produced Sunday magazine, I hoped to shed some light on how its editors attempted to balance the editorial values that define most newspaper newsrooms with the commercialism that is inherent in editorial decision-making at many magazines. I selected the *Post* magazine for a number of reasons, including the fact that it was among the few locally produced Sunday magazines still in publication. In addition, the *Post* newspaper is among the industry leaders in content innovation; it was among the first

U.S. newspapers to publish a “style” section, in 1968, and among the first U.S. newspapers to launch a website, in 1996.

Newspaper magazine sections were developed in the late 1800s to boost Sunday readership. They featured fiction, poetry and reader contests. There were stories about mysterious medical maladies, personality profiles and an assortment of articles about food, fashion and travel. Above all, these special Sunday sections featured color printing and pages upon pages of photographs. Newspapers soon began using a new printing process for their Sunday magazines called rotogravure, which provided enhanced color reproductions. The sections became a huge draw for readers and advertisers alike.

But as the Institute for the Future predicted in 1977, Sunday magazines would lose much of their commercial value when color-printing capabilities expanded to other sections of the newspaper. This included newspapers offering targeted distribution of preprinted advertising inserts that were printed on similarly glossy paper. In addition, less expensive alternatives existed in the form of nationally syndicated Sunday magazines. William Randolph Hearst’s *American Weekly* was the first syndicated Sunday magazine, in the late 1890s. Today, *Parade* and *USA Weekend* are the two largest nationally syndicated newspaper magazines, serving approximately 1,450 newspapers combined. Newspaper companies are all too happy to carry one—and on rare occasion both—of the nationally syndicated magazines because it bolsters the Sunday edition at a relatively modest cost (Machalaba, 1982; Reilly, 1991). Sunday editions are almost always the highest circulation edition of the week and generate the most advertising revenue. In addition to *Parade* and *USA Weekend*, there are a handful of other syndicated magazines, including the monthly food title *Relish* and the middle-America, small-market weekly

magazine *American Profile*, both owned by Publishing Group of America in Franklin, Tennessee. (The history and evolution of syndicated magazines will be expanded upon in Chapter 3.)

From more than 120 locally produced Sunday newspapers magazines in the late 1950s (Danilov, 1957), the number ballooned to approximately 225 in 1979 (Kurtz, 1982).¹ But this declined to 60 in the late 1980s (Turbett, 1999) and to 22 in 1997 (Jones, 1997). “Part temple, part playground, [the Sunday magazine is] where writers stretch and readers curl up,” reported the American Society of Newspaper Editors shortly thereafter. “It’s a diminished, even endangered, world full of spirit and short on cash. It probably won’t be around forever” (Woodward, 1999, 15).

By the end of 2011, only six newspapers published their own weekly Sunday magazine. In addition to low advertising revenues, high printing and distribution costs are most often cited as the reason newspapers shutter their Sunday magazines (Garneau, 1991; Editor & Publisher, 1995; Fitzgerald, 1998). Newspapers that still publish their own Sunday magazines are *The Boston Globe*, *The Kansas City Star*, *The New York Times*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Washington Post* and the *Albuquerque Journal*. The *Journal* actually publishes four different magazines, with each subject-specific magazine appearing on a different Sunday every month. (Of the six magazines, the *Albuquerque Journal*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Seattle Times* and *The Washington Post* also carry *Parade*. *The Kansas City Star* also carries *USA Weekend*. *The New York Times*, which has a national circulation and draw largely from a national advertising base, does not carry a syndicated magazine.) With the exception of the *Journal*’s magazines, the locally

¹ This number included general feature sections, so it is not entirely clear how many were traditional magazine sections.

produced magazines largely remain general-interest publications; all are published on a higher quality paper stock than the rest of the newspaper and maintain printing dimensions similar to most consumer magazines. At least three other newspapers, the *Baton Rouge Morning Advocate*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and the *Toledo Blade*, publish Sunday sections titled “Magazine”—the *Blade*’s is just a single page, consisting mostly of photography—but the sections are printed on newsprint in a broadsheet format. They are essentially feature sections with stories about outdoor activities, food and local events.

Newspapers, Magazines and Journalistic Culture

But many newspapers have not given up on the value of magazines. *The Christian Science Monitor*, for example, ceased publication of its 100-year-old five-day-a-week print newspaper in 2008, opting instead to focus its editorial efforts online. The *Monitor*’s only print presence is now a glossy Sunday magazine (Edmonds, 2009); the news organization is partially subsidized by the First Church of Christ, Scientist (Edmonds, 2012). In San Francisco, *The Chronicle* newspaper—owned by Hearst Corp., which also publishes *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire* and *Seventeen* magazines, among many others—began printing its front page, section fronts and various other pages on magazine-like high-quality paper in November 2009, to be a “better newspaper for both its readers and advertisers” (Vega and Bushee, 2009). By adopting the paper stock and some of the production capabilities that have traditionally defined magazines, *The Chronicle* sought to highlight the aesthetic value of print. And in September 2010, *The Sun* in Baltimore reintroduced its Sunday newspaper magazine, formerly a weekly that was killed off in

1996, as a quarterly high-end lifestyle publication (Serpick, 2010). It has since been increased to six times a year. Other newspapers have similarly launched new magazines, often published monthly, that are distributed only to affluent readers and target high-end luxury goods advertisers. These include the *Houston Chronicle (Gloss)*, the *Dallas Morning News (FD Luxe)* and the *San Francisco Chronicle (San Francisco Chronicle Magazine)*.

Since at least 1997, newspaper magazines have been working to modify their editorial content to “attract the right readers and advertisers,” specifically affluent and educated readers and luxury-goods advertisers (Jones, 1997, 10). Among the many challenges, according to Ann Gordon, former editor of the now-defunct *Cleveland Plain Dealer*’s Sunday magazine, is that “some [Sunday magazine] editors find it hard to shake their newspaper pasts and think like a magazine editor” (Jones, 1997, 40). That idea is among this study’s central areas of examination. Because newspapers remain general-interest publications, albeit with subject-specific sections that feature much of the same content that their Sunday magazines have historically pursued—such as sports, home design and food, for example—identifying and focusing on a “right reader” remains a challenge for most Sunday magazine editors.

McQuilken differentiates newspapers from magazines by explaining that newspapers “thrive on conflict” in bringing editorial value to readers, while magazines “thrive on aesthetics” (1992, 45). That is obviously a general statement, but it does speak to some of the cultural and operational differences between most newspapers and consumer magazines. Newspaper journalists have long defended the value of the proverbial “church-state” divide, whereby news operations are kept separate from

business departments to protect reporters and editors from potential economic pressures. The ability to plead ignorance about their publication's commercial interests also enables journalists to better maintain credibility with readers and to appear objective in the gathering and reporting of news (Tuchman, 1978; Schudson, 1981; Mindich, 1998; Downie Jr. and Kaiser, 2003). In contrast, editorial independence from advertising considerations isn't necessarily the norm at many consumer magazines, particularly those with narrow, category-specific editorial missions and high levels of competition (Peterson, 1964; Tebbel, 1969; Taft, 1982; Abrahamson, 1996). From their very conception, these consumer magazines work to build a targeted base of readers with specific shared interests who are of value to certain categories of advertisers (Johnson and Prijatel, 2006). As Bagdikian writes, "The role of most magazines, as seen by their owners, was to act as a broker in bringing together the buyers and sellers of goods. There was, and still is, a significant difference among magazines in how far they go to sell their readers to advertisers. But the influence of advertising on magazine content continues" (2004, 243-4). Steinem similarly decried the influence of advertisers on editorial content, specifically in women's magazines, noting that food, clothing and beauty product companies often required women's magazines to publish favorable, non-controversial editorial content in return for an ad buy. "That's why women's magazines look the way they do....The myth that advertisers simply follow readers is very strong" (Steinem, 1990). In actuality, she contended, advertisers followed editorial content in magazines that dutifully affirmed the commercialism and consumerism that such advertisements promoted.

As Brauchli's comments show in discussing why the *Post* magazine chose not to publish the Lindsay Ess feature, newspaper journalists are deeply protective of their editorial independence from advertising-related pressures, whether real or perceived. The notion that a story is published, or not published, out of deference to a newspaper's pursuit of advertising revenue runs counter to the professional norms and practices that have long defined newspaper journalism (Schudson, 1981; Squires, 1993; Auletta, 1998; Bagdikian, 2004). Another reason for such autonomy is rooted in the journalistic purpose of truth-telling, as newspapers "need to draw a fortification around work meant to inform people of the facts and arguments they need to understand to function effectively as citizens of a self-governing community" (Fuller, 1996, 202). Studies have shown that broadcast and magazine reporters maintain similar professional values (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986). And yet, there are numerous examples of print publications' commercial interests trumping journalistic ones, most notably the failure of many newspapers and magazines in the 1970s and '80s to publish stories about the health risks associated with tobacco products, out of fear of losing lucrative tobacco-related advertising (Smith, 1978; Soley and Craig, 1992; Bagdikian, 2004). Cigarette makers were major print advertisers, particularly following a 1971 law that banned tobacco advertising from television. And a 2000 study by the Pew Research Center and the *Columbia Journalism Review* found that more than one-third of nearly 300 journalists surveyed said that stories often or sometimes go unreported because the stories might hurt the financial interests of their news organization (Pew Research Center, 2000). The study did not detail who within the news organizations made the decision to ignore certain stories, only that, according to journalists, stories went unreported for the good of the news organization's bottom line.

Research has shown that weekly supplements and lifestyle sections are almost always launched or redesigned for the primary purposes of generating advertising revenue and they are discontinued primarily due to a lack of advertising support (Kenney and Lacy, 1987; Chalaby, 1989; Attaway-Fink, 2004). In January 2009, nine months *before* Kurtz's article about Mendelsohn's dropped feature, *The Washington Post* announced that it was discontinuing Book World as a stand-alone Sunday section and would simply publish fewer book reviews through its existing Style and Outlook sections. In the article that reported the elimination of Book World, Brauchli explained that the primary reason for the decision was cutting expenses at a time of declining advertising and circulation revenues (Kurtz, 2009). Days earlier, in an online Q&A with readers to explain other changes to the *Post*'s Sunday newspaper, Brauchli was even more pointed in his explanation:

“Alas, we are in a business, and the business requires us to produce a product that our advertisers will support. It is true that we publish nearly as many book reviews and as much book news as we did in the stand-alone Book World section. But those reviews are now in sections that, on the whole, are advertising supported” (Brauchli, 2009).

This apparent lack of consistency in explaining how and why different editorial decisions are made at the *Post* highlights the difficulties journalists at newspaper companies face in maintaining and defending longstanding professional standards of practice. In describing the differences between what journalists routinely say about their professional practices and what they typically do, Zelizer (1993) writes that the culture of journalism is defined by the symbols, narratives and myths that journalists use to make

sense of themselves. As an interpretive community, journalists negotiate among themselves and collectively determine the legitimacy of professional practices. Part of the challenge is that many newspaper journalists define organizational values and journalistic culture based on the professional standards that inform the production of hard-news sections, mainly the front news section, rather than the lifestyle- and entertainment-themed sections that follow (Boczkowski, 2009). Soft news carries lower status in the news industry because such stories don't often convey public affairs content (Hughes, 1981; Patterson, 2000; Baum, 2003). Temporality is another key factor that differentiates hard and soft news, with hard news receiving immediate attention and swift publication; in contrast, soft news is far less reliant on the news value of timeliness and can therefore make the scheduling of publishing more manageable (Tuchman, 1978; Hughes, 1981; Schudson, 1986). Because magazines typically publish weekly, monthly or even less frequently, they are far more reliant on soft news content than daily newspaper sections are. Although a number of magazines publish public affairs content, one of the key differentiators between hard and soft news, most magazines make ample use of lifestyle stories and service journalism pieces that can be assigned and published over long periods of time without becoming dated.

Further complicating matters is the fact that *The Washington Post* is unique compared to most U.S. dailies. For example, the *Post* has long considered itself a local newspaper, but because it is based in the nation's capital much of its news coverage over the years has focused on national politics and policy as well as international news. In addition, the newspaper has largely maintained a newspaper advertising monopoly in the Greater Washington, D.C. area since the 1950s, when it cornered the morning newspaper

market after buying the rival *Washington Times-Herald*. The *Post*'s last true newspaper competitor, the afternoon *Washington Star*, went out of business in 1981. The *Washington Times* was launched the following year, but it has provided little competition for advertising or circulation revenue (Ellison, 2012). In 1991, the *Post* had a weekday circulation of approximately 800,000, compared to about 100,000 for the *Times*, and two-thirds of *Times* subscribers also purchased the *Post* (Jones, 1992). According to recent audit numbers, the percentage difference between the two papers' weekday circulation—the *Times* does not published a Sunday edition—remains about the same. This earning power has enabled the *Post* to absorb a certain amount of financial losses when it comes to experimenting with new editorial sections or revamping existing ones. Lastly, because *The Washington Post* is family owned—the Post Co. is publicly traded, but the Graham family and close associates maintain all voting shares of its dual-class stock—the newspaper hasn't faced the same short-term financial pressures that have plagued other public newspaper companies. Taken together, these factors make the *Post* a distinct U.S. daily newspaper. But in many ways, as this study uncovered, these same factors have also restricted Sunday magazine editors' willingness to re-evaluate the proper balance between editorial and commercial values in producing their weekly section.

Gade (2004) found three types of newspaper editors: those who resist changes in the profession of newspaper journalism because changes are perceived to be market, or commercially, driven; those who accept the need to change because they accept the connection between market considerations and editorial goals; and those who feel

conflicted and frozen by the connection between journalism and business imperatives.² “Obviously, habits are hard to break. Change is as much social as it is mechanical; it threatens specific social work arrangements that newspaper employees have crafted” (Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2002, 194).

The newspaper industry is currently facing hard times. Print advertising revenues have plummeted due to increased competition from digital media, and circulation has been in decline since 1990, as people have turned to other sources of information, namely cable television and the Internet (Beckett, 2010). In 2011, print advertising revenues for the U.S. daily newspaper industry were half of what they were just five years earlier, a loss of some \$20 billion (Pew Research Center, 2012). Hundred-plus-year-old daily newspapers have gone out of business (Perez-Pena, 2009), while others have reduced print publication to three or four days a week (Beaujon, 2012). As newspaper companies continue to battle for their survival, the once venerable locally published Sunday newspaper magazine could reemerge as a key weapon to showcase the relevancy and power of print—to readers and advertisers alike—in an increasingly digitized world. That is, if the editors charged with creating these sections are able to effectively navigate their organization’s internal culture and the interplay between journalistic and business values.

To be sure, it will not be easy. Around six months before the Lindsay Ess feature was spiked, allegedly for being too depressing and a potential turnoff to advertisers, the *Post* magazine published a cover story by staff writer and columnist Gene Weingarten

² Gade used two surveys to conduct his study. The first went to rank-and-file journalists at 17 newspapers that had been involved in change initiatives. The second survey went to top newsroom managers at the same newspapers. The surveys sought to assess respondents’ attitudes about the change processes and how well the changes aligned with organizational values and goals.

about parents who accidentally killed their own children by leaving them strapped into the backseats of hot, park cars for hours on end (Weingarten, 2009). One year later, “Fatal Distraction” won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize in feature writing. There’s no question a place must exist in newspapers for great stories that examine tragedy, sorrow and the ability of ordinary people to cope and persevere in the face of immense pain, advertising be damned. The question that remains unanswered, however, is *where* in the newspaper those stories should be published.

Chapter 2

News Values and the Business Imperative

As editor of the *Miami Herald*'s Sunday magazine, *Tropic*, in the mid-1990s, Tom Shroder said he routinely had to fight top editors and business-side leaders for “the [magazine’s] right to be different” from the rest of the newspaper (McQuilken, 1992, 150). Shroder, who would later serve as editor of *The Washington Post*'s Sunday magazine, said *Tropic*'s value to readers was that it was unlike every other section of the *Herald*. Unlike the daily newspaper, the Sunday magazine carried very few stories rooted in the news value of timeliness. In addition, Shroder proudly avoided potential stories that contained what he called “useful information” (McQuiklen, 1992, 151), what’s known in the news media industry as service journalism. Service journalism is defined as consumer-oriented, action-oriented or instructional stories—also known as “how-to” articles—that help people make choices in their lives (Scott, 1989). Examples run the gambit, from a story about how to select a ripe cantaloupe to a story about how to file for disability benefits. *Tropic* typically featured opinion columns, first-person accounts and other point-of-view articles; these are now sometimes known as “alternative journalism,” whereby “credibility and trustworthiness can be derived from accounts of lived experience, not only from objectively detached reporting; and that there need be no imperative to separate facts from values” (Atton, 2009, 284). Shroder said he was largely uninterested in editorial objectivity, a hallmark of the majority of journalism published in most other sections of the newspaper, and instead pursued stories and columns through which the writer could express opinions and attitude. That did not always sit well with newsroom colleagues, business-side executives and advertisers, Shroder admitted. In the

case of advertisers, some did not want to be associated with a point of view that they believed reflected poorly on their brands.

In late 1998, the *Herald* shuttered its magazine; it was reported that the weekly publication was losing \$2 million annually due to high production costs and a lack of advertising (Robertson, 1998). Interestingly, Shroder wanted the final issue to feature retrospective opinion pieces by many of the then-famous journalists who had written for *Tropic* over its 31-year history: David Barry, Madeleine Blais and Gene Weingarten, to name just a few. But *Herald* editor Doug Clifton vetoed the idea, instead wanting the final issue to be the magazine's annual end-of-year gift guide because it was extremely popular among advertisers (Bernstein, 1998). The dueling visions—Clifton got his way—spoke to the very point of conflict Shroder previously addressed. Shroder and his predecessors at *Tropic* sought to produce a Sunday magazine that appealed solely to readers—advertisers and revenue be damned. In contrast, top *Herald* leaders generally disliked editorial uniqueness when advertisers shied away from it (Bernstein, 1998). This point will be expanded upon later in the chapter, but many advertisers prefer to associate their products and messages with editorial content that positively reflects their brands.

Since the days of Joseph Pulitzer in the late 1800s, newspapers have worked to keep their editorial operations separate from their business operations. This “church-state” divide was devised to protect the independence of journalists' editorial decision-making processes. Keeping advertising sales representatives away from reporters and editors meant fewer opportunities for business interests to influence journalistic interests, which have long been rooted in accuracy, truth-telling, and serving as a watchdog of government (Schudson, 1981; McChesney, 1999; Baker, 2002).

That divide is not absolute, however. As this chapter will illustrate, the line that separates editorial and business values varies greatly based on the organization, the medium, and the economic considerations of the times. As Witshge and Nygren (2009) note, journalistic news criteria are evolutionary, changing due to shifts in social and cultural interests, market demands and institutional considerations. Moreover, it is nearly impossible to detangle the relationship between editorial content, audiences and advertisers; by and large, they are interwoven within the organizational fabric of most news companies.

Professional journalists have long claimed a monopoly over the ability to determine which events and issues merit coverage, and how that coverage should be structured. However, determining news criteria involves a complex mix of professional norms and values, social structures, and market forces. These processes have been thoroughly examined over the second half of the 20th century (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Schudson, 1989) and they have gained renewed interest in recent years as millions of people with no formal training in journalism have taken to the Internet to publish on their own (Singer, 2003; Donsbach, 2004; Allan, 2006; and Goode, 2009).

The study of editorial decision-making processes at a locally produced Sunday newspaper magazine is significant because editors of such publications operate in a distinct environment. Although they perform many of their professional responsibilities alongside their daily newspaper colleagues, the editorial product they produce is different from every other section of the paper. Sunday magazines are typically printed on glossy paper, use color inks, and mirror many of the production sensibilities of commercial

magazines, such as the mechanical binding and full-bleed trimming of pages. And because locally produced Sunday magazines are printed by third-party vendors, as opposed to in-house, editors work on production schedules that range from three weeks to multiple months ahead of time. In addition, Sunday magazines have long featured far more distinctive page design and photography than other newspaper sections; for most of the 20th century, Sunday magazines and the comics were the only sections printed with color inks, and editors sought to highlight their color-printing capabilities with graphic design elements not seen in black-and-white sections. All of these factors influence editorial decision-making. “Not quite newspapers but not exactly real magazines either, [Sunday magazines] have floundered in search of an identity that would justify their place in the Sunday package” (Shields, 1986, 35).

Locally produced newspaper magazines were created in the late 1800s to bolster Sunday circulation. For the past 50 years, however, newspaper companies have increasingly measured their magazines’ success based on advertising revenue and profits alone. Since at least the 1980s, newspapers have consistently cited weak advertising revenues and high production costs—rather than readers’ lack of interest in the sections—to publicly explain the discontinuation of their magazines (Editor & Publisher, 1995; Editor & Publisher, 2001; Associated Press, 2003; Rosenthal, 2009). In this regard, the editorial values that inform the work of Sunday magazine journalists are clearly secondary to the business values of the newspaper as a whole.

No matter the news media industry, organizational economic considerations have crept into journalists’ decision-making processes about which events and issues merit news coverage and how that coverage should be presented, a phenomenon known as

“market-oriented journalism.” Critics have decried the trend of treating readers like “consumers,” as opposed to citizens (Underwood, 1993; Squires, 1993; Bagdikian, 2004), yet there has also been widespread recognition throughout the news media industry that journalism and revenues cannot exist independent of one another. Wrote Neil Shister, a longtime journalist who served as the rapporteur of an Aspen Institute conference titled “Journalism and Commercial Success: “There is...a need to inculcate throughout the organization, from the members of the board to the rank-and-file, heightened commitment to the notion that the profession serves as a steward of public trust as well as a source of financial profit” (2002, vii)

In examining the attitudes of *Washington Post* Sunday magazine editors and the factors that influence their editorial decision-making processes, this chapter will explore the history and evolution of journalistic news values, the role of professionalism in shaping how journalists do their jobs, and how external market considerations have influenced editorial decision-making.

Journalistic News Values

A tremendous amount of research literature exists on news production within media organizations large and small, foreign and domestic (Galtung and Ruge, 1965; Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 1979; Schudson, 1989). However, very few studies exist that specifically examine how weekly news magazine editors determine which events and issues merit coverage. There have been even fewer studies of Sunday newspaper magazine editors (Ranly, 1981; Kurtz, 1982; McQuilken, 1992; Turbett, 1999). Instead, Sunday magazines have mostly been defined through anecdotal evaluations in the trade

press: “Sunday magazine readers were thought to be mainly female, mainly housewives, and, as newspaper people’s reasoning ran, mainly uninterested in anything other than bright profiles and looks at the annual flower show” (Shields, 1986, 35).

Gans’ (1979) study of news values at general interest weekly newsmagazines, specifically *Time* and *Newsweek*, stands as the seminal work in news construction. Referring to journalists as “commercial employees” (229), Gans wrote that he entered the study assuming editors and reporters at the newsweeklies—his study also examined journalists at national television evening news programs—would take great pains to understand what their audiences wanted to read and view. However, to his surprise, journalists had little knowledge of who their readers or viewers were or what they were interested in, and regularly rejected feedback from them. “Instead, they filmed and wrote for their superiors and for themselves, assuming...that what interested them would interest the audience” (230).³ In defense of how journalists construct the news, Gans explained that audiences for national news magazines and TV news broadcasts were too large and diverse to be fully understood, and that readers and viewers don’t necessarily even know what they want.

On a far smaller scale, Min (2004) studied a biweekly alternative news magazine in Texas and also found that editors largely perceived their audiences as similar to themselves demographically (older, white and educated) and politically (progressive). Because that particular publication operated as a nonprofit and was not focused on maximizing revenue, editors and writers said they wrote about whatever they believed was socially, culturally or politically important, rather than what readers and/or potential

³ Gans defined “superiors” as direct and indirect editorial supervisors.

advertisers might actually want. As one editor said, “We don’t worry so much about pleasing everybody all the time” (Min, 2004, 454). But such an approach is the exception rather than the norm in the publishing world today, particularly given the vast competition online for readers’ time and money as well as for advertisers’ business. Because *The Texas Observer’s* editorial mission is rooted in a politically liberal perspective, its advertisers know exactly what they’re aligning their brands with. However, the nonprofit that publishes the newspaper is still losing significant money; revenues are generated through donations, fund-raising, grants, subscriptions and advertising. Revenues in 2011 were down approximately 30% from the previous year, the organization lost nearly \$190,000, and the print edition publishes only monthly today. At some point in the near future, the *Observer* will either run out of money and go out of business, or editors will need to start worrying a bit more about trying to please readers and advertisers.

Scholars and practitioners alike have long developed lists of news values journalists employ to determine when, where and how resources should be allocated to cover certain events and issues. Most studies have focused on “hard” news values at daily newspapers (Donahew, 1967; Clyde and Buckalew, 1969; Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986) and/or television news stations (Harmon, 1989; Berkowitz, 1990). At both newspapers and broadcast TV stations, conflict, timeliness and proximity were the most prominent values. Others have examined the news values at weekly community newspapers, where proximity reigns supreme. Stories are often focused on a narrowly defined geographic area and the publication is emotionally connected to its readers (Byerly, 1981).

News values and the values for feature pieces that inform much magazine writing are not all that dissimilar (Ricketson, 2004). Impact, relevance, prominence and conflict are among the shared values, while timeliness is more relevant to news writing than it is to feature writing; features typically are not wedded to a daily news agenda. The true differences exist in focus. Feature writers focus more on subjects' personal issues, as opposed to the professional issues often covered by news reporters. Feature writers focus more on story subjects' emotions than on their opinions (Stenson, 2009). Lastly, there is an ever-increasing amount of literature about story development at online publications and the differing standards of news criteria between print newspapers and online publications (Singer, 2001; Singer, 2003; Boczkowski, 2004; Robinson, 2006). For example, online editorial content—whether professional journalists or amateur writers produce it—is more rooted in immediacy, novelty and the prominence of story subjects than is print content. However, newspaper journalists who also produce content for the Internet have largely maintained their traditional gate-keeping role online by applying normative news values to information gleaned from and for the Internet (Cassidy, 2006; Farhi, 2009; Hermida, 2010).

Despite the many factors journalists consider when determining which issues and events merit news coverage, there is “no single or simple explanation of the news” (Gans, 1979, 281). News decision-making is a complex, often hierarchical, process that involves such factors as institutional objectives, technical and operational factors, the manipulative power of news sources, and the subjective beliefs of journalists. These all fall under the broad conceptual framework of “gatekeeping,” or the process by which journalists

acquire information and decide what of that information should be disseminated to the public.

White (1950) was among the earliest scholars to study editorial decision-making and shed some light on the processes journalists used to determine what information is and isn't shared with readers. He made a middle-aged wire editor, whom he dubbed "Mr. Gates," famous by studying how the man performed his "gatekeeping" function in selecting and rejecting various wire stories for transmission to newspapers. Mr. Gates's decision-making process was often rooted in technical or operational factors, while some story-selection decisions seemed subjective to White, who argued that journalists' personal experiences and attitudes have a sizable affect on their determination of news. Later research confirmed this point. Daily newspaper reporters were largely secular, left of center politically, and socially progressive, beliefs that informed which events and issues received coverage and how that coverage was portrayed (Broder, 1987; Garment, 1991).

In examining the gate-keeping function of 16 wire editors in Wisconsin, Gieber (1956) found that their personal preferences were rarely cited in determining a story's suitability for transmission. Rather, the editorial values of the newsroom as a whole guided decision-making. The editors were "concerned with goals of production, bureaucratic routine and interpersonal relations within the newsroom" (1956, 175). As was the case with White's study, Gieber noted that editors often declined stories based simply on a lack of available space. To be sure, technological advances—from news organizations' adoption of the telegraph in the 1850s to the Internet in the 1990s—have influenced the construction of news, as routines based on the collection and

dissemination of editorial content has evolved. The speed by which information can be obtained from sources, both local and international, thanks to technological advances is perhaps the biggest factor that influences the types of stories news organizations publish (Ibold and Wilkins, 2008). At the least, it expands the opportunity for certain stories to be published or broadcast. Other gatekeeping studies examined the role of collective assessments made during daily editors meetings (Clayman and Reisner, 1989), as well as the maintenance of cultural and social values relating to such issues as crime (Cohen and Young, 1973), sexuality and health (Watney, 1987), race (Hartmann and Husband, 1974) and gender equality (Tuchman, 2000).

The definition of news also varies by era, region and medium (Demers and Viswanath, 1999). For example, although sensationalism in big-city newspapers took root in the late 19th century, such coverage expanded in the 1920s, following the advent of radio, and again in the 1960s and '70s, following increased competition for audience's time and attention from television. Small-town newspapers provided far less sensationalistic coverage than their major metropolitan counterparts, focusing instead on the day-to-day happens of their communities (Houchin Winfield, 2008). In the 1940s, The Commission on Freedom of the Press—a private effort spearheaded by magazine publisher Henry Luce and University of Chicago President Robert Hutchins to study and clarify the changing social and civic needs of the U.S. citizenry—found that journalists often made editorial decisions based on a desire to appeal to the broadest possible audience, a central component of an advertising-based business model. “When a journalist says that a certain event is news, he does not mean that is important in itself. Often it is; but about as often it is not. The journalist means by news something that has

happened within the last few hours which will attract the interest of the customers. The criteria of interest are recency or firstness, proximity, combat, human interest, and novelty....To attract the maximum audience, the press emphasizes the exceptional rather than the representative, the sensational rather than the significant” (The Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947, 55). The impact and significance of the Commission’s report will be further examined later this chapter.

Galtung and Ruge (1965) identified several competing and oftentimes overlapping news values journalists use to determine which events—in their study’s case, foreign-based events—merit coverage and publication: frequency, significance, clarity, cultural proximity, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, actions of the elite, personification and negativity. But because newspapers are complex organizations that generate the preponderance of their revenues through a combination of advertising and circulation, it’s not unusual for different employees to interpret audiences differently. As DeWerth-Pallmeyer (1997) contends, “Working images of the audience are shaped to meet organizational needs” (4). For example, top business-side executives might see readers merely as a compilation of demographics that can be sold to advertisers, while editors might perceive readers as similar to themselves, possessing many of the same subject-matter interests. In addition, reporters can form views of readers from feedback obtained through letters, emails or comments on the street, but also via newsroom colleagues who bring their own biases to news criteria selection. Lastly, reporters might adopt a fluid view of their readers’ content wants and needs in order to convince an editor of a potential story’s news value. “None of these people are [sic] necessarily wrong.

However, each viewpoint is incomplete when taken alone” (DeWerth-Pallmeyer, 1997, 102).

Studies have found that editors often overestimate reader interest in crime, religion and sports (Bernt et al, 2000), as well as celebrity news (Atwood, 1970), and they underestimate reader interest in national and international news (Bogart, 1981; Atkin et al, 1983). It’s worth noting, as stated earlier, that news definitions vary by era and that they are based in large part on editors’ opinions of what readers need and desire at a certain point in time. At *The Washington Post* in the 1960s and ’70s, Executive Editor Ben Bradlee and Managing Editor Howard Simons were particularly interested in what they deemed “SMERSH”: science, medicine, education, religion...and all that shit (Graham, 1997), and informed writers and section editors to report on these areas more fully. A serious newspaper, their thinking went, covered the pursuit of knowledge and the maintenance of spirituality. It’s unclear if these topical interests were born from *readers’* desires, or if the topics were simply of interest to the editors and their belief in what readers *should* care about. Perhaps it’s neither. Maybe it was just an effort to win additional advertising support from area hospitals, colleges, churches and synagogues. As previously noted, the application of news values is a complex process that includes organizational, cultural and commercial factors.

Although the notion of objectivity is a cornerstone of 20th century newspaper journalism practice (Schudson, 1978; Mindich, 1998), surveys have shown a correlation between widely accepted societal values, journalists’ personal beliefs, and their determinations of which issues and events merit news coverage (Patterson and Donsbach, 1996; Donsbach, 2004). Schudson (1989) calls this the “culturological approach” to

editorial decision-making, or the “symbolic determinants of news in the relations between ideas and symbols” (17). Gans (1979) categorized a number of these cultural values—including ethnocentrism, responsible capitalism, individualism, and small-town pastoralism—to explain how journalists construct the news. Similarly, Tuchman (1972) has argued that journalists often rely on their own versions of “common sense,” derived from socialized structures and cultural attitudes that are taken for granted as accurate. “The news judgment which justifies ‘sense’ seems to be sacred professional knowledge” (Tuchman, 1972, 675).

The Professionalization of Journalists

In surveys dating to the 1970s, journalists saw their roles as neutral, detached observers that provide factual information, and also as advocates of solutions to societal problems who interpret or explain events (Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman, 1976). Later research expanded on journalists’ conceptions of their work, which included acting as adversaries of business and government (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986) and as mobilizers of readers (Weaver et al, 2007). Rooted in each of these conceptions is the notion that journalism is a professional practice.

The professionalization of journalism took shape in the late 19th century and early 20th century, as reporters began receiving college training and, hence, a higher degree of respectability within society. Some have claimed that the professionalization of the industry was a reaction to the prevalence of yellow journalism, a form of editorial sensationalism that emphasized exaggerations, scandals, rumors and crime coverage. Yellow journalism was popular starting in the early 1900s as newspapers, particularly in

major cities, competed for readers' attention in an effort to bolster circulation (Mott, 1941; Campbell, 2001). The University of Missouri-Columbia featured the first school dedicated to journalism instruction, starting in 1908 (Houchin Winfield, 2008), while Columbia's journalism program in New York City was founded in 1912 (Carey, 2000). For the first time, future reporters and editors were learning the "obligations, correct practices, and knowledge of historical roots and acceptable principles" (Houchin Winfield, 2008), enabling them the opportunity to earn the kind of societal respect bestowed upon professionals in the practice of law and medicine.

Journalism education was rooted in the philosophical goal of public service in the support of democracy through the dissemination of information that might help people make informed decisions about their lives. Truth and accuracy became a hallmark of the profession. Reporters' bias within news stories were frowned upon by editors and occasionally derided by newsroom colleagues. The journalistic purpose of serving the public interest held primacy over publishers' pursuit of profit. Obviously, these standards were not adopted and applied consistency throughout the industry. But through formal education and the growth of professional journalism associations that enabled reporters and editors to discuss best practices, deride deviations, and celebrate through the administration of awards the work that best exemplified their industry, standards were increasingly accepted and normalized (Schudson, 1981; Sloan and Startt, 1996; Houchin Winfield, 2008).

Professional journalism was to stand on the same intellectual footings as the learned professions of medicine and theology, as opposed to the "client-centered, industry-based relationships" (Ibold and Wilkins, 2008, 86) that defined accounting and

engineering. Other traits of journalism as a profession include members' willingness to put public service ahead of financial gain, and that members produce products that vary greatly on a daily basis (Beam, Weaver and Brownlee, 2009). In writing about professionalism in general, Freidson (1986) and Scott (1995) similarly noted that professional authority is derived from mission-driven work that holds social legitimacy. The individual members that make up organized units of professionals possess expert knowledge, typically obtained through a common and specialized education, and define their own areas of interest. Because of their common educational backgrounds and associations with other industry professionals, operational standards and processes are codified, diffused and become normative. However, because professional authority is linked to organizational identity, changes in an organization's mission can limit the power of certain professionals. Thornton (2002), for instance, tracked the institutional shift in the U.S. higher education book publishing industry, from an editorial logic in the 1960s to a market-oriented logic in the 1980s. In the 1960s, many publishing companies were privately owned and relatively small, and their missions were rooted in organizational prestige and increasing book sales. Publishing was a profession. Things began to change some 10 years later, as higher education book publishing became a big business, with corporations consuming independent publishers and missions changing to competitive position and profit generation. With top-tier publishing houses leading this shift toward market gain, conformity in the pursuit of legitimacy followed. The CEO, whose status and authority were derived from the company's financial success, hence became the dominant authority figure, as opposed to the editorial-side professional publisher.

As the newspaper industry similarly faces technological and economic challenges to their bottom lines, many have worried how journalists' professional identities might be impacted. *Washington Post* political reporter David Broder once contended that the professionalization of journalists stood as a bulwark against publishers more interested in profit than social purpose. "When journalists were itinerant, hard-drinking, but lightly educated and poorly paid wretches, they were easily replaced by others no worse equipped to cover a beat or write a headline" (Broder, 1987, 325). The educated, finely trained journalist, whose work earns industry-wide accolades and a loyal following among readers, is not so easily replaced. In addition, the collective maintenance of professional standards throughout a newsroom can oftentimes carry as much weight as any commercial or political pressure. *Post* Publisher Katharine Graham famously used to say that her refusal to back down from the Nixon administration during her paper's coverage of the Watergate scandal was less about standing up to the White House and more about not wanting to tell the newsroom to stop doing their jobs. To call off the *Post's* reporters and editors "would have caused a newsroom rebellion that might have damaged the *Post's* credibility far more than any political or commercial pressures from the administration," according to Broder (1987, 325). In essence, the professional standing of workers was more advantageous to them than it was to their employers. Independent-minded professionals, typically motivated by public interest, simply would not abide by managerial efforts that might undermine their values and social standing (Larson, 1977; Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

A number of studies have examined changes in the news media industry and their effects on journalists' attitudes about professional values. For example, Neuzil et al

(1999) found that team-based models of content creation were unpopular with newspaper journalists because individualism, as it pertains to creativity, is a major component of professional standards of practice. In noting how the professional standards of traditional journalistic practice, specifically original reporting and writing and a commitment to truth, were being challenged by online journalists, who often practiced the digital aggregation of others' work and placed a high value on expediency in publishing, Singer (2003) argued that it was the traditional journalists who would likely have to reconsider existing notions of professionalism. Traditional journalists' value systems were not stronger than market forces, she contended; readers and advertisers were leaving newspapers in droves for less expensive and even free digital media alternatives. The challenge for journalists is in striking a proper balance between traditional notions of professionalism in their print newspaper work and new practices for a relatively new medium.

The professional values that define a newspaper journalist can also be different than the professional values of someone who writes for a magazine. Broder, the longtime and award-winning political reporter for *The Washington Post*, called newspaper reporters "voyeurs, not participants." Professional newspaper journalists must be "our most disciplined and dispassionate when almost every human instinct impels us to give way to joy or pain" (1987, 343). Yet, a professional philosophy such as this runs counter to the professional practice of journalism often seen in consumer magazines, including such periodicals as *The New Yorker*, *Mother Jones*, *The Atlantic* and *Esquire*. Among the defining characteristics of narrative nonfiction journalism, of the type popularized by the likes of Thomas Wolfe, Joan Didion and Hunter S. Thompson starting the 1960s, is the

author's point of view and, often, his or her own inclusion in the article as a character who interacts with those under examination (Macdonald, 1965; Douglas, 1991; Harvey, 1994). In addition, narrative nonfiction often includes the recreation of dialogue that the reporter wasn't present to hear and the recreation of scenes the reporter did not witness. But magazine journalists are afforded the opportunity, based on the professional norms and values specific to the medium for which they ply their craft, to be both a voyeur *and* a participant. As Abrahamson (1996) and others (Tebbel, 1969; Taft, 1982) have argued, magazines typically do not maintain the same public service values that define newspapers. That said, literary journalism isn't the province of magazines alone; Wolfe, Didion and many practitioners experimented with narrative nonfiction during their time as newspaper reporters. The constant deadline pressures of a daily newspaper are often the great impediment in reporters' ability to write such pieces (Harvey, 2004).

Veering from any internal norms can be difficult because control of the rules and standards by which individual members must adhere to typically lies with managers and editors (McLeod and Hawley Jr., 1964), who wield the power to hire and fire, to praise and punish. In providing a critical definition of professionalism, Soloski contends it is a way for organizations to "control the behavior of reporters and editors" (1989, 207). At the root of this concept of professionalism is the relationship between supervisor and worker, whose professional future is tied to performing tasks in a proscribed way under the rules set by a supervisor. Consequently, "there is little reward in the professions for systematically re-examining the intellectual basis of professional practice" (Carey, 1978a, 851). Although senior managers, or editors in the case of journalism, don't necessarily create internal cultures, they do often enforce them or attempt to adjust them by

informing workers of appropriate attitudes, values and behaviors (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; O'Reilly, 1989). Culture is largely defined as socially constructed structures and systems through which an organization operates. The beliefs and behaviors of individuals feed and solidify an organization's culture, but those beliefs and behaviors are largely the result of an indoctrination of sorts that are perpetuated through norms and routines. For a culture to persist, intensity in the adoption of norms and consensus are required (O'Reilly, 1989; Kanter et al, 1992).

In this formalized system of control, individuals come to see that they should act and interact in certain ways, both to meet the needs of supervisors but also to potentially win such rewards as recognition, promotion, a salary increase, and/or enhanced responsibilities (Breed, 1955). "Journalists do not adhere to formal codes of newsworthiness that can be identified and promulgated and therefore 'learnt' by the public. Instead the informal code of what constitutes a good story is part of newsroom initiation and socialization. Affirmation for 'good stories' is confirmed in the newsroom by acknowledgement of superiors and by peer envy and praise" (McGregor, 2002, 2).

It's also confirmed and acknowledged through professional associations. Associations can influence professional practices through educational trainings and by fostering and managing discussions about deviations from established institutional norms, a social process that can lead to the legitimization or rejection of those deviations. If deviations are legitimized, professional identities can then be reconstituted under a new order (Greenwood et al, 2002). The newspaper industry has a number of professional groups and associations through which norms, codes of ethical conduct, and values are continually reinforced through conferences, interpersonal interactions and marketing

materials, such as trade publications. They include, among many others, the Society of Professional Journalists, American Copy Editors Association, the American Society of Magazine Editors, Associated Press Sports Editor and the Online News Association. From 1987 to the early 2000s, the Sunday Magazine Editors Association, or SUNMAG, brought together Sunday magazine editors on an annual basis to share best editorial practices and provide awards for noteworthy journalism that appeared in locally produced Sunday newspaper magazines. The goal of the association, largely underwritten by the Standard Gravure Co. of Louisville, Ky., a rotogravure printing company that printed many of the nation's Sunday magazines, was to help professionalize Sunday magazine editors and bolster the editorial quality of the publications (Gersh, 1987). From a business standpoint, Standard Gravure rationalized that Sunday magazines would thrive and survive if they were viewed as editorially indispensable by the newspapers that published them. This was partially accomplished by giving out awards for top work; as they tend to do, newspapers dutifully boasted within their own pages about the awards their journalists won (Washington Post, 1992; Pittsburgh Post Gazette, 1994; Orlando Sentinel, 1996). Different Sunday magazine editors would serve as president of the association each year. However, SUNMAG disbanded in the early 2000s due to a lack of membership, as newspapers were eliminating their locally produced Sunday magazines for economic reasons. According to some of the *Post* magazine editors interviewed for this study, little attention was spent at SUNMAG conferences talking about advertising or the economics of magazine publishing. Typical discussions revolved around finding good freelance writers, the challenges in getting daily reporters to write for the Sunday

magazine, best practices in packaging feature stories, and new ideas for column themes and short sections.

But even editorial content changes don't come easily, particularly when professionals perceive that their values are being challenged. When *The New York Times* explored adding new lifestyle-oriented sections in the spring of 1976, many journalists throughout the newsroom were concerned about how they, and their newspaper, would be perceived by readers and others in the news media industry. Arthur Gelb, an assistant managing editor who was tasked with launching the new Weekend section, said his chief concern wasn't whether the section would make money; it turned out to be hugely popular among readers and advertisers. Rather, it was "whether his peers and those in the literary and cultural community whose opinion he valued would feel the *Times* had sold its soul and cheapened itself" (Tifft and Jones, 1999, 510).

The success of Weekend, and greater flexibility in production and printing thanks to technological advances, prompted the *Times* to further revamp the "old gray lady" into something more contemporary. The paper took many of its inspirations from the world of magazines to create design-heavy section fronts unique for each day of the week (Sports on Monday, Science on Tuesday, Living on Wednesday, for example). However, not everyone at the paper embraced these changes; many reporters and editors worried that the journalistic character of the *Times*—as well as their own professional identity as *Times* journalists—would suffer. The *Times* was long known for its seriousness of purpose. But publisher Arthur "Punch" Sulzberger knew that times had changed, and that the popularity of television for both entertainment and breaking news was a threat to his company's bottom line. "The mission of *The New York Times*, Punch told one

interviewer at the time without a hint of shame, was first to be profitable, and then to cover the news, explaining that if the paper didn't make money, 'we can't have any other mission' " (Tiff and Jones, 1999, 512). It's not entirely clear why Sulzberger *should* have felt shame for admitting that a business must generate revenues in excess of its costs. As the newspaper scholar Philip Meyer (2004) later explained, economic ignorance on the part of journalists has been institutionalized, ironically at the expense of the very bottom lines that determine editorial budgets, staffing and other content-based resources. "The old convention that editors should be protected from all knowledge of the business side is hopelessly out of date" (Meyer, 2004, 205).

Interestingly, news organizations have been placing a greater emphasis on personality traits, as opposed to professional values, when making hiring determinations of entry-level workers. Faced with increased competition from the Internet—for both revenue and people's time—the importance of professional values in hiring decisions has seemingly waned. Research has shown that newspaper editors in the mid-1990s, when compared to the early '80s, were increasingly interested in hiring entry-level people with specific personality traits and work habits that would mesh well within their organization's evolving culture, specifically the embrace of change and adaptation. Editors ranked their interest in the professional values held by prospective employees relatively low, beneath technical skills, English language skills and general knowledge. Television news directors actually rated "professional values," such as journalistic ethical standards, much higher than newspaper editors did. It is unclear why, although station managers may have believed that the immediacy of TV broadcasting required a high level of journalistic ethical standards. "Both television and print news executives are

more concerned with hiring new employees who can meet the demands of the organizational culture than they are with hiring those who can meet the demands of the professional culture of journalism” (Hollifield et al, 2001, 110). It is possible that these news organizations have come to realize that it is far easier to teach new employees the professional values that define the industry, than it is to teach new employees how to adapt to change as technological and economic circumstances demand.

Market-Orientation

To be sure, newspaper journalists are increasingly aware of the financial challenges their industry faces, in no small part because of staff and news hole reductions at their own publications (Scott and Sieber, 1992; Meyer, 2009; Sonderman, 2012) as well as a steady stream of news accounts in the trade press and mainstream media that chronicle industry upheaval (Downie and Schudson, 2009; Dorrah, 2009). In a study that sought to empirically map perceptions of journalistic culture and the role that economic considerations play in newsrooms, Kunelius and Ruusunokso (2008) interviewed a number of managing editors of newspapers in Finland. The authors found that most actively considered the business interests of their newspapers—largely in terms of competition for readers—in editorial decision-making. As one managing editor noted: “Newsrooms will have to live in economic frames which get tighter all the time, and all this is developing into a content production industry.... You have to understand what it is all about, and start thinking how journalism can be renewed from within these financial frames” (668).

Entering 2010, paid weekday circulation for daily newspapers was down 31.5% over the previous 25 years, to approximately 43.5 million, while Sunday circulation was down 27%, to 45.6 million, according to the Newspaper Association of America (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010). Worse yet, advertising revenues—which make up the bulk of newspapers’ earnings—declined a whopping 28% in the third quarter of 2009, compared to the same period a year earlier (Liedtke, 2009). It was the 13th consecutive quarter that newspaper advertising revenues have dropped year-over-year. And the trend hasn’t improved. U.S. newspapers earned approximately \$2 billion less in advertising revenues in 2011 compared to the previous year for a total of about \$24 billion. Worse yet, for every \$1 newspapers earned in online advertising, they lost \$10 in print advertising (Lee, 2012).

In the early 1990s, a task force consisting of newspaper editors and executives issued a report that outlined several strategic options dailies could employ to increase readership and, subsequently, advertising revenue. Among the recommendations developed by the Competitive Analysis Project Task Force was the individual appeal strategy, whereby the newspaper “creates a series of daily features and weekly specialty magazines and lifestyle tabs so that the various special interests of changing consumers are served by tightly targeted publications” (Editor & Publisher, 1992, 22TC). Perhaps more importantly, sectionalization would give specific would-be advertisers a print platform to reach a dedicated niche audience of particularly engaged readers.

“Sectionalization makes the newspaper more accessible to readers by making its content more predictable, by packaging content in a convenient and manageable form....It is that predictability that develops readers’ emotional ties to the features, that brings readers

back to the paper day after day, that makes the paper's content seem familiar and comfortable amidst the endless turmoil and daily turnover in the subject matter of the (predominantly unpleasant) hard news" (Bogart, 1989, 106).

With varying degrees of success, newspapers have pursued niche content strategies in the pursuit of category-specific advertising for the past 40 years. When national advertising revenues began shifting away from newspapers and toward television and direct mail in the 1970s, many metropolitan dailies sought to reinvent themselves to win new readers and regain their relevancy in the eyes of advertising media buyers, who tended to be young and typically didn't read newspapers (Maxwell and Wanta, 2001). Advertisers were no longer interested in total market coverage, even though many metropolitan dailies invested millions in the production and distribution of free advertising circulars to nonsubscriber households beginning in the 1970s. "The trend toward highly refined target marketing is a result of audience fragmentation" (Advertising Age, 1989, 48). Readers were given more feel-good feature stories, while new lifestyle sections and entertainment supplements were created. The rise of food sections in the late '80s and early '90s, for example, was directly related to the fact that supermarkets had become large print advertisers. "The outburst of features on running shoes and home medical test kits and dead rock stars...lent newspapers a frothy tone usually found in consumer magazines. These features and sections signify the adoption of marketing by dailies and remind us that advertising influences editorial content through symbiosis, not extortion" (Blankenburg, 1992, 116).

From 1979 to 1983, 25% of daily newspapers added new "lifestyle" sections, while 38% of papers with a circulation of more than 100,000 created such sections

(Bogart, 1985). Zoned editions were also added to win over readers with specific geographic interests, as well as to appeal to small area businesses that couldn't afford the high price of full run ad rates. In an effort to emulate the appeal of television, a number of publications added color to their pages—and charged advertisers a premium for the kind of color they previously could only purchase through the paper's Sunday magazine—increased the usage of photographs and charts, and began requiring reporters to write shorter stories (Gladney, 1994).

Applying a market-based approach to the creation of editorial content is hardly a phenomenon of the 1980s and early '90s, although Gannett Co.'s *USA Today*, founded in 1982, is widely credited with taking audience research and marketing to new heights in the newspaper industry (Prichard, 1987). Magazines have been using market research to understand their readers since at least the early 1900s. Such efforts were largely in response to advertisers' demands for more demographic data about readers, including their incomes and product-buying habits. Advertisers wanted to figure out where best to spend their money in an increasingly competitive field of newspapers and magazines. Curtis Publishing Co., which owned the two highest circulation magazines in the country during the 1910s, *Ladies Home Journal* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, was a pioneer in the use of reader market research. “To Cyrus Curtis and his staff, readers were more than just an audience; they were a product in themselves, something that could be defined, packaged and sold to advertisers. As in the commercial publishing world today, readers were a commodity” (Ward, 1996, 48). However, Curtis and his journalists also used the data to better understand their readers' content preferences.

Newspapers began conducting audience studies in the 1930s (Bogart, 1985) and have since used them to gain a better understanding of readers' editorial content desires. In addition, newspapers have used these studies to better understand the demographic characteristics of their readers, to better "sell" their audience to prospective advertisers. Beam (1995) found that 85% of newspapers hired outside consultants to conduct readership studies and that most newspapers used the studies to restructure feature sections rather than national or international news coverage in the main section. This was because feature sections typically contain the type of editorial content that best appeals to specific markets of would-be advertisers. Of course, none of this means newspaper journalists actually like the practice of considering audience wants. Journalists have been generally reluctant to "accept any procedure which casts doubt on their news judgment and their professional autonomy" (Gans, 1979, 232).

However, in the early 2000s, Gade found that U.S. newspaper managers and journalists were still reexamining their news values, but were displaying "increased market consciousness" (2004, 9) out of necessity. Because of the Internet, competition for readers' time and attention was fierce; moreover, newspaper circulation was on the decline. In years past, Stepp (2000) wrote in chronicling the changing culture of the newspaper industry, "newsrooms and news people were autocratic, aloof and aggressive. They published first and asked questions later. They brazenly built fences between themselves and their sources and audiences. They guarded an independence bordering on isolation, not only from the outside world but even from other divisions of their own papers. They strutted and preened in the security of reader dependence. No more." But as the business of publishing changed, and newspapers in particular began losing tens of

millions of dollars in classified and other forms of advertising, the threat of their own professional mortality compelled many to approach their work a little differently.

In 2007, Gannett Co. launched a task force that studied the content wants and needs of readers over the age of 40. According to the company, people 40 and older were the most loyal and largest age-based segment of print newspaper readers. Among the findings, passed along to all Gannett papers to act on, was that these readers prioritized local news and hard news, yet they also greatly valued lifestyle-oriented content, such as entertainment listings, movie and restaurant reviews, and articles about cooking and day trips. “For us to be most effective with the print platform, it is necessary to zero in on the primary audience of readers over the age of 40,” read the report (Strupp, 2008, 23).

The *Chicago Tribune* took “reader engagement” to new heights in early 2009, when the paper sent out questionnaires to some 9,000 readers, asking them which of 10 prospective stories they would most like to read. Each of the stories was already in the works. However, when word of the questionnaire became known throughout the *Tribune*’s newsroom, journalists were largely aghast. *Tribune* editor Gerould Kern said the problem was not whether it is appropriate to ask readers what they think, but rather unwise to talk about stories in progress because it could damage ongoing reporting (Wasserman, 2009). It’s a fair concern. Would-be sources could gain a false impression of a story and decline to talk to reporters. Or, news of the story could tip off a source before the reporter was prepared to seek comment, which might affect how the source later answers questions.

Technological advances have made the practice of reader engagement far more commonplace in newsrooms throughout the country. Since at least 2000, online

publications, including newspapers, have used analytic technology to determine which stories are the most popular with readers. Based on the results, editors can adjust story placement online accordingly (Brill, 2001; Kiron and Shockey, 2011). When the online news site *Huffington Post* began hiring newspaper journalists in the mid-2000s, managers found that their new hires were largely unfamiliar with using data analytics. The new hires had to be re-trained to understand how *Huffington Post* uses data to better understand what its readers, and readers everywhere, are interested in knowing about (Shafer, 2011). A number of newspapers now use online readership data to pursue future like-minded stories for print and online (MacGregor, 2007). A 2009 survey of news managers found that approximately two-thirds checked their papers' online analytics on a daily basis, and more than half said the readership/page view data were discussed in news planning meetings at least "fairly frequently" (Lowrey and Woo, 2010).

As newsrooms continue to merge their print and online operations (Niles, 2005; Romenesko, 2009), such attention to audiences' content interests will likely only increase, leading to continued consternation over the role of journalistic authority in determining the value of information, both from an editorial and business standpoint. Of course, the practice is not without its detractors. The market-oriented approach to determining news criteria, substituting journalists' "expert opinion" (Beam, 1998, 2) with perceived reader interest, has been subject to widespread derision from practitioners and scholars for years. By and large, they have characterized market-oriented journalism strategies as an affront to the news media industry's responsibility to provide public affairs information to their communities (Postman, 1985; Squires, 1993; Underwood, 1993; McManus, 1994; Patterson, 2000; Downie Jr. and Kaiser, 2003; Bagdikian, 2004).

“Traditionally, the fact-gatherers and storytellers have been schooled to ignore publishing economics in favor of ‘objectivity’ and ‘editorial independence’ ” (Scott and Sieber, 1992, 193). Professional journalism is a public service and a civic responsibility to serve as a watchdog over the various social, political and economic institutions of power that wield great influence over society, the argument goes. By maintaining a “church-state” divide between newsrooms and business departments, journalists are protected from potential undue influences over their work. It’s not that advertisers necessarily place overt pressure on newspapers to write certain stories, opponents of market-oriented journalism argue; rather, newspapers with strong market orientations tend to publish fewer stories about the government and public affairs and more stories about sports, amusement and lifestyle topics to create an editorial environment that is welcoming to would-be advertisers (Beam, 2003). “In short, the constant and increasing pressures growing out of the economics of modern American journalism clash with editorial values” (Gordon, 1998, 143). A 1999 study by *Editor & Publisher* magazine found that 72% of top newspaper executives sought closer cooperation between their publications’ news and business departments (Mitchell, 1999).

In the early 1940s, a private effort spearheaded by magazine publisher Henry Luce and University of Chicago president Robert Hutchins sought to address this very clash. The Commission for Freedom of the Press, formed in 1943, was charged with studying and clarifying the changing social and civic needs of the U.S. citizenry and how the news media could best serve the public in a modern democracy. It was the perceived over-commercialization of the news media that prompted a number of media executives, political leaders, business leaders and academics in the late 1940s to call for a new

direction within America's news organizations. Concerned by the virtual monopoly status of an increasing number of metropolitan daily newspapers, they felt that too many papers were operating as instruments of business, seeking to appeal to prospective consumers rather than perform a social function on behalf of all. "The American newspaper is now as much a medium of entertainment, specialized information, and advertising as it is of news," the Hutchins Commission, as the group became known, would later report (The Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947).

The dominant theory of the press that the commission employed in making its recommendations was that of social responsibility, which holds that the press has a moral responsibility to cover the essential activities of government. The press must analyze and interpret occurrences of public concern so that readers can take the necessary actions to protect their individual, community and national interests through informed participation in civil society (Siebert et al, 1956). However, this notion was more ideological than theoretical, critics would later argue. Nerone, for example, claimed that social responsibility—while a laudable goal—was actually little more than a “mystification the media owners propound to explain their own existence. The myth of the free press in the service of society exists because it is in the interests of media owners to perpetuate it” (1995, 29). For example, libertarian theory—from whose roots social responsibility was born—views newspapers, first and foremost, as private enterprises that hold no moral obligations to the public. Newspapers are a product, a manufactured good that attempts to generate profits for their owners through the sales and advertising functions. “In the end, the success of the enterprise would be determined by the public which it sought to service” (Siebert et al, 1956, 52). Merrill and Lowenstein (1979) rejected the whole idea

of a social responsibility theory, and tried to replace it with what they deemed a “social-libertarian theory.” Tied to the economic realities of the media industry, social-libertarian theory would require some governmental regulation of the press to curtail monopolization. With greater competition, the authors argued, the news media would be more likely to serve people’s informational and educational needs. Ultimately, according to Merrill (1989), the public will decide what type of news media they want. “The question of responsibility in journalism, as always in an open society, today must be settled by the personal definitions of the persons who use it and by the market forces in the society, in line with the pluralistic model and the market model” (188). One of the problems with Merrill’s argument is that it is prefaced on the assumption that competition will drive news media entities to strive to reach the highest levels of journalistic responsibility. Given that no news media organization utilizes metrics to measure the social value of their editorial content—such as political or civic engagement, for example—and that the market is based largely on quantity numbers such as paid circulation and page views, competition is just as likely to compel a news organization to forsake social responsibility and instead focus on sensationalism and entertainment coverage. Moreover, Merrill’s contention was made prior to the commercial release of the Internet, which has brought far more competition to traditional news media companies than anyone could have previously imagined.

Nonetheless, the Commission’s critique of the news media was hardly the first. Dating back to 1910 and the era of the Yellow Press, social psychologist Edward Alsworth Ross wrote a scathing column in *Atlantic Monthly* magazine, calling newspaper editors and reporters “hired men” who put in the newspaper whatever content yielded the

“biggest return from the investment” to create “the largest possible marketable product” (1910, 305). Ross called on newspapers to become financially endowed, to disentangle professional editorial values from the pursuit of profit, which can get in the way of truth telling. Far more recently, others have proposed changes to the news media industry’s advertising-based business model in an effort to bolster journalism in the public’s service. These include governmental subsidies (McChesney and Nichols, 2010), foundation support (Gilmor, 2009), and creating nonprofit news operations (Guensburg, 2008).

To be sure, the news media industry’s business model has greatly influenced the types of issues and events journalists choose to cover, as well as how things get covered. Because of the advertising-to-circulation revenue-generating disparity—typically 80%-to-20%, respectively—advertisers tend to wield an often unspoken influence over the type of content generated out of many newsrooms. “A portion of the advertisers’ payment often goes to having the editorial content better reflect the advertisers’ interests” (Baker, 1994, 13). This poses some significant problems when viewed through the lens of critical political economy, specifically how economic dynamics negatively affect public cultural expressions and often the flow of information to low-status social groups (Golding and Murdock, 1991), most notably people of modest economic means.

Through a lens of political economy, Gomery (2003) writes that monopolies and strongly cooperative oligopolies, such as the broadcast television industry, have often used their influence of public opinion to pressure government officials to legislate in such a way as to protect existing media enterprises, which have long resisted new technologies to protect their market shares. Smythe defined the political economy of communications somewhat generally, as a means to “evaluate the effects of communication agencies in

terms of the policies by which they are organized and operated” (1960, 564). With the near-monopoly status many newspapers enjoyed in mid-sized markets between 1910 and 1950, for example, newspapers increasingly focused on minimizing offensive material so as to appeal to the widest possible—yet commercially desirable—audience. Media companies that operate in an oligopoly or monopoly market structure similarly have little incentive to offer more innovative programming or editorial content (Webster and Phalen, 1994).

However, Demers contends that the operational structure of a company is often a poor indicator of the journalistic value of the newspaper it publishes. In studying newspaper concentration and the corporatization of newspaper companies, as well as an extensive review of the literature, he found that bottom-line-driven corporate, or chain, newspapers were often “more vigorous” editorially (1999, 94) than were many privately owned smaller newspapers, publishing more stories that challenged established authorities and more tolerant of differing points of view. Others still have found few differences in the type of content published by privately owned versus publicly owned daily newspapers (Beam, 2008).⁴ Contrary to many of the criticisms of publicly owned newspaper companies, the papers Beam studied actually covered civic activities slightly more often than the privately owned papers did, and there was no demonstrable difference between the quantity of the two groups’ coverage of “soft” content, such as sports, home life, arts, and entertainment.

⁴ Beam performed a content analysis of eight general-circulation daily newspapers, four privately owned and four publicly owned, in 2004. For the publicly owned sample, he excluded such papers as *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times* because they seek a national audience, which influenced content decisions.

Whether publicly owned or private, newspapers are highly likely increasingly to feature more editorial content of particular interest to high-paying readers and the advertisers who covet them; the challenge is in determining what that content should be. Due to advertising revenue shortfalls in recent years, newspapers continue to increase the price of their print products to make up for the lost revenues and, to a lesser degree, become less vulnerable to advertising market fluctuations. But even before large subscription rate hikes by newspapers, critics derided much of the news media industry for providing scant coverage of low-income neighborhoods, focusing instead on affluent communities and commercial enterprises (Squires, 1993; Badgikian, 2004). It hasn't slowed. *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, for example, preemptively reduced its circulation size in response to higher paper costs and advertising declines (AJC Staff, 2008). The *Journal-Constitution* curbed distribution from outlying areas far from Atlanta, where the paper is headquartered, as well as from various low-income areas communities that are unattractive to advertisers. The ultimate goal is to bolster the "quality" of readership over the mere "quantity." Said one *New York Times* marketing executive, speaking about the merits of limiting certain people's access to the print newspaper, "We make no effort to sell to the mob" (Baker, 1994, 67). Squires (1993) is equally pointed in his critical explanation of the practice: "Because advertisers want only high-income, well-educated readers, [newspaper] publishers don't really want higher penetration in their market. They want what magazine publishers have always wanted—higher penetration in the top 35% of the market. But unlike magazine publishers, newspaper owners can't just admit that and begin basing rates on audience profiles" (89). The top

35% refers to the most demographically valuable readers, namely educated and affluent adults.

The Elimination of Advertising

Through the years, a number of publishers have experimented with eliminating advertising altogether in the name of complete editorial freedom, but most each effort failed due to financial constraints. Edward W. Scripps, a publisher with a growing newspaper empire in Ohio, had long sought to see if a daily newspaper free of advertising pressures could not only survive but also thrive. In September 1911, Scripps and editor N.D. Cochran launched the *Day Book* in Chicago and sold copies for a then still typical one cent to win the business of the widest possible audience, namely working-class readers. Editorial content focused on issues of particular interest to this population, namely stories about low wages and poor working conditions in the Chicago area, as well as a bevy of entertainment stories. “The *Day Book* remained a steadfast ally of the working class and the dispossessed, and a primary source of news on their struggles. The *Day Book* showed how a newspaper might keep a vigilant watch over department stores and other powerful advertisers, the government, and the mainstream press against which it competed” (Stoltzfus, 2007, 5). However, the publication lasted a mere six years, ending in 1917 with the anticipated rise in newsprint prices due to World War I rationing. With the increase in white paper costs—the publication carried a visual appeal more similar to a magazine than to a traditional newsprint newspaper—Cochran attempted to increase the *Day Book*’s price to two cents, but circulation dropped off. It never turned a profit (Stoltzfus, 2007).

A second notable effort to publish a newspaper absent of advertising premiered in New York City on June 18, 1940. The brainchild of Ralph Ingersoll, a longtime magazine man—Ingersoll was a former reporter at *The New Yorker*, managing editor of *Fortune* magazine and a general manager at *Time*—*PM* featured many of the content innovations that *USA Today*, some 50 years later, would be credited with packaging together. A newspaper-magazine hybrid of sorts, *PM* featured color pages, bold uses of photography, and ample graphics. But it was the fact that *PM* carried no advertising that most distinguished it from other newspapers of its time. Ingersoll believed that a newspaper beholden to advertisers for financial support—*PM* was instead funded through circulation and private investors, such as department store magnate Marshall Fields III—could not effectively provide readers with the types of stories they needed and, he believed, wanted. It was a newspaper with a perspective, with an attitude and, most definitely, an agenda (Hoopes, 1984). “Most great newspapers become great by their crusades. We propose to follow this tradition. But we shall crusade in a modern way,” Ingersoll wrote in his business proposal for *PM*. “However, we who are working on this new newspaper, as human beings, love and hate certain things. We shall not be unbiased journalists. We do not believe that unbiased journalism exists. Claims to emotional disinterest are, consciously or unconsciously, usually fraudulent” (Becker, 1964, 205).

PM, a tabloid, was sold for 5 cents and lost money from the start. Six years into the venture, Field ordered the reversal of the no-advertising experiment. *PM* began accepting advertising, but the publication wasn’t able to effectively reinvent its editorial identity in a way that invited much business. In 1949, *PM* shuttered its operation (Becker, 1964).

Other publications, most notably magazines, have attempted to publish without any advertising revenue support. In 1976, for example, a group of liberal journalists created a new political magazine called *Mother Jones* that purposefully carried no advertising so that editors could be free from external commercial pressures that might somehow impugn the editorial integrity of the publication. *Mother Jones* was published by the Foundation for National Progress, a politically progressive nonprofit group based out of San Francisco. Membership dues were \$12 annually, of which \$4 went to publication costs. But \$4 wasn't nearly enough, even with additional reader donations, to cover the actual expenses of publishing and distributing a magazine. *Mother Jones'* editorial board put the decision to readers. It polled 2,000 of them and asked if they would be willing to pay up to 25% more for a *Mother Jones* without any advertising. A whopping 87% of respondents said no (*Mother Jones*, January 1978). "Rest assured, though, that more advertising will in no way change what we say in our articles," editors wrote in explaining their rationale for advertising. "Indeed, after each issue goes to bed, we mentally cross off one or two corporations we know will never buy an ad" (*Mother Jones*, January 1978, 3). *Mother Jones* still publishes today, six times a year, and received the 2008 and 2010 National Magazine Award for general excellence, perhaps proving that a reliance on advertising as a revenue source does not mean editorial quality or integrity must suffer as a consequence.

Gloria Steinem founded *Ms.* magazine as a monthly in 1972 and said she chose to carry advertising primarily to defray the subscription and newsstand prices for readers; Steinem wanted as many women as possible to read her feminist magazine. But many advertisers didn't want to be in a feminist magazine, even though it reached a largely

educated market of readers. Moreover, those that did implicitly sought to influence editorial content. In a 1990 article in *Ms.*, Steinem decried the influence advertisers had over content in women's magazines in general, noting that food, clothing and beauty product companies often required women's magazines to publish favorable, non-controversial editorial content in return for an ad buy. "That's why women's magazines look the way they do....The myth that advertisers simply follow readers is very strong" (Steinem, 1990, 28). In actuality, she contended, advertisers followed editorial content in magazines that dutifully affirmed the commercialism that such advertisements promoted.

In 1989, after 17 years of losing money, *Ms.* suspended publication. It returned one year later with a new plan: publish six times a year, and with no advertising. The magazine would be reader-supported. The company was bought and sold a number of times, due to its weak finances. Steinem and group of financiers purchased the magazine in 1998, but it filed for bankruptcy in 2001. It was then purchased by a nonprofit group called Feminist Majority Foundation and began publishing on a quarterly basis, with advertising.

The other magazine most notable for publishing without advertising is *Consumer Reports*, a monthly with a circulation of approximately 4.5 million. Launched in 1936 through a nonprofit, *Consumer Reports* has operated under the mission of "seeking to create and maintain decent living standards for ultimate consumers" (Siklos, 1999) by reviewing and rating an array of products, from cars to car seats, potting soil to pop-up toasters. Because the magazine doesn't feature advertising, product recommendations are almost never subjected to questions of credibility. The specialty publication even makes money through its website, where people pay to access *Consumer Reports* rich archive of

product data and reviews (Flamm, 2009). Ultimately, however, it's the utility of the editorial content. Ironically, *Consumer Reports* has long proven that people will financially support an ad-less print, and online since 1999, publication that helps their personal consumerism. They want information they can trust, but also information they can actively use. Newspaper journalism practiced under the auspices of social responsibility tends not to possess the same level of personal and immediate utility. That doesn't mean it's a bad thing, but it might mean that readers aren't likely to fully subsidize any publication that fails to meet specific needs.

Going Soft

In an effort to better blend editorial with business strategies, the magazine industry began moving away from mass-marketed general-interest publications in the post-World War II era of the late 1940s. Thanks to technological advances in printing and distribution, and the growth of consumer research, magazines could publish at lower costs and to more narrowly defined audiences of their choosing. From a business standpoint, this niche publishing approach enabled magazines to better compete against television for advertising revenues (Peterson, 1964; Shaw, 1977; Abramson, 1996; Pendergast, 2000). General-interest newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* have long struggled to maintain their mass appeal in an increasingly fragmented media world. By the late 1980s, both magazines were decreasing the amount of space given to "hard" news and replacing it with more "soft," or lifestyle/feature, stories. National affairs stories received just 30% of space in both newsmagazines in 1980, and that number dropped to about 25% by 1988. "Conditioned by television and such pseudo-

newsmagazines as *People*, many readers appeared to find the ‘soft’ material more enjoyable than the ‘hard’” (Tebbel and Zuckerman, 1991, 305). Of course, this was not new. In addressing many of his professional contemporaries at an editor-educator conference in 1951, *Newsweek* Washington bureau chief Kenneth Crawford spoke of the challenge in giving readers the content they craved in addition to the content editors believed readers needed. “We can’t be more substantial than our audience will let us be,” he said. “We print pictures of Marilyn Monroe along with articles trying to explain why Albert Einstein was the great man of our time; anatomical studies along with intellectual exercise” (Wood, 1971, 231). The Washington Post Co., which purchased *Newsweek* in 1961, sold the magazine in 2008 after it accumulated many years of debt due to weak advertising support. Within four years, its new owners ceased publication of the print edition, although *Newsweek* still maintains an online presence.

Some researchers believe that newspapers should take a page from the magazine industry, and move away from general interest. Picard, for example, has argued that newspapers would be well served by no longer “offering an all-you-can-eat buffet of content” (as quoted in Meyer, 2008). People who don’t read the newspaper have already abandoned the idea of ever doing so, he contended; stop wasting limited editorial resources to win them over. Instead, target educated news junkies through additional newsroom investments in news analyses and investigative journalism. Market-oriented journalism doesn’t need to be viewed as selling out or pandering; it’s simply recognition that publications can no longer be all things to all people in an increasingly fragmented media environment.

Conclusion

In late 1999, the *Los Angeles Times* used its Sunday magazine to publish a 168-page special edition about the new \$400 million Staples Center sports and entertainment complex in downtown Los Angeles. However, unbeknownst to the magazine's editorial staff, which produced the content, a business-side arrangement existed to split that edition's advertising revenues with the Staples Center in return for full access to the facility and key executives. When the news emerged—the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, not the *Times*, broke the story—the paper's newsroom erupted in anger. Within hours, more than 300 editorial employees signed a petition expressing their indignation over the hidden deal (Smith, 1999). Publisher Kathryn Downing, who was new to her job and to the newspaper industry—she previously ran a legal and healthcare publishing company—apologized to the some 1,000 employees who turned out for a staff meeting about the incident, promising to spend more time with journalists to “gain a better appreciation of their efforts” (Smith, 1999) and the editorial culture in which they operate.

It's unclear whether Downing and other *Los Angeles Times* leaders originally found the business arrangement acceptable because it occurred through the Sunday magazine, as opposed to a more traditional news section. For all that has been written by the news media, trade journals and media scholars about the *Times*' Staples Center episode, it seems no one has addressed the issue of whether internal perceptions of the magazine influenced business-side leaders to agree to the arrangement. Was the magazine held to a lower professional standard than other sections of the Sunday newspaper? Did business-side leaders perceive the magazine's primary purpose as an advertising-revenue

generator, as opposed to an editorial product like other sections? Such questions would make for an interesting future study.

The lesson the newspaper industry did glean from the *Times* magazine/Staples Center episode was the need for greater transparency when taking a market-oriented approach to any editorial section. In 2004, executives at the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* heeded that lesson when launching an initiative called the Editorial-Marketing Bridge, a strategy that “carries marketing people into daily news meetings, allows newsroom access to extensive audience research and has changed what the newsroom produces” (Edwardsen, 2006, 8). Marketing Director Jeff Levine noted that the effort to use readership survey data to inform editorial decision making could not have gotten off the ground without the full support of the paper’s editor, Earl Mauker, who spent a tremendous amount of time allaying the concerns of newsroom personnel about “editorial meddling by marketing” (9). So unusual was it for a newspaper editor to break free from institutionalized routines and practices that Mauker was named *Editor & Publisher* magazine’s 2006 Editor of the Year.

Editorial decision-making at newspapers involves a complex mix of news values, technical and operational capabilities, as well as economic, social and political considerations. Other content determination factors include the specific audience a publication or broadcast aims to reach and the organizational identity of the publishing company itself. At *The Washington Post*, news values are rooted in industry standards but they are maintained through an institutional identity that has been shaped by the many professionals who have plied their journalistic craft there. As *Post* political reporter David Broder wrote: “With the Watergate story, the *Post* became America’s preeminent

investigative newspaper, with a keen eye for the ‘big hit’ that might change history—or at least the makeup and direction of government. For years before that, it had championed civil liberties, civil rights, social legislation and political reform....The values of the editorial page drifted into the newsroom. And though the editorial and news sides have always been separate, with no one carrying the title or authority of editor over both, the paper’s civil libertarian—social justice—reformist values and its prized self-image as skeptic and perhaps even scourge of governmental secrecy and abuse of power are evident to anyone who works here” (1987, 334).

I believe Broder was correct in his assessment of the *Post*, but I also believe those values have been both a blessing and a curse for sections such as Sunday magazines. As something of a specialty publication, in no small part because it is produced, printed and distributed through a process largely separate from the rest of the newspaper, Sunday magazines face possible extinction if their editors and business-side leaders cannot find a way to at least cover costs. The wall that has long separated editorial and advertising departments rightly protects those journalists who are scourges of governmental secrecy and abuses of power. But sometimes, as the *Sun-Sentinel*’s Mauker and others have shown, a little marketing and attention to readers’ content interests can go a long way in securing a publication’s future.

As this chapter illustrates, technological and economic forces cannot be decoupled from the editorial process; they are interwoven. Journalists need readers, and those readers expect editorial content that serves their interests. If journalists fail in that service, readers will simply go elsewhere; today, unlike years past, there is no lack of editorial alternatives. In addition, advertisers need readers, and most publications need

those advertisers to subsidize the editorial operations through which readers' content interests are served. The challenge for newspaper editors moving forward is figuring out how to balance their news values with their publications' business values to keep pace with changing times.

Chapter 3 History of Sunday Newspaper Magazine Sections

Cracking the Sunday Market

Sunday used to be a “day of rest” in America. It was a time for religious reflection and family gatherings, traditions brought to the colonies by the British settlers of the early 1600s. Each colony, over the next 200 years, passed and maintained their own laws to prohibit the “cares of business” (Laband and Heinbuch, 1987, 39) on the Sabbath day. In Massachusetts, for example, people were prohibited from conducting business of any kind, dancing, playing sports and attending entertainment of any kind. In New York, you also couldn’t travel on Sundays. Violations were punishable by fines.

In the mid-19th century, a large number of Irish and other European immigrants came to the United States without the same level of religious conservatism that earlier settlers carried toward the observance of the Sabbath (Smith, 2006). They increasingly violated Sunday restrictions and tested local officials’ ability and will to enforce religious observance. In an effort to find a middle ground of sorts, local governments began to open libraries and museums, offering people more secular activities that “could be beneficial for moral development and democracy” (Smith, 2006, 127). In short time, people and businesses began clamoring for even greater freedoms on their day of rest.

Yet, the newspaper industry had already undergone great change starting in the 1830s. Prior to that time, political parties subsidized most newspaper operations, which primarily published stories and editorials that promoted their funders’ ideological worldviews. Neither objectivity nor economic considerations were the goal (Schudson, 1978, Sloan et al, 1993; Chalaby, 1998; Croteau and Hoynes, 2006). Newspapers were

typically sold by subscription for \$6 to \$10 annually, a price that was beyond the financial means of the average person, or 6 cents on the street (Demers, 2007).

That began to change in the 1830s with Benjamin Day, who is largely credited with ushering in the era of the Penny Press through the *New York Sun*. The business model was simple and its influence on future newspaper operations in the United States and throughout the world would be profound. By focusing almost entirely on street sales and lowering the per-copy price of the newspaper to just one penny—a cost that a wide swath of laborers, immigrants and readers of all social strata could afford—newspaper publishers were able to grow a sizable audience and earn revenues from the sale of advertising space in their papers. It was this model, argued *New York Herald* Publisher James Gordon Bennett Sr., that truly fostered a free press, “simply because it is subservient to none of its readers—and entirely ignorant of who are its readers and who are not” (quoted in Schudson, 1978, 21).

But lower prices alone didn’t spur expanded circulation. To appeal to the masses and foster a readership habit, newspapers began publishing stories about issues of actual interest to people, providing both entertainment and escapism through tales of crime, sorrow and general human interest, such as sports, entertainment and fashion (Croteau and Hoynes, 2006). Day saw partisan newspapers as a turnoff to the masses and to advertisers; by not taking an editorial stance on a variety of controversial issues, Day offended few and his paper appealed to many (Picard, 2002; Demers, 2007).

James Gordon Bennett’s *New York Herald*, which was the first newspaper to publish a Sunday edition, in 1841. Bennett received significant opposition from religious leaders who frowned upon any distraction from the week’s holy day (Mott, 1941), yet

other papers slowly followed over the following decades. “In ways insufficiently appreciated, [blue laws] were eventually undermined by the gradual public acceptance of the commercialization of Sunday, part of the spreading culture of consumption that included buying, selling and leisure activities” (Raucher, 1994, 13).

People were hungry for news and information, particularly during the course of the Civil War in the 1860s, and publishers soon raced to extend their newspapers into the weekend market. This extension was a financial boon to both newspapers and local businesses, which used the papers to advertise their products and services during a time of the week when people typically didn’t work. The “Sunday dateline was essential to its cultural importance, connoting the secularization of leisure and family time even as it provided a key means of creating it” (Moore and Gabriele, 2009, 20). It was also a way to keep pace competitively with the burgeoning magazine industry. There were approximately 700 magazines in 1865, and that number ballooned to 3,300 over the next 20 years due to advances in printing technology, distribution and increased literacy rates throughout the country (Peterson, 1964).

The Birth of the Sunday Magazine Section

Among the early contributors to Sunday circulation growth was a new type of newspaper section. The Sunday newspaper magazine, or supplement as it was called (Mott, 1941)—the terms “magazines” and “supplement” are used interchangeably in research studies, trade press reports and news stories—largely featured lengthy tales of scandal and intrigue, illustrations, comics and, years later, four-color section fronts. *The San Francisco Chronicle* is credited with publishing the first Sunday magazine section in

the country, on December 19, 1869. Published on the same paper stock and paper size as the rest of the newspaper, the *Chronicle's* magazine section largely carried works of fiction, stories about leisure pursuits such as sailing, horseback riding and gardening, and articles about literature and art (Haney, 1953). Other newspapers soon followed, and these feature-oriented Sunday magazine sections would contribute mightily to the era of “yellow journalism,” starting in the 1880s. The era was born from competition between Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal*, as both publishers sought to reach as many readers as possible in one of the nation’s most competitive markets. They introduced large-type headlines intended to alarm readers; extensive use of drawings based not on the artist’s first-hand witness of an event, but on how the artist believed an event might have occurred; the use of misleading headlines and poorly attributed sourcing that included false “experts”; and an editorial slant that favored the downtrodden or the underdogs of society (Mott, 1941). Newspapers also filled their daily and Sunday editions with numerous sections, including sports, features and comics. The term “yellow journalism” came from the popular comic strip “The Yellow Kid,” which Pulitzer and Hearst battled over for exclusive publishing rights (Everbach, 2008). By the end of the 19th century, many Sunday newspapers sold themselves wrapped in a comics supplement to bolster circulation (Harvey, R.C., 1994). Taking a page from general interest commercial magazines, Sunday newspapers offered a little something for everyone, from local, national and international news, to features, fashion and fiction. *The Boston Globe* became so enamored with the formula that in 1891 it began calling itself, “The People’s Favorite Magazine” (Johanningsmeier, 1997).

As color printing technology improved, Sunday magazine sections quickly became big business for newspapers. Eager to promote their wares and services in full color, advertisers flocked to the magazine sections, which, along with the comics, were typically the only sections of the Sunday newspaper printed in color.

By the 1920s, Sunday magazines increasingly became photo sections thanks to advances in photography and printing technologies. It has been said that these sections, commonly known as “roto’s” for the rotogravure printing process through which they were produced, “democratized journalism” and created “the ‘local Life magazines’ of a region, telling their stories,” as opposed to only the stories of high society, politicians and members of the entertainment industries (Smothers, 2005, B1). By 1930, approximately 80 newspapers were publishing their own photography supplements (Haney, 1953), and a readership survey by George Gallop at the time found that rotogravure-produced photography sections were the best read of those Sunday newspapers (Friedricks, 2000).

The “modern” newspaper magazine, printed as a tabloid-sized publication of approximately 10 ¾ inches x 11 ½ inches and featuring both photography and a mix of general-interest feature stories, was largely born in the late 1950s. Often local in editorial scope, these Sunday magazines largely contained timeless and feature-oriented editorial content that was only loosely based on current events. Because of lengthy production, printing and distribution processes that usually involved the work of third-party vendors, the magazines required anywhere from three to eight weeks of advance editorial operations. Moreover, content was typically light-hearted, giving advertisers an editorial environment of mostly consumer-friendly lifestyle stories (Danilov, 1957; Turbett, 1999;

Herron, 2010). Over the next 50 years, however, the once mighty Sunday magazine would lose much of its luster.

Throughout much of the 1980s and '90s, newspapers throughout the country shuttered their magazine sections. Many reasons have been given for the closures, including lengthy production schedules, which limit inclusion of most direct-response advertisements; the newfound ability of newspapers to run four-color ads in other sections; the growth of the pre-printed insert business, which enabled advertisers to target readers by ZIP code, at a far lower cost, while still running four-color glossy ads; consolidation in the department store industry, which had long been the biggest advertising supporter of Sunday magazines; the rising costs of glossy paper; and the availability of relatively inexpensive nationally syndicated magazines such as *Parade* and *USA Weekend*. In almost all cases involving a Sunday magazine section's closure, decisions were publicly blamed on high expenses and a lack of advertising support, as opposed to readers' evolving content interests (Garneau, 1991; Editor & Publisher, 1995; Fitzgerald, 1998). In some cases, newspapers began carrying national supplements such as *Parade* or *USA Weekend* in lieu of their locally produced Sunday magazine (Mann, 2000). Today, fewer than 10 newspapers currently publish their own Sunday magazine on a weekly basis.

To examine the attitudes and perceptions of former and current *Washington Post* magazine editors, so as to better understand how and why they navigated the gray areas between news values and business values, it is essential to first understand the history of Sunday magazines and their impact on the newspaper industry. This chapter will examine the advent and evolution of Sunday newspaper magazine sections, including nationally

syndicated Sunday magazines, the technological advancements that largely defined newspaper magazines, and the various content elements that made Sunday magazines unlike every other newspaper section—for better or worse.

Syndication Spreads

With the exception of improved page design and finer paper quality, today's national newspaper supplements are not significantly different from the earliest syndicated Sunday newspaper magazines.

In the mid- to late 1890s, Morrill Goddard was at the heart of the newspaper wars between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. As someone who understood the intricacies of newspaper readership, Goddard led efforts at Pulitzer's *New York World* to create a Sunday edition that could be enjoyed by the masses, a publication that “a man would buy even if he could not read it” (Park, 1923, 288). Because most people didn't work on Sundays, Goddard, the “father of razzle-dazzle Sunday journalism” (Hachten, 1963, 24), sought to produce a publication that entertained rather than informed. He assigned stories about sensational crimes and local entertainment, often with little fact checking and exaggerated claims (Park, 1923; Evensen, 1993). The Sunday edition of the *World* routinely featured stories about romance and travel, advice on everything from tipping to gambling. And there was imagery, with cartoons, caricatures and illustrations that “made your eyeballs bustle and bounce around the department-store display of every page” (Baker and Brentano, 2005, vii). The goal was to compel “a dull-minded and reluctant public to read” (Park, 1923, 288).

In 1896, Goddard changed allegiances and went to work for Hearst, for whom he created the *Sunday American Magazine*, *Popular Periodical of the New York Journal and Advertiser*. The new magazine section carried editorial content based on values that Goddard believed his readers were most intrigued by: love, hate, fear, morality, superstition, ambition, culture and amusement (Haney, 1953). “The supplement specialized in sensational copy with big headlines, many-colored sketches and bizarre makeup” (Danilov, 1957, 9). The magazine was later renamed *American Weekly* and became among the earliest nationally syndicated Sunday supplements. For many years, *American Weekly* was available only to Hearst-owned newspapers as a way to build Sunday circulation (Peters, 1969). Nonetheless, it was still widely distributed throughout Hearst’s various newspapers, and Goddard understood that editorial content had to appeal to a diverse cross-section of readers (Hachten, 1963). “Because it must appeal to millions of readers with vastly different educations and interests, it dares not touch any subject that does not concern virtually all elements in the population, and it must be made short and simple enough so that even the least educated segment of that population will be willing to read it and able to comprehend it. This results in excluding many significant topics and over-simplifying many others” (Haney, 1953, 374). Moreover, syndicated magazines produced editorial content that was unlikely to offend their diverse customer base of editors and publishers (Hachten, 1963).

Competitors in the Sunday supplement space would soon emerge to challenge *American Weekly*, particularly since Hearst refused to syndicate his magazine to papers he didn’t own. Joseph Knapp started *Every Week* in 1905, but it was short-lived due largely to paper shortages around the start of World War I. Knapp returned to the

syndication space in 1935 and founded the United Newspaper Magazine Corporation, through which he published, printed and syndicated *This Week*. At its peak, *This Week* was distributed by 43 newspapers and had a circulation of more than 13 million (Raymont, 1969). The tabloid-sized supplement was printed in four-color and, for its first seven years, largely featured fiction articles written by authors well known at the time, including the English novelist Sax Rohmer, Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winner in literature Pearl Buck, and the British humorist P.G. Wodehouse. Approximately 80% of *This Week's* editorial content was fiction. It was lowered to half following an editorial redesign in 1942 because newspaper publishers wanted more news features, lifestyle stories and photography (Raymont, 1969; Lee, 2000). That's what they got, including occasional stories by such national political figures as former President Herbert Hoover, Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson, and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover (Hachten, 1963; Peterson, 1964).

Among the competitors that ultimately buried *This Week* was *Parade*, which got its start on May 31, 1941, as an offshoot of a money-losing daily newspaper published out of New York City named *PM*. The birth of the weekend supplement, initially known as *The Weekly Picture Newspaper*, was little more than a way to utilize excess photographs and feature content from *PM* (Becker, 1964). Financed by Marshall Field III, heir to a department store dynasty and the largest financial backer of *PM*, the magazine was conceived as an advertising-supported publication that daily newspapers would pay to carry. At the time, *This Week* and *The American Weekly* dominated the Sunday supplement space, but an opportunity existed in the relatively large number of cities where at least three dailies competed. Quite often, the third paper in those markets

didn't carry a Sunday supplement (Haney, 1953). The goal was for *Parade* to differentiate itself by publishing high-quality photography as stories unto themselves. *Parade* would be the first syndicated pictorial Sunday newspaper supplement. Modeled somewhat after *Life* in design, editor Ross Lasley pursued content that was "noncontroversial and educational" (Haney, 1953, 330), although every bit of it was borrowed from *PM*. The first issue featured 32 pages printed with black ink.

Parade's first sale as a newspaper supplement was to the Nashville *Tennessean* in July 1941 for 125,000 copies. *The Washington Post* signed on the following month and remains its oldest continuing carrier. *Parade* switched to rotogravure printing in October of that year, adding color to its pages, and by the start of 1942 it had been sold to 12 newspapers with a combined circulation of 1,760,000 (Becker, 1969, 315). By the end of the year, *Parade* was operating independent from *PM*, in no small part because the publications' editorial directions were "growing further apart" (Haney, 1953, 335). *PM* was founded as an advertising-free, largely anti-business daily newspaper. It regularly featured stories about the horrid employment conditions of local blue-collar workers, women and children. In contrast, *Parade* was advertising supported and noncontroversial to the extreme.

Parade's editorial formula was relatively simple: Pictures should feature women in bathing suits, the different ways people (often attractive women) earned a living, and entertainment activities, such as football games or theater performances (Haney, 1953). The more a subject was photographed in action the better. Because the magazine's editors saw the publication as a consumer product, they regularly tested ideas on readers through content sampling and reader panels. At one point, randomly selected readers would be

shown a bunch of funny editorial cartoons and asked to pick their three favorites; the winning three were then published in the magazine (Time.com, 1942).

The rationing of newsprint during World War II hampered all newspapers' and magazines' growth, and *Parade* was no exception. By the end of 1944, the magazine was carried in 15 newspapers, an increase of only three in two years, with a total circulation of slightly more than 2 million. Nonetheless, it was close to breaking even financially thanks to annual increases in advertising revenue.

The end of the war and an influx of new management drastically changed *Parade's* fortunes soon thereafter. Under the leadership of Arthur "Red" Motley, former publisher of *The American Weekly* who became president of Parade Publications Inc. in 1947, the magazine's editorial content "grew more serious, shifting from frivolity and cheesecake to current events of importance; the ratio of pictures to text dropped from 75:25 to 35:65" (Becker, 1969, 466). This was despite the fact that the magazine's name was changed to *Parade, the Sunday Picture Magazine* in 1946, the last year Lasley was editor. By late 1947, *Parade* was a profitable company, albeit with relatively miniscule advertising revenues of \$1.7 million.

Parade's circulation would climb to 5 million in 1950 and 6.5 million in 1954. At that point it was carried in 50 newspapers and had advertising revenues of nearly \$11 million; *Parade* began selling color advertisements in 1952 (Haney, 1953). In the early 1950s, newspapers again experimented in producing their own general-interest Sunday magazine sections. *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution* was among the first major metropolitan dailies to move away from supplements, in 1952, in an attempt to offer readers greater local coverage and to win a greater share of magazine revenues. The

Journal and Constitution ceased carrying *American Weekly* and *This Week* (Associated Press, 1952). Other magazines followed suit in creating their own general-interest features magazines, but they often continued to carry at least one syndicated magazine.

When *Parade* was sold in 1958, to John Hay Whitney, it was in 61 papers, had a total circulation of 8.6 million and ad revenues of almost \$24 million (Becker, 1969). Throughout the country, newspapers were still embracing syndicated magazines to bolster their own Sunday circulation. In 1961, the four major supplements—*Parade*, *American Weekly*, *Family Weekly* and *This Week*—had a combined circulation of 38.4 million, appearing in 334 different newspapers (Hachten, 1963). In a number of cases, newspapers carried multiple syndicated magazines. The *Washington Post*, for example, included *American Weekly* and *Parade* until *American Weekly* went out of business in 1963. They were each produced in New York City, and although their staffs came from both the magazine and newspaper industries, younger employees tended to use jobs at the syndicates as steppingstones to consumer magazines. Like many consumer magazines of the time, the supplements employed bright color photographs and illustrations, ample feature stories and lifestyle-oriented content (Hachten, 1963). They were also accustomed to working on stories that weren't based on immediacy. Because of production, printing and distribution challenges, all magazines produced editorial content that attempted to skirt time elements, either through generic features or stories that were more predictive in nature. That occasionally backfired. In 1962, *Parade* ran a relatively negative cover story on actress Marilyn Monroe. But by the time the issue appeared in newspapers, Monroe had died due to a drug overdose (Hachten, 1963). It happened again in January 2008, when *Parade* featured former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on its cover and

touted her as “America’s best hope against Al-Qaeda.” But between the time when the magazine was printed and when it appeared in newspapers three weeks later, Bhutto was assassinated in her home country. *Parade*’s publisher opted not to recall the magazine from the newspapers it serves, arguing that the article was still politically and socially significant. The story was updated for *Parade*’s online edition, and many newspapers added a short note on their own pages explaining how and why Bhutto was still being featured (Matthews, 2008). Every magazine has surely published editorial content that became out of date prior to distribution due to lengthy production and printing cycles. In late 1994, *The Washington Post*’s Sunday magazine ran a 5,000 story by *Post* sports columnist Michael Wilbon that criticized the Washington Bullets basketball team for being a losing and uninspiring organization for the previous 15 years. However, in the time between the magazine was printed and the week or so it was distributed to readers, the Bullets pulled off a blockbuster trade that brought two the NBA’s most exciting young forwards, Chris Webber and Juwan Howard, to Washington. Webber and Howard were former teammates at the University of Michigan and led the Wolverines to back-to-back NCAA championship game appearances during their freshmen and sophomore year together, in 1992 and ’93. There was nothing the *Post* could do to update the story; Wilbon wrote a column for the first page of the sports section that day, explaining what happened and making light of his own professional embarrassment (Wilbon, 1994, D1).

Lengthy production and distribution lag times didn’t directly damage the business of the syndicated Sunday magazines. Rather, national advertisers—largely from the supplements’ three main categories of advertisers: food, medication and cigarettes—began shifting their buys to television, where specific audiences could be better targeted.

As the supplements' advertising revenues shrunk, so did the number of pages they printed per issue.

Parade, however, would continue to grow and thrive. Booth Newspapers purchased the supplement in 1973 and sold it to Advance Publications Inc. three years later. Today, the privately owned Advance media corporation owns some 25 newspapers, Condé Nast Publications—publisher of various lifestyle, fashion and news magazines, including *Vogue*, *The New Yorker* and *Bon Appetit*—and large number of TV holdings. But it was the purchase of *Family Weekly* by the Gannett Corp. in 1985 that provided *Parade* with one of its greatest financial windfalls. After buying *Family Weekly* from CBS, Gannett quickly redesigned and renamed the magazine *USA Weekend* to resemble its fledgling national daily, *USA Today*. The move spurred a precipitous backlash. Newspapers throughout the country were already concerned about the possibility of *USA Today* making circulation inroads in their local markets. They weren't about to now carry a syndicated magazine that they viewed as little more than a marketing tool for the competition. More than 100 newspapers that had carried *Family Weekly* immediately switched to *Parade*, increasing its circulation by the millions (Randolph, 1985).

By the summer of 1986, *Parade*'s circulation stood at 31.4 million. It had advertising revenues of nearly \$200 million in 1985 (Gloede, 1986). In addition, the magazine launched a new Sunday supplement titled *Parade Countryside*, which featured the same content as the traditional *Parade* but lower advertising rates to win the business of smaller-market papers. Those smaller-market papers had typically carried *Family Weekly* (Jones, 1985). By 1991, *Parade* earned more gross advertising dollars than any

magazine in America, charging a then-national high of \$460,000 for a single four-color, full-page ad (Reilly, 1991).

It wasn't long before Sunday newspapers began to cease publication of their own locally produced magazines in favor of the far less expensive alternative of *Parade* or *USA Weekend*. The business model was and remains relatively simple: a newspaper pays the syndication companies a fixed rate based on the newspaper's circulation, and receives in return a small percentage of the advertising revenues that the syndicated magazine generates (Wilson, 1998).

In the mid- to late 1980s, the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* each experimented with inserting thinned down versions of their own Sunday magazines inside *Parade*, citing cost containment as the reason. "We did it because the cost of production [to create their own magazines] was outpacing advertising revenues," said Ferguson Rood, vice president and assistant to the president of the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* (Bloom, 1985, 23). However, each paper eventually found little value in the approach and returned briefly to publishing and distributing their full Sunday magazines in addition to carrying *Parade* (Hammond, 2001). Although it's somewhat counterintuitive for a newspaper to publish its own Sunday magazine and still carry a national supplement that is a competitor for regional and national advertising, a number of newspapers, including *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe*, have long chosen to provide their readers with both. According to former *Washington Post* publisher Donald Graham, the readership appeal of *Parade* is so great that a newspaper risks losing a substantial number of local Sunday subscribers if it stops carrying the national supplement (Graham, 2010). Thomas Ferguson, former president of *The*

Washington Post, noted in 1982 that *Parade* was the second-best read section in his Sunday paper, after the main news section. This was despite the fact that the *Post* carried its own locally produced Sunday magazine. “The editors would like it (*Parade*) out, but the circulation department would kill to keep *Parade*,” he said (Machalaba, 1982).

In 1996, *The Record* newspaper in Hackensack, N.J., let its readers decide which syndicated Sunday magazine they preferred. Even though *The Record* had been carrying *Parade* for nearly 20 years, it launched a contest of sorts over six months by also carrying *USA Weekend*. “We finally felt it was time to give our readers a chance to be involved with what’s in the paper,” said John Kimball, vice president of sales at *The Record* (Reina, 1996, 15). That chance was short-lived, however. *The Record* cut the contest short and declared *Parade* the winner. Although readers reportedly liked both magazines—it was unclear how responses were collected—the newspaper opted to stick with *Parade* and “mitigate the change factor” (Reina, 1997, 24).

Parade is the largest-circulation weekly magazine in the country at approximately 33 million, as of July 2012, appearing with 650 Sunday newspapers (Parade, 2012). Moreover, the publication offers 10 different zoned advertising options, including a six state buy that includes Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia—the direct market area of *The Washington Post*. *USA Weekend* is carried in more newspapers than *Parade* is, but the supplement has a smaller reach due to the size of those papers. *USA Weekend* has a weekly circulation of 22.6 million. However, economic conditions hit *USA Weekend* hard in 2009, as it did for many print publications throughout the country. Total ad pages for the weekend supplement were down 14.7% that year (Sass, 2010), prompting Gannett to

lay off 11 people at the magazine and using writers at the national daily *USA Today* to produce feature content (Calderone, 2009).

As Hachten wrote in 1963, “At their best, the supplements offer a national, professional flavor—a whiff of the quality general magazine—that is not within the power of the local newspaper” (28). That hasn’t stopped a number of newspapers from trying to bolster their “professional flavor,” often through partnerships with other newspapers and occasionally by attempting to target niche audiences.

For example, *New Jersey Focus* was launched in 1989 as a syndicated weekly Sunday newspaper magazine and was carried in eight New Jersey dailies that didn’t publish their own locally produced magazine. Each issue was built around a subject matter theme, such as health, education and fashion, and provided advertisers a purely statewide advertising vehicle without having to buy into the New York or Philadelphia markets (Anderson, 1989). However, the publication was short lived—as was a similar effort in Texas a few years earlier—due to a lack of interest among advertisers. At the now-defunct *Houston Post*, executives in the mid-1990s signed a distribution partnership with a monthly city magazine named *Houston Life*. The *Post* received no advertising revenue from the deal, but instead sought to bolster its Sunday package by including a magazine that it didn’t have to create (Giobbe, 1995).

Another model was a supplement to locally produced Sunday magazines. Five major metropolitan dailies—*The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *the Los Angeles Times* and *The Chicago Tribune*—joined forces in 1989 to produce *The Good Health Magazine*. Each newspaper produced unique editorial content for its own version of *Good Health*, which carried a common cover and common national

advertising, although companies could also just buy space in any one magazine. *The New York Times* had been publishing *Good Health* as a biannual “Part 2” supplement to its own Sunday magazine since 1986, but agreed to broaden the approach as an experiment driven by the American Newspaper Publishers Association to bolster national advertising in newspapers. The effort lasted just a few years; the reason for ending this project is unclear, as neither the news media nor the trade press has covered it.

Vista was started in 1985 as an English-language Sunday newspaper magazine aimed at America’s ever-growing Hispanic population. Within a few years, the publication was inserted in 26 Sunday newspapers with a total circulation of 1.2 million, with many of those copies going to communities with relatively large Hispanic populations. The monthly publication—which catered almost exclusively to national advertisers—struggled for a period due to changing readership and advertising trends, but continues to publish by focusing on female readers and the national advertisers who want to reach them. *Vista* is now carried mostly in Spanish-language newspapers and has a circulation of approximately 900,000 (Impremedia.com, 2011). Current advertisers are still mostly national and span a range of categories, from banks and food to cars and beauty products.

A Printing Revolution

The development and decline of Sunday newspaper magazines are intrinsically tied to innovations in printing technology. Most notably, advancements in color printing and, later, photo reproduction made Sunday magazines and newspaper comics sections the only places in a newspaper where readers could actually *see* the world and experience

more than black and white. Because photo processing was still cumbersome and time-consuming in the early part of the 20th century, many newspapers employed illustrators to hand-sketch photographs for reproduction in print (Harris, 1978).

Newspapers began printing supplement sections in four-color in the early 1890s. The *New York World* first printed a color section in 1893 (Baker and Brentano, 2005), while *The Boston Globe* introduced its readers to color the following year (Harris, 1978). On March 27, 1898, the *World* promoted the launch of a brand-new printing press, by R. Hoe & Co. of New York, through a full-page advertisement on the back page of its magazine section. The ad featured a colored illustration of the new electrotype press, and accompanying text explained that the press could print and fold the paper's color supplements at a then-speedy rate of up to 20,000 copies an hour. That Sunday edition featured three colored supplements: the magazine, the comics and an eight-page Easter-related women's fashion section (Baker and Brentano, 2005).

By the mid to late 1890s, line drawings were sent to papers via a new system called telautograph, with the *Chicago Times-Herald* among the first to employ the technology (Lee, 2000). It would be the forebear to telephotography, whereby halftone photographs could be sent electronically to newspapers. However, high-quality reproduction of those photographs onto newsprint required a technology all its own.

Developed and first used in Germany in 1910, rotogravure presses employed etched cylindrical plates, as opposed to the typical flat copper ones used for the letterpress halftones employed by most every newspaper. The plates were attached to rollers, allowing the press to operate at speeds fast enough for mass production of color images. Also known as intaglio printing, the cylindrical plates would pass through a long bucket

of warm colored ink, typically sepia, and only the multi-depths of recessed “cells” on the etched plate would take in the ink. “The varying depths enabled highlights, middle tones, and shadings to be applied to images at a high rate of speed for the first time. Natural shadows, which imparted depth and perspective, were possible, but only in one color” (Goldsmith, 2008, 100-101). Despite initial limitations in color usage, the technology created far more clear reproductions on the inexpensive newsprint newspapers then used for their Sunday magazine sections. “Rotogravure printing is so consistent that color variations are rare, ink does not smear, and pages can be handled (and bundled for shipping) immediately. Newly equipped newspapers were able to print large pictorial sections that increased readership and advertising revenue” (Library of Congress, undated).

The technology soon became so synonymous with the publishing of photographs and illustrations in newspapers that many Sunday newspaper magazines were simply titled “Rotogravure” or “Roto” for short. Although *The New York Times* was the first U.S. newspaper to carry a rotogravure photo section, in December 1913, *The Cleveland Leader* was the first to actually own a gravure press. The *Leader* bought one in early 1914, and the *Times* followed suit just months later (Mott, 1941). *The New York Times* used it to publish a special stand-alone newsstand rotogravure section during the week to make greater use of excess photographs from the European battlefields of World War I. The publication is widely regarded as the first modern picture magazine (Kobre, 2008). The *Times* printed “Mid-Week Pictorial” until 1934, when it sold its rights to the section in a cost-cutting move (Tiffit and Jones, 1999). It ceased publication three years later.

The New York Times began printing its Sunday magazine section via rotogravure in August 1917, improving the clarity of type and visual impact of its many photographs. It installed four new rotogravure presses to expand usage to the magazine and, in time, other parts of the paper (New York Times, 1917). In a self-congratulatory story about readers' pleasure with the changes, the president of the local merchants' association was quoted as saying:

“I wish to congratulate THE TIMES upon its progressiveness in the improvement to the Magazine section. I noticed it the first thing when I opened my paper this morning. It is a big improvement, one that is not approached by any other paper. I took especial pleasure in the Magazine pictures printed by the rotogravure process. The type is much clearer, too, but I think the biggest improvement is in the presentation of pictures” (The New York Times, 1917, 9).

The *Detroit Free Press* launched a rotogravure section in March 1916, announcing in the paper that the “beauty of the velvety shadows that are found in reproduction by the intaglio process delights the eye of all who enjoy artistic printing” (Detroit Free Press, 1916a, 8). With the addition of the rotogravure pictorial supplement, the Free Press' Sunday edition contained six special sections in all, including a fiction section, a feature section, a women's section, the “Boys' and Girls' Magazine,” a comics section and an illustrated Sunday magazine (Detroit Free Press, 1916b, C12). In time, most of these sections would be printed through rotogravure to utilize the technology's color printing capabilities. *The Washington Post* began publishing its Sunday photography section, simply titled “Rotogravure,” in 1917. The *Post*'s section typically ran eight pages and featured color and black-and-white pictures from around the world, with particular emphasis on photographs of soldiers from various countries during World War I relaxing, eating or just talking. Camera technology was still in its infancy and few photographers were adept at capturing action; almost all photographs that appeared in

print featured sedentary subjects (Harris, 1978). Photos in the *Post*'s rotogravure section also included traditional and unusual fashion. For example, an early spread included female models wearing military hats from around the world (Washington Post, 1917a, RS6). Photojournalism during the early years of the *Post*'s rotogravure section largely centered on human interest and feature-oriented pieces. One such element highlighted nine different men who were individually "worth \$500,000 each year to the business of the United States," yet were now working for just \$10 a year heading up various governmental agencies, defense councils and shipping boards (Washington Post, 1918). Like many newspapers, the *Post* claimed its rotogravure section made the entire Sunday edition the best in the Washington, D.C. market. "The Most Elaborately Illustrated Supplement South of New York," read one in-paper advertisement. "Destined to Intrench (sic) THE WASHINGTON POST More Firmly Than Ever in Its Position as 'The National Capital's Favorite Sunday Newspaper'" (Washington Post, Oct. 24, 1917). To be sure, rotogravure picture sections were a circulation boon to Sunday editions. The *Houston Chronicle* began publishing a weekly eight-page "Pictorial Gravure Section" in 1919; the first issue sold out by early afternoon and circulation increased by a then-whopping 3,000 copies (Hammond, 2001). By 1918, 47 newspapers had a rotogravure picture section (Danilov, 1957), with numerous other sections and special supplements designed to appeal to distinct audiences. Despite fragmenting its mass audience based on readers' specific content interests, thereby addressing "itself to a collection of publics, each with its own scale of values" (Hughes, 1981, 56-57), the addition of new sections became a winning financial strategy for newspapers.

But it was the *Chicago Tribune* that took rotogravure printing technology to new heights, in 1920, owning the first full-color rotogravure press in the United States, called coloroto (Goldsmith, 2008). Soon thereafter, the *Tribune* became the highest circulation newspaper in America, with color advertising capabilities helping the paper to “capitalize the extensive news coverage” (Goldsmith, 2008, 199). By 1925, 72 newspapers carried a rotogravure section (Danilov, 1957). The photo-rotogravure section of the *Des Moines Register and Tribune*, published by brothers Johns and Mike Cowles, was met with such great fanfare in the late 1920s that the brothers sought to capitalize on reader interest by expanding into new markets (Friedricks, 2000). The *Register and Tribune*’s photo section became the template for *Look*, the Cowles’ monthly feature-oriented photography magazine that premiered on newsstands on January 5, 1937. *Life* magazine was first published five weeks earlier, even though the two magazines were developed around the same time, as a weekly news photography magazine aimed at affluent readers. Both consumer magazines became incredibly successful with readers. By April 1937, *Look* became a biweekly and had a per-issue circulation of 2 million by October (Friedricks, 2007).

Other Sunday newspaper magazines began experimenting with four-color usage, with Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York Sunday World* among the first paper to do so, adapting the rotogravure technology to a new process dubbed “tintogravure.” The *Sunday World* employed spot color to comics, specifically the strip “The Yellow Kid,” but soon expanded its revolutionary comics section into full color (Sloan, Stovall and Startt, 1993). *The Washington Post* followed suit with color rotogravure printing in 1927 through a sheet-fed press. The *Post* touted its color reproduction as something akin to art, with the

slogan “Pictures you’ll frame and name” (The Washington Post, 1927). “The color rotogravure press enabled art and photographs to be finely reproduced for the masses. For the five-cent cost of a Sunday newspaper, readers could regularly enjoy news art and fine art with the credibility of color” (Goldsmith, 2008, 97). However, it would take decades before most daily newspapers could employ color-printing technology. High costs had discouraged many daily newspapers from using color, even when advertisers were threatening to take their business elsewhere—namely the growing number of consumer magazines that were printing in color. By 1936, only about 20 percent of newspapers could offer advertisers color printing on weekdays (Johnston, 1997). For that reason, Sunday magazine rotogravure sections were incredibly valuable in terms of circulation and advertising draws.

By the mid-1960s, many newspapers still offered readers and advertisers little by way of color. Although the technology existed for newspapers to print run-of-paper color, reproduction was typically poor because of newsprint quality—particularly in comparison to the type of coated paper stock most consumer magazines used. Nonetheless, studies showed that readers remembered color advertisements more than they remembered black-and-white ads, that readers viewed the stores that ran color advertisements as higher status than stores that only advertised in black and white (Gardner and Cohen, 1964) and that readers viewed even mediocre color reproduction in newspapers as more visually enjoyable than black-and-white reproduction (McGann and Snook-Luther, 1993). Because color printing was expensive, however, few newspapers opted to offer it. In 1965, the only color sections in *The Washington Post*, for example, were its locally produced Sunday magazine *Potomac*, its weekly TV Week publication,

the comics section and the syndicated Sunday magazine *Parade*. The *Post* was so wedded to its earlier investments in printing technology that the newspaper was among the last U.S. metropolitan dailies to use color printing on its section fronts; it began in 1999 (New York Times, 1999).

Color or not, rotogravure sections became so popular with readers that some in the newspaper industry felt for the first time that newspapers could almost compete with the aesthetics of commercial magazines (Haney, 1953). By employing rotogravure presses to print pages and pages of photography, newspapers “democratized journalism” and created “‘the local Life Magazines’ of a region, telling their stories” (Smothers, 2005, B1). A survey by George Gallop in the early 1930s found that rotogravure sections were the best read of any section in the Sunday newspaper (Friedricks, 2000).

By 1930, approximately 80 newspapers were publishing their own rotogravure supplements (Haney, 1953), although only 10 newspapers were doing the printing themselves. Most, including *The Washington Post*, outsourced the work, which led to even lengthier production cycles as materials and rotogravure publications were shipped back and forth by train. This forced Sunday magazine editors to approach content in a manner unlike other editors at their newspaper. Because of the long production process—four-color printing through rotogravure typically required editorial deadlines of around six weeks in advance (Danilov, 1957)—and off-site printing and distribution operations, magazine editors had to focus their editorial efforts on content that wasn’t time sensitive or immediately evolving, as many breaking news stories are. Such a schedule often posed significant challenges to editorial and business operations. *The Denver Post*, for example, outsourced its rotogravure printing needs to a press operator in Chicago when it launched

its Sunday magazine, *Empire*, in September 1950. Problems in the shipping process would lead to delays in editorial and advertising schedules, damaging revenue and readership (Kisling, 1995). Despite the lag time involved in production, printing and distribution, and the great risks of delay, few newspapers printed their own rotogravure sections. Instead, they used one of a handful of commercial publishers that specialized in the technique. While there were approximately 120 locally edited magazine supplements in the late 1950s, for example, only a “handful” of their parent newspapers did the printing (Danilov, 1957, 10).

The industry leader was Standard Gravure Corp. in Louisville, Ky. Founded in 1922 by Judge Robert Worth Bingham, who also owned *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Standard Gravure served to diversify Bingham’s revenue streams while also securing for *The Courier-Journal* the kind of high-end printing capabilities that no other local publisher had. By the mid-1940s, Standard Gravure was printing the rotogravure sections of *The Atlanta Journal*, *The Columbus Dispatch*, the *Houston Chronicle* and *The Nashville Tennessean*, among others (Editor & Publisher, 1947). Some 30 years later, Standard Gravure was printing 26 different Sunday newspaper magazines and worked to support the medium by underwriting the Sunday Magazine Editors Association, which organized and hosted annual conferences and gave out journalism awards for the best Sunday magazine sections; the group disbanded in 2001 due to a lack of members, as so few papers still produced their own Sunday magazine (Strupp et al, 2003). Chapter 2 briefly explores the role that the Sunday Magazine Editors Association played in influencing editorial standards and news values at locally produced Sunday magazines throughout the country.

In 1986, Standard Gravure was sold to Atlanta-based businessman Michael Shea and struggled under the weight of numerous lawsuits over health risks from the chemicals used in the printing process. In 1989, the Louisville facility was also the site of a workplace shooting by a former pressman who was on disability leave for mental illness. Eight people were killed and 12 were injured; the shooter, Joseph Wesbecker, committed suicide on the spot (Harrison, 1989). The company went out of business in 1992.

Other printers serviced newspapers' Sunday magazine needs throughout much of the 20th century, including Art Gravure and Cuneo Press, but it was Alco-Gravure Inc., owned by Joseph Knapp, that challenged Standard Gravure for national supremacy. In 1935, Knapp used his printing company to support a new syndicated Sunday newspaper magazine titled *This Week*, which some 21 newspapers began to carry.

By the 1980s, rotogravure was no longer the printing technology of choice in the newspaper industry. Because rotogravure is only economical for large print runs, many smaller papers turned to heatset offset, a process that uses special inks that don't easily rub off and is 15% less costly than rotogravure for print runs smaller than 200,000 (Machalaba, 1982). In other cases, newspapers transitioned to offset lithography, a printing technique that was faster than rotogravure, relatively easy to set up (Hynds, 1994) and could be done in-house.

Content Matters

From the late 19th century through most of the 20th, locally produced Sunday newspaper magazines were one of the principal weapons employed by metropolitan dailies in their battle for circulation and advertising gain. The earliest newspaper

magazines featured vivid illustrations, line art, long-form narratives, poems, fiction stories, and news about fun and frivolity; the sections were printed on the same exact size and type of newsprint used for other sections, but featured slightly more page design thanks to line art, illustrations and distinct font styles for headline typography (Haney, 1953; Hachten, 1963). They were also routinely filled with “tales of sex abnormalities, horror, romance...and oddities” (Lee, 2000, 403). *The St. Louis Post-Dispatch* promoted its Sunday magazine in an in-paper ad in 1898 by writing that “frivolity has no place in its table of contents” (St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 1898, 5).

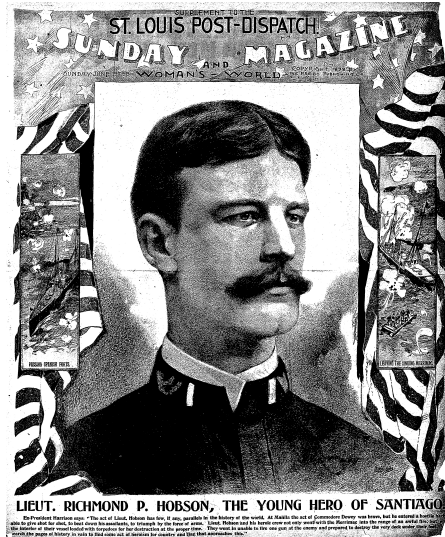


Figure 1: The St. Louis Post Dispatch used vivid illustrations to depict the Spanish-American War, and its heroes, in this June 19, 1898 magazine section.

Nonetheless, the magazine featured such stories as a local woman who performs exorcisms and true-life tales about medical mysteries, including a woman who grew ill from eating poison candy. In 1912, *The New York Times*' magazine section—it launched in 1896, three weeks after Adolph Ochs purchased the newspaper (Lee, 2000)—carried a full-page feature headline, “French Savant Tells of Life on Venus and Mars,” in which a zoologist wrote about the animal and plant life that surely lived on the two planets. The feature included illustrations of unusual flora, fauna and an array of lizards and large-eared creatures (Friedman, 2011). The Sunday syndicates weren’t immune to a bit of sensationalism either. *American Weekly* carried stories questioning, “Does Modern

Photography Incite Women to Brutality?” and “Are the Huge Mammoths Still Roaming the Wilds of Alaska?” (Hachten, 1963, 25).

By the early part of the 20th century, newspapers were routinely publishing photographs in their Sunday magazine sections, often of people and places well beyond the newspapers’ circulation areas. For example, the May 8, 1904 cover of the *New York World’s* magazine featured five pictures of the St. Louis Fair lit up at night, with a declaration on the bottom of the page that the images were “declared by experts to be the best night photographs ever taken” (New York World, 1904, SM1). The primacy of photography and illustrations in Sunday magazines were born from technological and operational limitations within the print publishing industry. Because of the time-consuming processes of capturing, processing, delivering and pre-producing photographs for publication, newspapers used pictures largely for feature and human-interest stories that could run at most any time. And by making the Sunday magazine the primary section for photography, editors could better plan and organize news production operations; Sunday magazines—along with comics sections and other special supplements—were often printed on smaller presses that had the ability to print with color inks (Baker and Brentano, 2005). Photography had become so prevalent within print publishing by the early 1900s that some in the industry were questioning whether any consumer magazine “can live today on literary excellence alone, or whether it must have recourse to the aid of pictures” (San Francisco Chronicle, 1905, 6). The authors noted that the long-popular literary magazine *Longman’s* was ceasing publication because readers were opting instead for magazines and newspapers that carried some degree of visual aesthetics, including the use of color inks.

Most Sunday magazines were general-interest publications. When the *New York Tribune* launched its Sunday magazine in 1904, it featured original feature stories, poetry and fiction that was suitable for “family perusal.” “It is lively without being vulgar, and is so nicely balanced that the boy with a passion for outdoor sports will find it as interesting as his more serious-minded parents. As for the girls, they all like it, regarding of their temperament or disposition” (New York Tribune, 1904, 6). Sunday magazines continued to operate as general-interest publications, particularly when they became rotogravure-printed photography magazines. The goal was editorial variety, with photos that were local, national and international. In some cases, editors used their magazines to shock or surprise readers. For example, early editions of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*’s Sunday photography magazine—it premiered in 1938—included pictures of a man in New York jumping out of a building to his death, pictures of people with no arms feeding themselves with their feet, pictures of voo-doo dance rituals, and pictures of Hollywood starlets (Mcguire, 1996). *The Washington Post*’s Sunday photo magazine was similarly unpredictable in the early 1940s, with photographs and extended cutlines about women’s fashion, sports, female actresses and attractive women in the workforce, including a spread on commercial airline stewardess in training (Washington Post, 1940, RG3); the rotogravure section was renamed “Pictures” in 1941. Yet, although much of the content was seemingly geared toward male readers, advertising in the *Post*’s rotogravure section was mostly targeted toward a female audience, with ads for hairdressers, makeup, jewelry and women’s clothing.

An exception to the general-interest Sunday magazine format was Hearst’s *San Francisco Chronicle*, which launched an eight-page Sunday magazine titled “A Woman’s

Magazine” in June 1909 to run in addition to the paper’s existing magazine section. “Devoted entirely to everything that concerns women” (San Francisco Chronicle, 1909, 4), the new magazine featured articles and illustrations about fashion, beauty, food, work and more. The first and last page of the Sunday women’s magazine featured color. In explaining the rationale for the new publication, editors wrote that the existing magazine was increasingly geared toward men. It featured articles with “good red blood in them and written by ‘men with the bark on’ Sea stories, with the tang of the brine in them, pioneer stories, Indian stories, war stories, detective stories, hunting stories” (San Francisco Chronicle, 1909, 4). While some women likely read those stories too, the article explained, “A Woman’s Magazine” was to cater solely to “feminine readers.” Around the same time, the *New York Tribune* revamped its Sunday magazine section to focus more on the human side of artists, entertainers and celebrities. “When a man achieves distinction, most of us want to know all about him. Certain very interesting folk, whose names are widely familiar, have been sadly neglected in this age of personalities,” read an article promoting the new-look magazine (New York Tribune, 1909, SM2). Profilees included playwright Clyde Fitch and actor William Gillette.

Publication of Fiction

Sunday magazines also became home to an increasing amount of fiction stories. Such works—clearly labeled as such, as opposed to the “straight” Sunday magazine features about life on Mars—had previously been a part of newspapers’ main sections, with short stories and serial tales of fiction, particularly by authors that readers were familiar with and enjoyed, serving to bolster circulation around the turn of 20th century

(Johanningsmeier, 1997). *The Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Herald Tribune*, among many others daily newspapers, all published fiction in an effort to bolster circulation. When Adolph Ochs purchased *The New York Times* in 1896, he put an immediate end to fiction and comics within the pages of the “Grey Lady,” claiming that false information and frivolity had no place in a serious newspaper (Davis, 1921; Tift and Jones, 1999). So serious was the *Times* about being so serious that it wasn’t until 1942, seven years after Ochs’s death, that the *Times* published its first crossword puzzle—in its Sunday magazine. Newspapers had been publishing crosswords since the early 1900s. The *Times*’ new puzzle was so popular with readers that editors added a crossword to the daily paper as well, albeit eight years after it premiered in the Sunday magazine (Douglas, 1999).

Far more recently, *The New York Times Magazine* took inspiration from the early days of Sunday magazine publishing and launched a variety of fiction and graphic novel content elements under the section title “The Funny Pages.” According to editors of the magazine, the *Times* took “its inspiration from the Sunday supplements that newspapers first published more than a century ago.... We hope to engage our readers in some ways we haven’t yet tried—and to acknowledge that it takes many different types of writing to tell the story of our time” (New York Times, 2005). In their pursuit of younger readers, editors decided to add a bit of frivolity by carrying serialized fiction and other content elements in a section of the magazine titled “The Funny Pages,” which included a serialized cartoon novel; the Sunday Serial, a straight serial novel that would span weeks; and True-Life Tales, a personal essay by different authors. The Sunday Serial featured nationally renowned writers such as Patricia Cornwell, who wrote 15 chapters that were

published over three months in 2006, and Michael Chabon, who wrote 15 chapters that ran over five months in 2007. The Funny Pages were discontinued in 2008 due to lackluster reader response.

However, many newspapers embraced fiction as a mode of storytelling long before the *Times*' Funny Page experiment, and they often used their Sunday magazines to carry the stories. After government-mandated newsprint restrictions were lifted following World War I, newspapers were quick to add new magazine sections, and many featured fiction. In 1921, *The Chicago Tribune* created the *Blue Ribbon Fiction Section*, which it sold to other newspapers via its syndication service. In 1925, the Sunday magazine of *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* carried a series of short fiction stories by a then relatively unknown writer named William Faulkner, who would go on to write such acclaimed novels as "The Sound and the Fury" and "Light in August" (Collins, 1954). *The Washington Post* launched a stand-alone Sunday fiction section in January 1934; it carried short stories, serials and illustrations. The section ran in addition to the *Post*'s magazine section and its rotogravure photo section (Washington Post, 1934). In 1940, the *Post* replaced its fiction section with "The Sunday Novel," a 16-page section that was a complete novel broken into approximately 20 sections, or chapters. The *Post* last published "The Sunday Novel" in 1942 without explanation as to why the section was eliminated.

The *Post*'s Sunday magazine occasionally carried works of fiction in the mid- to late 1970s, but the practice ended for unknown reasons. However, in 2007, *Post* Sunday magazine editor Tom Shroder produced an entire fiction edition through a reader-submission contest that garnered significant interest from local writers (the contest was

open only to residents of DC, Maryland and Virginia). So popular was the fiction issue with readers that the *Post* magazine has continued it ever since. As editor of the *Miami Herald's* Sunday magazine, *Tropic*, in the mid-'90s, Shroder experimented with a serial fiction tale titled "Naked Came the Manatee." The serial ran from November 1995 to February 1996. But what made it particularly unusual was that a different writer penned each chapter. The writers—all popular writers in South Florida, including the *Herald's* Dave Barry and Carl Hiaasen as well as crime novelist Edna Buchanan—simply reacted to the previous chapter, and took the story in whichever direction they desired (Reina, 1996b). The stories were so popular with readers that *Tropic* gave fiction its own weekly section called "True Lies," which featured 900-word stories that occasionally included reader submissions.

Throughout much of the 1980s, the Sunday magazine sections of *The Boston Globe*, *Providence Journal*, *Hartford Courant*, *Milwaukee Journal* and *San Francisco Chronicle* all sporadically experimented with fiction as a readership driver. *Chronicle* features/Sunday editor Rosalie M. Wright went so far as to call it a lure for her "smart" readers (Schaefer, 1987, 13). Alan Rosenberg, editor of the *Providence Journal's* *Sunday Journal Magazine*, saw the content element as something more: "Newspapers try to explain life in as many ways as they can. Fiction is another tool for doing that" (Schaefer, 1987, 12).

Editorial Distinctions

To be sure, modern Sunday newspaper magazines have been as editorially distinct from one another as were the newspapers that published them. Over the past 50 years,

Sunday magazines have featured everything from long-form narratives, photojournalism, service articles, first-person essays, fiction, product listings and even poetry. For some publications, the Sunday magazine was a place to experiment with different storytelling techniques that couldn't find a home in the hard news main sections of the newspaper (Hynds, 1979; Oney, 1985). Yet, critics have contended that many Sunday magazines, particularly the 1970s and '80s, were editorial embarrassments to the newspapers that published them. More often than not, the magazines served as repositories for local and light fare, and they were staffed with mediocre journalists who no other section editor wanted (Shields, 1986). Newspapers "haven't done enough to make the Sunday magazine a provocative, point-of-view section that stands out from the rest of the newspaper," said James Bellows, a former editor of the *New York Herald Tribune*, among other publications. "They're bland and boring" (Machalaba, 1982, 29).

Comparing Sunday newspaper magazine editors with commercial city magazine editors in the same markets, Costen (1978) found that Sunday magazines mostly published editorial content about "leisure" activities, often built around "locally oriented subjects," and "people articles" (33). Few Sunday magazine editors provided "thought-provoking" or "interpretive" coverage, viewing their sections mostly as an "entertaining vehicle." Conversely, city magazine editors claimed to provide nearly double the amount of interpretive journalism and half the people-oriented content that Sunday magazine editors did. Costen argued that Sunday magazine editors were not as concerned with understanding their readers as were city magazine editors because Sunday magazines automatically reach readers via insertion into the main paper. Kurtz (1982) conducted a similar study a few years later, comparing locally produced Sunday newspaper magazines

to metropolitan-focused newsstand magazines, and found that Sunday magazines carried ample personality profiles, TV and movie reviews, service journalism pieces, and home and gardening articles. However, Sunday magazines, unlike metropolitan magazines, published very little investigative journalism. In addition, metropolitan magazine editors were far more aware than Sunday magazine editors were of advertisers' needs, and actively attempted to "create a specific audience...to appeal to advertisers" (93). Sunday magazine editors were also far less familiar with who their readers were. Ranly (1981) similarly found that Sunday magazine editors had strongly held beliefs that they should maintain complete independence from their newspapers' advertising and marketing departments. In many cases, Sunday magazine editors believed that generating revenues was the sole responsibility of those who run the newspaper as a whole, as opposed to section editors.

Of course, there are many exceptions to the content critics. A number of Sunday magazines have published Pulitzer Prize-winning journalism through the years, including articles by Madeleine Blais (*Tropic*, of the *Miami Herald*, 1980), Alice Steinback (the *Baltimore Sun*'s Sunday magazine, 1985) and Steve Twomey (*Inquirer Magazine*, 1987). Other newspapers whose Sunday magazines carried Pulitzer-winning work include: *The Boston Globe* (in-depth national reporting, staff, 1983); *Miami Herald* (commentary, Gene Weingarten, 1988); *The Washington Post* (feature photography, Matthew Lewis, 1975; feature writing, Weingarten, 2008 and 2010), and *The New York Times* (photography, Michelle Agins, 2008; and investigative reporting, Sheri Fink, 2009). Lewis' Pulitzer-winning photographs for the *Post* were the first color pictures ever awarded the top prize.

Clay Felker is largely credited with bolstering the prestige of Sunday magazines in terms of editorial quality and reader engagement. As editor of the *New York Herald Tribune's* Sunday magazine *New York* in the mid-1960s, Felker tapped staff reporters from the main newspaper and granted them the freedom to experiment in their writing styles. The *Herald Tribune* was attempting to create a niche for itself in the competitive New York newspaper market, and literary-oriented journalism became that niche. *Herald Tribune* staffers Tom Wolfe and Jimmy Breslin wrote numerous long-form narrative articles for the Sunday magazine; Wolfe alone reportedly wrote 20 pieces for the magazine in late 1963 and early 1964 (Harvey, 1994). In his book *The New Journalism*, as reported by Harvey (1994, 42), Wolfe explained that the goal was to emotionally and intellectually engage the reader. To say, "Come here! Look! This is the way people live these days! These are the things they do!" Sandwiching these stories in *New York* were recurring columns and consumer-oriented sections, including restaurant reviews, fashion tips and other service journalism items that helped readers navigate life in New York City. Felker proved a newspaper magazine could examine and even promote consumerism, while at the same time publish hard-hitting and thoughtful journalism about any number of social and cultural issues. It was an editorial formula many Sunday magazine editors and city weekly magazine editors emulated.

When the *Herald Tribune* went out of business in 1967, Felker bought the rights to the Sunday magazine and spun it off one year later as an independent weekly city magazine, which continues to publish today.

To be sure, Wolfe wasn't alone in bringing narrative nonfiction to magazines and, to a far lesser degree, newspapers in the 1960 and early '70s. Joan Didion, Hunter S.

Thompson, Gay Talese and Gail Sheehy were just some of the writers who embraced the New Journalism, defined by extended dialogue, point of view and even subjects' internal monologues (Harvey, 1994). Critics of the form called it "parajournalism" that undermined the authors' credibility because New Journalism attempted to blend factual authority with fictional literary devices (Macdonald, 1965). Eugene Roberts, former managing editor of *The New York Times*, similarly worried about the challenges of newspapers publishing narrative nonfiction. "When you're picking up a newspaper, you're picking up a product of not just individuals, but an institution, with a past, present and hopefully a future. And the institutional integrity is all tied up in it" (Harvey, 1994, 46).

For that reason—as well as the reality of production limitations, such as space and time—Sunday magazines were often the sections where newspapers experimented with long-form narrative nonfiction. *The Washington Post's* magazine has so embraced the style that the section's current tagline reads: "Telling the stories of the Washington region through narrative journalism" (Washington Post, 2013). This literary style of journalism is among the most distinctive editorial qualities of Sunday magazines, and it's what helps make them a valuable piece of the entire Sunday newspaper package. "A Sunday magazine, if well done, can bring a dimension not ordinarily available in the newspaper's conventional pages. It's the place where staff writers and freelancers can step out with literary pieces that explore local institutions, people and legends in ways that go beyond the fact-based reportage typical of the rest of the paper" (Morton, 1998).

Conclusion

History has shown that good journalism alone cannot sustain a newspaper section, or even a newspaper as a whole. The newspaper industry has long been structured around a business model that is reliant on advertising revenues to cover editorial, printing and distribution expenses, among many other costs.

With the popularity of TV in general in the 1950s and '60s, and the advent of cable television in the '70s, an increasing number of people were spending more and more of their free time in front of television sets, where an explosion of diverse content—from sitcoms and sports, to 24-hour news stations, weather and general entertainment—could be found no matter the day or time. In the late 1990s, researchers found that ad agencies were decreasing their reliance on newspapers. Among the reasons cited by the agency executives were a belief that other media were better at reaching target audiences and that newspaper advertising space was too expensive compared to other media (Maxwell and Wanta, 2001).

Although daily newspaper circulation increased almost 12% in a 40-year span, between 1950 and 1990, the number of U.S. households rose by 100% over that time (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2004). The decline in household penetration over that period has been attributed to a number of factors, including that young people aren't picking up the newspaper reading "habit" as they get older (Cobb, 1986), English isn't the primary language for a growing number of U.S. residents, and media audiences are increasingly fractionalized based on demographic and lifestyle interests (Bianco, 2004). Entering 2010, paid weekday circulation for daily newspapers was down 31.5% over the previous 25 years, to approximately 43.5 million, while Sunday circulation was down

27%, to 45.6 million, according to the Newspaper Association of America (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2010).

Moreover, advertising revenues—which still make up the bulk of newspapers’ earnings—declined a whopping 28% in the third quarter of 2009, compared to the same period a year earlier (Liedtke, 2009). It was the 13th consecutive quarter that newspaper advertising revenues have dropped year-over-year. Although circulation and advertising are intrinsically linked, the latter still determines the longevity of most any print product. Newspapers with relatively high readership will often go out of business if they are unable to win sufficient financial support from local and/or national advertisers. The *Rocky Mountain News*, for example, ceased publication with a paid circulation of more than 210,000 (The Associated Press, 2009), while the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* carried a paid circulation of approximately 117,000 when it stopped publishing (Bensinger, 2009).

As both Shaver and Lewis (1997) and Attaway-Fink (2004) have found, newspapers almost always create new sections and subsidiary publications for the primary purpose of generating advertising revenues. When a new section or publication fails to earn revenues in excess of its expenses, it is often discontinued. The same has held true for many established sections, such as Sunday magazines. Unlike sports sections or op-ed sections that rarely cover their costs—former *Washington Post* Sunday magazine editor Steve Coll, who later became managing editor of the entire newspaper, said the *Post*’s sports department used to lose \$25 million a year; “You think the tire ads pay for all that road game travel?” (Coll, 2010)—a Sunday magazine’s editorial content can easily run in other sections of the newspaper, and often does when publishers shutter their paper’s magazines (Garneau, 1991; Fitzgerald, 1998).

In other cases, newspapers create new sections that unintentionally undermine the editorial uniqueness of their own Sunday magazines. In 1977, for example, *The Washington Post* launched a new Friday section called “Weekend.” Editorial content included entertainment and restaurant guides, how-to articles and general feature stories (Editor & Publisher, 1977). Years later, some within the *Post* were still trying to discern what made their Sunday magazine editorially distinct from other sections in the newspaper. In 1986, for example, *The Washington Post*’s front-page was almost always filled with hard-news stories, often tied to politics and government. By 1991, however, the *Post* was running cover stories on suburban traffic jams, teenage boredom, and drivers who run red lights (Kurtz, 1993). “A lot of stories you used to find only in Sunday magazines you now will find in other sections of the paper,” said *Post* assistant managing editor Mary Hadar, who in the late 1980s served as president of the Association of Sunday and Feature Editors. “When asked what the magazine does that no other section of the paper does, it’s hard to come up with an answer” (Rosenthal, 1989, 16).

From more than 120 locally produced Sunday newspapers magazines in the late 1950s (Danilov, 1957), their numbers ballooned to approximately 225 in 1979 (Kurtz, 1982).⁵ Costen attributed the growth of locally produced Sunday magazines, particularly in the 1970s, to four factors: competitive pressure for Sunday readership and advertising revenues from commercial weekly magazines; greater advertising interest from department stores; a desire on the part of publishers to make greater use of auxiliary presses, which were mostly used for extra editions; and the recognition of editors that

⁵ Slightly more than half of the Sunday magazines the author identified were printed on basic newsprint, and some of them—such as the *Arkansas Gazette’s Omnibus* or the *News & Observer’s Leisure Living*—could easily be categorized as feature sections.

readers were increasingly interested in such topics as crime, romance, science and celebrities (1978).

However, the economics simply did not work out. Turbett (1999) reported just 60 locally produced Sunday magazines in the 1980s, and that number dropped to 22 in 1997 (Jones, 1997). In announcing the closure of the *Hartford Courant's* Sunday magazine, *Northeast*, magazine editor Jenifer Frank called it a “non-essential newspaper section” that was ceasing publication due to “insufficient money.” But she also pointed out that the mission of *Northeast* was “to be as different as possible from the daily news pages. Otherwise, what was the point of a magazine? (Frank, 2006). In Frank’s eyes, earning revenue was not the point of the magazine. It is to certain executive editors. When asked in 1991 why the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* didn’t publish its own locally produced Sunday magazine, executive editor John Flanagan’s response was simple: “Advertisers don’t support them...they don’t pay their own way” (Stein, 1991, 15). Interestingly, a 1992 survey by American Opinion Research found that adults under the age of 50 preferred to read, by a 2-to-1 margin, magazines rather than newspapers. Respondents said they preferred magazines—the specific types of magazine were undefined—because “they provide more variety and information, they are easier to handle and less depressing, and have better graphics and more detail” (Garneau, 1992, 15).

By the end of 2011, only six newspapers published their own weekly Sunday magazine. They are *The Boston Globe*, *The Kansas City Star*, *The New York Times*, *The Seattle Times*, *The Washington Post* and the *Albuquerque Journal*. The *Journal* actually publishes four different magazines, with each subject-specific magazine appearing on a different Sunday every month. The other five magazines largely remain general-interest

publications; all are published on a higher quality paper stock than the rest of the newspaper and maintain printing dimensions similar to most consumer magazines. The *New York Times Magazine* is the lone locally produced Sunday magazine that has a national circulation.

Over the past 25 years, the following newspapers have ceased publishing their own Sunday magazine, often for the stated reason that they were losing too much money:

- *The Denver Post (Empire, 1986; the magazine was resurrected in 1995 before again getting the axe, in 1998)*
- *Times Picayune in New Orleans (Dixie, 1986)*
- *Dayton Daily News (The Magazine, 1988)*
- *The Columbus Dispatch (Capitol, 1989)*
- *Sacramento Bee (Sacramento Bee Sunday Magazine, 1989)*
- *New York Daily News (New York Daily News Magazine, 1991)*
- *Newsday (Newsday Magazine, 1991)*
- *Akron Beacon Journal (Sunday Beacon Magazine, 1995; the paper re-launched it three years but again killed it, in 2000)*
- *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel (Wisconsin Magazine, 1995)*
- *Providence Journal (Rhode Islander, 1995)*
- *Dallas Morning News (Dallas Life, 1995)*
- *Buffalo News (BUFFALO, 1996; the magazine became a monthly in 1997. The name was later changed to *First Sunday*, but that publication was also eliminated, in 2007)*
- *Miami Herald (Tropic, 1998)*

- *South Florida Sun-Sentinel (Sunshine, 2000)*
- *San Jose Mercury News (SV, 2001)*
- *Philadelphia Inquirer (Philadelphia Inquirer Sunday Magazine, 2003)*
- *Houston Chronicle (Texas, 2005)*
- *Plain Dealer, Cleveland (Sunday Magazine, 2005)*
- *Hartford Courant (Northeast, 2006)*
- *Los Angeles Times (2008; the company shuttered the weekly Los Angeles Times Magazine, then re-launched and renamed it as a monthly) and*
- *Chicago Tribune (Chicago Tribune Magazine, 2009).*

Locally produced Sunday magazines used to generate tens of millions of dollars in national advertising, but the dollars mostly dried up in the late 1980s as national advertisers sought more targeted and cost-effective ways to reach would-be consumers. Metropolitan Sunday Newspapers, or MSN, a member-owned cooperative that sold national ad space in locally produced Sunday magazines throughout the country, was among the chief financial rainmakers. When it began operations in 1932, the group promoted Sunday magazines as the “ideal concept” for print advertising, enabling companies to run four-color advertising with good reproduction on a mass scale (Giobbe, 1995). The cooperative contended that readers of Sunday magazines were largely affluent; they owned two or more cars and spent a large amount of money on groceries. In 1983, MSN boasted a reach of 48 million readers through 54 newspapers, many in big markets (Dougherty, 1983), and advertising revenues in excess of \$80 million. However, nearly half of that revenue total came from tobacco advertising (Giobbe, 1995).

Cigarette advertising was big business for newspapers and magazines starting in 1971, when the federal government banned cigarette advertising from radio and television (Teel, Teel and Bearden, 1979). In 1970, the last year cigarette makers could advertise via broadcast, newspapers earned approximately \$16.5 million in advertising revenue from them. By 1976, that number increased to \$197.6 million; magazines in total were earning about \$158.5 million, up from \$55 million in 1970 (Teel et al, 1979). By 1985, cigarette advertising accounted for 52% of locally produced Sunday magazines' national advertising revenue. However, that number dropped to about 16% just three years later, as tobacco companies transitioned their marketed efforts to direct mail and other venues that enabled them to better target their messages (Giobbe, 1995). As a result, national advertising became a smaller and smaller part of the total ad mix for most locally produced Sunday magazines.

Larry Israel, former president of the Washington Post Co. (he left in 1977), banned the Post's television operations from accepting advertising from cigarette companies a full year prior to the federal broadcasting ban. The move cost the Post millions of dollars in revenue. However, no such restrictions were placed on the print operations of the company, either the *Post* newspaper, its Sunday magazine, or *Newsweek*, all of which reaped significant revenue gains following the broadcast prohibition. *The Washington Post* eventually instituted a policy against carrying tobacco advertising, citing the health dangers of the product (Campbell and Sato, 2009).

Sunday magazines similarly lost a lot of advertising revenues when grocery stores and food manufacturers switched their ad buys from Sunday magazines to full-color free-standing inserts in the late 1970s and early '80s because newspapers began offering

geographically zoned distribution of inserts—at less cost than a full-page Sunday magazine ad, no less. Coupon advertising used to account for nearly 35% of Sunday magazine ad revenue, but almost all of that money was lost with the advent of free-standing inserts (Dougherty, 1983; Giobbe, 1995).

For locally produced Sunday magazines to survive, and perhaps for others to experience a resurrection, some have argued that publishers need to come to grips with the fact that the section won't often produce much if any profit (Bloom, 1985; Woodward, 1999). Rather, Sunday magazines are readership draws on the day of the week newspapers earn the vast majority of their advertising revenues. As Michael J. Davies, who wore the usual dual hats of publisher and editor of the *Hartford Courant* in the mid-1980s, once said: “A good magazine offers prestige, enormously high readership, and it can be to the Sunday paper what the gallon of milk is to the supermarket” (Bloom, 1985, 25).

To win renewed interest from advertisers, some newspapers have attempted to change the editorial approach and format of their Sunday magazines, from general interest to more thematic issues and advertising-friendly lifestyle coverage (Hynds, 1994). In 1994, the *San Francisco Chronicle* replaced its Sunday magazine *Image* with a magazine that largely centered on culture, arts, entertainment, fashion, wine reviews and home design (Editor & Publisher, 1994). The magazine was carried in both the Sunday *Chronicle* and the *San Francisco Examiner*; the papers operated under a joint-operating agreement at the time. Today, the magazine is a monthly that still largely focuses on lifestyle-oriented content.

In 1998, the *Akron Beacon Journal* resurrected its *Sunday Beacon Magazine* at the behest of area furniture stores (Turbett, 1999). The magazine had ceased publication just three years earlier, after a 40-year run, due to a lack of advertising revenue. Yet, despite increased ad support and production changes that enabled the *Beacon Journal* to print the magazine in-house, saving the company money and dramatically shortening the lag time between printing and distribution, *Sunday Beacon Magazine* was again closed down just three years later for failing to generate sufficient ad revenues. “Once again...it was draining us financially,” said Jim Cruthfield, publisher and president of the then Knight Ridder-owned newspaper (Huey, 2001).

More recently, newspapers have created monthly weekend magazine sections that are largely focused on lifestyle content and high-end advertisers. *The Wall Street Journal*, for example, relaunched its two-year-old quarterly news and lifestyle magazine *WSJ* in December 2010, rebranding it the “world’s largest luxury magazine.” The publication’s media kit said the magazine, to publish six times a year with distribution through the Weekend edition, “acts as an escape and inspiration for [readers’] diverse and sophisticated lives” (The Wall Street Journal, 2011). Today, the magazine publishes 11 times a year, and will become a monthly in 2014. In the press release announcing the magazine’s expansion, there was no mention of circulation growth. However, it did note that *WSJ* experienced a 76% increase in ad pages between 2010 and 2011. “It’s thoughtful and genuine, and it has really resonated with the advertising community, becoming a core outlet for marketers looking to reach the most affluent and influential audience possible,” said *WSJ* publisher Anthony Cennamo (Wall Street Journal, 2012).

The Baltimore Sun brought back its Sunday magazine in September 2010 after retiring it in 1996 due to financial considerations. The magazine was founded in 1946 as “a picture magazine with an idea. The idea is PEOPLE” (Corey, 2010), but returned in 2010 as a quarterly publication that focuses on a combination of fashion, celebrity, health, and home and gardening. In the March 2011 edition of *Sun Magazine*, for example, the publication profiled the swank home of Debbie Phelps, mother of Olympic swimming champion and Baltimore native Michael Phelps. Her luxurious two-bedroom garden apartment is part of The Ritz-Carlton Residences along the Baltimore Harbor. Not far from that feature, titled “Debbie Phelps is puttin’ on the Glitz,” is a full-page advertisement for The Ritz-Carlton Residences, where one to three-bedrooms condominiums sell from \$500,000 to \$4 million. This isn’t to say the feature was done at the request of Ritz-Carlton, or that it was conceived of with the hope that Ritz-Carlton would advertise. Neither scenario is known. It’s merely an example of how lifestyle-oriented editorial content is of great appeal to the advertisers necessary to support such specialty publications. A number of other newspapers have launched new niche magazines, yet publish them on a monthly or quarterly basis and distribute them separate from the Sunday newspaper to better target specific readers. Each magazine is geared toward relatively affluent, educated readers, and focuses narrowly on such topics as food, fashion, travel or home design. These include the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*’s *FEAST*, a free quarterly magazine that’s available through hundreds of distribution points around the city, the *Miami Herald*’s *Indulge*, a free monthly that’s available through South Florida retail outlets; and the *Dallas Morning News*’ *FD Luxe*, a free monthly about fashion, beauty, dining and travel. In each case, distributing the magazine independent

from the Sunday newspaper is a way to better target specific types of readers whom advertisers want to reach. The value of these types of magazines will be expanded upon in Chapter 8.

The weekly Sunday magazines still publishing today, including those of *The Boston Globe*, *Kansas City Star*, *Seattle Times* and *The Washington Post*, have largely struck a balance between general-interest storytelling and consumer-oriented special editions, which are favored by advertisers because such editions tend to be complementary to the advertisers' promotional messages. In addition, the magazines have added a number of consumer-oriented content elements into their editorial mix, often to appeal to specific types of readers and the advertiser who want to reach them. For example, when the *Globe* redesigned and revamped its Sunday magazine in 2003, it added short features on food and fashion to the front of the magazine with the goal of reaching younger readers, those "champs of American consumption, the 18- to 35-year-olds" (Lehmann-Haupt, 2004, 24). Today, more than half of the *Globe's* Sunday magazines over the course of the year are consumer-oriented editorially themed editions, including home and design, food, travel, and fashion (Boston Globe, 2013). *The Washington Post* follows a similar schedule, with about half of the magazines published over the course of a year based on a consumer-oriented theme that aims to appeal to category-specific advertisers.

In the early '90s, Sunday magazines were characterized as either a "profit center, a reader bonus or a showcase for editorial" (Silber, 1991, 54), depending on who you asked within a newspaper company. This lack of a shared vision for the value of Sunday magazines was among the main reasons so many of the sections failed to survive.

Sunday newspapers used to have an identity: they featured lively storytelling, service journalism, narrative nonfiction, photographs, and color reproduction. However, as each of those elements found homes in other sections of the newspaper, Sunday magazines have struggled to reestablish a distinct identity that balances editorial values with the business values that underpin any section's survival.

Chapter 4 Inside The Washington Post

The Washington Post is the dominant daily, in terms of circulation and advertising revenue, in the Greater Washington, D.C. area. Its coverage of politics and policy has become a must-read for many on Capitol Hill, the epicenter of political power in the United States. Moreover, although The Washington Post Co. has been publicly traded since 1971, it has largely remained a family-owned company, with the Graham family and trusted advisers maintaining financial and operational control through a two-tiered, voting-and-nonvoting stock ownership structure. Unlike some newspaper companies that must cater to pure market demands—for instance, Knight Ridder, once the second-largest newspaper chain in America, was publicly traded as a single-class stock and forced into sale under pressure in 2005 from institutional investors unhappy with the company's financial performance (Said, 2005)—the *Post* has been able to weather advertising slumps and circulation declines through the years. This is largely thanks to a diversification of corporate revenue streams—from broadcasting to education, the company owns the test prep and for-profit education centers Kaplan—and the Graham family's commitment to quality journalism rather than short-term financial gain. Journalistically, the *Post* has long been among the elite newspapers in the United States.

In many ways, the *Post*'s operation is like most any other major metropolitan daily, with a hierarchy of newsroom employees, consistent advertising and circulation pressures, and well-established cultural norms and practices that inform decision-making at most every turn. For all these reasons, it's important to examine the history and evolution of The Washington Post Co., the culture and character of its namesake daily newspaper, and then that of the locally produced Sunday magazine at the center of this

study. A short exploration of the Post Co. and its flagship daily, past and present, will also provide a better understanding of how internal business practices and cultural values have shaped the *Post's* Sunday magazine over the past 50 years.

The Early Years, 1877-1948

The Washington Post newspaper began publishing on December 6, 1877. The company added a Sunday edition in 1880. The paper was purchased and sold a few times over the next 25 years, when John McLean, owner of the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, purchased the paper. Although McLean helped increase the Post's circulation and advertising revenues, it was largely regarded as a partisan publication; McLean was a committed Democrat. McLean's son, Edward, took over the newspaper following his father's death in 1916, and largely ran the *Post* into court receivership because the company could no longer pay its bills (Washington Post, undated, 1).

Despite the *Post's* financial troubles—the paper had been losing \$1 million annually in the early '30s and boasted a daily circulation of only 50,000—it was a highly sought-after property. The *Washington Herald*, the city's dominant daily with a circulation of approximately 120,000, wanted the *Post* so as to obtain a morning newspaper monopoly, while the afternoon *Washington Star* sought a foothold in the growing morning market. Eugene Meyer, a wealthy former Wall Street businessman and former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, had tried to buy the *Post* on two separate occasions, in 1925 and 1929, but failed to strike a deal each time (Kelly, 1983). Finally, in 1933, Meyer turned his dream into a reality by outbidding his competitors and purchasing the then-bankrupt *Post* for \$825,000 (Johnson, 1977). Upon purchasing the

newspaper, Meyer announced on the front page: “It will be my aim and purpose steadily to improve *The Post* and to make it an even better paper than it has been in the past” (Meyer, 1933, A1).

In the early 1930s, only the *Herald*, owned by William Randolph Hearst, *The New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune* were the must-read dailies for congressional power brokers (Kelly, 1983). The *Star* was largely a District of Columbia publication, and as such “had a headlock on local advertising” (Kelley, 1983 60). The *Evening Times*, also owned by Hearst, the *Post* and the tabloid *Daily News* largely rounded out the mix of dailies in D.C.

Meyer’s stewardship of the *Post* got off to rough start. The publisher of the *Herald* convinced the comics syndicate used by both newspapers to no longer do business with the *Post* (Whitelaw, 1999). In an effort to tighten the reigns of the *Post*’s business operation, Meyer announced in late 1934 that the paper’s business manager would henceforth oversee all salary raises and promotions of journalists, responsibilities that had long resided in the newsroom. Twelve editors, including the *Post*’s managing editor, complained and demanded the return of autonomy in personnel and newsroom management matters. Meyer refused and all 12 quit in protest (Kelly, 1983). New to the industry, Meyer was unaware, unsympathetic or perhaps uninterested in the established cultural norms of a daily newspaper newsroom. Although he cared deeply about the public service responsibilities of his company, he viewed the *Post* primarily as a company. If he couldn’t help the newspaper make money, the newspaper would fail to exist (Whitelaw, 1999).

By the end of 1935, the *Post* was losing \$1.3 million annually, yet Meyer refused to cut his losses and sell. He led in the addition a women's section and new advice column, and he launched a lawsuit that brought the comics back to his paper. According to his friend Elizabeth Young, "Mr. Meyer kept the *Post* because of his determination not to be a failure" (Kelly, 1983, 66).

In time, the *Post* began to reverse its fortunes. By 1938, the paper doubled its circulation, to 112,000, and annual losses were down to \$400,000 a year through improved content—editorial writer Felix Morley won the *Post* its first Pulitzer Prize award, in 1936—greater marketing of the paper, and operational cost cutting. Meyer purchased a variety of syndicated columns from *The New York Herald Tribune*, including those of Walter Lippmann, Dorothy Thompson, drama critic Richard Watts Jr. and sports columnist Richard Vidmer. Among the paper's more popular content elements were the colored Sunday comics, featuring "Andy Gump," "Dick Tracy" and "Winnie Winkle" (Kelly, 1983). Interestingly, the *Post* actually marketed its entire Sunday newspaper as "entertainment." In an October 1941 in-paper advertisement, the *Post* trumpeted its Sunday edition's 11 sections, including two photography magazine sections (including the 32-page *Parade* magazine), an eight-page sports section, and a "complete novel" through the fiction section. Other content elements were movies, hobbies, comics, society news, politics and special articles (Washington Post, 1941, 9).

The Grahams Build an Empire

With his planned retirement looming, Meyer in 1948 transferred ownership of the *Post* to his daughter Katharine and her husband, Philip L. Graham. Meyer also gave

Graham \$75,000; he gave the same amount to Katharine and each of her siblings.

Graham used the money to purchase 5,000 additional voting shares in the company, reportedly saying, “A man should never feel that he is working for his wife” (Whitelaw, 1999). Two years earlier, Phil Graham had been named associate publisher of the *Post* to learn the business that he would soon take over.

Under Phil’s leadership, the company would rise to new heights, economically and politically. He purchased WTOP radio in D.C., as well as a local TV station. He then bought a TV station in Jacksonville, Florida, which became a cash cow for the company. But the biggest deal came in March 1954, when the Post Co. consolidated its power in the Greater Washington, D.C. area by purchasing the *Washington Times-Herald*, for \$8.5 million, giving the *Post* a morning monopoly. (*The Washington Herald* had purchased the *Washington Times* in 1939, and the two papers were merged.) In buying the *Times-Herald*, the *Post* absorbed most of its circulation, with the increased audience leading to higher advertising returns. Of the *Times-Herald*’s 250,000 Sunday circulation, the *Post* picked up 200,000, nearly doubling its Sunday numbers. *The Washington Star*, an evening paper that carried far more advertising lineage than the *Post* did at the time, added only about 8,000 new Sunday subscribers (Roberts, 1977, 315). The *Post*’s new Sunday paper included two syndicated magazines—*Parade*, which the paper had carried since 1941, and *American Weekly*, which had run in the *Times-Herald*—as well as two full sections of comics. Three years later, in 1957, the *Post* opened its first foreign bureau, in London (Felsenthal, 1993).

By 1959, the new *Washington Post and Times-Herald*—the paper shed its extended name in 1973, returning simply to *The Washington Post*—finally surpassed the

Star in advertising lineage and never again trailed. Sunday circulation was more than 400,000, by far the best of any newspaper in the District, and advertising sales ranked seventh in the nation among all U.S. dailies (Roberts, 1977). Between its growing circulation, diminished competition, and the mounting influence of its journalism among the politically powerful and economically elite of the nation's capital, the *Post* was able to steadily increase its advertising rates through the years (Felsenthal, 1993). When combined with surrounding suburbs, the D.C. area constituted "one of journalism's soundest economic bases" (Johnson, 1977, A1).

In the early 1960s, the company created a news service with the *Los Angeles Times* that bolstered both papers' foreign news coverage. Within time, it also became a profitable subscription service. The Post Co. additionally acquired a partial ownership stake in the Paris-based English-language newspaper *Herald Tribune*, and entered the magazine business with the purchases of *Newsweek* in 1961, as well as *Art News*, a widely read monthly, and *Portfolio*, a hard-cover art quarterly, in 1962.

In August 1963, the Post Co. came under new leadership virtually over night. Following years of manic depression and mental illness, Phil Graham, chairman of the board of *Newsweek* and president and CEO of The Washington Post Co., committed suicide in his home in Middleburg, Virginia. He was 48 (New York Times, 1963).

His wife, Katharine, took over the company at age 45 out of duty to both her father, who died in 1959, and to Phil. Although she worked for a short time in the *Post's* circulation department soon after Meyer purchased the paper, Katharine knew very little about the inner-workings of a newspaper, let alone a diversified media company with magazine, TV, radio and other holdings. She had devoted herself to raising their four

children, performing various philanthropic work, hosting social gatherings related to *Post* business, and caring for Meyer. She held a seat on the company's board of directors and even spent some time in the late 1940s writing for the newspaper. Interestingly, Katharine was the author of the *Post*'s "The Magazine Rack" Sunday column, through which she reviewed and highlighted many of the nation's top magazines (Whitelaw, 1999).

And as if learning the business on the fly wasn't hard enough, Katharine faced a tremendous amount of sexism both within her own company and in her external professional dealings. "When Katharine took over, the *Post* was a male bastion in every department, from news to editorial to business....Male executives held little belief in women as leaders....The business world was a man's world, and it had been a long time in the making" (Gerber, 2005, 69). Graham later said she originally thought so many people in the industry were condescending to her simply because she was new to the industry. "It took the passage of time and the women's lib years to alert me properly to the real problems of women in the workplace, including my own," she wrote in her widely acclaimed biography (Graham, 1997, 351).

Graham immediately got to work learning the newspaper industry. She toured all parts of the company's operation, traveling with a notebook to take notes. She learned about typesetting, printing and distribution. She took courses on management and read textbooks and manuals. She became a student of the *Post* newspaper, often calling reporters into her office to have them answer questions she had after reading their work. She traveled to New York once a week to learn about the operations of *Newsweek*, as well as to sit in on the main editorial meeting through which the cover story was decided.

However, Graham “rarely spoke at these meetings. When asked her opinion, she usually said, ‘Well, I’m depending on you guys to make it a better magazine’ ” (Whitelaw, 1999, 68).

In 1963, she took the title of president, yet left the running of the larger company’s business to Fritz Beebe, chairman of the board who also largely oversaw the *Newsweek* operation, and John Sweeterman, publisher of the *Post*. However, with a growing interest in the business side of her company, Graham gradually inserted herself into the financial operations. From 1963 to 1969, the Post Co. continued to grow through acquisition. It bought a partial ownership stake in a Canadian newsprint company and a Virginia-based warehouse and storage facility, and made the outright purchase of an ABC-TV affiliate station in Miami (Washington Post, 2011). Sweeterman, who Graham often had “difficulties with” professionally (Graham, 1997, 412), announced his retirement in 1968 and Graham reluctantly took over the title and responsibilities of publisher. To fill her old spot as president, Graham hired Paul Ignatius, a former Secretary of the Navy with a Harvard MBA but no experience in the newspaper industry. She wanted an outsider, someone who didn’t know her late husband or many of the other executives in the newspaper industry who “could not bring themselves to take her seriously” (Felsenthal, 1993, 283). In addition, former governmental colleagues of Ignatius’ described him as “budget-minded” and “profit-oriented,” both of which appealed to Graham, and he had experience leading several building projects. Graham was eager to create a new headquarters for the *Post* (Graham, 1997, 413). However, Ignatius—his son, David, later became an editor, columnist and reporter for the paper, specializing in international affairs—was a poor fit in the job and within the company.

According to Graham (1997, 509), he was a “thoroughly nice, well-intentioned man, but he came from a very different culture and never really learned the communication business.” Ignatius was asked to resign, and the *Post* announced it in October 1971.

A few months earlier, in June, Graham took the Post Co. public through a two-tiered dual-class ownership structure that earned the company \$35 million. The “Class A” stock stayed with the Graham family, giving them controlling interest in the company, as well as the ability to elect 70% of the board of directors. Flush with new capital, the Post Co. further invested in its core print publishing business and diversified through new industries, such as TV, cable and education (Gerber, 2005). The two-tiered public offering wasn’t entirely unique. The Sulzberger family took The New York Times Co. public in much the same way in 1967 (Gerber, 2005), as the Bancroft family did with Dow Jones & Co. around the same time. From a business standpoint, companies such as the Fitch Ratings Agency have argued that the dual-class stock structure is good for long-term financial success: “Family or trust-owned enterprises with dual-class stock structures are better positioned to take a longer-term view of the risks and opportunities in the newspaper space and to weather near-term turbulence in the stock markets, thereby better insulating them from shareholder activist-driven event risk” (E&P staff, 2007).

Graham would become chairman of the board, balancing new responsibilities with the existing ones of running the newspaper as its publisher. It was a difficult task for someone with no formal business training. As Graham later admitted, she was constantly struggling with how best to balance her paper’s journalistic responsibilities with the financial responsibilities she held as the chief executive officer of a public company (Graham, 1997).

Yet, by 1971 the *Post* was clearly the dominant paper in the Greater D.C. area. Its circulation ranked seventh largest nationally, with a daily circulation of 510,000 and 671,000 on Sundays. It had the highest circulation of any newspaper in Virginia, and was the largest daily in Maryland. From an advertising standpoint, the *Post* carried more than 71.3 million lines of advertising, fifth most of any paper in the country (Washington Post, 1971). The *Post*'s only local print competitor was the afternoon *Star*. "With suburban and upscale readers drifting away, a growing percentage of [the *Star*'s] remaining readership consisted of the relatively downscale residents of the District of Columbia and downtown office workers who bought it on the newsstands. These were not the flossy, upscale advertisers' darlings who motored off to the suburbs each evening" (Benjaminson, 1984, 88). Although the *Star* under new editor Jim Bellows arguably provided more coverage of the communities of Washington, D.C.—as opposed to the federal government—and became a more light-hearted and irreverent read than was the *Post*, "many people decided that reading the *Star* was equivalent to reading a supplement to a supplement and stopped it altogether" (Benjaminson, 1984, 101). Even though the *Star*'s circulation rose slightly under Bellow's leadership, advertisers didn't follow.

In writing about *The Washington Post*'s 100-year anniversary, in 1977—it was one piece of a 10-part series of articles the newspaper published in celebration of itself—reporter Haynes Johnson referred to the company's "morning monopoly" and how publishing in the "affluent nation's capital gives it one of journalism's soundest economic bases" (1977, A1). By the late 1970s, the *Post* was earning approximately 70% of all daily newspaper advertising in the D.C. area, and ranked fifth nationally in terms of advertising lineage (Bray, 1980). In 1977, the Post Co. earned a whopping \$94.6 million

in the first quarter alone on the strength of advertising and circulation growth at the newspaper, advertising gains at *Newsweek*—the magazine added color-printing capabilities for all pages the previous year, which led to a surge in advertising—and advertising and licensing growth through its broadcasting properties. In all of 1976, the Post Co. earned \$24.5 million (Jones, 1977).

Graham's oldest child, Donald, was handed control of the *Post* in 1979 when he was named publisher; Katharine transitioned to CEO of the Post Co. that same year. Unlike his mother, who had to learn the publishing business on the fly, Don came to the job with a strong understanding of the *Post*'s inner-workings through years of grooming and preparation. He had previously served in a variety of positions at the *Post*, from city reporter to sports editor, from working in marketing and promotions to serving as assistant general manager (Gerber, 2005).

In August 1981, the struggling *Washington Star*—under the new leadership of Time Inc.—finally went out of business, even though it still had a circulation of approximately 300,000. It was losing about \$20 million annually and its share of local advertising dollars was at an all-time low (Benjaminson, 1984). The *Post* became the lone daily in the nation's capital, and by the end of that year the paper's Sunday circulation had risen 17% and its daily circulation by 25% (Felsenthal, 1993). The newspaper soon had little trouble increasing its ad rates and bolstering its already strong revenue performance (Fink, 1996). However, it wasn't long before a new daily competitor arrived in Washington, D.C. *The Washington Times* began publishing in 1982, but the conservative-leaning newspaper—it was funded largely by the fringe religious

group Unification Church—was never able to generate more than a small fraction of the *Post*'s advertising or circulation revenue.

The Post Co. continued to acquire new businesses, both within the media industry as well as beyond. In 1984, the company bought the K-12 tutoring/test preparation company Stanley H. Kaplan Educational Centers Limited for \$45 million, and in January 1986 paid Capital Cities Communication \$350 million for 53 cable TV systems, largely in Western, Midwestern and Southern states (Rivera, 1985). Although both deals were significant for the Post Co., enabling it to diversify revenue streams, the Kaplan acquisition has grown more significant with time, expanding into the lucrative higher education and professional training fields. In 1975, the Post Co. posted annual profits of \$12 million. By 1989, that number stood at \$197 million (Kurtz, 1993).

The diversification of business interests has partially shielded the newspaper division from more severe cutbacks during times of financial hardship. For example, following a pressmen's strike in 1975 and 1976 that greatly damaged earnings at the newspaper, advertising revenues from the Post Co.'s television stations and *Newsweek* magazine prevented what would otherwise have been tough times financially for the company (Bray, 1980). In 2009, the Kaplan educational unit generates more than 60% of the company's revenues and 75% of its operating income (Mufson, 2010). Two years earlier, Chairman Don Graham actually rebranded the Post Co. an "education and media company" to highlight for Wall Street analysts and investors the breadth of its diversification. At the time of the announcement, on December 5, 2007, the company's newspaper division—which is largely the *Post*—accounted for just 21 cents of every dollar earned (Aherns, 2007). Katharine Graham passed away on July 17, 2001.

In the first quarter of 2010, the Post Co. reported a \$45.4 million profit with revenues of \$1.17 billion. However, revenue gains, which were 11% higher from the same period a year earlier, were attributed to growth at Kaplan, the Cable One cable company and six television stations. Such growth offset losses in the newspaper division, which dropped \$13.8 million in that first quarter (Aherns, 2010).

A Business Challenged

The newspaper's financial woes are not particularly unique to the *Post*. The newspaper industry as a whole has faced historic economic challenges from the emergence of the Internet, with its free content and low advertising rates. As is the case at newspapers nationwide, online advertising still accounts for only about 15% of all advertising revenues. Although online advertising revenues have grown slightly in recent years, the increases haven't been nearly enough to make up for losses on the print side. At metropolitan daily newspapers, online advertising sells for approximately 10 cents to the print dollar. Print advertising revenues at the *Post* were down 6% in the second quarter of 2010, year over year, while daily circulation dropped 10.7% in the first six months of 2010—Sunday circulation fell 9%—compared to the same period one year earlier. Daily circulation was 556,300, while Sunday stood at 776,900 (Politico.com, 2010). The Post Co.'s newspaper division posted operating losses of \$193 million in 2008 and \$164 million in 2009, numbers that include online advertising (Sherman, 2010).

The shortfalls have forced some major cuts in the paper's much-heralded newsgathering operation, with hundreds of newsroom staff members leaving the company through a combination of retirements, general departures and four rounds of

voluntary buyouts (Sherman, 2010; Kindred, 2010). The *Post* lost a bevy of top writers, including foreign correspondent and two-time Pulitzer winner Anthony Shadid and political reporter Mark Leibovich, to *The New York Times* and other news media organizations. (Shadid died while working in Syria in 2012.) As of fall 2010, the paper still had a robust newsroom of approximately 600 employees and, as of May 2011, the *Post* ranked sixth nationally in daily circulation, at nearly 551,000, and third in Sunday circulation, at nearly 853,000 (Romenesko, 2011).

In other cost-cutting moves in 2011, the *Post* closed its three national bureaus—in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles—stopped printing its daily business section as a stand-alone section, opting instead to run only a few pages as part of the “A” section, and killed its book review section. The book section was launched in September 1963 as a “literary supplement” to the Sunday paper. Titled “Book Week,” the rotogravure section was developed in partnership with the *New York Herald Tribune* and the *San Francisco Examiner* (The Washington Post, 1963, A1). That partnership ended when the *Herald Tribune* went out of business in 1966, although the *Post* continued the Sunday book section by joining forces with *The Chicago Tribune* in 1967 to produce a new “rotogravure magazine of modern design” titled “Book World” (The Washington Post, 1967, A17). The *Post* would eventually publish the section entirely on its own. Other cutbacks in recent years included the *Post*’s *National Weekly Edition*, a subscription-based print tabloid launched in 1983 that repurposed many of the *Post*’s top national news stories, book reviews, editorials and cartoons each week. The *Weekly*’s subscriber base had fallen from about 150,000 in the late 1990s to just 20,000 in 2009, and advertising revenues were similarly on the decline (Alexander, 2009). In 2008, the *Post*

discontinued publishing its very own crossword puzzle, which ran in the magazine section on Sundays. Fred Piscop held the job from 2002 to 2008, and was let go by the paper to cut costs (Horne, 2009). The *Post* immediately replaced Piscop's puzzles with a syndicated puzzle, created by famed puzzle-maker Merl Reagle.

Although painful, the various cuts to the newspaper weren't as deep as they might otherwise have been if not for the Post Co.'s diversification of business interests. However, according to some, such diversification carried a possible downside for the flagship daily: "The success of Kaplan may have also provided a financial cushion that insulated the *Post* from making changes necessary to survive in a new climate" (Sherman, 2010).

Journalistic Culture and the Pursuit of Greatness

In the early 1970s, *The Washington Post* was among the elite U.S. daily newspapers, both journalistically and economically. On June 15, 1971, Katharine Graham took her company public through a two-tiered stock offering that earned the Post a quick \$35 million—and many millions more over the years—while consolidating corporate decision-making authority within her family and among close associates (Gerber, 2005). Just days later, the *Post* cemented its journalistic reputation by publishing a front-page story based on what became known as "The Pentagon Papers." The 47-volume report, formally titled "History of Decision Making in Vietnam: 1945-1968," chronicled more than 20 years of misjudgments and outright lies by various U.S. administrations in the execution of the war with Vietnam. The U.S. government commissioned the classified report, which was written by the foreign policy think tank Rand Corp. (Kelly, 1983).

The New York Times broke the Pentagon Papers story on Sunday, June 13, 1971, with six full pages of stories and documents based on the report. It looked at little known policy decisions by Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, and how the CIA had argued, to no avail, in 1964 that the war couldn't be won by bombing the Vietnamese. Graham and executive editor Ben Bradlee "were humiliated that the *Times* broke the story first and felt that the *Post* now had to catch up" (Davis, 1979, 257). The paper got its chance in part thanks to the Nixon administration, which quickly sought and won a temporary restraining order against the *Times*, preventing the paper from publishing additional stories from the classified report. By Thursday of that week, the *Post* acquired a full copy of the report. Despite a bevy of legal and financial fears, namely its new status as a public company as well as the future maintenance of its broadcasting licenses (Davis, 1979)—the Post Co. owned a variety of TV stations—the *Post* published a front-page story chronicling the Eisenhower administration's efforts to delay elections in Vietnam in 1954, as well as other stories based on the report. The Nixon administration quickly sued the *Post* as well, winning another restraining order against further publication of the "Papers." The *Times* and *Post* quickly joined forces, consolidated their appeals, and on June 30 won their case, 6-3, before the U.S. Supreme Court. Wrote Associate Justice Hugo Black for the majority:

"In my view, far from deserving condemnation for their courageous reporting, the New York Times, the Washington Post, and other newspapers should be commended for serving the purpose that the Founding Fathers saw so clearly. In revealing the workings of government that led to the Vietnam war, the newspapers nobly did precisely that which the Founders hoped and trusted they would do" (New York Times Co. v. United States, 1971, 717).

The *Post* challenged and defeated a U.S. president in the protection of such journalistic principles as truth and accountability, and the newspaper became something of a hero within the news media industry. One year later, the *Post* not only again challenged that president, but it also played a role in forcing his resignation from office.

On the evening of Friday, June 16, 1972, a group of burglars were caught breaking into the offices of the Democratic National Committee, located in the Watergate office building in Washington, D.C. The following day, a group of *Post* reporters and editors began looking into the break-in. Their findings culminated in a front-page story on Sunday, June 18 titled “5 Held in Plot to Bug Democrats’ Office Here” (Kelly, 1983, 183). Among other details, the article noted that one of the men who attempted to wiretap the DNC’s office was a former CIA agent. Within days, the *Post* discovered and reported that James McCord, the former agent, was the chief security officer for President Richard Nixon’s reelection committee, and that the burglars had other ties to the White House.

Over the next four-plus months, *Post* Metro reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein were tasked with further exploration of the burglary and its connections to those within the Nixon administration. Aided by confidential sources within the federal government—it was revealed only in 2005 that the primary source, famously code-named “Deep Throat,” had been FBI Associate Director W. Mark Felt—the *Post* got far ahead of everyone in the news media in chronicling a laundered money trail from former Attorney General John Mitchell, who resigned in early 1972 to manage Nixon’s reelection campaign, and the Watergate burglars. Nixon nonetheless won reelection in a landslide in November 1972, yet would resign his office less than two years later, the result of a steady stream of details from criminal trials, Senate hearings, special prosecutor

investigations and, ultimately, a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that finally cleared the way to the truth: Nixon knew about the break-in and was directly involved in trying to thwart any investigation. The *Post* and its executive editor, Ben Bradlee, would become national heroes. Woodward and Bernstein would go on to write two best-selling books about the Watergate break-in and cover up, with one of those books, *All the President's Men*, adapted into a screenplay and made into a movie in 1976.

Thanks largely to its investigative reporting of the Watergate scandal, the *Post* quickly became known as “the most exciting paper to work on, the most interesting one to read, and the one from which wrongdoers had most to fear” (Fallows, 1976, 145).

When Bradlee announced his retirement in 1991, many in the newsroom thought former *Post* editor and Bradlee protégé Shelby Coffey was his likely successor. Coffey had held a variety of positions at the paper over the years, from editor of the *Post's* Sunday magazine, to editor of the Style section, to deputy managing editor of the paper. An avid proponent of feature writing and narrative journalism, Coffey had left the *Post* in 1985 and joined the *Los Angeles Times* one year later. He became that paper's editor on January 1, 1989, although many in and around the *Post* expected him to return to D.C. (Kindred, 2010). But the offer never came. By instead choosing *Post* managing editor Leonard Downie Jr. to replace Bradlee, in 1991, Publisher Donald Graham “told editors and reporters that style was good, and there was a place for style, but the values of his newspaper would be based solely on substance” (Kindred, 2010, 140).

Whereas Bradlee led the *Post* to national prominence, Downie is credited with professionalizing the newsroom and shaping “the institution's culture” (Sherman, 2010). A longtime *Post* reporter, Downie became an editor on the Metro section in 1974 and a

London correspondent in 1979. He returned to D.C. in 1982 as the national editor and was promoted to managing editor two years later. Downie served as executive editor of the *Post* for 17 years, from 1991 to 2008, leading the paper to 25 Pulitzer Prizes, including three for Public Service, the newspaper industry's highest honor (Kurtz, 2008).

However, some have argued that Downie was almost too focused on the greatness of the print newspaper, at the expense of new opportunities and emerging threats, namely the Internet (Sherman, 2010). The *Post*, like *The New York Times*, had increasingly become a “centrist institution given to glacial movements” (Sherman, 2002, 49).

Although the *Post* was among the first newspapers to start publishing online, in 1996—it was the first major U.S. newspaper to carry a staff-written blog, in 2005 (Kindred, 2010)—the *Post* kept its print and online news operations separate, with the online team based in Arlington, Va., and the print operation in the company's headquarters in downtown Washington, D.C. Some have argued that housing the web unit in Virginia was a way to prevent unionization (Virginia had tough union-forming laws), while others have contended that separate offices gave the digital operation the freedom to experiment and innovate in ways it would unlikely be able to if housed within a print newsroom culture that was deeply protective of established journalistic norms and practices (Wemple, 2008). “The website people were kids from a computer culture of video, audio, databases, photo galleries, interactivity—all those gadgets that were alien to the veterans” in the *Post*'s print headquarters (Kindred, 2010, 120). Said Steve Coll, former editor of the *Post*'s Sunday magazine and, later, starting in 1998, managing editor of the newspaper, “Even the most creative of us were imprisoned by our inherited newspaper assumptions” (Kindred, 2010, 120). Ultimately, the *Post* was among the last major

metropolitan newspapers to merge its print and online newsrooms, finally doing so in 2009 under new executive editor Marcus Brauchli.

Pulitzers, Power and Prestige

While *The New York Times* won the 1972 Pulitzer Prize in Public Service for its coverage of the Pentagon Papers, the *Post* won the top award one year later for its ongoing investigation into the Watergate break-in and White House cover up. *Post* political columnist David Broder also won that year in the Commentary category. It was a crowning achievement for the paper. Prior to 1973, the *Post* had won “just” seven Pulitzers, starting with its first, in 1936. However, in the years that Bradlee served as executive editor, from 1968 to 1991, the *Post* won 19 Pulitzers, not counting the 1981 award for feature writing, which was returned by *Post* reporter Janet Cooke after admitting she fabricated the story. Since 2000, the *Post* has won 24 of the awards, second only to *The New York Times*’ 27 (Pulitzer.org, 2011). Pulitzer “winners become the nobility of American journalism,” wrote former *Post* ombudsman Bill Green (1981, A15). Studies have shown that reporters and editors are perceived to carry greater professional prestige after winning a journalism award (Kosicki et al, 1985), and that a newspaper’s prestige is elevated through the industry when one of its journalists is honored for his or her work, particularly investigative journalism (Coulson, 1989).

“So prestigious is *The Post* among journalists and would-be journalists in this country and abroad that one could feel comfortable betting that the entire staff could be replaced, at least numerically, once a month by the applications the paper receives” (Green, 1981, A15). However, such success often comes with professional pressure,

which hasn't always served *Post* journalists or the paper very well. Said Lewis Simons of the *Post*'s Metro section in explaining what might have compelled his former colleague Janet Cooke to fabricate a story and then repeatedly lie about it: "Pressures are so great to produce, to go beyond excellence to the 'holy s---' story. Everyone knows that's what the editors want. The pressure is to get the incredible story, the extraordinary story" (Green, 1981, A15).

In the search for reporters who can handle that pressure, newsroom-hiring decisions at the *Post* have long been group decisions, with various editors meeting with and interviewing job candidates. It's a system of checks and balances to determine if aspiring *Post* journalists would likely survive and thrive within the company's fast-paced, politically charged (both internally and externally) environment. Editors at the company called the process a professionally "collegial" one (Green, 1981, A14), although collegiality suffers at times during the rigors of producing a brand-new product each and every day. As is the case at many newspapers, *Post* editors are often protective of their sections and reporters, and will lobby for ever-more resources—be they staff, budgetary or news hole—while reporters guard their beats and stories from potential encroachment by colleagues vying for a front-page article that might bring internal plaudits, promotions and external prestige (Sherman, 2002). Said former *Post* national section reporter Joanne Omang: "There is little interest in yeoman labor covering a subject that only affects people's lives; what counts in the glory department is page one, and everyone is supposed to 'write it out' onto the front, no matter how mundane the topic. This is part of the creative tension business" (Green, 1981, A15).

In writing about her experiences as a Metro and Sunday magazine reporter at the *Post* in the mid- to late 1980s, Jill Nelson chronicled the early thrills, frustrations and ongoing challenges of those tensions. The book is pointedly titled *Volunteer Slavery: My Authentic Negro Experience*. “Being hired by the *Post* is for many journalists the pinnacle of their careers. Wooed from some other newspaper because they are stars, enterprising hot shots with great reportorial skills, they came to the *Post* prepared to take their rightful place in the ultimate journalistic constellation, to join the elite club of the country’s finest reporters and writers. Once arrived, they abruptly find themselves tossed into a newsroom filled with several hundred other stars fighting to see who can shine the brightest, eclipse each other, continue to ascend, and yet avoid the always imminent danger of crashing and burning” (Nelson, 1993, 84).

Getting Style

Although *The Washington Post* is largely known for its investigative journalism and award-winning coverage of U.S. politics and policy, the newspaper was at the forefront of a new model of newspaper journalism beginning in the late 1960s. Bradlee, a former Washington bureau chief for *Newsweek*, joined the *Post* as managing editor in 1965 and brought a “magazine flair and style” to the paper (Roberts, 1977, 378). Bradlee was named executive editor of the *Post* in late 1968, and he wasted little time putting his personal stamp on the newspaper.

In the mid- to late 1960s, at the height of America’s “new journalism” movement, which emphasized narrative storytelling and the writer’s point of view, Bradlee led the charge in shuttering the *Post*’s often dry daily women’s section “for and about Women.”

Bradlee wanted the *Post* instead to cover the private lives of his high-powered readers and shine a light on the cultural trends taking shape throughout the country (Felsenthal, 1993), but with a magazine's breezy editorial voice and sophistication of design.

In 1952, "for and about Women" editor Marie Sauer had actually lobbied top *Post* editors to revamp her section and replace it with a new general interest section that catered to men and women alike. She sought to challenge the newspaper industry's "gendered definition of news" (Yang, 1996, 367), which held that women's sections should largely contain soft news stories about food, fashion and furnishings geared to housewives. However, *Post* business-side executives rebuffed Sauer's efforts due largely to advertisers' desire for an ever-upbeat section through which they could market their products to affluent suburban housewives. "From the management's point of view, these pages were to serve the advertisers more than the readers of the *Post*" (Yang, 1996, 368).

As such, Sauer and her team of reporters were stuck in a no-win situation. Because they mostly covered society news and fluffy lifestyle stories, Sauer and her staff were held in low esteem among many other journalists throughout the newsroom. And yet, when Sauer began to incorporate more "hard news" into her section, by having her reporters pursue more substance from such soft-news beats as community luncheons or embassy receptions, editors of other *Post* sections complained that such substance belonged in their sections, not the women's section (Yang, 1996). She occasionally won those battles, and she occasionally lost some, too.

The inaugural issue of *Style* appeared on January 6, 1969, and it was among the first newspaper sections in America that carried a magazine-like editorial sensibility, packaging graphics, photography, witty and controversial features, short items of gossip,

news interlaced with opinion and context, and narrative storytelling. “It soon became the voice of the precious few and an affront to many” (Kelly, 1983, 158). For Bradlee, *Style* was a place where the *Post* could cover “the revolution in how people were living” and what “real people were doing, rather than criminals murdering or leaders leading” (Bradlee, 1995, 297). That’s not exactly how *Style* started out, though. For the inaugural issue, the cover story featured Ruth Eisemann-Schier, the first woman to appear on the FBI’s 10-most wanted list. Eisemann-Schier played a role in the December 1968 kidnapping and ransom of a Florida land heiress. To be sure, it was not the typical women’s page fare. “Readers were shocked, but none more than Kay Graham. She worried about losing the fashion advertising (including that of department stores) and the respect of her friends who were accustomed to polite coverage of their teas, not stories about abortion, homosexuality, extramarital sex—all of which were soon fare for ‘*Style*’” (Felsenthal, 1993, 267). *Post* business executives, including Graham, were deeply worried about the potential loss of advertisers as a result of *Style*’s edgier content (Bradlee, 1995), but the new feature section soon became a hit with readers and advertisers alike.

Coverage of area social events and weddings, as well as articles on child rearing, markedly declined over the next 10-plus years, while coverage of entertainment and the arts blossomed (Franklin, 1991). The number of stories focused entirely on women also significantly decreased (Miller, 1976). “We wanted to look at the culture of America as it was changing in front of our eyes,” Bradlee (1995, 298) would later write. “The sexual revolution, the drug culture, the women’s movement. And we wanted it to be interesting, exciting, different.”

But Style's success came at a cost to the broader newspaper. In fulfilling Bradlee's desire for a top-notch daily feature section, some of the paper's best writers were pulled from other sections and assigned to write for Style. As a result, those sections would increasingly become "feature-free" and "top-heavy with straight news" (Bradlee, 1995, 300), which, in many ways, would shape the editorial culture of the *Post* for years to come.

Magazines and Lifestyle

Demographic shifts in the Greater Washington, D.C. area in the late 1940s dramatically effected operations at the *Post* as well as at other local dailies. People were increasingly moving away from the urban center of the District and into the surrounding suburbs. From 1940 to 1950, the area's suburban population doubled, and by 1960 the surrounding suburbs had twice the population of the District of Columbia (Grier, 1973). This geographic shift had a direct affect on the *Post*'s editorial coverage and business operations. The newspaper quickly broadened its news coverage into the suburbs and sought new ways to appeal specifically to women. That's because advertisers were similarly chasing these affluent suburbanites, often at the expense of inner-city residents—African-Americans represented 76% of the D.C. population in the early 1970s (Bray, 1980)—as the expansion of homes, yards and living conditions gave rise to a vast market of domestic products. Businesses wanted to reach suburbanites, but women in particular because they often did their family's shopping (Roberts, 1977; Benjaminson, 1984).

The *Post* introduced new special content sections throughout the 1950s and early '60s. Editors of these sections were given great freedom to pursue more or less whatever stories they deemed important to tell, although food, travel and real estate were largely a “reflection of the advertisers” (Roberts, 1977, 359). Entertainment was another content area the *Post* used to pursue new ad revenue. In response to the popularity of the booklet-sized consumer magazine *TV Guide*, which premiered with national listings in 1953, the *Post* began publishing its own weekly color TV magazine in 1960. Printed in a 7-inch-by-10 1/4-inch format through rotogravure, the Sunday *Post*'s television magazine featured local channel listings, program highlights, movie guides, celebrity interviews, pictures of famous TV personalities, and a column about the Washington area TV scene.

The company moved into the magazine publishing business in earnest in 1961, both with the February launch of a new locally produced *Post* Sunday magazine, *Potomac*, and the \$15 million purchase of *Newsweek* one month later. The Post Co. quickly added two art magazines, *Art News* and *Portfolio*, to its stable in late 1961 and early 1962, respectively.

Newsweek was founded as a news digest in 1933 and was originally called *News-Week*; it merged with *Today* magazine in 1937 and the name was tweaked to become *Newsweek*. The magazine attempted to compete with *Time*, the nation's leading general-interest newsmagazine, and did so by avoiding the type of “point of view” journalism that defined *Time* (Tebbel, 1969, 228). By the 1960s, following its purchase by the Washington Post Co., *Newsweek* discovered its editorial voice through news analyses and signed columns; *Time* typically ran anonymous columns. Under the guidance of Philip Graham, *Newsweek* took on a more politically progressive viewpoint in stories, mirroring

its new owner's politics and further distinguishing itself from the more conservative-leaning *Time*. Graham invested additional cash into the magazine, enabling it to expand its editorial staff both in the United States and abroad (Tebbel and Zuckerman, 1991). In 1967, *Newsweek* received wide acclaim from news media insiders, community activists and political leaders alike when it veered from its typical news analyses approach and toward open advocacy in support of the civil rights movement. In November of that year, *Newsweek* produced a 20-page section titled "What Must Be Done" that identified various steps the government should take to meet the needs and demands of black communities throughout the country. "As the media critic Edwin Diamond put it, 'Newsweek was the 'hot book' for Madison Avenue in the '60s' " (Tebbel and Zuckerman, 1991, 306). Throughout its history, however, the magazine was always second to *Time* in circulation. In a span of 12 years, from 1972 to 1984, *Newsweek* had a whopping six different editors and seven different presidents, "perhaps a reflection of its owner, Katharine Graham, head of the Washington Post Company, who had been periodically impatient with *Newsweek's* failure to overtake *Time*" (Tebbel and Zuckerman, 1991, 306). Although it has been widely reported that she left editorial management of the *Post* newspaper to Bradlee, she was actively involved in the hiring and firing of editors at *Newsweek*. Her primary interests were not budgetary or even advertising related; she simply wanted *Newsweek* to be "better, quicker, more thoughtful, [and] more rewarding to its readers" (Kosner, 2006, 162).

In the late 1970s, Katharine Graham and the Post Co. turned their sights to the city magazine market, with specific interest in Clay Felker's *New York*. With the demise of the *New York World Journal Tribune* in 1966, Felker purchased the rights to the

paper's locally produced Sunday magazine, of which he was editor, and spun it off a year later as a weekly consumer magazine. The *Post's* new Style section, which premiered in 1969, used the magazine as something of an editorial template, as did *Potomac* under the editorship of Walter Pincus and Steve Isaacs in the late 1960s. Bradlee even instructed Isaacs to visit Felker to better understand the elements of what Bradlee called "boutique journalism." "Use light and frivolous covers and you can get away with serious pieces inside," Felker told Isaacs, a former reporter and editor of the *Post's* city section (Bray, 1980, 215). *New York* was renowned for its "upscale service journalism," such as stories about where to find the best bagels or where to go to have an invaluable family heirloom repaired. Such stories sandwiched feature articles by such journalistic luminaries as Gloria Steinem, Tom Wolfe, Jimmy Breslin and Gail Sheehy (Kosner, 2006). Felker described the editorial philosophy of *New York* as a "subtle, sophisticated formula for a literate and active, upwardly mobile audience, depending on constant surprise, and unique writing and visual talents" (Felker, 1968, 9).

Later feeling creatively squeezed and disempowered, Felker in 1976 sought to gain greater control of his magazine's future and began to quietly pursue new investors. The New York Magazine Company owned *New York*, the *Village Voice* and *New West*, a California-based city magazine Felker had started one year earlier, but Felker owned just 10% of the company and he was increasingly at odds with other board members, namely Carter Burden, who held the largest block of company stock. Felker appealed to both Rupert Murdoch, who purchased *The New York Post* in 1976, and Graham, whom he had a friendship with. However, after a protracted negotiation process, Burden sold his shares to Murdoch, "an embarrassing defeat" for Graham (Gerber, 2005, 179).

Other efforts and failures in magazine publishing would follow, including numerous attempts at redeveloping the *Post*'s Sunday magazine. In 1979, the Post Co.'s magazine group launched *Inside Sports*, a monthly competitor to Time Inc.'s weekly *Sports Illustrated*, but the subscription and newsstand publication became a financial drain on the company. *Inside Sports* lost \$12 million its first year, four times more than expected, and quickly lost support among Post Co. executives in Washington, D.C. and New York. The magazine was projected to lose money in its first four to five years—it took *Sports Illustrated* 12 years to gain profitability; it premiered in 1951 (Brinkley, 2010)—yet Katharine Graham and Post Co. President Richards Simmons didn't want to risk the magazine becoming a drag on the company's bottom line. *Inside Sports* ultimately cost the Post Co. \$20 million, and was sold in 1982 (Felsenthal, 1993).

Today, the magazine business represents a sliver of the Post's operation, although the company has developed an array of niche publishing interests. Although the Post Co. purchased *Foreign Policy* magazine in 2008, it sold *Newsweek* two years later to businessman and philanthropist Sidney Harman in a dumping of debt. The magazine hadn't earned a profit since 2007 and lost a reported \$30 million in 2009 (Olivarez-Giles, 2010).⁶ Among the *Post*'s niche titles, the company owns a free, young adult-oriented commuter daily, *Express*, which it launched in 2003, and a Spanish-language newsweekly, *El Tiempo Latino*, which it purchased in 2004. Both print publications feature additional online content, as is the case with *Foreign Policy*. The Post Co. also currently owns a pair of online-only daily magazines, *Slate.com*, a general-interest

⁶ Harman later partnered with Barry Diller's InterActiveCorp, which owned *The Daily Beast* website. *Newsweek* and *The Daily Beast* were jointly operated, but *Newsweek* still wasn't able to generate a profit. The print edition ceased publication on December 31, 2012, but continues to publish online (Daniel and Hagey, 2012).

publication purchased from Microsoft in 2005, and *TheRoot.com*, which delivers an African-American perspective on news, politics and culture. The Post launched *Root* in 2008.

Taken together, the Post Co. remains deeply committed to publishing. However, with the exception of the main section of its flagship daily, that commitment has increasingly moved away from general interest—as is the case throughout much of the print publishing industry (Morton, 2004)—and toward a niche content and advertiser strategy.

The Evolution of the Post’s Sunday Magazine

In the early part of the 1900s, *The Washington Post* published a number of Sunday-only niche sections dedicated to culture and lifestyle. This included an illustrated fiction section, starting in the late 1910s, as well as an eight-page rotogravure photo section in 1917, providing readers with “pictorial presentations of places and people the whole world over” (Washington Post, Dec. 1917, 10). The Sunday-only section was marketed heavily through advertisements in the main paper during the week, often in conjunction with other promotions for Sunday content offerings, including the fiction section, the sports section and comics. Clearly, the *Post* sought to win readers through offering a package of lifestyle and entertainment-based content.

In promoting its rotogravure section, the *Post*, like many newspapers of the time, turned to over-the-top rhetoric: “The most elaborately illustrated supplement south of New York. Destined to entrench *The Washington Post* more firmly than ever in its position as ‘The National Capital’s Favorite Sunday Newspaper’” (Washington Post,

1917, 12). The newspaper sought to engage its readers partly by inviting them to submit their own creative content for publication, a practice regularly employed by most newspaper websites today. In March 1918, the *Post* announced its first photography contest, open to experts and amateurs alike in the Washington, D.C. area, with the top winner receiving \$50 and his/her pictures published in the paper's Sunday rotogravure section (Washington Post, March 1918). More than 1,000 photographs were submitted, with the winners announced through the Sunday publication of their pictures (Washington Post, June 1918). In 1923, the *Post* took its pursuit of user-generated content to new heights, or perhaps lows, with a rotogravure section photo contest for the "prettiest feet" in the Greater D.C. area. Nearly 2,000 women submitted pictures, proving, according to a write up about the contest, "Washington women are proud of their feet, and justly so" (Washington Post, 1923, 2).

In 1919, the *Post* began publishing a new broadsheet section that the paper called "the best magazine ever printed by a Sunday newspaper" (Washington Post, 1919, 9). The "magazine" carried mostly fiction, opinion pieces and illustrations, but also the occasional traditional feature story, including some based on life on the European battlefields of World War I. The *Post* launched a new standalone fiction section in 1934 and continued to carry a bevy of other Sunday sections, including the magazine, a rotogravure photo section, colored comics, sports, society, real estate and news (Washington Post, 1934). However, the magazine section would come and go throughout the first half of the twentieth century due, in part, to paper shortages and shifting editorial strategies. It wasn't until February 5, 1961 that the *Post* introduced what might be seen today as a traditional Sunday magazine section.

Printed through rotogravure, the new publication featured four-color on the front and back page as well as sporadically throughout, with content completely local and generally “light and fluffy” (Bradlee, 1986, C7). The goal, in addition to bolstering local retail advertising, was to give “some bulk” (Bradlee, 1986, C7) to the *Post*’s Sunday paper, which was then in serious competition with the *Washington Star*’s Sunday edition for readers and advertisers. “You’ll be able to share it with your entire family—the places you know, the people you’ve seen—the familiar events that are so much a party of the Washington scene,” read a full-page ad announcing *Potomac*. The ad also touted the fact that more than 75% the magazine, which measured 10 ¾ inches-by-13 inches, would be photographs (Washington Post, 1961, A11).

Led by Paul Herron, a former real estate reporter and editor at the *Post*, *Potomac* was launched as a way to offer area businesses color advertising through rotogravure printing. No other section of the paper could print in color. Editorially, editor Russell Wiggins conceived of *Potomac* as “local and low key. No controversy and keep the thing short,” according to Herron (Herron, 2009). To that end, *Potomac* consistently featured local feel-good stories and photo spreads, highlighting such things as high school marching bands, art shows, area luncheons and local golf tournaments. Later in this study, in the chapter detailing findings, I will explore in greater detail some of unique content elements and the evolution of the *Post*’s Sunday magazine under its various editors.

But soon after Bradlee joined the *Post* as managing editor in 1965, he replaced Herron as editor of *Potomac* with *Washington Star* politics and campaign finance reporter Walter Pincus. According to Pincus, the *Post* and *Star* had an informal agreement that

they wouldn't hire reporters away from each other. But by having Pincus edit the magazine, as opposed to work on the main paper, Bradlee believed he found a loophole (Pincus, 2010).

Unlike Herron, Pincus came to the *Post* with at least a working knowledge of the magazine industry. He was an early investor in *The New Yorker* and good friends with Clay Felker, editor of *New York* magazine (Pincus, 2010). Pincus, Bradlee and a small team of *Post* journalists would redesign *Potomac* to be more like a general-interest city magazine, with recurring sections such as restaurant reviews, and three to four features and personality profiles each week. The ultimate goal, Pincus said, was to make the magazine substantive enough to one day compete directly with *Parade* on a national level. However, that plan never came to fruition due to infighting between section editors over resources and stories ideas—Pincus would get various Metro and city reporters at the *Post* to write for the magazine as a way to improve its journalistic quality—as well as *Post* executives' unwillingness to experiment with a section that was already generating a lot of advertising revenue (Pincus, 2010). On October 13, 1968, the entire issue of *Potomac* was dedicated to a chapter from the upcoming book *Ten Blocks From The White House*, a story about the race riots that engulfed D.C. that year. A few *Post*



Figure 2: In the late 1960s, the *Post* largely promoted *Potomac's* color-printing capabilities, showcasing both photography and illustrations.

reporters and photographers had produced the book; the newspaper sought to use the magazine to promote their upcoming work (Washington Post, 1968).

Tired of the internal politics, Pincus left the magazine in 1968 and returned to traditional newspaper reporting. From 1972 to 1975, he served as executive editor of *The New Republic* magazine before returning to the *Post*'s national staff; he was part of the 2002 team that won a Pulitzer Prize for national reporting.

Pincus would be followed by a number of temporary fill-in editors, including Joe Anderson and former *Post* city editor Stephen Isaacs, who years later became editor of the *Minneapolis Star*. In 1971, Bradlee hired a New York-based magazine editor named Robert Wool to help remake *Potomac* into a Sunday magazine that paralleled *The New York Times Magazine* both journalistically and financially, in terms of national advertising revenues earned. The goal, according to Wool, was to rename *Potomac* and overhaul its design and editorial identity; Bradlee wanted the magazine to tap top-notch writers, focus on local, national and international news, and appeal to high-end luxury goods advertisers. The plan was estimated to cost around \$15 million over three years. However, after a year of planning, Katharine Graham refused to back the project. She simply didn't believe the cost was worth the potential reward of a more editorially sophisticated magazine of appeal to national advertisers (Wool, 2012). In his short time as editor, Wool largely maintained *Potomac* as it had been; short stories that were largely light and local. The December 26, 1971 issue, for instance, featured a photo essay about the Washington Redskins football team, a variety of games—including crosswords, bridge, and a cryptogram—a listing of popular records for readers' stereo systems, and a restaurant review (*Potomac*, 1971, 4). Since the magazine was not to receive the financial

support needed to overhaul it, Wool left the *Post* and returned to New York to take an editorial position at *The New York Times Magazine*.

Wool was replaced by Shelby Coffey, a 25-year-old sports reporter at the *Post*. Coffey's first exposure to the magazine was as a freelance writer during his undergraduate years at the University of Virginia. Pincus assigned Coffey a feature article about the social scene on the Charlottesville campus. As editor, Coffey infused *Potomac* with longer stories—some winning awards from the Sunday Magazine Editors group—although still largely local in nature. He was allowed to stretch his editorial boundaries to North Carolina and Pennsylvania because that's where many affluent Washingtonians vacationed (Williams and Touster, 1976). “We wanted it to be lively. To have impact was one of Ben's favorite words,” said Coffey (Coffey, 2010). Among the *Potomac* features Coffey most remembers as impactful, or at least generating significant buzz inside the newsroom and beyond, was a 1973 profile by Bob Woodward on E. Howard Hunt, a former CIA officer who helped engineer the Watergate burglary on behalf of President Nixon's reelection team. Hunt would later be convicted of burglary and wiretapping, among other things, and serve nearly three years in prison. In conceiving of stories for the magazine, Coffey said he often thought about how those around him would perceive his editorial judgment. “Is this going to be something that Katharine Graham, Ben Bradlee, [managing editor] Howard Simons, peers within the newsroom, people I care about outside, people I hear from, will they think this is a strong piece?” said Coffey (2010).

The magazine would run 40 to 60 pages in length each week—up from around 32 during its early days—with half and sometimes as much as three-quarters of the

publication filled with advertising. Reader surveys routinely conveyed complaints about the amount of advertising in *Potomac*, as well as the fact that “the stories were buried among the ads,” which were often “garish looking and jarring in their typefaces and design” (Williams and Touster, 1976, 145)

Coffey left *Potomac* in 1976 to become editor of the Style section and, years later, editor of the *Los Angeles Times*. It was around the time he moved to Style that the *Post* sought to revamp the magazine yet again, changing the title from *Potomac* to *The Washington Post Magazine*. Marion Clark was editor of *Potomac* as it underwent the redesign, but was killed in a freak accident on the tarmac of a Michigan airport one week prior to the launch of the new-look publication. She was 35 (Allen, 1977).

Some of the *Post* magazine editors interviewed for this study claimed that the name change—the new magazine premiered on September 11, 1977—was based on the paper’s inferiority complex in comparison to *The New York Times*, whose Sunday magazine was of top journalistic quality and had always carried the main paper’s name. Other *Post* magazine editors attributed the switch to internal desires to better align the magazine with the *Post*’s

strong brand as an institution of journalistic excellence. But for the brand extension to work, the magazine had to exemplify the journalistic standards that had long defined the



Figure 3: Following its name change from *Potomac* to *The Washington Post Magazine*, the publication began carrying more politics-related features. However, it also maintained many articles about fashion and beauty.

main paper. Research has shown that brands face significant risk of dilution or outright damage if extended products fail to live up to quality standards (Barwise and Robertson, 1992). Because the *Post's* magazine was distributed with the Sunday newspaper, at no additional expense to readers, there were few ways to measure the effectiveness of the name change from a business standpoint. Rather, if anything, the extension perhaps served a psychological purpose of aligning the magazine with the paper's brand in the minds of advertisers. The magazine soon attempted to bolster advertising by running more of its already popular social and lifestyle-specific special editions, such as home design, fashion, dining out, holiday entertainment and education, for example. Over the years, these special editions would become great revenue generators for the magazine.

Following Clark's death, Laura Longley took over as editor of the *Post* magazine. When she went on maternity leave in 1979, her deputy editor, Stephen Petranek, filled in. However, Longley didn't return to the company; she became communications director for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Prior to joining the *Post*, Petranek was editor of the Rochester (N.Y.) *Democrat and Chronicle's* Sunday magazine, *Up State*, and the *Miami Herald's* award-winning Sunday magazine, *Tropic*. But it was the year he spent working under Longley, learning the competitive and journalistic culture of the *Post* newsroom and how to navigate various professional relationships, that Petranek credits with his success at the magazine.

The *Post's* magazine would win its share of Sunday Magazine Editor awards under Petranek, but the publication began to rapidly lose money. Petranek attributes the losses to the overall decline in department store advertising, a long-time supporter of Sunday magazines (Petranek, 2010). Department stores in the late 1970s and early '80s

increasingly began to move their money into pre-printed inserts, whose color reproduction was superior to Sunday magazines. Moreover, the inserts could be zoned, or distributed to select ZIP codes, and advertisers could pay only for the inserts they wanted printed rather than the Sunday *Post*'s full circulation run. In addition, the magazine's overall quality was still viewed negatively by many in and around the *Post*. According to Bradlee, the magazine's design was for "people who read with their lips" (Meyers, April 1986), while stories too rarely stirred readers' emotions. The solution would be a grand makeover, "with vastly greater resources in people and money and quality" (Bradlee, 1986, C7).

A Relaunch That Didn't Take Flight

In the mid-1980s, the *Post* magazine underwent a wholesale redesign that took 18 months to complete. Printing was switched from rotogravure to a higher quality offset process, and the magazine's page dimensions were trimmed to the same 8 ¼-inch-by-10 ¾-inch format the *Los Angeles Times* and *San Francisco Sunday Examiner & Chronicle* magazines had adopted a year earlier. This was the same size as most consumer magazines, and the newspapers had hoped the familiar format would make it easier to win the advertising business of upscale retailers, both local and national (Meyers, September 1986; Shields, 1986). "To us, the future is national advertising," said Nick Cannistraro, the *Post*'s vice president of advertising. "But we're not hanging our hat on it. It could be a year or two away before we can plug into that national advertiser media schedule" (Meyers, April 1986). The *Post* newspaper had never made significant money

from national advertising. Rather, it earned its fortunes by dominating the local media market.

In promoting the *Post*'s new magazine, Bradlee told *Advertising Age* that the new look and edgier editorial direction aimed to appeal to higher-end readers and advertisers (Meyers, April 1986). If successful, it would be Bradlee's final grand achievement at the paper before he retired: a Sunday magazine even better than *The New York Times*' (Nelson, 1993). But like the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Post* spent a tremendous amount of money on things that had almost nothing to do with editorial issues. The page format reduction and upgraded paper stock attempted to address advertising concerns alone (Shields, 1986).

The *Post* spent millions to promote its new Sunday magazine, even though it expected to lose \$10 million in its first four years before turning a profit (Meyers, 1986; Greene, 1986). It was a small investment for the Post Co., which had revenues of \$1.07 billion the previous year and ranked 296th on the "Fortune 500" list of top-performing companies (Greene, B1). Ad rates were increased 10% to 20%, with a full-color page costing \$16,200 (Meyers, April 1986). Yet, the project had its share of critics inside the *Post*'s newsroom due in part to the huge amount of resources funneling into the magazine—its news hole doubled and its budget tripled (Bradlee, 1986)—and because the magazine's new editor and half of the writers on staff were New York City transplants new to the *Post* (Nelson, 1993). Jay Lovinger, a senior editor at *People* and a former editor of the Post Co.'s failed *Inside Sports* magazine, was hired to lead the new magazine and bolster its editorial staff; Petranek accepted a demotion and served as his managing editor. According to those familiar with the situation, Bradlee and other top

editors wanted someone with national consumer magazine experience to lead the *Post*'s new Sunday magazine. Top-flight writers were hired or moved over from other sections, including David Remnick (now editor of *The New Yorker*), Peter Carlson, formerly of *People*, and, later, Walt Harrington, who would go on to win three Sunday Magazine Editors Association writing awards. Andy Corty, the former publisher of a regional business magazine in Florida, was hired for the newly created position of general manager of the Sunday magazine.

After much fanfare, launch parties and media attention, the premier issue of the new-look *Post* magazine hit the streets on September 7, 1986. The cover story was titled "Murder, Drugs and the Rap Star," a feature about an African-American rapper from New York City who was arrested in connection to the murder of a D.C.-area drug dealer. *Post* magazine staff writer John Ed Bradley's narrative covered more than 11 pages and chronicled the life of Joseph "Justice" Williams Jr., a hard-scrambled rapper whose legal troubles helped his music career. The story was actually a fill-in, as the intended inaugural cover story was supposed to be a feature on President George H.W. Bush. However, interviews couldn't be completed in time, so Lovinger and other top editors at the *Post* agreed to go with the Williams story (Nelson, 1993).

Also in that issue, *Post* writer Richard Cohen authored a column titled "Closing the Door on Crime" that essentially supported the rights of local jewelry store owners, fearful of shoplifting, to prohibit young black men from entering their stores. Young black males in large urban cities are often the people who commit crimes, Cohen asserted, and storeowners had a right not to do business with them.

Taken together, the cover story and column—they were not part of an editorial package, as the two were separated by 23 pages—set off a series of events that would largely doom the new *Post* magazine. Led by local radio station owner and talk show host Cathy Hughes, protesters decried what they saw as negative stereotyping of blacks in the magazine and by the *Post* newspaper in general. In addition, none of the advertisements published in the robust, 112-page inaugural issue included a single African-American (Anderson, 1986). Approximately 70% of the population in the District was African-American in 1986, although the *Post* pointed out to critics that blacks made up only about 25% of its broader circulation area (Greene, 1986). Although the newspaper was headquartered in Washington, D.C., and it covered the happenings of the federal government extensively, the *Post*'s direct market area included all of northern Virginia and southern Maryland.

There are many reasons for the racial divide within the *Post*'s circulation mix. However, a major turning point was the 1968 street riots following the April 4 assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis. The rioters, almost all African-American, shattered store windows and broke into local businesses, looting clothes, electronics, liquor and food. Along the 14th Street NW and H Street NE corridor, which was filled with African-American-owned businesses, rioters torched whole buildings and largely overwhelmed police response. Over three days of rioting, 12 people died, more than 1,000 people were injured and nearly as many stores were destroyed; 6,100 people were arrested. “More than 2,500 jobs had been lost. Washington’s black business districts were devastated. Piles of rubble marked buildings

destroyed. . . . Insurance rates in the areas soared, if policies would be written at all. The two corridors of the riot remained crime-ridden shells for decades” (Tucker, 2004).

Many residents soon fled the District, while many new ones—mostly Caucasians—opted for the suburbs surrounding the city, such as those in Fairfax County in Virginia and Montgomery County in Maryland. Between 1960 and 1980, the District lost about one-sixth of its population, and between 1980 and 2010 the population shrunk still, although not as deeply (The Economist, 2013). Retail commercial activity followed these residents into the suburbs. In the Tyson’s Corner area of Fairfax County, two large shopping malls accounted for more than \$1 billion in annual sales in the late 1980s, with department stores such as Macy’s, Neiman Marcus, Hecht’s, Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdale’s—long the principal advertisers in many major metropolitan newspapers—leading the way (Downey, 1989; Knox, 1991).

The economic and racial divide between the District and its surrounding suburbs would only deepen. In 1990 and 1991, the nation’s capital was the murder capital of the United States, based on per capita homicides. Among cities with a population of more than 100,000, Washington, D.C. came in ahead of New Orleans, Atlanta and Detroit. According to media reports, all forms of crime increased in the District in 1990, with murder and assaults rising 10 percent each, and forcible rapes going up 9 percent and robberies 11 percent (Ashenfelter, 1991). Those who could afford to live in the surrounding suburbs did, and *The Washington Post* often followed them because these were the people who were willing to buy newspapers and who advertisers sought to reach. Although the Washington, D.C. area featured many middle-class African-American neighborhoods, the *Post* has long focused on the suburbs and Capitol Hill.

The business rationale mattered little to the 1986 protesters of the Sunday magazine. They sought to use the magazine as a symbol of the *Post*'s historically poor record in covering the positive aspects of D.C.'s African-American communities. Dorothy Gilliam, among the first black reporters hired by the *Post*, in 1961, was often tasked with covering the greater Washington, D.C. area's large black community. "But they were negative stories about blacks,' she recalled, 'describing criminal ways and poverty. They never looked at the range of black activities as they looked at white activities. Just by exclusion, you ended up with this skewed picture, nothing else except welfare and crime'" (Bray, 1980, 164). The *Post* hired more African-American journalists and by the early 1970s, nearly 10% of the nation's black newsmen and women—not counting those who worked for the Black press—worked at the *Post* (Bray, 1980). But internal criticisms persisted due to limited promotions and opportunities for African-Americans.

Some 15 years later, readers were voicing many of the same frustrations with the company. In the weeks and months that followed the 1986 relaunch of the Sunday magazine, the Washington Post Magazine Recall Committee collected and returned nearly 250,000 copies of the Sunday magazine to *Post* headquarters (Roberts, 1989). The protests lasted three months and evolved into more general objections concerning the belief that the main newspaper too often portrayed blacks in a sensationalistic or negative way. Still, the uproar badly damaged the magazine, as many would-be sources refused to be interviewed by writers of the magazine (Nelson, 1993), and many of the local businesses that initially supported the new publication moved their advertising dollars into different sections of the Sunday paper (Meyers, 1986). Whereas the first issue was

112 pages, the fourth was down to 56 pages. Advertisers weren't willing to completely boycott the *Post*, as the newspaper's local penetration rate was still among the highest in the nation.

Lovinger said he was hired to create a publication that would grab readers' attention. It often did, but not always in a good way. In one instance, Lovinger ran an "exclusive" feature by *Post* sports writer Tony Kornheiser about the impending return of the Washington Senators professional baseball team, which left the District in 1971. However, the story was never labeled a satirical hoax, work of fiction or parody, which is was, even though real-name sports

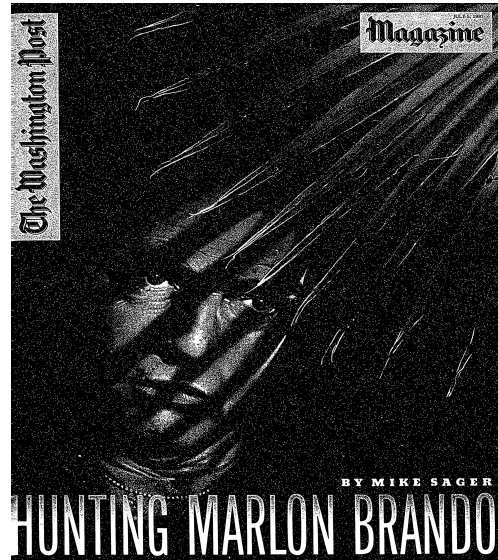


Figure 4: *Post* magazine editor Jay Lovinger, formerly of *People* magazine, sought to publish stories that would grab readers' attention. In this case, he sent freelance writer Mike Sager to Tahiti in search of actor Marlon Brando.

and political leaders were quoted. The idea was inspired by a faux feature published by *Sports Illustrated* two years earlier, on April Fools Day, about a pitcher named Sidd Finch who could supposedly throw a baseball 168 mph (Howe, 1987). More than 250 readers called the *Post* asking for clarification, and four letters to the editor about the article were published the following Sunday; each one highly critical of the story. "To extend a fictional story as far as Kornheiser did and to use real people and real quotes to fabricate an event just to build readership for a dying magazine is sick," wrote one reader. "What will the *Post* magazine editor Jay Lovinger do next? I've got it! How about a nice fun and satirical piece on the Vietnam War?" (Davis, 1987, A21).

“I was super attracted by the *Post* job because the thing didn’t have to sell itself; the magazine was inserted in the Sunday paper, so you could do anything you wanted because the *Post* covered everything in the newspaper,” Lovinger (2010) would say later. “There was nothing obligatory that you had to cover. I had the opportunity to do all the kind of things that I really found interesting that most newspapers would never even consider doing

“I think I was often fighting the institution’s perception of itself....In trying to create a magazine that was somehow the same as a newspaper just really never worked and, in my opinion, couldn’t work....If you bring in somebody from the outside like me, who is a magazine person, then in a lot of ways it’s just not a very good fit for the culture. You’re always kind of running up hill and they’re always trying to get you to conform” (Lovinger, 2010).

Following the initial race-coverage protests, Lovinger claimed that senior editors at the *Post* were routinely second-guessing his editorial judgment and that the company began pushing for more positive stories about blacks in both the magazine and throughout the paper (Greene, 1986). Lieb (1988) mostly validated the coverage assertion through a content analysis of the magazine from May 4, 1986 to April 5, 1987. He found no negative coverage of blacks during the three-month protest while positive stories soon became far more regular.

A few years later, Lovinger and the *Post* had a parting of ways. He was eased out of the door, staying on at the magazine largely in name only and to help the transition to a new editor. He was allowed to resign and was given a severance package, to “make right” the promises of editorial freedom that he claimed the *Post* made to him and failed to live

up to (Lovinger, 2010). “But the often-asked question remained: does *The Washington Post Magazine* (or that of any other newspaper save the ad-rich *New York Times Magazine*) serve any useful purpose?” (Roberts, 1989, 489).

Upon his official departure, in 1989, the magazine was largely placed under the managerial control of Mary Hadar, an assistant managing editor who oversaw the Style section (Nelson, 1993). Bob Thompson, a deputy editor of Style, replaced Lovinger at the helm of the magazine, and soon took full control over a much-slimmed down operation. With major advertisers still largely reluctant to commit to the magazine, even though it was still the only editorial section in the newspaper that published in color—the main newspaper didn’t acquire color-printing capabilities until 1999—the *Post* quickly reduced the publication’s budget (Thompson, 2010).

As editor, Thompson worked to make the magazine more local and less controversial. He hired some top-notch narrative writers, including David Finkel, who joined the magazine staff in 1990 and would go on to win numerous journalism industry awards, including the 2006 Pulitzer for explanatory journalism. Like a number of magazine editors before him, Thompson eventually yearned to write—Thompson was the rare editor who never before worked as a reporter (Thompson, 2010)—and found opportunities in Style and Metro.

In search of his next professional challenge, Steve Coll, a highly regarded foreign correspondent who shared a Pulitzer Prize for explanatory journalism in 1990, took over as editor of the Sunday magazine in 1995. Although he spent years as a reporter at the *Post*, Coll brought some magazine experience to his new job. He began his career as a contributing editor for the city magazine *California* as well as for the Boston-based

business magazine *Inc.* At the *Post*, he also wrote for *Style* and was an occasional contributor to the *Post* magazine during his time as a foreign correspondent. In 1991, Coll and David Vise, who together won a Pulitzer for their coverage of the Securities and Exchange Commission, penned a narrative feature for the magazine on the SEC's investigation into Ivan Boesky and Michael Milken (Coll and Vise, 1991). One year later, Coll wrote a cover story on the devastation of Kabul, Afghanistan following the invasion of the Soviet Union (Coll, 1992). Interestingly, Coll and *Post* reporter William Branigan also wrote a page 1 story for that Sunday's *Post* on how thousands of Muslim rebels took over the capital of Afghanistan the previous day in a violent coup. These are just some of the examples of how the magazine had evolved editorially from its early years of light and local news coverage, and how Thompson and others at the *Post* sought to redefine the editorial identity of the magazine as something similar to—as opposed to distinct from—the rest of the newspaper.

As editor of the magazine, starting in 1995, Coll quickly expanded the publication's coverage of national and international issues, regularly tapping some of the newspaper's top writers to craft deeply reported and lengthy narrative features. A self-described “creature of

the big machine and a believer of the big machine” (Coll, 2010), Coll coaxed the *Post*'s famed sports writer John Feinstein to write a monthly sports column and routinely



Figure 4: Magazine editor Steve Coll wanted the magazine to reflect the best of the *Post* newsroom. For his first edition as editor, he convinced Bob Woodward to write the cover story.

convinced many of the paper's most notable reporters to write lengthy narratives for the magazine.

Yet, perhaps his greatest accomplishment as editor of the magazine was on the business side. Wearing the unusual dual hat of editor and publisher—no *Post* magazine editor had ever or since held the double responsibility—Coll reworked the magazine's printing contract in early 1998 and saved nearly a million dollars annually by switching to a different stock of paper. "It's the same paper used by all of the very best newspaper Sunday magazines, as well as numerous consumer magazines," Coll wrote in the magazine's editor's column (Coll, 1998). The switch was barely noticeable to the eye or touch, but it made a significant difference to the magazine's bottom line (Coll, 2010). It was a line that remained red, albeit far less so than earlier years.

From 1987 to 2003, the *Post* magazine lost an average of \$2.4 million annually (internal document), yet the company continued to support it, as it supported the standalone, advertising-thin *Book World* section and, later, the early money-losing years of washingtonpost.com (Sherman, 2002). According to Coll, Publisher Donald Graham, who at that time was also CEO of the company, simply refused to let the magazine die. "He wanted a paper that was driven by quality journalists and though he wasn't always sold on the magazine and didn't love every decision that I made, or that writers made, fundamentally he wanted great journalism in the paper," Coll said. "He knew that the journalists that he cared about valued the opportunity to write in the magazine the way we did and he didn't want to get in the way of that culture" (Coll, 2010).

Because the magazine was still printed externally and inserted into the Sunday newspaper, it long was the only news department managed financially through a profit-

and-loss sheet. No other section of the *Post*, including those that carried little to modest advertising, such as Sports, Opinion and Metro, were held to the same level of fiscal scrutiny at the time.

In 1998, Coll made the unusual jump from editor of the magazine to managing editor of the entire newspaper. Glenn Frankel would replace Coll and hold the position until 2002. A longtime *Post* reporter and editor, Frankel wrote for the Metro section, was a foreign correspondent for 10 years (he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1989 for international reporting), and served as deputy national editor, but came to his new job with absolutely no magazine experience. According to Frankel, he was hired in part because he was such a creature of the *Post* and could navigate the cultural and political dynamics of the newsroom (Frankel, 2010). Top editors at the paper wanted someone “who came out of the newsroom and who was comfortable with the newsroom because, again, of this question of how the magazine relates to the larger newsroom and how you create a magazine with a magazine sensibility but at the same time take advantage of the enormous journalistic resources in the big room” (Frankel interview, 2010).

Frankel infused the magazine with his own intellectual interests, from the tobacco industry to food safety to famine in Africa. He freely admitted that he had a “journalistic agenda,” but also “an institutional agenda of making the magazine more vital” to the *Post* brand (Frankel, 2010). It’s worth noting that the *Post* magazine and staff writer Peter Perl were honored with Sigma Delta Chi’s 2000 “Public Service Award” in the magazine category for “Poisoned Package,” a feature on food inspection deficiencies throughout America’s food industry (Quill, 2001). Such “journalistic agendas” were, in many ways, a reflection of the editorial sensibilities Coll brought to the newspaper as managing

editor. In 2003, Coll sought to use the Post Co.'s newfound revenues—it recently sold its 50% stake in the *International Herald Tribune* to The New York Times Co.—to increase his newspaper's national and international news coverage so as to better compete with *Times* in the U.S. (Kindred, 2010). Coll was a dedicated supporter of long-form journalism; as managing editor, he wrote an approximately 10,000-word feature for the *Post* magazine about political violence in Sierra Leone (Sherman, 2002). However, Donald Graham was reluctant to follow too deeply in the *Times*' tracks and risk alienating the *Post*'s local audience (Sherman, 2002; Sherman, 2010). Coll left the *Post* in 2005 and joined the *New Yorker* magazine as a staff writer.

Frankel stepped down as editor of the Sunday magazine in 2002 to return to writing. He was replaced by his managing editor, Tom Shroder, who served as editor of Style for two-and-a-half years before joining the magazine's staff. Shroder came to the *Post* in 1999 after learning that the *Miami Herald*'s Sunday magazine, of which he was editor, was soon to be shuttered due to financial reasons. Shroder had actually replaced Gene Weingarten as editor of *Tropic*, in 1990—Weingarten hired Shroder as his assistant editor five years earlier—when Weingarten left Miami to join the *Post*'s Style section. Weingarten would later become a syndicated humor columnist and *Pulitzer Prize*-winning feature writer for the *Post* magazine.

As editor of the *Post* magazine, Shroder said one of his first goals was to make the publication more reader-oriented through more local stories, photo essays and fiction, both professional and reader-submitted. The magazine had been a “vehicle for the pleasure and satisfaction of the *Post* journalists rather than as something that was really

aimed at engaging readers....The story subject choice was very often kind of esoteric and very removed” (Shroder, 2010).

In 2006, Shroder decided to honor some of the top stories published by the *Post* magazine over its previous 20 years, starting with the bold relaunch in 1986. The commemorative issue contained excerpts of 32 past features, and it was a chance to show readers that the *Post* magazine had long been, at times, a product of great journalistic value. “The Magazine’s 20-year survival wasn’t really about luck,” Shroder wrote in the issue’s “editor’s note.” “It was about great writers who could make the people, trends and institutions of our time come vividly, and in some cases, shockingly, alive” (2006, 2). Of course, the magazine wasn’t only about quality journalism. In 2007, Shroder launched the first-ever “Peeps Diorama Contest”—it’s now annual—calling on readers to create a diorama of whatever scene they like using the Easter treat marshmallow bunnies. Photographs of the winning entries were then published in the Sunday magazine. In 2011, the contest was a full-blown business operation that featured a week of local activities and advertising sponsorships that cost between \$10,000 and \$50,000 (Washington Post, 2011). In addition, Shroder introduced the “Post Hunt” to the Washington, D.C. area in 2008. While working together at the *Miami Herald’s* Sunday magazine in 1991, Shroder, Gene Weingarten and Dave Barry conceived of a scavenger hunt for which clues were published in the magazine and readers would scour the Miami area for answers. The event would culminate in a big party, where readers would vie for prizes. Shroder brought the idea to the *Post*—approximately 5,000 people, most carrying a copy of the Sunday magazine, took part in the inaugural Post Hunt (Strupp, 2008)—and it remains a mainstay to this day.

By the time Shroder took over the magazine in 2002, it was no longer the financial disaster that it was during the 1980s and '90, when its editorial and printing budgets far outpaced advertising revenues. It actually earned a profit of nearly \$1 million in 2002 and more than doubled it the following year, to \$2.1 million (internal document) thanks largely to an increase in advertorial inserts, subject-specific special editions that advertisers often rallied around, and an increased focus on home furnishing ad sales (Shroder, 2006; Steiner, 2010). The good times didn't continue for long, however, as a national recession slowed advertising sales at most newspapers throughout the country. Throughout the magazine's history, business side managers would occasionally suggest that the magazine run shorter articles and more feel-good stories, including news-you-can-use service journalism pieces. Advertisers, the business-side arguments went, didn't want to promote their products next to rambling stories rooted in conflict, grief or unsavory characters. More often than not, the magazine's editors would ignore the advice (Steiner, 2010; Karalekis, 2010; Graham, 2010). Because the *Post* newspaper boasted profit margins throughout the '90s and early 2000s that were "healthy enough to ward off calls to turn the magazine into a local version of *Men's Health*" (Wemple, 2009).

Editors' apathy toward the company's business values changed somewhat following a new top leadership team at the *Post*. In early 2008, Katharine Weymouth, niece of Donald Graham, was installed as the paper's new publisher. In July of that year, she hired Marcus Brauchli, formerly of the *Wall Street Journal*—a paper with a rich history of high quality feature writing and long-form narratives (Sherman, 2010)—to serve as executive editor of the *Post*. It was widely believed that Brauchli got the job, in part, because he had "no institutional history at the paper and...no work experience in

Washington” (Sherman, 2010). For a publisher interested in transforming the *Post*’s operations for a digital future, she sought a newsroom leader unwedded to the internal cultural norms and practices that had long defined her family’s newspaper. In Brauchli, she found someone with experience running a converged print-online newsroom at a top-tier newspaper. Said Weymouth, “He had a great news sense as well as a business sense” (Sherman, 2010).⁷

In 2009, the *Post* again redesigned its Sunday magazine, condensing the page width, running fewer long features, and including more lifestyle-oriented sections. Debra Leithauser, the former editor of the *Post*’s defunct “Sunday Source” broadsheet section, which largely featured product reviews, service articles and entertainment listings—it lasted just five years, from 2003 to 2008, due to mediocre fanfare from readers and surprisingly little interest from advertisers—oversaw the revamping of the magazine and was eventually named its editor, replacing Shroder, who took a company buyout that year.

Critics decried the new-look magazine for its “levity and brevity” and seemingly obvious pander to advertisers (Wemple, 2009), while the journalists who initiated the changes talked about the product as if it served just one audience: readers. “The impetus for the overhaul was that readers had told us what they loved and what they didn’t, and we listened,” said Leithauser and Art Director Janet Michaud about the 2009 redesign, in an online Q&A with readers (2009). In her “editor’s note” in the inaugural new magazine, Leithauser also contended that the magazine was changed to appeal to

⁷ Brauchli left his job at the *Post* in November 2012, outside the period of review for this study. Media reports suggested that Brauchli and Weymouth were often at odds, in part because she wanted him to make deeper newsroom budget cuts than he was comfortable with. Brauchli was replaced by *Boston Globe* editor Marty Baron (Haughney, 2012).

increasingly busy readers, people with “a giggling, gurgling baby; a first-grader going on middle-schooler; and neighbors who wish they had more time for...well, just about everything” (Leithauser, 2009). There was no mention of advertising.

Conclusion

To understand the history of *The Washington Post*'s Sunday magazine and the editors who have shaped it over the past 50 years, one needs to understand the uniqueness of the newspaper through which it's published and the company and people behind them both. Through an array of good business dealings, including the one in 1971 to split the company's public stock offering so that the Graham family could maintain control and majority voting rights over the board, the Post has become one of the most financially prosperous news organizations in the country. The company's diversification of business interests, as well as the Grahams' commitment to high-quality journalism, has enabled the *Post* to weather advertising recessions and print circulation declines during years in which other major metropolitan dailies cut back significantly in their news operations. In some cases, these dailies eliminated whole sections. “At a time when some large newspaper corporations have sacrificed journalistic quality for quarterly profits, the *Post*, under Don Graham, has maintained a rock-hard stability and a commitment to—and investment in—newsroom excellence” (Sherman, 2002, 42).

Yet, whereas the *Post* stands among an elite few journalistically, namely *The New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, its editorial culture over the years has shared many defining characteristics with far more dailies. They include the search for stories that generate buzz among readers or that win recognition from award committees. They

include reporters and editors who produce content with little thought to readers' desires, but rather in the pursuit of praise from colleagues and senior newsroom leaders. They include a strong distaste, if not complete ignorance, for the business side of their organizations, even though advertising represents the vast majority of their papers' revenues.

Said Don Graham (2010): "As journalists, if the business side isn't functioning, well, they're out of luck. In my view, there was too much church-state separation at the *Post* Sunday magazine and every Sunday magazine. It was really stupid. These were people that were in the same boat that were rowing in different directions."

Chapter 5 Institutional Theory, SIT, Change and Status

The impetus for organizational change is often the result of environmental factors, whether they are regulatory, technological, social and/or economic (Aldrich and Pfeffer, 1976; Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Ryfe, 2006). Oftentimes, older organizations, whose internal norms and practices have been deeply engrained within the culture of the firm, struggle to survive when faced with external threats (Carroll and Hannan, 1989). For others, however, changes to the environmental and competitive landscape provide a welcomed opportunity to pursue new directions and to reconstruct professional consensus, thus creating a new institutional order and a return to stability until the “next random mutation or shift in niche width sets a change cycle in motion” (Kanter et al, 1992, 27).

In the daily newspaper industry, environmental threats often result from new and emerging competitors on the media landscape. Historically, these competitors have included, among others, radio, television, weekly newspapers, cable television and, more recently, Internet-based companies (Rosse, 1980; Dimmick et al, 2004). In each case, newspapers expanded and altered their content offerings to mimic certain aspects of the upstart medium. As television grew increasingly popular in the 1950s and '60s, newspapers began incorporating more entertainment and lifestyle coverage, so as to keep pace with the largely entertainment-based medium of TV. Newspapers weren't necessarily competing for stories, but rather for people's time and advertisers' business. The advent of cable television, which provides audiences with an array of niche-topic channels—from 24-hour news, to sports, to movies and sitcoms—led newspapers to

expand lifestyle section coverage and increase the number of sections it published to give readers more distinct choices (Bogart, 1985). Studies have shown that the national daily *USA Today*, which premiered in 1982, was essentially an amalgamation of different media; it featured the page design of magazines, the visual appeal of television, and the breezy and short storytelling of radio (Prichard, 1987). Lastly, the growth of web-based digital content in the mid- to late 2000s inspired many newspapers, under the belief that readers were starved for time and preferred “quick-hit” content items, to publish even shorter news items and more photographs, as well as to create spin-off quick-read tabloid editions (Carpenter, 2006).

Sparrow (1999) contends that risk-averse organizations most closely monitor competitors, or peer groups, to more effectively copy practices that are perceived to bolster cultural and political legitimacy. However, seemingly rational strategies at one organization may not serve other organizations’ interests well due to differences in staffing, resources and external relations. “Yet, the very fact that they are normatively sanctioned increases the likelihood of their adoption” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 148).

But what compels the individual actors within an organization to pursue initiatives and efforts that are seemingly misaligned with the organization’s strengths and survival? And why do some people resist changes to their workplace norms and routines, and instead embrace existing actions that yield only mixed results at best? Through the examination of two behavioral theories, institutional theory and social identity theory, this chapter will attempt to provide some answers to those questions. Institutional theory can serve as a valuable prism through which to examine *Post* magazine editors’ attitudes and behaviors as they relate to editorial decision-making. The theory generally holds that

individuals often seek to conform to established practices and behaviors in their pursuit of legitimacy. It wasn't until after analyzing all of my data, however, that I discovered the applicability of social identity theory, which holds that individuals attempt to maintain a positive social identity through group categorization and in comparison to others (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Chapter 8 of this study features an extension of social identity theory, through the use of institutional theory, to show how the behavior and attitudes of newspaper editors can be influenced by both organizational and external factors.

In addition to discussing institutional theory in this chapter, I will highlight different processes for individual and organizational learning as well as how institutional theory has been used to examine the news media industry. Following an overview of social identity theory, I will then examine its past uses in the study of journalists and the news media, as well as the role of status in identity formation.

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory holds that an institutional environment can influence the adoption of certain practices, even when such adoptions fail to improve efficiency. When certain norms or innovations reach a certain level of acceptance, or legitimization, the failure to copy is seen as almost irrational. However, so too is mimicking standards of practice that are unsuited for a particular task.

Institutional theory is “characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy” (Scott and Meyer, 1983, 149). Legitimacy mainly exists in the realms of social and economic support (Suchman, 1995; Deephouse, 1996). In a newspaper setting,

for example, social support is conferred through positive reader feedback, the willingness of news sources to be candid, compliments from colleagues, and external awards.

Examples of economic support include paid subscribers, newsstand sales, advertising revenue and industry partnerships. Failure to conform to widely accepted practices is to risk legitimacy. However, this pursuit of legitimizing practices drives isomorphism, or the sameness of organizational structures and operations. Even though the practices may not be in the best strategic interest of the individual organization, the legitimizing practices eventually become codified and difficult to change over time (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1987; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

Developed as an offshoot of rational-choice organizational theory, which explains behaviors as purposeful, efficiency-driven reactions to market forces, institutional theory is often used to make sense of behaviors in industries with “vague criteria for judging value and quality” (Lowrey, 2005, 497). These industries tend to be mission-driven, with examples including higher education, health care, charities, governmental operations and the news media. Organizations in these industries employ a significant number of professionals who measure their organization’s success differently than profit-minded business-side managers and executives do (Greenwood and Hinings, 1988; Galaskiewicz and Wasserman, 1989; Brint and Karabel, 1991; Stensaker and Norgard, 2001; Kraatz et al, 2010), making it difficult for organizations to determine which practices are best suited to achieve legitimization. For this reason, “institutionalism” has become a popular theoretical tool in a number of academic disciplines, including political science, economics and sociology (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

On the organizational level, Hawley (1968) defined the concept of isomorphism as a constraining process in which an organization seeks to resemble other organizations that exist under a similar set of conditions. In essence, organizations will often imitate others' socially sanctioned, legitimized practices regardless of efficiency or technical considerations. Without clearly defined directives and organizational goals, organizations will routinely copy external practices that they are simply fond of and that fit within the perceived cultural norms of the organization. Isomorphism can also be "self-serving" (Kondra and Hinings, 1998, 749) on the individual level, whereby risk-averse managers copy and maintain industry norms to protect their internal status and their jobs. However, Scott (1987) contends that when an organization faces external threats, these individual actors are often too entrenched in established norms and practices to effectively manage the situation.

Conformity in the pursuit of legitimacy is often driven by one of three processes: normative, coercive and mimetic (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Normative processes are those that are passed along through professional affiliations and structures. In examining newspaper-TV partnerships through an institutional theory lens, for example, Lowrey (2005) found that normative factors were most predictive of managers' decision-making, as ideas and concepts were routinely passed along through professional networks and conferences or promoted through the trade press. Coercive processes are somewhat forced upon an organization through external pressure, such as regulatory changes or strategic initiatives handed down from a corporate parent. Finally, mimetic processes involve adopting the behaviors of model organizations, particularly when faced with uncertainty about alternative approaches. Particularly valuable to this study is Greenwood

and Hinings' (1988) contention that certain organizations will pursue mimetic behaviors when actors are unclear about the performance measurements their organization uses to determine success. Without clearly defined directives and organizational goals, individuals will often simply copy external practices that they are fond of and that fit within the cultural norms of the organization. As previously stated, this is why much research on institutional mimicry has focused on organizations with conflicting measurements of success (Brint and Karabel, 1991; Stensaker and Norgard, 2001; Kraatz et al, 2010). These organizations possess a social and/or cultural purpose that is reliant on but distinct from the organization's maximization of revenue generation.

Research utilizing institutional theory tends to focus on micro factors (Townley, 2002; Zilber, 2002; Powell and Colyvas, 2008), specifically individual actors who "perceive the meaning of institutions and infuse their actions with meaning based upon these perceptions" (Dacin et al, 2002, 47). Individuals are active, not passive, in perpetuating their organization's institutional logics (Fligstein, 2001). The diffusion of norms is also facilitated by employee turnover from one organization to another. In such cases, the individual will sometimes introduce to his new organization perceived best practices from his former organization, particularly when the former organization carries higher industry status (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Researchers who use institutional theory often view sources of inertia as the consequences of seeking legitimacy, as opposed to the maintenance of vested interests (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Institutionalism puts the theoretical focus on the organizational culture and codification of routines that create individual behavior and unreflective decision-making (Zucker, 1987; Carruthers, 1995). By applying the lens of

institutional theory, individual motives can be examined through “the contexts in which they act” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, 16). In addition, the sequencing and timing of processes and events are central to understanding outcomes. For this reason, institutional studies are typically based on historic analyses (Selznick, 1957; Berger and Luckmann, 1967) because individuals largely adapt to existing and recurring conditions rather than buck organizational norms and routes (Ryfe, 2006).

In studying the production of news, Cook (1998) and Sparrow (1999) each argue for the necessity of examining the historical evolution of institutional practices. Other scholars (Thornton, 2002; Townley, 2002) have similarly argued that institutional studies require a historic examination of organizations, rather than moment-in-time queries, to track the evolutionary nature of values, practices and norms.

Individual and Organizational Learning

Studies have found that efforts to improve existing workplace competencies lead to less experimentation with new skill sets and procedures necessary for future growth. This holds true at both the organizational and individual level (Levitt and March, 1988). Such tension between exploitation and exploration, as March (1991) argues, leads to a trade-off between attempting to improve current returns—be they cultural or financial—and seeking alternative approaches to present practices with the hope of bolstering future returns.

Established and culturally secure organizations are generally inflexible and largely resistant to change because operations are often rooted in institutionalized structures (Hannan and Freeman, 1984; Granovetter, 1985). “If stable and reproducible

routines are the foundation of reliable performance, then organizational change increases the risk of failure” (Amburgey et al, 1993, 52). Changes also risk the external legitimacy of the organization (Hannan and Freeman, 1984), as substantive changes to formal practices can lead to perceptions of organizational distress, which can impact everything from stock prices to vendor relations to the ability to recruit new hires.

On the individual level, the adoption of new practices and routines is equally difficult. Pfeffer, for example, firmly argues that while situations change, people rarely do. We are “limited in our ability to even recognize the need for change, let alone to accomplish it” (1994, 304). Zucker (1977) attributes resistance to change at the individual level to cultural persistence within established organizational settings. The more that cultural and operational norms are engrained within an organization, the more that the internal culture recognizes and rewards the status quo. In such cases, individual behavior is constrained by limited operational choices, including the allocation of resources necessary to break from current practices.

Research that examines how individuals can best effectuate change within existing organizational structures varies. Pedler et al (1999) argue for decentralized organizational structures in which individuals can confer and communicate. Leonard-Barton (1999) advocates for a team-based approach to individual learning, which can then be spread to the organization as a whole. And Garvin (1993) believes that reward systems should be created to encourage the meeting of individual learning goals. But since all individuals are merely parts of the whole that constitute an organization, diffusion of individual learning throughout an organization is the true challenge, as the sharing of individual knowledge is the core requirement for organizational learning.

Crossan et al (1999) developed a “4i” framework for the transfer of learning from individuals to organizations: intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalizing. By questioning existing practices and routines, developing new approaches and then implementing them, learning can move from the individual level to the departmental to the organizational. However, as Shipton notes, “transferring learning to effect organizational-level change is enormously complicated, depending upon individual, job and structural characteristics, as well as the existing learning culture and reward/recognition systems” (2006, 240).

Institutional Theory and the News Media

Although there are few examples of its usage in media and/or communication studies, institutional theory can serve as a valuable prism through which newspaper companies—and the individual actors that give them life and meaning—are examined to make sense of individual decision-making and organizational culture and norms. But because newspapers are complex entities that serve a public service function and typically require financial profit for survival (Beam, 1996; Lowrey, 2005), any study of individual professional and organizational practices requires an understanding of motivations, and the challenges in merging missions and markets.

As noted throughout this study, a number of scholars believe that commercial pressures have long undermined news organization’s ability and/or willingness to fully serve the public interest (Golding and Murdock, 1991; Schudson, 1995; McChesney, 1999; Bagdikian, 2004). Beholden to advertising revenues that largely fund the content-production enterprise, newspapers routinely publish stories that are little more than

window dressing for the ads, the argument goes. This interconnection between economic and cultural influences has led to a number of challenges within organizations that, like newspapers, are largely mission driven.

In writing about professionalism, Freidson (1986) and Scott (1995) noted that professional authority is derived from mission-driven work that holds social legitimacy. The individual members that make up organized units of professionals possess expert knowledge, typically obtained through a common and specialized education, and define their own areas of interest. Because of their common educational backgrounds and associations with other industry professionals, operational standards and processes are codified, diffused and become normative. However, because professional authority is linked to organizational identity, changes in an organization's mission can limit the power of certain professionals. Thornton (2002), for instance, tracked the shift in the U.S. higher education book publishing industry, from an editorial logic in the 1960s to a market-oriented logic in the 1980s. In the 1960s, many publishing companies were privately owned and relatively small, and their missions were rooted in organizational prestige and increasing book sales. Publishing was a profession. Things began to change some 10 years later, as higher education book publishing became a big business, with corporations consuming independent publishers and missions changing to competitive position and profit generation. With top-tier publishing houses leading this shift toward market gain, conformity in the pursuit of legitimacy followed and the CEO, whose status

and authority were derived from the company's financial success, became the dominant authority figure, as opposed to the editorial-side professional publisher.⁸

Like most book publishing, the news media serves a civic and cultural function as well as an economic one. However, this can lead to conflicting organizational values and identity due to the disparate interests of individual actors (DeWerth-Pallmeyer, 1997).

“The trouble is that what is good for the operative system does not necessarily serve the standards or ideals that the institution is supposed to uphold. Therefore institutional values are always at risk” (Selznick, 1992, 244). When an organization seeks to change due to technological or short-term market threats, it risks diluting and damaging the values central to the organization. In such cases, mission-driven employees tend to lose some operational autonomy (Kraatz et al, 2010).

For example, when workers at a Canadian provincial government agency charged with historical and cultural heritage battled with their business-side counterparts due to a “clash of value spheres between the cultural and the economic” (Townley, 2002, 175). With declining public financial resources, museum officials attempted to develop new strategic performance measurements to guide decision-making, with an emphasis on business planning, visitation numbers and revenue generation. However, this shift led to substantial friction among the professional museum employees, who had long measured their success based on cultural factors, such as service to and the education of the public. Ultimately, employees publicly obeyed the new performance measurement systems, but were privately dismissive of them as an assault on their professional autonomy and expertise. Consequently, the coercively imposed changes never became embedded within

⁸ Also see Keh, H.T. (1998). Evolution of the Book Publishing Industry: Structural changes and strategic implications. *Journal of Management History* 4(2): 104-123.

the culture of the organization. Kanter et al (1992) define culture as socially constructed structures and systems through which an organization operates. Individuals' beliefs and behaviors feed and solidify an organization's culture, but those beliefs and behaviors are largely the result of an indoctrination of sorts that are perpetuated through norms and routines. For a culture to persist, intensity in the adoption of norms and consensus are required (O'Reilly, 1989). But to alter an established culture, organizational structures often must change. In the case of the Canadian museum, officials simply instituted a new strategic effort and performance measurement, but the fundamental structure of the organization remained the same, enabling workers to cling to the previously established culture and norms.

Ryfe's (2009) ethnographic study of a mid-sized U.S. daily newspaper produced somewhat similar findings. A new editor hired to run the newsroom instituted new policies aimed at forcing his journalists to change how and where they gathered the news. The guidelines required reporters to rely far less on news sources at governmental agencies, such as courthouses and police departments. According to the editor, the goal was to bolster print circulation. But ultimately, a number of reporters quit, while many others were resentful of the "encroachments onto their professional turf" (119). In examining newspaper-TV partnerships through an institutional theory lens, Lowrey (2005) found that normative factors were most predictive of managers' decision-making, as ideas and concepts were routinely passed along through professional networks and conferences or promoted through the trade press.

Sparrow (1999) similarly found that risk-averse organizations most closely monitor competitors, or peer groups, to more effectively copy practices that are perceived

to bolster cultural and political legitimacy. However, seemingly rational strategies at one organization may not serve other organizations' interests well due to differences in staffing, resources and external relations. "Yet, the very fact that they are normatively sanctioned increases the likelihood of their adoption" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 148). Of course, this isn't new to the news media industry. Ample studies have shown that journalists often fear being perceived as professionally out of step with colleagues both within their organizations as well as contemporaries throughout the industry (Graber, 1971; Crouse, 1973; Glasser, 1992; Schudson, 1989). To ignore the editorial choices of others is to question shared professional and journalistic values. Therefore, it's better to mimic news values, sources and perspectives, even if it's not in the individual's or his or her organization's best interest. More recently, Boczkowski (1999) contended that journalists' increased use of digital technologies has actually facilitated increased monitoring of competitors' work, and has subsequently led to greater mimicry. Moreover, the practice has "altered the ecology of practices and values by which journalists make meaning out of information" (40), as well as to curtail the overall diversity of content and viewpoints published by news organizations.

But across the spectrum of a specific industry, or even individuals within a specific organization, which actors are most likely to mimic and which are more likely to experiment? Research from the late 1950s showed that high-status actors are often comfortable deviating from conventional behavior (Hollander, 1958); in contrast, middle-status actors aspire to solidify their social and/or economic standing, so they are often reluctant to take risks that might be associated with low-status actors. This is because they fear their perceived legitimacy will be called into question, and lose any future

opportunity of rising in rank. Interestingly, researchers believe that high-status actors, comfortable in their positions (Meyer and Rowan, 1977), and low-status actors, who have little to lose, are far more likely than middle-status actors to experiment in ways that might be associated with those possessing low status (Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001). In the case of a newspaper company, this might be like allowing local community groups to submit and publish unedited press releases directly on the paper's website, for example.

However, it's important to note that each status level also contains a perceived hierarchy (Phillips and Zuckerman, 2001). But that, I believe, calls into question the likelihood that certain high-status actors would be willing to pursue a radically different approach to perform a particular task. A high-status actor toward the middle or bottom of its level's hierarchical structure would not likely want to risk damaging its existing economic or cultural legitimacy. Unlike low-status actors in general, this high-status actor would be taking a risk, including the potential loss of power, prestige and resources.

Studies have examined the status of newspaper readers and the types of publications they prefer—a broadsheet, which tends to cover an array of news, versus a tabloid, which covers more sports and crime (Van Rees and Van Eijck, 2003; Chan and Goldthrope, 2007)—as well as the status of people who do not read newspapers (Westley and Werner, 1964). However, no study has attempted to measure the status of a specific group of newspapers or news media outlets. Benson (2006) merely contends that *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* “play a crucial role in establishing or modifying the dominant ‘rules’ of journalistic practice” (190), given the fact that they are among the few U.S. papers that routinely cover national and international news stories and are among the most celebrated newspapers in the United

States, based on top journalism prizes won. But while the *Post* likely helps to set professional standards among many high- and middle-status metropolitan newspapers in the United States—however they are to be defined—it has also long operated in the shadow of *The New York Times* (Felsenthal, 1993). Other top-tier major dailies, such as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, similarly view *The New York Times* as the standard bearer of excellence, and they often measure their journalistic efforts against those of the *Times* (Benson, 2001, O’Shea, 2011). Interestingly, studies have shown that the *Los Angeles Times*’ readership is far more similar to that of *USA Today*’s and other regional newspapers (Benson, 2006), highlighting the potential dangers of pursuing legitimacy through the imitation of others’ practices and norms.

So although the *Post* and *Times* exist among high-status actors in the U.S. newspaper industry, there is a clear hierarchy. Some readers of the *Post*’s Sunday magazine have even wondered why the publication couldn’t be more like the *Times*’ excellent Sunday magazine, with more and lengthier features and higher production quality. *Post* magazine editors and the paper’s top news editors have expressed some “ego bruises” as a result of the comparative critiques (Zagoria, 1984, A18). Zagoria, the *Post*’s ombudsman in the early to mid-1980s, himself seemed to welcome a magazine more like the *Times*’, despite the fact that his paper operates in a very different economic market, calling on a “top-side commitment” at the *Post* to more “thoughtful articles and quality art, beautifully printed,” thus leading to “an editorial concept that would give Washington a Sunday magazine more like the *Times*” (1984, A18). But such pursuit of isomorphic practices could carry a significant downside, as inefficient routines can “generate identities, behaviors, roles and values that are seen as appropriate. These norms

may crowd out alternative ways of practicing journalism—even if those alternatives might respond more efficiently to exogenous pressures” (Ryfe, 2006, 140).

The study of journalism history and the evolving practices of news organizations are well served by institutional theory. The workplace norms and cultures that are embedded within an organization aren't formulated over night, but are adopted from a complex system of slightly evolving technical and social routines that are tied to isomorphic pressures (Ryfe, 2006). Like any theory, institutional theory cannot fully explain the complex relationships and phenomena that give rise to change and maintenance in all established organizational settings, or the speed with which one organization adopts isomorphic practices as compared to another organization. However, applying an institutional theory approach can explain context-specific individual and organizational resistance to change, particularly when established practices are seemingly less efficient and effective than potential alternatives needed for long-term survival (Tolbert and Zucker, 1983; Eisenhardt, 1988).

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory, developed by the French behavior psychologist Henri Tajfel in the early 1970s, specifies how individuals' perceptions of various social environments, such as groups or organizations, influence the way they understand themselves and others (Tajfel, 1972). Social identity, or SIT, explains a self-evaluative process in which an individual compares his perceived social standing to others, then classifies himself within a group and compares it to other groups. As Hogg explains in citing Turner (1975), “Intergroup relations involve a process of competition for positive

identity” (2001, 186), as individuals attempt to establish or confirm distinctiveness in their pursuit of self-esteem through group affiliation, and measure their success in comparison to the distinctiveness of members in other groups. Every group offers a specific identity for members, and members can decide whether or not they want to incorporate that identity into their individual identity. Groups can be demographically based (race, gender and ethnicity, for example) while organizations can be professional or social (clubs and religious groups, for example).

Individuals generally select identities that positively reinforce their self-image and enhance their status. “Thus, in an effort to maintain and enhance a positive work-related self-image, when creating their work identity individuals will be more likely to use the identities of the work groups that offer them the greatest perceived levels of distinction and status enhancement” (Walsh and Gordon, 2007, 50)

SIT builds on the social psychology work of George Herbert Mead (1967), who argued that the self exists only in relation to others and that it is through ongoing social processes that individuals’ perceptions, attitudes and behaviors are shaped. SIT greatly expands on that concept, specifically how and why individuals perceive themselves in comparison to others to formulate a self-identity, and then classify themselves and others into social groups (Turner, 1975; Tajfel and Turner, 1986). By grouping oneself into a specific social unit, individuals are able to differentiate themselves from perceived out-group members and exhibit similarities with perceived in-group members (Hogg and McGarty, 1990).

SIT is rooted in three basic assumptions: individuals work to achieve or maintain a positive social identity; an individual’s positive social identity is often based on

favorable comparisons to in-groups and relevant out-groups; and individuals who are unhappy with their social identity will either leave their existing group, attempt to join a more positively viewed group, and/or work to make their existing group more positively distinct (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Whereas all individuals maintain a personal identity rooted in their own characteristics, they also maintain a social identity that is derived from membership and status in different groups (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). As Hogg and Terry (2000) note, individuals seek to acquire and maintain a positive social identity through status, stability and legitimacy within a well-regarded in-group, often in an effort to positively reinforce their self-image. The famous Robbers Cave experiment showed how affiliation with a group, even absent any other group, could foster obedience and loyalty to group rules and practices (Sherif et al, 1961). In the experiment, a group of boys from Oklahoma were taken to a summer camp and randomly placed in one of two groups. Without knowing the other group's existence, group members formulated rules of behavior, a group name and even a loose hierarchy. When members later learned about the other group and had to compete for camp-related resources, they demonstrated in-group favoritism, in-group bias and a general distaste for the other group. The mere awareness of being in one group versus another in a particular situation was enough to lead to processes of competition and discrimination.

Creating and maintaining an identity through social comparison is a “continuous, self-defining process” (Walsh and Gordon, 2008, 48), since membership of groups can change, as can an organization's culture and values. For example, the organizational culture and values of a daily newspaper would likely change dramatically if the publisher chose to eliminate the print edition altogether and make the company a digital news

operation. In such a scenario, changes in newsgathering, production and the use of real-time data analytics to gauge reader interest would likely have a profound effect on organizational culture and values, and, subsequently, the perceived in-groups. In addition, Dutton et al (1994) have posited that, “members may change their behavior by merely thinking differently about their employing organization. If members believe that the perceived organizational identity has been altered either in content (e.g., in what attributes distinguish this organization) or in its evaluation (making it more or less attraction), members are likely to modify their behavior” (256). An organizational identity is the relationship between an employee and his organization. The cognitive connection an employee has with his organization will determine how strongly the employee identifies with the organization. The more that members view their organization positively, and the more their self-concept approximates the organization’s identity, and the more they will identify with their organization and attempt to serve perceived organizational goals. However, the opposite holds true as well. The more that members view their organization negatively, the less they will identify with the organization and work toward perceived organizational goals (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). In such cases, the person’s dominant social identity will likely be based outside of the workplace, either through the profession in which he is a member or through external organizational affiliations or social groups.

Individuals can possess multiple social identities, as well as conflicting social identities. For example, an individual may perceive her profession in a positive light, yet view her day-to-day work in a far more negative light. In such cases—think of an attorney who views her profession through a positive lens, but isn’t proud of her day-to-

day responsibilities defending alleged drug dealers and rapists—members will often identify with the perceived positive aspects of their organization’s identity, not the negative aspects. “Individuals will use their organization’s distinguishing competency and/or their occupation’s positive defining values to determine their organization’s and occupation’s identity. The groups whose competencies and positive defining values offer members the greatest distinction and status enhancement...will be prominent for these individuals and will be used by them to create their individual work identities” (Walsh and Gordon, 2008).

SIT has been used to explore organizational behavior and individual attitudes through a variety of organizational affiliations. These studies include an examination of a religious college’s alumni (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), 3M salesmen (Dutton et al, 1994), New York/New Jersey Port Authority workers (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991), veterinarians (Johnson et al, 2006), and librarians (Garcia, 2011). Using SIT, scholars have examined the positive relationship between people’s perceptions of a company’s commitment to corporate social responsibility and their decision to work there (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Turban and Greening, 1997), as well as how the social identity of newspaper readers influence the editorial content they consume (Mersey, 2010).

That said, SIT has its limitations. Most notably, certain individuals rely more on individual identity than group identity to bolster their social standing. These people defy social norms and either choose to operate outside of group affiliations or affiliate with others who similarly reject social norms. In the case study of *The Washington Post’s* Sunday magazine, Jay Lovinger might fall under this category. He came to the *Post* from New York City, where he served as an editor of *People* magazine. Lovinger was hired to

lead the *Post* magazine's 1986 relaunch, but later acknowledged that he struggled to fit into the organizational culture of the *Post*, which he defined as lacking creativity. In addition, critics have contended that social identity theory is too limited and struggles to explain why people choose to define themselves in connection to a particular group of status versus another group of seemingly equal status (Turner, 1999).

SIT and Journalists

SIT has only rarely been used in communication studies, and only a few researchers have applied it to examine the attitudes and behaviors of newspaper journalists. Using SIT as a loose framework, Sylvie (1996) examined the stated interdepartmental differences within newspaper companies—specifically, editorial, advertising and circulation—at Ohio daily newspapers. Ultimately, and not surprisingly, he found that interdepartmental differences existed regarding perceived cooperation, or a lack thereof, between editorial, advertising and circulation. Newsroom leaders found the members of the advertising department the least cooperative, while advertising and circulation department leaders found newsroom personnel to be the least cooperative.

Filak (2004) similarly found that newspaper and broadcast TV journalists displayed in-group favoritism and out-group derogation when comparing themselves to the other group as well as when considering issues of newsroom convergence between the two media. Each group viewed potential organizational changes more positively when they believed that members of their own group were driving the changes. This can largely be attributed to a general fear of the unknown, but it is a fear based on perceptions of the out-groups.

In an unpublished 2010 doctoral dissertation that examined daily newspaper journalists' self-perceptions, and how recent technological advances and economic declines have influenced their professional practices at newspaper companies, Hinsley (2010) found that daily newspaper journalists identify more closely with the profession than they do with their respective organizations, in many cases because of unhappiness with their organizations for decreasing newsgathering resources due to advertising revenue declines. This confirms the findings of Dutton and Dekerich (1991), whose research showed that individuals closely monitor the actions their organization takes on social issues because those actions can either bolster or damn self-identity. Anything that might limit a news media organization's ability to serve the public's informational needs—including curtailing newsroom resources—can be viewed as a social problem. Hinsley's work also supported Russo's (1998) findings about journalists at a single daily newspaper. There, journalists likewise identified more closely with the profession than with their employing newspaper. However, journalists had a difficult time separating the work they did from the company that published it, meaning their identification to the profession and to their company were interwoven, as opposed to mutually exclusive. Moreover, it is hardly surprising that the journalists identified slightly more with the profession. As Russo alluded, the vast majority of journalists would not seek work in an entirely different profession if that newspaper were to suddenly go out of business. Part of the professional nature of journalism means that workers have attained a certain level of higher education, undergone task-specific training, and often socialize through different industry networks and associations.

Lastly, SIT has been used to examine changes in professional identity among journalists at a daily newspaper in Sweden. Specifically, the study looked at how print journalists' attitudes changed after they were re-assigned to work on a new web edition. The authors found that the re-assigned journalists took a more market-oriented, as opposed to content-oriented, approach to their jobs after working in a new group environment (Fagerling and Norack, 2005). The new online journalists' social identities transformed in large part because the journalists operated within a new organizational unit within the newspaper company, and that the new unit lacked many of the institutionalized norms and practices that defined the newspaper company. In addition, the online team was so small that journalists, advertising sales representatives and information technology personnel had little choice but to work together, fostering a better understanding of shared goals and outcomes. Fagerling and Norack found that an entrepreneurial spirit permeated the online operation, and that the web-based journalists embraced an identity that was rooted in commercial success through editorial innovation and a willingness to experiment. This is the very essence of any skunk-works operation, whereby a small team of people comes together to develop new ideas and practices without feedback from the established organization. By physically segregating the operation, new cultural values and norms can be developed. Many newspapers, including *The Washington Post* and *USA Today*, to name just a few, housed their online news units in entirely different buildings (in the case of the *Post*) or on an entirely different floor (in the case of *USA Today*). In both cases, the new digital operations developed a highly entrepreneurial and collaborative culture (O'Reilly and Tushman, 2004). However, both companies later struggled to merge their print and digital operations because the two

groups viewed each other as competitors for resources and organizational status.

Ultimately, the companies had to reorganize both operations to better integrate the two.

The Pursuit of Status

Inherent in the pursuit of a positive identity through group affiliation, particularly in relation to perceived out-groups, is the concept of status, defined as “an individual’s standing in the hierarchy of a group based on the prestige, honor and deference accorded her by other group members” (Lovaglia, 1997, 161). The accordance of prestige or honor upon an individual is based on status characteristics, including age, race, educational background, income, physical appearance and a host of others. Certain characteristics carry greater weight than others, depending on the cultural setting.

Gould (2002) explains that there are two frameworks to understand hierarchical differentiation of status characteristics. The first perspective views hierarchical status structures as natural phenomenon, in which individual characteristics and qualities lead certain people or groups to gain greater prominence and influence in group settings. The other framework views hierarchical status structures as artificially imposed by interested parties, who seek to maintain their privileged positions and access to resources and power. The challenge is when people repeatedly reinforce others’ status roles. Those roles will often become accepted and inform perceptions that can be difficult to change (Ridgeway, 1997).

Studies have shown that status beliefs can also spread beyond those who are directly affected by an “influence hierarchy,” to bystanders of similar status characteristics who “simply witness the influence hierarchies between people of nominal

groups” (Ridgeway and Erickson, 2000, 611). This belief system spreads, helping to solidify additional attitudes and perceptions about certain people’s abilities, knowledge and worth.

It’s important to note that status beliefs ultimately must come to be agreed upon to form a social reality, meaning that a less regarded group has to accept its inferior status for the belief to take hold. This often occurs through the process of “altercasting,” in which a lower-status individual comes to accept his social standing through repeated experiences with high-status people (Ridgeway, 1997). Justifying existing social hierarchies can lead to inferences by both high-status and low-status individuals that the lower-status groups possess minimized social value, cementing perceived status hierarchies. However, that’s not to say status group membership is forever. “Depending on whether they perceive group boundaries as permeable or impermeable and status relationships as secure or insecure, low-status group members might adopt a strategy of upward individual mobility or social creativity” (Turner, 1999, 9).

Cohen and Zhou (1991) found that status characteristics played a larger role in the interactions of group members when the group was ad hoc, as opposed to established. “In the absence of first-hand knowledge about the relative abilities of group members, individuals use the information conveyed by status characteristics” (186). External characteristics the authors explored were gender, education, leadership, seniority and company status. Their findings were rooted in a sociological concept deemed the “Matthew effect,” in which “contributions of apparently similar quality are evaluated differentially depending on the status of the contributor” (Gould, 2002, 1148). This is the basis of much research on status, whereby individual characteristics are subjectively

assessed by high-status individuals, who perceive a correlation to task performance abilities. For example, in his ethnographical study of manufacturing workers, Vallas (2006) discovered that men were often far more committed to long-standing institutional norms than were women who worked on the same production line. The company had instituted a new team system, requiring that every worker on the line provide “cooperation and mutual support across traditional [task] boundaries” (1697), yet men oftentimes refused to participate in job rotations or to help women perform a certain task due to the men’s attachment to a hierarchical system based on gender. Such an example illustrates how an individual can exist in multiple social groups and maintain conflicting identities. Certain women in Vallas’ study could exist in a social in-group of high performers, in comparison to those who required help to fulfill their tasks, while at the same time socially identify with all of the women. In such a case, certain women might even perceive the men as the out-group for possessing a workplace mentality that is small-minded and insecure. As previously stated in this chapter, an individual can possess multiple social identities, and those identities are constantly being reevaluated and revised.

Moreover, research shows that organizations often value specific qualities more than others. For example, a particular organization might prefer creativity in its workers more than efficiency. As a result, individuals with high levels of creativity would tend to possess higher status within the organization (Kanter, 1993). The point here is that lower-status employees can enhance their self-image by identifying qualities they possess that are valued by their organization. Pugh and Wahrman (1983) have similarly shown that people’s expectations of others can be changed by interactions that defy previous beliefs.

In their study, the researchers provided males and females examples of female competence in performing a specific task. They ultimately found that demonstrating female superiority to men—rather than equal competencies—was the most effective way of producing equality of influence in mixed-gender task-oriented groups. “The effects of a status characteristic can be said to have been eliminated as a judgmental factor only if a demonstration of superiority leads one to be viewed (and to view oneself) as a superior, not as an equal” (760). Another example could be found in a low-status, out-group section editor at a daily newspaper. If this editor was to attempt to produce award-winning stories of national significance, it stands to reason that high-status actors’ perceptions of that editor would change for the better. This point will be further discussed in Chapter 8.

Conclusion

The newspaper industry has always faced market threats, whether from radio, television, cable TV, community newspapers, the Internet and mobile device. The question is never whether newspaper journalists will have to adapt to some new technological innovation and slightly alter how they do their jobs, but rather from whom will they take their cues.

The essence of institutional theory is that the individuals who give an organization life routinely seek professional legitimacy for legitimacy’s sake, and often do some through the emulation of practices that have gained widespread appeal elsewhere. Sometimes, emulation will work out for the best and both the individual and organization will be the better for it. In other cases, however, adoption of others behaviors or processes

can carry ruinous results, as they could be poorly misaligned with specific goals or simply inefficient for the actual task at hand. This is incredibly relevant for today's newspaper industry, as newswriters face changes and challenges at a far greater pace than at any other time in history due to widespread disruptions to the longtime advertising-based business model. But it is also relevant to a 50-year case study that seeks to understand the evolution of editorial decision-making, namely in the balancing of news values and business values. Within the various contexts of history, who did *Post* magazine editors emulate in their pursuit of legitimacy, and what were the motivating factors that compelled editors to maintain certain behaviors and processes?

Because Sunday magazine editors have historically been held in relatively low regard in newspaper newsrooms, for reasons previously mentioned that include some daily journalists' distaste for long-form narrative stories and a resentment that magazine writers face little time pressure to publish, this study is also well-served by an examination of status and social identity. Newspaper newsrooms are competitive environments, both internally and externally. Most newsrooms are divided by editorial section, and reporters constantly vie to cover stories that will land their work on a section front or, at best, the front page of the newspaper. More people will likely read those section-front stories, but the stories will also receive special notice from top editors.

Sunday magazine editors rarely operate in that world. They perform their job on the periphery, working with long deadlines and lengthy production cycles that inhibit most any chance for one of their stories to get moved to A1.

As noted earlier in this chapter, social identity theory is based on three assumptions: Individuals work to achieve or maintain a positive social identity; social

identity is often based on one's self comparison to others, and then the relevant in-group and out-groups the individual is a member of; and individuals who are unhappy with their social identity will either leave their existing group, attempt to join a more positively viewed group, and/or work to make their existing group more positively distinct (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). In an examination of Sunday magazine editors and their attitudes toward editorial decision-making and the consideration of business values in producing their magazine, social identity theory provides a valuable prism through which to further understanding of their pursuit of status and membership within certain organizational in-groups. By also incorporating institutional theory, research can take a broader view and examine both external and internal professional environments that influence the behavior and attitudes of these journalists.

Chapter 6 Methods

This study aims to further understanding of editorial decision-making by editors of what I call “blended” media products, in this case *The Washington Post’s* Sunday magazine, as well as the editors’ attitudes toward the business side of their publication’s operation. In addition, this study is a 50-year case study of the *Post* magazine, beginning with the launch of *Potomac* in 1961.

Janesick writes that “qualitative researchers accept the fact that research is ideologically driven. There is no value-free or bias-free design....By identifying one’s biases, one can see easily where the questions that guide the study are crafted” (2000, 385). To be sure, personal interest and pragmatism influenced my selection of *The Washington Post’s* Sunday magazine as the focus of this study. Prior to beginning my doctoral studies at the University of Maryland in College Park, in 2007, I spent 13 years as an editor and reporter for various newspapers, both weekly and daily, as well as for three different magazines. Through these experiences, I came to recognize certain differences in the organizational culture of newspapers and magazines, specifically in the working relationship between journalists and their colleagues in the advertising and circulation departments. At the newspapers where I worked, the internal culture was rooted in journalistic independence, an often-articulated divide that separated newsroom decision-making from business operations and the financial needs of the publication. At the magazines where I worked—each a subject-specific niche publication, including one that covered the business operations and policy interests of the newspaper industry—the newsroom and advertising departments were clearly distinct from one another, but the cultural divide was far less doctrinarian than it was at the newspapers. Editors and

advertising representatives at the magazines communicated frequently with each other to share information about upcoming stories and editorial projects, which advertisers were buying space, and what advertisers were saying about the magazine. I'm sure such conversations were held at some level at the newspapers where I worked at, but those dialogues were not openly discussed in the newsroom.

Study Scope and Purpose

A Sunday newspaper magazine is an unconventional media product; it “challenges classification” (Taft, 1982, 223). It is neither a typical magazine nor a newspaper section like any other, as it combines content and production elements unique to each medium. Sunday newspaper magazine editors typically produce, package and design content in the manner of a magazine, yet they do so in a newspaper newsroom environment where traditional news values reign supreme. Among those values, particularly at daily newspapers, is editorial independence from commercial pressures, both internal (from business-side colleagues) and external (from existing or would-be advertisers). Unlike newspapers, magazines have a long history of developing editorial content to attract specific categories of advertisers (Steinem, 1990; Mastin, 1996; Zukin and Maguire, 2004). In studies of special interest magazines, researchers have found that the number of magazines ballooned following World War II because of increases in the nation's economic prosperity and people's leisure time, as well as the growth of other media, namely television, that introduced people to new interests for which they sought additional information (Abrahamson, 1996; Sumner, 2010). In addition, as advertising began to account for a growing share of magazines' total revenues, enabling magazines to

become inexpensive if not free to readers, editors worked to produce editorial content that provided a friendly environment for advertisers. “Between 1900 and 2000, magazines generally became a business enterprise instead of a literary enterprise. Magazines became defined not as much by their content but by the demographic character of their audiences” (Sumner, 2010, 9). Beginning in the 1980s, newspapers sought to expand their own reach by developing new “special interest” editorial sections, such as food and lifestyle-oriented sections, yet those efforts were largely ancillary to the “hard-news” reporting that defined the front section (Bogart, 1995; Eckman and Lindlof, 2003).

As discussed in great detail in Chapter 3, newspaper magazines were originally created in the late 1800s to increase Sunday newspaper circulation, mainly through the publication of illustrations, fiction, poems and long-form storytelling. By the early 1900s, photography became the principal content element of Sunday newspaper magazines. The publications eventually grew incredibly popular among advertisers because the rotogravure printing process through which the magazines were created allowed for the use of color inks and sharper reproduction of images. The rest of the newspaper was printed through a traditional printing system that used only black ink.

This shift, from a potential driver of Sunday circulation to a distinct vehicle for advertising revenue, ultimately became the undoing of locally produced newspaper magazines. Beginning in the late 1970s, newspapers discontinued their Sunday magazines largely because expenses far exceeded advertising revenues. There are many reasons for those declines, including: advertisers’ increased use of free-standing inserts that could be distributed through the newspaper in select geographic locations; expanded color printing capabilities throughout the newspaper; improved page design technology

that brought magazine-like aesthetics and production to the daily newspaper; and the addition of new lifestyle-themed sections throughout the newspaper. News accounts and academic studies about locally produced Sunday magazines and special sections clearly show that newspapers cease to publish them for advertising-related financial reasons, as opposed to readership declines (Kenney and Lacy, 1987; Chalaby, 1989; Attaway-Fink, 2004). Because Sunday magazines are expensive to produce—due largely to the expense of glossy paper, third-party printing and binding, and distribution—the sections need to generate more advertising revenue than a typical newspaper section does to cover its costs. In addition, most major metropolitan newspapers offer advertisers the option of geographically zoned preprinted inserts, which maintain many of the same production values as a Sunday magazine. It has been estimated that preprint advertising accounts for nearly 70 percent of the average metropolitan newspaper’s Sunday advertising revenues (Mutter, 2012). As a national newspaper, *The New York Times* hasn’t experienced these challenges because it enjoys a large, national advertising base, and few advertisers opt to run preprinted inserts beyond the paper’s New York Metropolitan area. As of September 2012, *The Times* had a Sunday circulation of 2.1 million, which includes print and digital, making it twice as big as the second-largest Sunday newspaper in the country, the *Houston Chronicle* (Moos, 2012).

Despite the fact that advertising revenues are the primary determinant in a Sunday magazine’s survival, studies consistently show that Sunday magazine editors say they make almost all editorial determinations with their perceived readership in mind and think very little about the environment they’re creating for current or potential advertisers (Haney, 1953; Ranly, 1981; Hynds, 1994; Morton, 1998; McQuilken, 1999). Chapter 2

presented a review of the relevant literature pertaining to professionalism and journalistic news values, as well as the market conditions that influence organizational changes.

Zelizer has called for more studies that attempt to illuminate “new modes of journalistic practice, new circumstances in which journalism can and does operate, and new purposes for which journalism is called into action” (2007, 112). Major metropolitan newspapers have experienced significant revenue declines over the past 10 years due to the “disruptive innovation” of online publishing. Christensen (1997), who coined the term, defines it as an innovation that creates a new market and value for consumers. In the case of newspapers, from a revenue standpoint, consumers are both readers and advertisers. The innovation will eventually disrupt the established market—in this case, print advertising and print circulation—by forcing existing companies to lower prices and adjust product offerings, such as specific sections, including locally produced Sunday magazines.

Understanding how editors, particularly editors of Sunday magazines and other advertising-dependent feature and/or lifestyle-oriented sections, can adjust to today’s “new circumstance,” as Zelizer calls it, is important as the newspaper industry continues to face market challenges that diminish resources and challenge long-established professional norms and practices. In many ways, this study is an examination of the causes and consequences of power, production and culture in an organizational environment where professional norms are highly institutionalized.

Because the sequencing and timing of processes and events are central to understanding outcomes, institutional studies are often based on historic analyses (Selznick, 1957; Berger and Luckmann, 1967). This is because individuals largely adapt

to existing and recurring conditions rather than buck organizational norms and routes (Ryfe, 2006). In studying the production of news, Cook (1998) and Sparrow (1999) each argue for the necessity of examining the historical evolution of institutional practices. Other scholars (Thornton, 2002; Townley, 2002) have similarly argued that institutional studies require a historic examination of organizations, rather than moment-in-time queries, to track the evolutionary nature of values, practices and norms.

Study Design

This study was designed to examine the attitudes and perceptions of past and present editors of *The Washington Post's* Sunday magazine to better understand the principal factors that influence editorial decision-making, particularly as it relates to their publication's commercial success. I conducted 13 in-depth interviews with past and present editors of the *Post* magazine, and used the grounded theory method to analyze and conceptualize findings. In addition, I blended case study methodology to triangulate findings. By conducting a case study of the *Post's* Sunday magazine, bounded within a 50-year period from 1961 to 2011, I could incorporate a macro-level understanding of various factors that influenced the actions and attitudes of editors, including economic conditions, industry trends and shifting organizational values. As Stake (1995) explains, researchers will often use the case study method in an instrumental way to help investigate a broader phenomenon.

Some case study findings were reported in Chapter 4, which includes a detailed history of the *Post's* Sunday magazine. Chapter 7 contains the study's results, which suggest that *Post* magazine editors' attitudes toward content creation were rooted largely

in a desire to earn greater professional respect from colleagues throughout the newsroom, by competing both internally and externally for resources and stories. This included the pursuit of stories that were designed to win the interest of colleagues as well as journalism award committees, despite the fact that readers may not have been interested in them. Moreover, editors often attempted to fill the *Post* magazine with content that emulated *The New York Times Magazine*'s, such as lengthy national and international news features. Lastly, *Post* magazine editors maintained traditional newspaper newsroom values, such as low regard for business values in editorial decision-making. Chapter 8 discusses the bases of these findings.

Twelve former editors of the *Post*'s Sunday magazine were each interviewed in-depth for approximately 60 to 90 minutes, as was the current editor. One past editor of the *Post*'s Sunday magazine, Stephen Isaacs, could not be found, while two other past editors, Joe Anderson and Marion Clark, have passed away. Since 1961, the 16 editors of the *Post*'s Sunday magazine were:

- Paul Herron, 1961-1965
- Walter Pincus, 1965-1968
- Joe Anderson, 1968-1970
- Stephen Isaacs, 1970-1971
- Robert Wool, 1971-1972
- Shelby Coffey, 1972-1976
- Marion Clark, 1976-1977
- Laura Longley, 1977-1980
- Stephen Petranek, 1980-1986

Jay Lovinger, 1986-1988

Bob Thompson, 1988-1995

Steve Coll, 1995-1998

Glenn Frankel, 1998-2001

Tom Shroder, 2001-2009

Debra Leithauser, 2009-2011

Lynn Medford, 2011-today

In addition to the editors, three former general managers/publishers of the magazine were interviewed in-depth; one of the past editors, Coll, also served as publisher of the magazine during part of his time leading the editorial side of the publication. Those business-side leaders were Andrew Corty, who was hired by the *Post* to serve as general manager of the magazine and help lead its grand redesign in 1986; Anne Karalekas, general manager of the magazine in the mid- to late '90s; and Leslie Morgan Steiner, general manager of the magazine in the late '90s and early 2000s. Washington Post Co. Chairman Donald Graham, former publisher of the newspaper from 1979 to 2000, was also interviewed in-depth. The current general manager of the magazine, Jenny Abramson, and current *Post* Publisher Katharine Weymouth indicated initial interest in taking part in this study; ultimately, however, neither one made herself available.

Because this study examines *Post* Sunday magazine editors' content decision-making processes and their attitudes about the relationship between editorial and commercial interests within the magazine, interviews with business-side leaders were not directly included in the grounded theory analysis. Like other elements of data, as detailed

below, those interviews served to triangulate findings as well as to support the 50-year case study of the magazine.

All interviews were based on a set of predetermined questions, but the interview process was free flowing and iterative to allow for follow-up questions and new lines of inquiry. As Fortner and Christians write, “open-ended, unstructured interviewing plays a prominent role in discovering how people define their realities” (2003, 351). Interviews were conducted in person unless the subject was no longer in the Greater Washington, D.C. area, where I was based at start of this study; in this case, for Corty and Frankel, the interview was conducted by telephone. Three other interviews (Wool, Longley and Medford) were conducted by telephone because I moved to the Boston area prior to the completion of this study. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for manual analysis. Interview subjects signed a release form that explained the purpose of this study, and everyone agreed to speak for attribution. Because this dissertation includes a 50-year case study of *The Washington Post*'s Sunday magazine, I believed all subjects should be named for the sake of this study's historic and academic value. All interview subjects agreed to the condition of full attribution.

In addition to interviews with key subjects, I analyzed approximately 85 issues of the *Post*'s Sunday magazine, starting in 1961, as well as various internal documents and communications acquired from interview subjects and others. For every two years, three issues were randomly selected for examination; additional issues were examined to ensure that the researcher had a sample of every editor's work. In instances when a selected issue happened to be an outlier—such as a special topically themed issue—the researcher examined the next week's issue as well. Riffe et al (1996) suggest that the

most efficient way for researchers to perform a content analysis of a weekly magazine is to use a stratified sample of 12 issues, one randomly selected from each month. Lacy et al (1995) came to the same conclusion in their examination of random sampling for content-analysis studies of weekly newspapers. However, this research project is not a content analysis of *The Washington Post's* Sunday magazine. Rather, it is a study of *Post* magazine editors' editorial decision-making and their attitudes about the interplay between journalism and commercialism. As a result, I examined past issues of the magazine over a 50-year period for contextual purposes only, to add an additional layer of detail to the editors' stories and to identify the evolution of editorial content elements and advertising in the magazine for the purpose of the case study.

Further insights into the history and practices of Sunday newspaper magazines were gleaned from trade journals, news reports, academic studies (of which there were very few), and informal interviews with people associated with Sunday magazines. These include Phyllis Cavaliere, CEO and chairman of the Metro Newspaper Advertising Services, formerly the Sunday Magazine Network; Carolyn Flynn, longtime editor of the *Albuquerque Journal's* women's magazine *SAGE*; Leslie Yazel, deputy editor of the *Wall Street Journal's* Personal Journal section and a former *Post* Style section editor who helped re-conceptualize the paper's Sunday magazine in 2007; as well as numerous friends and former colleagues in the newspaper and magazine industries. The data collected through interviews with business-side leaders were not analyzed through the grounded theory method. Rather, they were used in conjunction with the other aforementioned data sources—documents, physical artifacts, news accounts, etc—to

triangulate data in an effort to establishment converging lines of evidence and bolster credibility of fact.

Selection of Case Study Subject

I chose to study *The Washington Post's* Sunday magazine largely for pragmatic reasons. First, fewer than 10 locally produced weekly Sunday magazines currently exist. Second, I sought to focus on a magazine published by a major metropolitan newspaper so that findings could potentially be applied to similarly sized dailies, which have been undergoing the largest revenue declines of any newspaper segment (Edmonds et al, 2011; The Economist, 2009). Third, the magazine needed to be local in editorial and advertising scope—as opposed to the Sunday magazine of *The New York Times*, which is essentially a national publication—again to improve the chances of applicability to others in the newspaper industry. Lastly, the *Post* was selected because of its geographic proximity to me. The vast majority of former *Post* magazine editors and general managers who were interviewed for this study still lived and worked in the Greater Washington, D.C. area.

Merging Case Study and Grounded Theory Methods

Researchers who practice qualitative studies tend to believe that reality is too complicated to control and can only be “superficially touched” (Holliday, 2007, 6) by research that attempts to clarify meaning through interpretation. It’s for that reason that qualitative methodologies are often employed to study broad social perspectives and the backgrounds and interests of subjects. For this study, I married case study and grounded theory methodologies because both are appropriate for a number of reasons, including 1)

few studies exist on the specific topic, 2) this study looks at an evolutionary process and people's reactions to it, and 3) this study explores context, consequence and strategies. In addition, both the case study and grounded theory methods can be used to study people's actions and engagement in a process (Creswell, 2003). More importantly, the methods were combined because of their differences; the case study approach enables exploration of context within a bounded system, while grounded theory allows for a more detailed analysis of data.

Case Study

Researchers use the case study method to broadly explore processes and individuals that are "bounded by time and activity" (Creswell, 2003, 15). Sources of evidence vary in case study research, yet Yin (2012) suggests that researchers collect data from any combination of the six most common sources: 1) direct observations; 2) open-ended interviews; 3) archival records; 4) documents, such as newspaper articles and internal records; 5) participant-observation; and 6) physical artifacts, such as employees' work. For this study, I used open-ended interviews, archival records, documents and physical artifacts, which included "editor's notes" that appeared in the magazine or the daily newspaper, as well as online Q&A's with a *Post* magazine editor.

One of the defining traits of the case study method is that is based on a constructionist approach to research (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003). In other words, it is a social construction of research participants' descriptions of their views and actions. It "recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning, but doesn't reject outright some notion of objectivity (Crabtree and Miller, 1999, 10). Yin (2003)

explains that the case study approach is well suited to answer “how” and “why” questions and to uncover contextual conditions that might be relevant to the phenomenon that is being studied. He describes three types of case studies: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In an exploratory case study, data is collected prior to the adoption of a theory to frame the study and the formation of research questions, often because there is little existing information about the topic of study. The researcher is largely attempting to develop a hypothesis. In contrast, descriptive case studies require the use of theory for the primary purpose of describing the various characteristics of the phenomenon under study. Finally, explanatory case studies aim to explain how things occurred over the course of well-defined events and through the prism of a theoretical lens. The following case study is explanatory.

Grounded Theory

In addition to the case study method, I used a grounded theory methodology to analyze data culled through interviews with former editors of the *Post* Sunday magazine. Grounded theory is a good technique for the examination of behavior and attitudes because the method requires an examination of processes and trajectory (Turner, 1983; Martin and Turner, 1986).

The grounded theory method requires the “constant comparison of data with emerging categories” (Creswell, 2003, 14) and the refinement of those categories until the researcher develops a higher level abstraction of the phenomenon under review. Pioneered by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the grounded theory approach involves systematic coding of data and organizing that data into as many categories as possible.

The process requires continually returning to the data to expand categories until they are “theoretically saturated” (Conrad, 1978, 102). At that point, the researcher begins refining the categories by combining properties, delimiting them as higher-level concepts emerge. As Lindlof and Taylor explain, the two main features of grounded theory is that theory is grounded in the relationships between data and the categories, and that codes and categories continue to evolve throughout the data collection process and until late in the study because new information can “alter the scope and terms” of the analytical framework (2002, 218). This “continuous interplay between analysis and data collection” (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, 273) enables the researcher to explicate a story from the interconnection of findings and themes.

In contrast to open-ended feedback opportunities through questionnaires, open-ended interviews are generally less structured and take on more of a conversational tone, enabling the researcher to pursue different lines of inquiry based on subjects’ responses (Crabtree and Miller, 1999; Holliday, 2007). Such interviews can help reveal how “participants construct reality and think about situations, not just to provide the answers to a researcher’s specific questions and own implicit construction of reality” (Yin, 2012, 12).

For this study, interview questions were general, but focused on the interview subjects’ career history and path, editorial philosophy as editor of the Sunday magazine, their perceptions of *The Washington Post*’s organizational culture, their perceptions of the culture’s impact on the magazine, and linkages over time between editorial decision-making and advertising/revenue goals. The ability of the researcher to sift out bias and factually questionable information is an essential component of this research procedure.

Following a process of source evaluation—based on primacy, credibility and the intrinsic value of individual sources—researchers attempt to derive reliable facts from the evidence so to construct interpretations of past events (Berkhofer Jr., 1995). It’s also why open-ended interviews should not suffice as the lone data source of a study.

Interestingly, every editor interviewed for this study largely defended his or her tenure leading the magazine, contending that any revenue problems the publication suffered during their time at the helm were a result of the poor performance of *Post* advertising sales reps, a downturn in the nation’s economy, and/or competitive threats from emerging media, namely the Internet. Only former *Washington Post* Publisher Donald Graham said he erred in overseeing the publication; he believed he should have either killed the publication following the relaunch in the mid-1980s or demanded that magazine editors were more business-minded. While editors often provided rosy portrayals of their time leading the magazine, most everyone offered critical analyses of the problems they inherited upon taking the job, as well as their predecessors’ strengths and weaknesses. When combined with internal revenue documents, an examination of actual *Post* Sunday magazines, as well as in-depth interviews with business-side leaders, I was able to sift out some bias and achieve far greater accuracy in the data.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for ease of analysis. As is required for grounded theory work, the researcher employed a “constant-comparison approach” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, 101) to conceptualize the data and identify commonalities among cited incidents. “We compare incident with incident as we go along so that similar phenomena can be given the same name” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990,

63). Also, by repeatedly examining past interview transcriptions, new lines of inquiry for future interviews were identified.

Through an open-coding, line-by-line analysis, the researcher developed approximately 40 conceptual labels. Code notes, or memos, were written throughout the coding process to identify unique attributes, potential connections and contextual underpinnings. As Strauss and Corbin explain, “The basic analytic procedures by which this is accomplished are: the asking of questions about data; and the making of comparisons for similarities and differences between each incident, event and other instances of phenomena” (1990, 74). Similar incidents and concepts were then grouped to reduce the number of units and form categories. Through the axial coding process, further connections were made between categories and subcategories to either create new categories or to develop broad themes that covered many of the existing ones. “In most cases, axial coding brings previously separate categories together under a principle of integration” (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002, 221) and conceptualization.

Initial categories included “awards and external recognition,” “recognition from within the *Post* newsroom,” “the *Post* as a revered institution,” “the pursuit of editorial ‘impact,’” “competition with other *Post* sections,” “competition with *The New York Times* magazine,” “telling stories that *Post* magazine editors were interested in,” “the role of special sections of the *Post* magazine,” “apathy toward *Post* business-side issues/interests,” “the financial health of the *Post* newspaper,” and “Donald Graham, supporter of the magazine.” In the end, three major themes emerged as central to this study: “Politics and Competition Inside the *Post* Newsroom,” “Evolving Attitudes about the Business Side of Magazine Operations,” and “A New York State of Mind,” or more

specifically how and why editors of the *Post* magazine took particular inspiration from *The New York Times Magazine*.

Chapter 7

Findings: Competition, Conflicts and Culture

Three major themes emerged through the analysis of interviews with editors who have led *The Washington Post's* magazine over the past 50 years. All three speak to challenges editors faced in developing content for the magazine, but the themes also help to shine a light on how editors perceived themselves while working at one of the nation's most renowned and respected journalistic institutions. Ultimately, those self-perceptions—as opposed to a desire to fulfill readers' content desires, or the pursuit of advertising revenues for the magazine—were the main drivers that shaped editorial decision-making and the identity editors sought to develop for the Sunday magazine, as well as for themselves, while working at the *Post*.

This chapter will examine the three major themes: “Politics and Competition Inside the *Post* Newsroom,” “Evolving Attitudes about Business Values,” and “A New York State of Mind,” which details how and why editors of the *Post* magazine took particular inspiration from *The New York Times Magazine* and, to a lesser degree, *The New Yorker*. “Politics and Competition Inside the *Post* Newsroom” focuses on the internal battles among section editors for potential stories and actual resources, including reporters and additional budgetary funding. “Evolving Attitudes” examines how and why *Post* magazine editors perceived the revenue-generating necessities of their publication, and their attitudes toward working with business-side colleagues to develop editorial content ideas so as to create a more welcoming—and noncontroversial—environment for potential advertisers. Lastly, “A New York State of Mind” focuses on how *The New York Times Magazine* has influenced editors of the *Post* magazine, specifically in their efforts to produce editorial content of the same high quality as the *Times's* magazine. Even

though *Post* magazine editors acknowledged that the entire *Times* newspaper has long operated as a national publication—in terms of circulation and advertising—and that the *Post* was essentially a local newspaper, they still routinely measured the editorial quality of the *Post* magazine against the *Times* magazine. In addition, many *Post* magazine editors spoke glowingly of *The New Yorker*, another general interest weekly news magazine, saying they took editorial inspiration from the publication. These editors justified their editorial approach to the *Post* magazine—namely, publishing smart, lengthy and occasionally idiosyncratic narrative stories—by citing how *The New Yorker* is a commercially successful magazine that runs similar types of feature articles. *Post* magazine editors throughout the 50-year period of study consistently made this claim. Editors again acknowledged that the *Post* employed a very different business model than *The New Yorker* did, with local versus national circulation. Unlike *The New Yorker*, the *Post* magazine has also never targeted a highly educated and affluent readership. Over the course of 52 weeks per year, for the past 50 years, the *Post* magazine has essentially employed a general-interest editorial approach, and advertising that featured modestly priced clothing and home furnishings.

This chapter will finish with a brief analysis of my interpretation of the data, with the next chapter providing a more detailed discussion that centers on an extension of social identity theory through the use of institutional theory.

Politics and Competition Inside the Post Newsroom

The first major theme that emerged through an analysis of interviews with former editors of *The Washington Post*'s Sunday magazine was the editors' pursuit of

professional acceptance by their newsroom colleagues. Newspaper magazines were first created in the late 1800s to bolster Sunday circulation, and they did this by providing a variety of lifestyle stories—defined broadly throughout this chapter as light-hearted articles about everything from food to fashion, romance to recreation, and most things in between—poems and illustrations. The modern Sunday newspaper magazine, beginning in the mid-1900s, largely employed feature photography, local gossip, food recipes and other “soft” news stories. Over time, editors added a bit more journalistic substance to the editorial mix, with deeply reported long-form feature stories and award-winning photojournalism. Yet, most of the editors interviewed for this study believed that journalists working for the daily sections of the newspaper viewed the *Post* magazine negatively for a variety of reasons. These reasons, as the magazine editors imagined them, included a distaste for narrative stories that often spanned 8,000 to 12,000 words in the magazine, little regard for the magazine’s lifestyle and entertainment articles, a dislike of photo essays, jealousy over the long lengths of time reporters were often given to report and write stories for the magazine, and a resentment that budgetary and staff resources were given to a section that routinely lost money year over year.

Stephen Petranek joined the *Post* magazine in 1979 after leading the Sunday magazines of the *Miami Herald* and the *Rochester (N.Y.) Democrat* for many years. He began his career in Rochester as a business reporter and, later, assistant city editor. Petranek said such disdain for Sunday magazines was widespread throughout the newspaper industry. “It was always seen as a second-class citizen. Sunday supplement! Those words defined the lowered expectations,” he said, noting that the Sunday Magazine Editors Association was created in 1987 as a professional support group of

sorts, allowing Sunday magazine editors to gain editorial inspiration and encouragement from like-minded journalists. “The rest of the people in the newspaper rarely took you seriously, and even when you deserved to be taken seriously they never gave you the credit.” SunMag, as the group was known, ceased operations in the early 2000s due to declining membership as newspapers stopped publishing their own weekly magazines. The group, supported financially by the Standard Gravure Corp. in Louisville, Ky., which printed many newspapers’ Sunday magazines, was unaffiliated with the American Association of Sunday and Feature Editors, which was founded in 1947 and is now known as the Society for Features Journalism. (The influence of SunMag on the professional identity of Sunday magazine editors was discussed in detail in Chapter 2.)

Syndicated humor columnist David Barry, who got his start in the newspaper industry in 1983 with *Tropic* and whose work appeared in the *Post* magazine from 1989 to 2005, has said that most newspaper journalists hold Sunday magazines in low regard because they are jealous. Daily section journalists hate their newspapers’ Sunday magazines because the publications remind them each week just how dry their own work is, Barry said (McQuilken, 1992). Of course, not everyone shares that belief. Critics of Sunday magazine have called the publications editorial embarrassments to the newspapers that publish them. More often than not, Sunday magazines served as repositories for local and light fare, and they were staffed with mediocre journalists who no other section editor wanted (Shields, 1986). In addition, newspapers “haven’t done enough to make the Sunday magazine a provocative, point-of-view section that stands out from the rest of the newspaper,” said James Bellows, a former editor of the *New York*

Herald Tribune, among other publications. “They’re bland and boring” (Machalaba, 1982, 29).

Another challenge in magazine editors’ pursuit of acceptance by their newsroom colleagues was their inability to produce the type of editorial content that won internal plaudits. *Post* magazine editors defined the paper’s newsroom culture as internally competitive for big stories that might earn a spot on A1. They said such stories won the attention and excitement of top *Post* editors—be it Executive Editor Ben Bradlee, his successor, Leonard Downie Jr., or any number of managing editors—and that all section editors vied to get their staff’s work on the front page. The *Post* also placed great value on the breaking of news, particularly in the areas of politics and policy, given their geographic position in Washington, D.C. However, because the magazine was published only once a week, and because stories had to be written and produced in advance—the entire process could take three weeks to around six months, depending on the story—due to production limitations tied to the fact that an outside vendor printed the magazine, the magazine very rarely competed on either level. For most of its existence, the magazine has printed just two feature stories per issue, with the remainder of the publication filled with recurring lifestyle-oriented sections, columns, puzzles and stand-alone photographs.

Post magazine editors also spoke about their need to be aware and sensitive toward other section editors’ “turf”—meaning the story topics those sections typically featured—while at the same time not taking the magazine too far afield from the *Post*’s journalistic identity of covering national and political stories. It was a huge challenge given that the magazine has always been a general-interest publication. The dual challenges would sometimes overlap when a magazine editor wanted to assign out a

political feature story. Given that political coverage was the *Post*'s "bread and butter" (Thompson, 2010), it would have been professional suicide to assign a politics feature to an outside freelance writer. As *Post* magazine editor Bob Thompson explained it, the paper's political reporters would feel slighted and journalists throughout the newsroom would almost certainly bash the quality of the freelance story. Debra Leithauser (2010), who served as editor of the magazine from 2008 to 2010—she was interviewed for this study while she held the position—said competition between *Post* journalists intensified throughout much of the 2000s due to the emergence of digital media technologies. As print circulation began to decline precipitously in the early 2000s, editors felt greater pressure to make their sections stand out from other parts of the Sunday paper in an effort to win the increasingly limited attention of readers and to stave off potential budgetary cutbacks. "There was a time when Style would not even tell Metro what they were doing, or tell the magazine," said Leithauser (2010), who previously served as editor of the *Post*'s short-lived entertainment, fashion and pop culture section Sunday Source. Leithauser also previously worked as an editor of a youth section for the Orlando Sentinel, was a deputy editor for the paper's Sunday magazine, and later went to work for the Knight Ridder/Tribune New Service, a syndication company based out of Washington, D.C. Internal competition was hardly unique to the *Post*. In the 1970s, the Knight Ridder newspaper company, then the largest newspaper chain in the country by circulation, had a saying that "on the back of every reporter are a few footprints; the ones with the fewest footprints become the editors" (Pollack, 1978, 28). A perceived competitiveness was among the traits editors looked for when making hires.

But even prior to the *Post*'s circulation declines, newsroom turf battles routinely erupted. For example, a potential magazine story about a crime spree in the District might rankle the editor of the Metro section, interview subjects said. A story about a national political figure could upset the newspaper editor who oversaw politics coverage. And a story about area culture or a major personality might stir the ire of those in the Style section, which was conceived of in the early 1960s as a daily magazine of sorts that chronicled the private lives of public figures and offered a variety of lifestyle-oriented coverage. In many ways, the weekly magazine and the daily Style section had overlapping editorial missions for most of the past 50 years, and those missions were further diluted with the addition of new weekly sections geared toward home life, food, lifestyle and the arts.

This wasn't the case in the early years of *Potomac*, the name of the *Post*'s original Sunday magazine whose founding editorial mission in 1961 was "local" and "light," according to editors and in-paper promotions (Washington Post, 1961; Herron, 2009). The magazine was created as a rotogravure publication that published mostly photographs; newspaper advertisements during the time proudly claimed that 75% of *Potomac* content was illustrations, the term used in the early '60s for photography (Washington Post, 1961, A11). Articles tended to focus on the social happening of local organizations, like the Boy Scouts or a horseback riding club, as well as area events such as fishing derbies and parades. Paul Herron, the founding editor of *Potomac*, said the magazine was created to bolster Sunday circulation through local, feel-good, "cheesecake" coverage and to increase advertising revenues. At the time, and for many years thereafter, the magazine was the only section—with the exception of the weekly

TV Week rotogravure publication—that could publish in four-color. The *Post* newspaper was actually among the last U.S. metropolitan dailies to use color printing on its section fronts; it began in 1999. According to then executive editor Len Downie Jr., there was significant concern among *Post* journalists and even some readers that adding color to the newspaper would lead to less serious and less substantive journalism (O’Brien, 1997; New York Times, 1999). Studies have shown that journalists, starting in the early 1980s, believed that readers would perceive newspapers that used spot color and contemporary page design as less professional and less accurate. However, these studies proved these fears to be unwarranted (Pasternack and Utt, 1986; Smith, 1991). Nonetheless, such a concern speaks to a certain mentality that existed within and around the *Post*: stylistic changes aimed at bolstering the economic fortunes of the newspaper were viewed as a potential threat to the paper’s identity as a serious journalistic institution.

In many ways, the magazine began to adopt that seriousness beginning in the late 1960s and early ’70s. The magazine began to adopt the editorial identity of the newspaper as a whole, which, under Bradlee, sought to compete for stories, prestige and power with *The New York Times* and other nationally recognized newspapers, such as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*. Magazine feature stories became more serious and focused on issues and personalities that existed outside of the Washington, D.C. beltway, so long as they had some local connection to the region. Editors explained this was of their own doing, not by order of anyone at the newspaper; over the years, the Sunday magazine editor most often reported to one of the newspaper’s managing editors. The magazine’s evolving editorial content reflected their own interests, editors said, as

well as a desire to produce content that reflected their perceptions of the great and mighty *Post*.

Beginning in the early 1970s, the magazine also became a vehicle for long-form narrative storytelling; articles often explored what former *Post* magazine editor Shelby Coffey (2010) called the “human condition.” Coffey, who graduated from the University of Virginia with a degree in English literature and was named editor of the magazine in 1972, at the age of 25, said such stories sought to examine the motives and inspirations for how people chose to live their lives. In developing stories for the magazine, he said he often thought about Plutarch, an early Greek essayist who was more interested in his subjects’ personality and character than he was of their roles in history. “Bradlee was also a classics guy, as he used to remind us,” Coffey added (2010), noting the “old axiom in newsrooms that a reporter writes for three friends and an editor.” Although Coffey believed in the editorial value of deeply reported profiles, stories that examined the personal lives, emotions and motivations of people who have accomplished great things in life—it’s worth noting this was largely also the editorial mission of the new daily Style section, created in 1969, causing a blurring of the distinction between the two sections—he was also a young editor at the time who very much wanted to please the newspaper’s top editor.

By the late 1980s and into the ’90s, internal competition intensified as the daily newspaper followed the path of others in the industry that sought to compete with cable television by producing more lifestyle-oriented content and feature writing styles, even in the main news section, according to former *Post* magazine editor Steve Coll (2010), who later became managing editor of the entire newspaper. The growing similarities between

the magazine and other parts of the newspaper only intensified internal competition, editors said. To make the magazine more distinctive, editors fully embraced literary journalism—narrative nonfiction stories that had a beginning, middle and end, and that sometimes included the author as a central character—as well as stories that chronicled a subject’s effort to overcome a major life obstacle.

However, according to Leithauser (2010), internal competition began to wane in the late 2000s—because of business factors more than anything else. She cited the naming of a new publisher (Katharine Weymouth) and the hiring of a new executive editor (Marcus Brauchli), both in 2008, as a main reason. Both people routinely trumpeted the values of departmental collaboration; the combining of the *Post*’s online and print operations, in 2009; and a much smaller newsroom staff due to multiple rounds of voluntary buyouts that were largely aimed at containing operating costs. Weymouth, in particular, has been a vocal advocate for greater collaboration between the editorial and advertising departments. However, she received a great amount of criticism in 2009 from the *Post* newsroom as well as external media circles for developing what she called advertiser-sponsored “dinner salons.” The salons were to feature high-profile guests from politics, business or entertainment, as well as *Post* journalists, and people would pay between \$25,000 and \$250,000 to have “off-the-record” conversations with them. Critics assailed the plan, saying the *Post* was attempting to charge lobbyists and business leaders for access to the paper’s editorial staff. In addition, it would be a conflict of interest for the newspaper to pay the various high-profile guests to attend, since the newspaper routinely covers those people and their work (Allen and Calderone, 2009). Weymouth killed the project before it ever launched, and has been apologizing for the idea ever

since. However, the episode does speak to Weymouth's willingness to challenge some of the *Post*'s organizational values in managing the newspaper's finances.

Brauchli was entirely new to the *Post*, having come from *The Wall Street Journal*. Brauchli quickly hired Raju Narisetti, a former colleague at the *Journal*, as a managing editor and charged him with merging the *Post*'s print and digital operations newsrooms. Media accounts of Brauchli's hire suggested that Weymouth purposely hired someone from outside of the *Post*—Downie was a longtime reporter and editor at the newspaper when he succeeded Bradley—because she believed the newspaper required a fresh perspective. Like most metropolitan dailies, the *Post* was suffering large advertising revenue shortfalls and circulation declines, which prompted budget cuts and newsroom staff reductions (Perez-Pena, 2008). However, in late 2012, Brauchli left the job for unspecified reasons and was replaced by *Boston Globe* executive editor Marty Baron (Farhi, 2012). Conjecture regarding Baron's future at the *Post*, and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for him, will be provided in the next chapter.

With fewer newsroom resources in general, Leithauser explained, section editors were forced to collaborate more often with colleagues in other sections or editorial departments to achieve their journalistic goals.

Hiring from Within

Within the framework of internal newsroom culture and competition, it is noteworthy that almost all *Post* magazine editors were hired from within the newspaper. Of the 15 top magazine editors who have held the position over the past 50 years, only three—Walter Pincus, Robert Wool and Jay Lovinger—came directly from other

publications, and only Lovinger came from a magazine, *People*. All other Sunday magazine editors were already employees at the *Post* newspaper, as an editor or reporter in the Style section, the Metro section, a weekly lifestyle section, the foreign desk or as an assistant editor of the magazine. Petranek became the top editor of the magazine without ever previously working in a different editorial department at the *Post*, but he spent two years as a deputy editor of the magazine under Laura Longley before winning the promotion after she went on maternity leave and then left the paper altogether to become communications director of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. Petranek was later demoted when the *Post* hired Lovinger to lead the revamped magazine. Because the *Post* was spending tens of millions of dollars on a redesign and relaunch that attempted to bolster the editorial prestige and aesthetics of the magazine—in large part to win the business of high-end national advertisers—the company wanted an editor with national consumer magazine experience.

To better understand how the newsroom culture of the *Post* informed and influenced the Sunday magazine, it's useful to examine the tenures of the three outsiders.

In 1966, then-managing editor Ben Bradlee was just one year into his job and sought to move the paper into a more journalistically serious and distinctive direction. One of his first efforts was to change the editorial direction of *Potomac* by bringing in someone with a hard-news background. Pincus was a political reporter for *The Washington Star* and a longtime friend of Bradlee's. The morning *Post* and afternoon *Star* were ferocious competitors, but they had an informal agreement not to poach each other's news reporters. As an end-around to that agreement, Bradlee hired Pincus to join the *Post* as an editor, rather than a reporter, to lead *Potomac*. Herron, a former *Post* real

estate editor who helped launch and run *Potomac* over the previous four-plus years, was immediately removed his job and made an assistant financial editor for the daily paper.

But although Pincus came to the *Post* with some previous magazine experience, his tenure as head of the Sunday magazine was short lived in large part because he repeatedly butted heads with other section editors—most notably Metro editor Ben Gilbert—over competition for potential stories. Pincus came to the job not knowing many *Post* editors or reporters, and said for this research that he was unconcerned about potential turf battles when it came to stories. It simply wasn't something he thought about, Pincus said (2010).

Under Herron, *Potomac* was a feel-good Sunday magazine. The rotogravure publication was “local and low key. No controversy. Keep the thing short. Use the color,” said Herron, recalling his marching orders from *Post* executive editor James Russell Wiggins. But although Pincus had no problem running ample lifestyle content—he added restaurant reviews, written by the *Post*'s Nick Van Hoffman, and a section on local fashion—he also refused to shy away from stories he deemed “journalistically substantive.” Under Pincus, *Potomac* published a story about a local teen's experience having an abortion, and local Vietnam veterans who were injured in the war. Pincus ran profiles of largely anonymous local government officials who held substantial power behind the scenes, and a feature about the popularity of Junior ROTC programs among local African-American high school students (at a time when race riots were a major issue throughout the country, including in the nation's capital). Pincus said Bradlee largely left him alone to put out the magazine each week—both men were fond of Clay Felker's *New York* magazine, a consumer title that routinely published hard-hitting news

features wrapped within ample pages of style and society news—but editors of other *Post* sections often bristled over the fact that Pincus was covering stories that previously only ran in their sections, he said.

In less than two years, fed up with the internal politics and competition for stories, particularly among editors in Metro and Style, Pincus told Bradlee to move him into a reporting position in the main paper. According to Pincus, the final straw came while he was pursuing a big feature story on Walter Washington, a lawyer and local official who many thought could become D.C.'s first black mayor. Pincus had learned that Washington, unbeknownst to many, was working as an attorney in New York City in addition to his paid local governmental responsibilities in the District. Gilbert, the Metro editor, found out about the potential story and went on a mini-rampage because he was a fan of Washington's and also because he felt the story belonged in Metro, Pincus said. At Bradlee's request, Pincus reluctantly agreed to let Metro pursue the story.

In the years immediately following Pincus's tenure with the magazine, *Potomac*—first under Joe Anderson and then Stephen Isaacs—moved back toward “softer” feature stories, including ample sports pieces. In 1969, the magazine even published its own football trading cards featuring Washington Redskins players. Anderson and Isaacs had worked as reporters and section editors prior to their move to the magazine, and in both cases it appears as if they were merely filling in until a more permanent solution could be found. After short stints as editor, both men returned to work in hard news sections.

In 1971, Bradlee hired a freelance magazine writer to wholly revamp *Potomac* and turn it into something that could compete journalistically with the likes of *The New*

York Times Magazine, Esquire and The Atlantic Weekly. A New York City writer who freelanced for such top magazines, Robert Wool was hired by Bradlee to create a new publication for the *Post* with a national editorial identity.

Wool: *Ben said he liked that I had a magazine background rather than a newspaper background. There's a difference....A magazine is much more about the writing, whereas newspapers are focused largely on simply conveying the facts of an event. It's entirely different. It's like comparing apples and pears* (2012).

The thinking, Wool explained, was that the sheer excellence of the magazine's journalism would earn the *Post* the advertising business of national companies and also add to the overall prestige of the newspaper. Wool noted that he had no idea if *Potomac* was ever profitable, and he didn't much care. Plans called for the magazine to receive a new name (*The Washington Post Magazine*), higher-grade paper, and additional editorial resources and advertising sales representatives. Wool spent nearly a year conceptualizing, budgeting and talking to various internal constituencies, such as advertising representatives and other *Post* section editors. Wool brought in a consultant who projected that the effort would cost about \$3 million over three years. But the concept was killed before it ever came to life. According to Wool, Publisher Katharine Graham ultimately declined to spend the money necessary for the revamp/relaunch. In 1971, the *Post* was consumed by controversy and its publication of the Pentagon Papers, a classified report first leaked to *The New York Times* and then to the *Post* that chronicled the history of deception by the U.S. government in justifying to the nation its role in the Vietnam War. The Nixon administration filed a court injunction to force the papers not to

publish the report, yet the U.S. Supreme Court ultimately sided with the public's right to know. However, the legal battles took a heavy financial toll on the *Post*. According to Wool, Graham wasn't in the mood to risk millions of dollars on a new magazine.

Although Wool made some editorial changes to *Potomac* in the year that he led the publication, including running the occasional book excerpt—something he said was a first for the Sunday magazine, although it actually devoted an entire issue in 1968 to a chapter from the book *Ten Blocks From the White House*, which chronicled the race riots in D.C. that year—he said he didn't want to be editor of a magazine that lacked top-notch editorial resources. With the promise of a new and potentially prestigious magazine gone, Wool opted to leave the *Post* and return to New York City, where he became political editor for *The New York Times Magazine*.

Lovinger was the last *Post* Sunday magazine editor hired to the position from outside of the company. In 1985, under Bradlee and Publisher Donald Graham, he was tasked with overseeing the multimillion redesign and relaunch of the publication, whose title was changed to *The Washington Post Magazine* in 1977. Formerly an editor at *People* magazine, which premiered in 1974 with a focus on “people, not issues” (Time, 1974) and quickly became an editorial template for countless other consumer magazines, Lovinger (2010) said the *Post* hired him to bring a “magazine sensibility” to its Sunday title.

Lovinger: *I think they finally concluded after all this time that you couldn't make a successful magazine with newspaper people or people with newspaper consciousness, which is what they'd always tried to do before that. And so they were looking to go outside for somebody who had a magazine consciousness*

A newspaper is about information, whereas a magazine, to me, is really about the same things that a good movie is about: a good story, something that has a dramatic arc to it, good characters. The truths are not able to be summed up in, like, three sentences....They might have information in it, but it's something that creates a life, a world, like a good novel or a good movie."

But Lovinger's time at the *Post* came to a somewhat abrupt end. His challenges began as early as the first issue, on Sept. 7, 1986, which prompted months of protests over perceptions of racial insensitivity in *Post* news coverage. As discussed in great detail in Chapter 5, which examined the history of *The Washington Post* and its Sunday magazine, the inaugural issue of the new magazine featured a cover story about a black New York City rapper accused of murder. In addition, a columnist for the magazine wrote a piece that largely defended the rights of D.C.-area store owners to discourage young black men from visiting their stores because young black men were disproportionately responsible for crime. Taken together, the two pieces—*Post* columnist William Raspberry called it “a disconcerting combination of bad luck, bad judgment and racial insensitivity” (1986, A15)—set off a firestorm of reader anger over the negative depiction of African-Americans in the pages of the city's top daily newspaper. It brought embarrassment to journalists throughout the *Post* newsroom and unwanted negative attention to the many businesses that had advertised in the paper's new Sunday magazine, often for the first time. The protests ended after three long months, but the damage to the magazine's advertising potential was long-lasting, said *Post* magazine editors and publishers. One of the primary purposes behind the multi-million dollar redesign and relaunch was to win the advertising business of high-end, luxury brands that hadn't

previously done business with the newspaper. And yet, the magazine immediately became a tainted brand that many businesses didn't want to be associated with.

Lovinger's greatest failing as editor of the magazine, however, was that he lacked diplomatic skill, said subsequent Sunday magazine editors who worked at the *Post* during his tenure, as well as at least one magazine staff writer who worked for Lovinger (Nelson, 1993). He failed to build meaningful relationships with other section editors and even among his own staff. Carving out an editorial niche unique from the Style section was particularly difficult, he and others said, given that the magazine and Style largely had overlapping missions. The only real differences were the magazine's ability to print color photography and its willingness to publish much longer features. Moreover, Lovinger was considered something of a journalistic provocateur, meaning he sought stories that would shock readers—and sometimes his newsroom colleagues—to keep them wondering what the magazine might publish next. There seemed to be no definable editorial identity to the publication, which ran a 13,000-word narrative about a reporter's search for Marlon Brando (Sager, 1987) one week, to a serial fiction story (yet unidentified as fiction) about the return of the Washington Senators baseball team the next (Kornheiser, 1987). The *Post* newspaper had to write a story after the fact that explained the Senators feature was satirical (Howe, 1987). In fairness to Lovinger, the feature was clearly a gag. A starting outfielder was named "John Doe," the shortstop was a former singer in the band Menudo, and a tagline appeared at the end of the 10-page feature that noted that news of the Senators would not be reported in the *Post's* sports section because "the team is likely to be inept, and subscribers do not need to be reminded of yet another failing Washington administration, not to mention the trauma

such coverage could cause the players themselves” (Kornheiser, 1987, 30). Lovinger continued running the series about the Senators’ faux season.

Lovinger said the element of surprise *was* the editorial identity of his magazine. Unfortunately, he explained, the *Post* newsroom was filled with people who only valued political or serious national news. Many at the *Post* appreciated good storytelling, but only through the traditional journalistic values of objectivity, fairness and social responsibility, he said.

Lovinger: *[The magazine] was basically an outsider publication. Part of the problem is it just didn't really fit....By the process of natural selection, you're going to hire people that fit into what the culture is predominantly about and what you're trying to consciously achieve. [As the magazine editor], you're always kind of running uphill and they're always trying to get you to conform.*

As Ben (Bradlee) once said to me, if you want to fight the institution it's going to keep leaning on you and leaning on you and leaning on you, and eventually it's going to crush you into dust....The Post had a self identity that everybody [there] bought into. It was understood that you were the kings of the world and you were driving this very great publication, which also at the same time happened to make a lot of money.

Following the “Lovinger experiment,” as *Post* magazine editor Glenn Frankel called it (2010), the company has only hired internal candidates for the magazine editor position. It’s not clear whether this became a conscious decision following Lovinger’s departure in 1988, or whether the *Post* simply opted to look inward to its talented newsroom staff. Either way, every Sunday magazine editor who came after Lovinger

spoke of the value and necessity of building relationships throughout the newsroom, often to maximize editorial resources—such as borrowing a reporter from a daily section to write a magazine story—but also to win internal support given that newspapers throughout the country were shuttering their own locally produced Sunday magazines due to financial reasons. If the *Post* magazine couldn't turn a profit, as it rarely has over the past 25 years, it needed to be viewed as journalistically relevant by many of the high-profile daily section reporters and editors throughout the newsroom, the magazine editors claimed.

A number of magazine editors said they were successful in building such support, largely through the improved quality of journalism the magazine published. Magazine articles were increasingly winning regional and national journalism awards, and many of the newspaper's high-profile reporters from the national desk and foreign bureaus were writing lengthy narratives. In addition, internal support for the magazine occurred when magazine editors were promoted to higher-profile jobs in the newsroom. Coffey, who was editor of the magazine in the early 1970s, went on to a succession of bigger positions, including editor of *Style*, features and national. Longley and Petranek both acknowledged Coffey's support for their work and his willingness to coax other section editors to share reporting resources with the magazine. Frankel and Tom Shroder similarly enjoyed significant support from Coll, a former *Post* magazine editor who left that position to become managing editor of the entire newspaper.

Coll (2010) said he worked to build support for the magazine during his tenure as its editor by making assignments something of a prized opportunity for daily section writers. Coll could hold out the assignment as an escape from the day-to-day grind of

news reporting, for reporters to take months to produce a deeply reported, beautifully written 10,000- to 15,000-word narrative that would be painstakingly edited and finely packaged in a unique section. He said he sought to create a publication that his newspaper colleagues would be proud of. To Coll, the magazine should be a showcase of the many great journalists employed by *The Washington Post*. It should be a product *of* the newsroom, not distinct *from* it. To that end, Bob Woodward was tapped to write the cover story for Coll's first issue, on Sept. 24, 1995, a 10,000-word feature about why Colin Powell was a reluctant contender for the U.S. presidency (Woodward, 1995).

Coll: *I, as a creature of the big machine (the Post newsroom) and a believer of the big machine, wanted the magazine to proudly express the best of The Washington Post in magazine form.*

Thompson, who immediately preceded Coll as editor of the magazine, Frankel and Shroder similarly said that they worked to make the Sunday magazine more reflective of *The Washington Post* newspaper and the type of journalism that they believed it represented: deeply reported and well-written stories of social, cultural and political value. All four men talked about the importance of having good relationships with section editors and reporters throughout the newsroom to mitigate internal competition over stories, to borrow staff writers for magazine assignments, and to build support for a section that wasn't always viewed favorably among rank-and-file writers and editors. According to Thompson (2010), who was hired as an assistant editor for the Post's Style section in 1985 after previously serving as editor of the *San Jose Mercury News'* Sunday magazine, such efforts were largely a reaction to Lovinger's time as editor because he rarely used writers from the daily newspaper, even though many were topical

experts on a subject the magazine was covering, and he often assigned stories that were more entertaining than informative.

Thompson: *Editorially, Jay set it up as something that would be better and different [than the newspaper], and he pissed off a lot of people by doing that. The Washington Post is The Washington Post; it's a serious organization and there's a lot of talented people there.*

An analysis of interviews with *Post* magazine editors showed that editorial decision-making was often rooted in a desire to win the general approval of newsroom colleagues. Although most spoke about the need for the magazine to offer something distinct from the Sunday newspaper, with long-form narrative journalism often serving as that something, many also spoke of their desire to impress reporters and editors who worked in other sections of the paper. This finding is consistent with the extensive literature on professionalism in the newspaper industry, as detailed in Chapter 3, whereby journalists often produce content to win the approval and respect of colleagues, as well as to maintain the newsroom's perceived norms and practices. Although all interview subjects said that the Sunday magazine was a unique print product, editorially distinct from the vast majority of the rest of the newspaper, most editors consistently noted a desire to publish stories that reflected the interests and editorial sensibilities of newsroom colleagues, as well as personal interests such as international issues, food safety and district area politics, for example. This desire was generally rooted in wanting the magazine to be viewed positively by various top-level editors, respected reporters, and former colleagues in other sections/editorial departments.

Herron: *We put in the magazine what appealed to us, what appealed to the editor, what appealed to the managing editor, who reviewed it. He liked this kind of story...that's what we'll do now.*

Coffey: *There was no doubt that in the back of your mind, or in the back of my mind, at least, I would think, 'Is this going to be something that Katharine Graham, Ben Bradlee, [managing editor] Howard Simons, peers within the newsroom, people I care about outside, people I hear from will think is a strong piece or that this intrigued [them]?''*

Thompson: *My job was to make a product that people in the paper were proud of. In addition to that, something the readers liked....*

I would say I had two problems when I took over the magazine. One, it was losing a ton of money. And two, the newsroom hated it....I had to change that.

Coll: *On the journalistic side, I wanted to do work that was memorable, that I and my colleagues would recognize as powerful.*

Frankel: *I was prepared, and did several times, [to do] stories that had journalistic impact that I felt had strong journalistic value and social value that wasn't going to get a ton of eyeballs. No question. I was quite willing to do that. I*

had the luxury of doing that...we're talking The Washington Post Magazine and everything that term connotes!

This supports Tuchman's (1978) findings, that news production is often socially constructed by journalists, who operate through work routines and a web of relationships that include human sources, other reporters, editors and even friends and family members. Internal standards and professional practices most often guide journalists in determining news criteria, and success in doing so is measured internally, within the newsroom, rather than externally, among readers (Gieber, 1964; Broder, 1987). As former *New York Times* reporter Robert Darnton wrote, "We knew that no one would jump on our stories as quickly as our colleagues; for reporters make the most voracious readers, and they have to win their status anew each day as they expose themselves before their peers in print" (1975, 176).

Speaking generally about the *Post* magazine through the years, Pincus said it has largely served as a "hobby horse" for whoever was in charge of it. He blamed the culture of the *Post* newsroom, particularly during the '80s, '90s and early 2000s, when section editors had tremendous autonomy over their own content and reporters were routinely allowed to write longer and longer stories. Journalistic purpose was seemingly measured internally by column inches, Pincus said (2010). And with little direct local competition from other publications, the journalistic purpose of much of the *Post* during this period was increasingly geared toward national and international news coverage. Former Publisher Donald Graham (2010) shared Pincus's assessment.

Graham: *I would argue that The Washington Post newspaper as a whole became successful very suddenly. And as it did, we lost some of our sense that our*

paramount was to write for readers. That was in the water when I joined the place.... Inevitably, at almost every big paper in the country, as competition diminished we started writing more [about] what writers wanted and less what readers wanted. The magazine, to me, almost perfectly exemplified that history.

Evolving Attitudes about Business Values

The second major theme that emerged through an analysis of interviews was editors' general discomfort with even the idea of needing to consider business-side interests when formulating editorial concepts and features for the Sunday magazine. Most editors spoke fondly of the "good old days" of the newspaper industry, when top editors encouraged reporters and section editors to ignore internal *and* external commercial interests so as to protect the paper's editorial integrity. In fact, journalists have been trained for the better part of a century to largely ignore the business side of publishing. Generating revenue, they've been told in college classrooms and professional newsrooms, is the job of advertising sales representatives. To assign a story based on an advertiser's request for that story would violate professional journalistic standards of practice, *Post* magazine editors explained. But even if an advertiser doesn't explicitly request a particular story, there is a danger in the mere possibility that some readers might believe certain editorial content exists to win advertising, editors explained. In such cases, the newspaper would lose its credibility as an independent news provider and truth teller, multiple editors said.

Of those who oversaw the magazine over the past 50 years, recent editors were more likely to say they viewed the Sunday magazine as a commercial venture and liked

that their jobs required them to work closely with *Post* advertising representatives and other business-side executives. Frankel (2010), in particular, noted that he took the magazine editor position because he wanted to learn more about the business of publishing, although he was quick to say that meetings with the magazine's publisher and advertising sales reps were often uncomfortable because both sides saw their interests as more important than the other's. Leslie Steiner (2010), who served as publisher of the magazine during Frankel's time there, agreed about a disconnect of purpose between the editorial and business sides. She recalled one instance when a company wanted to pay a lot of money to run a gatefold advertisement on the cover; the ad is attached to the cover and folds inward, into the magazine. But Frankel refused, saying it would ruin the artistic value of the cover he had been planning. Steiner said it was the low point of her time as publisher because the argument brought her to tears. Steiner felt that Frankel had previously agreed to the concept, and she was furious that he was willing to turn down much needed advertising revenue for what she perceived to be artistic reasons. The magazine was distributed through the Sunday newspaper, not on a newsstand where it has to compete against numerous other magazines to win the attention of potential readers.

Starting in the mid-1980s, the *Post*'s top magazine editor typically spent a considerable amount of time communicating and working with advertising and business-side executives at the company. Unlike every other section of the newspaper, the magazine had its own general manager or publisher—who was required to maintain a profit-and-loss statement, and routinely shared results with the magazine's top editor—in large part because the magazine was printed by an outside vendor, on either a rotogravure or offset press, rather than through the *Post*'s newspaper presses. Since the late 1970s, the

magazine has been printed on paper of a higher grade than newsprint, enabling better color reproduction, and bound with a staple. All editors decried the fact that the magazine's finances received extra scrutiny from top *Post* executives, saying the P&L system was deeply flawed. For example, the magazine didn't receive any credit for Sunday circulation gains, while expenses never included the salaries of daily reporters from other sections who contributed feature articles to the magazine.

Coll: It was really just a way to punish the magazine by clarifying how much, on paper, the department was losing. At certain points I started going around to other departments and drawing up mock profit and losses. Do you realize that the sports department loses \$25 million a year? You think the tire ads pay for all that road game travel? (He laughs) Nobody ever paid any attention to me.

Graham acknowledged that the system wasn't perfect—it is still used today—but said the P&L statements did provide a “yardstick” to determine the magazine's overall financial health. “It should have been what told us, if we didn't have such a stubborn publisher at the time...that this wasn't working,” he said of his time as publisher. In a 15-year period, from 1987 to 2001, the *Post* magazine lost more than \$44.3 million, or nearly \$3 million per year (Post internal document, 2005). Why the *Post* maintained its Sunday magazine despite so many years of financial losses will be explained later in this chapter.

When speaking about the magazine's finances, editors routinely focused on its readership value, as opposed to advertising revenue, essentially contending that the publication was a valuable component of the *Post*'s Sunday circulation strategy. This was likely because the magazine didn't often earn much advertising revenue, particularly over

the past 25 to 30 years, and editors preferred to view the publication primarily as a journalistic product, rather than a commercial one. The fundamental purpose of the magazine, many editors explained, was to give readers another reason to buy the Sunday newspaper and to engage readers through quality editorial content.

Various *Post* magazine editors contended that internal readership studies showed the magazine was popular among readers, although the company was never been able to quantify the actual monetary value of that popularity in terms of circulation value, they and business-side executives explained. Nonetheless, the circulation-enhancing rationale was tacitly endorsed at the highest levels of the newspaper, as the magazine was allowed to lose millions of dollars a year. The *Post* was able to do this because it made so much money through other parts of the newspaper, namely local classifieds and local retail advertising. In 2004, the *Post* earned 32.9% of all locally placed advertising in its direct market area (Internal document, 2005).

Like all major metropolitan newspapers, the *Post*'s Sunday circulation greatly exceeded daily circulation and the company has long charged higher advertising rates for that day. Within months of its merger with the *Times-Herald*, in 1954, the combined *Post* newspaper had circulations of 381,417 daily and 393,680 Sunday, ranking it as the ninth-largest morning newspaper in the country. Circulation growth continued through the years, but it increased substantially when the *Washington Star* went out of business in 1981, to about 730,000 daily and 952,000 Sunday. By 1995, circulation had reached 834,641 daily and 1.14 million Sunday. However, the *Post*'s circulation has been in something of a freefall since the advent of the Internet in the late '90s and early 2000s. Between March 2011 and March 2012 alone, the paper lost 15%, or about 133,000

copies, of its highly lucrative Sunday circulation. Sunday circulation in March 2012 was 719,301 (Funding Universe, 1996).

Early editors of the magazine said they knew little about the overall finances of the magazine, and they liked it that way. Later editors, particularly following the '86 relaunch, were at least mindful of their publication's bottom line. This awareness led some editors to take a more proactive role in coming up with advertising revenue-generating strategies for the magazine. However, all editors made a point to explain that they measured any potential revenue ideas against the potential journalistic value to readers. Journalism had to trump advertising revenue, they said, even during years when the magazine was losing millions of dollars.

In one instance, Frankel and Coll, then managing editor of the newspaper, orchestrated moving an education review from the weekly Book World section to the magazine. Editors of Book World, which didn't operate with a profit-and-loss statement like the magazine did because it was printed internally, disliked having to produce the reviews. Calling it a great "pander," Frankel said he wanted to take over the reviews primarily because he knew they were popular with advertisers and would add to his section's bottom line. But he said he also saw the journalistic value in education stories and that the subject was under-covered in other sections of the *Post*. "I felt that education was truly a crossroads subject that our readers really cared about. It involved money, politics, all kinds of issues that I cared about," Frankel said, noting that the first education review he published in the magazine was about 60 pages, nearly twice the size of the normal magazine, and loaded with advertising.

Subsequent editors of the magazine—Shroder, Leithauser and Medford—were similarly mindful of and active in their publication’s financial wellbeing, although it should be noted that Shroder accepted an early-retirement package in 2008 in large part because he felt the *Post* wanted to over-commercialize the magazine. “I knew that they were going to make change, that they were going in a direction [with the magazine] that I didn’t agree with, and I felt that I no longer believed that the future was going to be brighter than the past,” he said. “Originally, they were saying they didn’t want any more ‘downer stories,’ which really meant any more real serious journalism in the magazine....I think that they wanted it to be more sort of a city magazine...and that just bored me.”

Top editors and executives at the *Post* were, in fact, planning to revamp the magazine. In 2007, managing editor Phil Bennett tapped a Style section editor to secretly analyze the locally produced Sunday magazine space and to make recommendations for how the *Post* could best revamp its publication. Although it’s unclear whether the report played a role in any future editorial and business strategy shifts with the magazine—Bennett left the *Post* in early 2009—it did suggest that the magazine focus primarily on women, editorially and through the advertising it carried, because the newspaper overall had been seeing declines in readership among females ages 24-40. It also called for bolstering lifestyle, service and consumer-oriented content. “Most newspapers’ biggest mistake with regard to topics such as fashion, home décor, shopping, beauty, etc., is to present them as if apologizing for focusing on them. Newspapers send this message by not reporting out the issues thoroughly, with writing that wastes time explaining *why* you

might care about such a ‘trivial’ area and by not adding truly useful (yet fun to read), detailed service and product evaluations” (Post internal document, 2007).

To be sure, journalists throughout the country in recent years have been made acutely aware of the financial challenges plaguing the newspaper industry. Like all daily newspapers, the *Post* has lost significant print advertising revenue over the past 10 years due largely to external competition from the Internet, mostly in the areas of recruitment and automotive classified advertising as well as retail advertising. And like many newspapers, the *Post* has sought to change its organizational culture, albeit slowly. In recent years, industry insiders have argued that newspapers can no longer afford to allow their journalists to ignore the business side of publishing; reporters and editors needed to become more flexible in their attitudes about editorial independence (Rainey, 2009; Niles, 2011). One such example of this came from Medford (2011), who has served as the *Post* magazine’s editor since 2011. She said she had wanted to eliminate the publication’s front-of-the-book “Trend Report” department because she felt it provided little editorial value. The section is a one- or two-page photographic showcase of various products grouped around a specific theme, such as going to the beach or gearing up for outdoor adventure. However, Medford said the business side of the magazine operation “vetoed” her editorial desire because “Trend Report” helped create a commercial atmosphere in the magazine that advertisers valued. In another instance, Medford’s editorial team was planning to run a 25th anniversary issue in late 2011; to some at the *Post*, the magazine was born with the relaunch in 1986. Medford and her deputies wanted to use a guest editor, someone famous, to lead the content creation for that issue as a promotional gimmick of sorts. But again, the advertising department successfully pushed

back, saying it would be too difficult to sell advertising connected to an unknown editorial commodity. Instead, the magazine ran an anniversary issue that highlighted some major stories in Washington history from the previous 25 years, as well as some noteworthy stories from *Post* magazines past. Medford said she pushed for her editorial vision in both instances, but ultimately conceded each point because the new internal culture at the *Post* is more supportive of business-side concerns than editorial ones when it comes to feature sections and non-sensitive topics.

Medford: *The whole newsroom is very cost conscious now. When [Publisher] Katharine Weymouth has a senior editors meeting or an extended staff meeting, she has basically said you have to be. Historically, newsrooms have never paid the least bit of attention to the business side and that was a value, actually. Katharine has said you need to be business savvy, you need to pay attention to the business because it's a battle of survival.*

The line that actually separates editorial content from advertising in the *Post's* Sunday magazine has long been thin, if not opaque. Herron, the founding editor, said he chose to keep his distance from the business side of the newspaper because he worried that readers might perceive a blurring of the editorial-advertising line; he greatly valued editorial independence and the maintenance of professional journalistic standards. And yet, Herron would assign stories about how to host a successful dinner party, for example, knowing full well that area stores were advertising flatware, linen and furniture in the magazine. He justified this by explaining that readers aren't as doctrinal as journalists are in the need for separation between editorial content and advertising, seemingly contradicting his own rationale for maintaining such boundaries.

Herron: *I don't think [the typical reader] is that observant....It would not occur to a normal reader if we ran a story about how to set your table for a dinner and there's an ad for linens or something....He sees that it is there, but he does not believe that there is a connection. He doesn't say, "Oh boy, these guys run a little ad and they give him a little story." He's not as suspicious, he's not as investigative as you would be or as I would be.*

Other editors explained that the magazine's general manager, publisher or advertising sales rep routinely requested stories about certain general topics—golf or NASCAR, for example—because they believed that they could sell topic-specific advertisements around the story. However, these editors said they typically rejected such requests for one of two reasons: such stories lacked journalistic basis, or the advertising representatives had a history of not following through on their end of the deal. In one instance, Frankel said the magazine's general manager suggested a cover story about NASCAR. Frankel thought the sport's growing popularity made it journalistically worthwhile, particularly since the magazine had never written about it. The editorial team came up with a specific story, assigned the article, and set it to run on a specific date. However, the advertising staff failed to sell a single new ad. In telling this story, and with the assistance of hindsight, Frankel acknowledged that the article was probably a poor fit for a *Post* readership that was largely urban, professional and—among those in the suburbs—affluent. In addition, readership surveys showed that the magazine had a heavy female readership. It was an example of a national story that wasn't the right fit for a local audience, including advertisers.

Medford, the current editor, told a similar anecdote about a 2011 request by a *Post* advertising representative for a golf story because the U.S. Open was being held at the Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md., in June of that year. Medford found and assigned a golf story that she deemed journalistically worthwhile, but the *Post*'s advertising department didn't sell a single new ad in that issue. Shroder said newspaper ad reps made it difficult for editors to work with them because reps routinely overpromised and under-delivered. This was his experience as editor of the *Miami Herald*'s Sunday magazine, *Tropic*, and the *Post* magazine. Shroder said *Tropic* was "extremely popular" with readers, but the *Herald*'s advertising department often struggled to sell space in it.

Shroder: *Advertisers wanted eyeballs. The magazine was attracting plenty of eyeballs, and so we were always sort of wondering, "What's wrong with this picture?" And also it made me skeptical. "Well, if you did fashion content, we'd sell fashion ads," they would say. We DID try to do fashion, but they never delivered. There was a long history of them not being able to deliver, and so it just sort of made you not want to go out of your way to do anything [editorially for commercial reasons] because it wasn't going to sell anyway.*

Special Sections

Throughout the history of the *Post*'s Sunday magazine, the greatest tension between editors and their business-side counterparts revolved around the creation and production of special themed editions of the magazine. Starting with *Potomac* in '61, special editions were used to build excitement among specific categories of local

businesses that sought to better target potential customers. Even though newspapers have long touted their ability to help local businesses target readers on a geographic basis, they have created a variety of topic-specific sections over the years in part to appeal to specific demographic groups that advertisers want to reach. For the *Post* magazine, such special issues have included Bridal, Dining, Education, Fashion, Home and Design, and Travel.

All editors interviewed for this study acknowledged that the primary purpose of these sections were to bolster advertising sales, and that the sections actually generated the lion's share of the magazine's annual ad revenues. But the editors also deeply disliked most special sections because they felt they were being forced to produce content they wouldn't otherwise have produced. All editors said they had total discretion over story selection, although some editors noted that business-side colleagues and/or top *Post* editors have explained that special section feature stories shouldn't detract from the positive commercial marketplace that the sections aimed to create. Longley learned this lesson early in her time as editor of the magazine, after she ran a cover story about Nicaraguan rebels in an issue that also contained a special section devoted to area art and culture; the section was bound within a typical issue of the magazine. Advertisers who bought into the section were furious, calling sales reps, top editors and even Publisher Donald Graham to complain that the story created a negative environment in an issue that was promoted to them as something of a celebration of the arts, she said (2012). Longley said she quickly learned that special sections should contain mostly positive editorial content, and cover art needed to reflect that content. A negative restaurant review in a dining guide special section was OK, she noted, because reviews are opinions and editorial opinions cannot be purchased. However, an editor probably should not run a

feature story about health violations at area restaurants in a guide that aims to win the advertising business of local eateries, she explained. Such a story has a place in Metro or other sections, maybe even the magazine during a typical week, Longley explained, but not in a special section that exists primarily to win food-related advertising. To avoid such problems in the future, thematic special sections were no longer bound within the general-interest magazine. Instead, they became the entire issue of the magazine for that week.

By now, more than 20 issues per year of the *Post*'s magazine have been special sections, with topics ranging from Home & Design, to Travel, to Health, to Dining. An analysis of interviews with *Post* magazine editors shows a clear and gradual shift in attitudes about the role and value of special sections, with recent editors viewing them more favorably. According to the editors, the total number of special sections has increased through the years:

Herron: *There was only one person in the Post advertising department who dealt with us and the ads in the magazine....and we wouldn't have listened to him if he had [asked for more special sections]. If he'd had said [they] want more automotive issues, we'd say, "Go to hell. We don't want to do more automotive issues, or furniture issues or..."*

Coffey: *Newspapers are business, but journalism isn't.*

Petranek: *The guys in the business side of the Sunday newspaper magazine always want a thing to sell; they want 52 special issues to sell a year. What you*

do is you give them eight. You give them two dining guides a year, four fashion and two something else's. But to me, they were aberrations from what the magazine did.

Interviewer: *Why keep it at eight? What was the rationale for that?*

Petranek: *It was the smallest number I could get. If I could have done it at four, or one, I would have.*

Lovinger: *I guess they sold them when they could. You know, whatever made sense when the advertiser would want them. This was stuff that was still a bit of a leftover from rotogravure magazines, but it was lucrative so....I really had nothing to do with [Post] business people.*

Thompson: *I don't think I really wanted to know what the advertisers wanted out of the magazine....I did not spend a lot of time worrying about what the advertisers wanted. I'm grateful for that.*

If you think you're offering the readers of The Washington Post a certain kind of journalism, the more special issues you have the less of that you can do. Over the years, it is my impression—I only know from the years that I was there—it is my impression that people in the advertising department believed that everything should be a special issue.

Coll: *The way the 6th floor (the advertising department) worked with this magazine was that you could get the sales floor excited about the special issues. Everybody felt like this was going to be a special thing and that their clients were going to be glad that they were in it. And then the momentum would reinforce itself.*

Frankel: *We were designing special issues that would sell. We were killing special issues that we didn't think were sellable. We were creating. We were doing our journalism, which oftentimes, you know, the business side was not terribly enamored with. But we were also doing many kinds of journalism that fit comfortably into their needs.*

Shroder: *As the years went by, the business stresses sort of increased....There was always this sense of security at the Post with this understanding of the wall between the editorial and business side. And on the other hand, I was trying to reject this sort of major rejection of all concerns of the business side that newsrooms had been able to enjoy, this luxury of the past.*

If they (the biz side) felt that there was a potential for advertising sales in a certain thing, we would then attempt to think of something that we felt was legitimate from an editorial perspective that would address that. We turned down all sorts of things that they thought they could sell advertising to because there were no editorial purpose....Also, I didn't want to have too many special issues

because it reduced the number of regular issues that we had, which I felt was really what drove readership.

Leithauser: *After this meeting I had yesterday with the ad reps, all of them sent me a note saying just how pleased they were that they actually were heard....Great story ideas can come from anyone. If I don't understand their push-backs, how can I expect them to understand mine? I think that they were genuinely encouraged that somebody from editorial actually understands that they have opinions on magazines that actually matter....No one will argue that the magazine should lose money.*

In confirmation of Petranek's point, former publisher Donald Graham said his ideal would have been 52 special sections of the *Post's* Sunday magazine because those were typically the only issues that earned a profit. On occasion, he noted, the magazine published an extraordinary piece of journalism during one of its non-special sectioned issues. But more often than not, Graham said, stories were simply long and uninspiring. Interestingly, most magazine editors credited Graham as the reason the *Post* continued to publish its often money-losing publication, saying he valued the same kind of long-form, substantive journalism that most *Post* journalists valued. This point will be expanded upon later in the chapter.

Many of the editors interviewed for this study, particularly those who led the magazine over the past 25 years, spoke highly of *The New York Times's* current model toward the publishing of special sections, whereby the paper publishes most special sections independent of its general-interest weekly magazine. Since 2004, the *Times* has

published various men's and women's fashion and design magazines, titled *T*, that appear separate from the magazine. *T*, which comes out 14 times a year, operates under an entirely distinct editorial team than the general-interest *Times* magazine. Hugo Lindgren, who became editor of the *Times* magazine in October 2010, explained that *T* was created to provide a more pleasant editorial environment for luxury advertisers than the *Times* magazine could provide on a regular basis: "They do some interesting stuff [at *T*], but they're not going to do a story about famine in Africa next to the Chanel ads, so it's an environment that the luxury advertisers feel more comfortable in and it's difficult for us to make the counter to that" (Rosenbaum, 2012).

The *Times* magazine does produce its own share of thematic special editions, including "Innovations" in medicine, technology and science, "Food & Drink," "Education," and "Voyages," among about five others (New York Times, 2012).

Although none of the *Post* editors mentioned these special editions, *The New York Times* and its Sunday magazine were consistent topics of interest among most of the editors interviewed for this study.

A New York State of Mind

The third major theme that emerged through an analysis of interviews was a general aspiration among *Post* magazine editors to compete editorially with *The New York Times Magazine*. Although the *Post*'s circulation strategy and advertising base have long been different from the *Times*', *Post* magazine editors routinely spoke about their desire to create a product that at least matched the editorial excellence of the *Times* magazine.

Interestingly, “ambitious” was a word that a number of *Post* magazine editors used to describe their editorial approach to the Sunday magazine. Following the earliest years of *Potomac*, when it was largely a rotogravure picture magazine, editors worked to produce a weekly publication that told serious stories about social issues and consequence. They pursued stories that shined a light not only on *how* people lived but also on the personal choices and experiences that helped to explain *why* people lived the way they did. In recent years, even some of the *Post* magazine’s more light-hearted sections, such as Date Lab, have been described as editorially meaningful. Date Lab, which was created in 2006 and matches up local single people—followed by a post-first date editorial recap—“took the reporting DNA and the values of *The Washington Post* and put them into this area of life that I think a lot of people would say is frivolous, but it’s really not. It’s really talking about that search for partnership and meaning that pretty much everyone is on,” said former *Post* magazine assistant editor Sandy Fernandez, who led the Date Lab section through its early years (Antoniades, 2011). That said, the *Post* magazine editorial team once turned over its DateLab matchmaking duties to a capuchin monkey named Armani, just to see how he would fare (Fernandez and Chang, 2008). On a less frequent basis, the magazine in recent years has also dedicated an entire issue to the Post Hunt—a citywide scavenger-hunt contest organized and hosted by Dave Barry, Gene Weingarten and Tom Shroder, who brought the idea to the *Post* from their days together at the *Miami Herald*—and an Peeps marshmallow diorama design contest. Both annual editions, since the mid-2000s, involve external events that carry ample sponsorship opportunities for area businesses.

Despite editors' stated goals around editorial ambition, the *Post* Sunday magazine has long been viewed throughout the *Post* newsroom as a mediocre, if not lousy, publication. Editors interviewed for this study, particularly those who oversaw the magazine for its first 30 or so years, consistently spoke about how the *Post* magazine was editorially boring, visually unappealing, and too often failed to match the overall journalistic excellence of the *Post* newspaper. Each editor said he or she was charged with improving the magazine in some substantive way because top *Post* editors and business executives were generally unhappy with the product. In addition, the *Post* repeatedly tried to redesign and revamp its Sunday magazine in large part to better compete with the *Times* magazine on an editorial and advertising basis, editors said.

The New York Times has long maintained a national print circulation strategy, with hundreds of thousands of copies distributed to paid subscribers and newsstands throughout the country. As a result, the *Times* magazine—as well as other sections of the paper—has benefited from a great diversity of advertising, from small New York-area antique stores to large national luxury goods companies such as Chanel (Rosenbaum, 2012). Starting in the early 1990s, the paper expanded efforts to extend its print circulation beyond the New York City area. In 1993, 63% of the *Times*' Sunday circulation was in the New York City market area. By 2003, that number was down to 49%. In 2010, it was just 38% (PoliticalCalculations, 2011).

Although the *Post* has routinely published national news stories, largely because it is headquartered in the nation's capital and covers the workings of the federal government, the company's business strategy has always been rooted in the Washington metro area. Starting with the 1954 purchase of the *Washington Times-Herald*, which

essentially gave the *Post* a daily morning newspaper monopoly in the Washington, D.C. area, the company has dominated its local advertising market. It helps that the *Post*'s market penetration, meaning the percentage of people in the *Post*'s local market area who read the paper on a consistent basis, has long been among the highest in the country among major metropolitan dailies (Sherman, 2010; Edmonds, 2011). But unlike the *Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*, three national newspapers that receive a substantial amount of their advertising revenue through national advertising, the *Post* has received relatively little because its audience is almost entirely local.

The *Post* first tried to make its magazine more competitive with the *Times* magazine in editorial quality and appeal to national advertisers in the early 1970s when Bradlee hired Wool to lead the revamp of *Potomac*. Wool said *Potomac*'s name was to change to become *The Washington Post Magazine*, mimicking the *Times*'s Sunday magazine, and *Post* ad representatives were to target big-name national advertisers. (He noted that the ad reps were incredibly resistant to the idea, often complaining about the challenges of selling space to national advertisers in a largely local publication.) Ultimately, after almost a year of planning, *Post* Publisher Katharine Graham declined to invest in the new product, believing it wasn't worth the financial gamble, Wool said.

It wasn't until five years later, in 1977, that the *Post* changed the name of its Sunday magazine—executives determined that the company would be better served if its Sunday magazine capitalized on the strong brand of the daily newspaper, according to editors interviewed for this study—and sought to publish more national feature stories. In-paper advertisements that announced the new publication also touted its “bold new graphic design and much more color. And the writing will be just as colorful as the

exciting pictures” (Washington Post, 1977, B7). In addition, the magazine went from a simple fold, like every other page in the newspaper, to staple-stitched binding. According to editors and business-side leaders, inspiration for each change came from New York.

Coffey: *We sort of wanted that bigger name, like The New York Times Magazine. The Washington Post Magazine!*

Graham: *Everybody was terminally dissatisfied with Potomac, which was the good roto book, but was obviously pallid compared to.... I've often thought the best thing for the Post would be to ban The New York Times from the building because we aren't The New York Times! We shouldn't be influenced by it.*

The new magazine was thrown into disarray, however, following the sudden and tragic death of magazine editor Marion Clark, who was killed when walking into an airplane propeller on a Michigan runway just weeks before the official relaunch. A longtime *Post* magazine reporter and assistant editor, Clark often wrote about the D.C. social scene and various lifestyle issues. Along with magazine columnist Rudi Maxa, Clark also helped break the story that Rep. Wayne Hays gave his mistress a no-show administrative job on his congressional staff (Maxa and Clark, 1976). Coffey, who worked closely with Clark for many years, said a lot of people at the *Post* were absolutely devastated by the news of her death. But with planning for the relaunch well underway, the *Post* had to quickly find someone to replace her.

Longley was a former reporter and editor at *Playboy* and *The Washingtonian* magazines, respectively, and joined the *Post* in the mid-'70s to lead the paper's new Washington Post Writer's Group. The *Post* sought to capitalize on some of its best-

known political reporters and columnists, including David Broder and George Will, and launched the news service to sell versions of their work to other newspaper companies. Longley was charged with identifying which stories and columns merited syndication and to then work with the writer to re-edit the piece for a more general audience. Longley was also tapped to lead various book projects at the *Post*, again largely utilizing material previously published in the newspaper and repackaging it for a niche national audience. She said she believes those experiences made her a desirable candidate for the magazine editor position—Longley said she didn't apply for the position but, rather, was asked to take the job following Clark's death—because top *Post* editors wanted someone who could reshape the publication to appeal to a niche national audience and national advertisers, ala *The New York Times Magazine*.

Longely: *When it became The Washington Post Magazine, and it was to be much more major stories, written by big names, I think the newsroom said, 'We get the idea. But [the new magazine] still isn't The New York Times Magazine.' There wasn't the leadership from upon high to make it happen [on a weekly basis].*

When people were tapped to write for the magazine by a top editor, we were able to get stuff from people who really knew national and international....But you were also competing against editors of these other sections...it was a tough situation. They didn't want to give up writers, and they didn't want to give up stories that would have gone in their sections to run in another section. It's very territorial.

The new magazine, which premiered on September 11, 1977, was bound for the first time by a staple and was printed through offset to improve reproduction. But

although the redesigned and renamed magazine was to “maintain its local character and flavor,” according to Bradlee (quoted in Jones and Anderson, 1977, F13), it actually took on a much more national editorial tone, featuring articles that delved into social and cultural topics. The premiere issue was devoted to the 1977-78 “Cultural Season,” with articles on music, television, dance, drama and film. Future editions included features on *Hustler* magazine editor Larry Flynt and how he came to be a born again Christian (Maxa, 1978), juvenile prostitution in the Greater Washington, D.C. area (Chaplin, 1978), and how President Jimmy Carter’s sister, Ruth Carter Stapleton, was traveling the world as a Baptist minister (Maxa, 1978b).

Despite its editorial aspirations, the magazine still operated with a small editorial staff—approximately 5 people, including a page designer—and a relatively modest freelance budget, Longley said. In addition, the new magazine never developed a clear editorial identity because it never fully shed its largely local past. Stories ranged from local to regional to national to international on a week-to-week basis, not including the various special editions that were designed to win over area advertisers. It simply wasn’t clear what the magazine sought to be, and the lack of identity made advertising sales difficult, *Post* business leaders said.

To complicate matters, the *Post* refused to discontinue carrying *Parade* magazine, whose advertising base was almost entirely national, because the supplement was incredibly popular with readers. Significant numbers of people throughout the Greater D.C. area purchased the Sunday *Post* only for *Parade* and coupons, Graham said. Although those people likely read very little of the Sunday paper, they counted as much as anyone else who purchased the *Post*. They helped bolster the paper’s paid circulation

total, which helped set annual advertising rates. That said, it's worth noting that *The New York Times* has never carried *Parade* or a comics section because executives believed such sections were editorially misaligned with the paper's journalistic identity as a serious and substantive news publication (Tifft and Jones, 1999).

By the early to mid-1980s, Bradlee and other top *Post* executives sought to again revamp the Sunday magazine, again largely to win the business of big-name, high-end retail advertisers. But while the *Post* aspired to win the same kinds of national advertising that filled *The New York Times Magazine*, the *Post* took most inspiration from the *Los Angeles Times*. In 1985, the *Los Angeles Times* relaunched its weekly Sunday magazine *Home* into a general-interest weekly magazine that centered on personality profiles and celebrity interviews (Los Angeles Times, 1985). Moreover, the *Times* decreased the page size of the magazine to match the size of consumer magazines. That way, prospective advertisers would not need to change any of their print advertising specifications to do business with the *LA Times*' newspaper magazine. Graham said the idea made a lot of sense to him, as the Post Co.'s *Newsweek* operation was a natural feeder system for any *Post* magazine revamp. "*Newsweek* bought so much of that coded paper that we could get quite a deal on it and that we could spend a lot less money on paper. But it was high-quality paper, so it would give us the opportunity to attract the class of advertisers you never had in the [*Post*] book before."

According to editors of the *Post* magazine, however, that wasn't the only reason—if even the primary reason—for the grand redesign and relaunch of the magazine.

Petranek: *[The Post refused to give up on its Sunday magazine] because The New York Times had a Sunday magazine. That's very simple; it's all about ego. The Post considered itself to be a better paper than the Times in the years that I was there.*

The Times had more column inches than we did in that time period, but you could have made a really good case that the Post was the best paper in the U.S. in the time that I was there, the 13 years that I was there. You can't make that case today, there's no if's ands or buts that the Times is better than the Post, which is really sad.

Lovinger: *They realized [in the mid-'80s] they had been doing the rotogravure version for, like, 25 years and they were never really happy about it. And I'm not sure exactly why—whether it was content or this advertising question or the fact that compared to The New York Times [magazine], it was weak.*

Thompson: *You know, they looked at the Times, and the Times is a different animal for different reasons, but nonetheless the Post and the Times were very competitive and the Post people didn't want to be embarrassed by their Sunday magazine. So, they were willing to commit more resources than other papers for that reason because they had higher standards.*

Frankel: *Our competitors, only in our minds, was The New York Times Magazine, to an extent. But there, too, The New York Times magazine has a much*

different ad base, a much larger one being up in New York and having a national audience that we didn't have. And so they were working on a whole different playing field.

But, nonetheless, I wanted to make sure that our journalism was just as good, if not better, than theirs. Any died-in-the-wool Washington Post person from that era always looked at The New York Times as a big, bad guy's Hertz to our Avis almost, you know? And [we] didn't mind kicking their ass when it was possible.

Although *Post* magazine editors seemingly understood the differences between their paper's circulation strategy and the *Times*'s, they largely sought to match the editorial ambition of the *Times* because that's what most *Post* journalists throughout the newsroom tried to do on a daily basis. However, even before the relaunch, there was often a distinct mismatch between editorial content and advertising in the magazine. Longley, for example, described the editorial and advertising mix of the magazine prior to and during her years as editor as "schizophrenic." Woodward & Lothrop and the Hecht's Co., two major area department stores, were prominent advertisers in the magazine through much of the '70s. However, ads that featured bras, party dresses and women's shoes often surrounded and interrupted the page flow of feature stories, which were often about male national political figures.

Interestingly, *Post* magazine editors also cited a different New York-based magazine they often took inspiration from. Coffey, Longley, Coll and Medford all referenced *The New Yorker* as what a good weekly, general-interest magazine could accomplish editorially.

In *The New Yorker's* prospectus, in 1925, founder Harold Ross famously wrote that his new publication would not be edited “for the little old Lady in Dubuque.” Rather, *The New Yorker* was produced for a sophisticated, highly educated readership that spanned the nation, even though it has long contained multiple pages of New York City-based entertainment listings. Only two editors led the magazine over a 61-year period: Ross, from the magazine’s founding in 1925 until his death in 1951, and William Shawn, from 1952 until 1986 (Terry, 2005). In explaining the history of *The New Yorker*, Grimes described the magazine as “a brilliant, unpredictable product of the Jazz Age, irreverent, brisk, gossipy and sharp....Under the quieter and more reflective Mr. Shawn, the magazine, already profitable, grew into a rich and prestigious powerhouse, with a reputation for comprehensive, acute profiles and multi-part reporting articles on important issues” (1992, C20). It was a writer’s magazine, created for a smart and often affluent audience that advertisers paid large amounts of money to reach (Douglas, 1991).

Post magazine editors who said they took editorial inspiration from *The New Yorker* were quick to note that the current editor of *The New Yorker*, David Remnick, was a staff writer for the *Post* magazine during the mid-'80s. Remnick was named editor of *The New Yorker* in 1996. This relationship was seemingly pointed out to draw a connection between the editorial talent both magazines employed. In addition to Remnick, Coll would go on to become a contributing writer for *The New Yorker*, as did former *Post* magazine staff writer Nicholas Lemann, who has served as dean of the Columbia Journalism School since 2003. He announced his retired in 2012.

The problem with *Post* magazine editors taking editorial inspiration from publications such as *The New York Times Magazine* and *The New Yorker* is that the two

New York-based magazines have long been produced for national niche audiences—namely, affluent and educated readers—and that the publications largely contain advertising from luxury-goods businesses. In contrast, the Sunday *Post*'s circulation is almost entirely local, the magazine's advertisers have historically been based in the Greater Washington, D.C. area, and nearly every *Post* magazine editor interviewed identified his or her audience extremely broadly.

For example, some of the editors noted that the *Post* magazine had a slightly higher female readership, but said they didn't necessarily select stories based on that fact. As recent as 2009, the editor of the magazine explained in an online Q&A that the publication's target audience is "any and all readers.... We don't have a specific target audience in mind, per se." Even though the length of feature stories in the *Post* magazine were shortened following the 2009 redesign, Leithauser further described her target audience simply as someone "who likes to read" (Leithauser and Michaud, 2009). These were unusual comments, given that magazines have increasingly targeted specific audiences since the late 1970s. Moreover, research has shown that general-interest magazines, specifically *Look*, *Life* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, went out of business in large part because advertisers moved their money to television, where audiences were far more segmented (Van Zuilen, 1977; Bogart, 2000; Dimmick, 2003). In 2010, the Washington Post Co. sold *Newsweek* because the weekly news magazine was losing tens of millions of dollars a year (Aherns, 2010). In less than two years, new owner InterActiveCorp announced that, although *Newsweek* would continue to be available online, it would cease publication of the print product by the end of 2012 (Carr and Haughney, 2012).

In addition, it's not entirely clear the degree to which readers of the *Post* magazine are even interested in the long-form narrative storytelling that has long defined the publication. For example, Shroder said the magazine lost nearly 15% of its readership following the retirement of humor columnist David Barry in 2005; he added that a lot of people also picked up the magazine only for the crossword puzzle. Weingarten, who wrote his own humor column in the magazine starting in 2000, replaced Barry as the back-of-the-book columnist (Weingarten, 2005), a job he still holds to this day. And although the *Post* has conducted proprietary readership surveys of all sections for at least the last 30 years, it doesn't survey readers about the magazine's features. Surveys mostly ask readers their opinions about recurring sections in the front and back of the magazine, said editors and business-side leaders of the magazine. According to Graham, the average reader of the *Post*'s Sunday newspaper fell within a less desirable demographic than the typical reader of the daily paper from an advertiser appeal standpoint. Sunday readers tended to have lower household income and less education than the average daily reader, he said, noting that Sunday coupons and the editorially lowbrow *Parade* magazine were large draws for many readers. But instead of creating a Sunday magazine for the *Post*'s actual audience, magazine editors often produced 12- to 14-page esoteric narratives that they themselves would enjoy, he said.

Graham: *If you asked the readers, 'What magazine do you like most?' the readers of The Washington Post would've said People or, optimistically, Newsweek. The writers and editors [of the Post magazine] would have said The New Yorker....But The New Yorker is a 1 percent publication. It is read by the demographic cream of the U.S. And they like long, discursive articles and*

beautiful writing. [Starting with the 1986 relaunch, the Post Sunday magazine] has been a colossal mismatch with its audience.

Despite Graham's frustrations with the magazine, editors consistently pointed to him as the primary reason the newspaper continued to publish its own Sunday magazine while so many other papers discontinued their own in the face of similar financial losses. Graham became publisher of the newspaper in 1979, taking leadership of the family business from his mother, Katharine. He believed in the value of good journalism. He had worked as a reporter and editor at the *Post* and the Post Co.-owned *Newsweek* magazine starting in 1971. Editors of the *Post* magazine said Graham was different than most publishers at other newspapers in that he didn't make decisions based on short-term financial interests, even though the Post Co. was and remains publicly owned. (As previously explained, the Post Co.'s operates under a dual-class stock ownership system, with members and close associates of the Graham family controlling ultimate decision-making.) Because the newspaper was earning so much money from the 1970s through the first half of the 2000s, the company could afford to lose millions of dollars on a Sunday magazine that some reporters and editors in the *Post* newsroom appreciated for its journalistic value. Interview subjects said that the magazine has long been the home of great, long-form storytelling, and that Graham's legacy as publisher of the *Post* is that he routinely put journalistic interests ahead of commercial ones. Moreover, he believed that the *Post* was every bit as good as *The New York Times*, and if the *Times* was publishing its own Sunday magazine then the *Post* should, too, editors said.

Coll: *He wanted a paper that was driven by quality journalists, and though he wasn't always sold on the magazine and didn't love every decision that I made or*

that writers made, fundamentally he wanted great journalism in the paper. He knew that the journalists that he cared about valued the opportunity to write in the magazine the way we did, and he didn't want to get in the way of that culture.

For his part, and with the value of hindsight, Graham said he probably should have killed the magazine following Lovinger's departure in 1988. From a business standpoint, the magazine struggled to recover from the three months of street protests that greeted its '86 relaunch. And from an editorial standpoint, the magazine was always poorly aligned with readers and advertisers, he said, even after its various relaunches. But that, too, was part of the *Post's* newsroom culture: section editors were given a tremendous amount of editorial freedom, which included freedom from most internal and external financial interests.

Interestingly, none of the editors said they viewed the monthly city magazine *The Washingtonian* as real competition to the *Post* magazine. *The Washingtonian* has been published since 1965, and its editorial focus is feature journalism, service articles, and news and information about various lifestyle-oriented topics, including dining home improvement, health and wellness, and travel. Collectively, it's not all that dissimilar from the *Post* magazine over the years. Thompson and Leithauser at least acknowledged that *The Washingtonian* was a competitor for D.C. area readers' time, but both were generally dismissive of the city magazine. In Leithauser's case, it was because *The Washingtonian* is a monthly niche publication—it caters to a largely affluent readership—whereas the *Post* magazine publishes on a weekly basis and aspires to appeal to more of a general audience. For Thompson, however, the differences were more personal. "I'm not a big *Washingtonian* fan, so they didn't do a lot of stuff that I wished I

was doing....They had a different idea of what they were doing than we did... From my point of view, [service journalism] doesn't interest me that much; that's something that is done all over the newspaper" (Thompson, 2010).

Only Pincus, who said he took editorial inspiration from Clay Felker's *New York* magazine, believed that the *Post* magazine should have more closely followed the city magazine model. Lamenting Bradlee's constant desire for the *Post* newspaper and its Sunday magazine to compete against *The New York Times*, Pincus said the *Post* magazine would have been well served to remain steadfastly local editorially. "I've argued over the ensuing 40 years...that [the *Post* magazine] should have been a city magazine. It could have been *The Washingtonian*....It could have been big and fat if they had just...ugh" (Pincus, 2010).

In 1978, Costen studied the editorial influence that city magazines had on locally produced Sunday magazines in their market area. In the case of the *Post's* magazine, *Potomac*, she found that local coverage increased from 68% of all coverage in early 1965, the year *The Washingtonian* began publishing, to 74% during the same time period one year later. However, this relatively small increase could just as easily be attributed to *Post* magazine editors' personal editorial interests than it could to concern over greater local competition; Herron was editor of *Potomac* in early 1965, and replaced by Pincus mid-year. Moreover, Costen found without explanation that the percentage of local editorial content in *Potomac* plummeted to 34% in late 1965. Both Herron and Pincus said in interviews that their editorial focus was largely local.

Other print publications existing in the Greater Washington, D.C. area throughout the period of this study, most notably the alternative weekly *Washington City Paper*,

which was founded in 1981 and still exists, and various community weeklies and political-oriented titles, such as *Congressional Quarterly* and *The Hill*. However, *Post* magazine editors generally dismissed all of these alleged or would-be competitors because those publications weren't producing the same type of editorial content that they wanted the magazine to. By and large, only *The New York Times Magazine* was publishing a weekly print publication that mixed long-form features and shorter pieces that were general interest in topic. Editors aspired to produce a magazine that they wanted to read, and that their newsroom colleagues might be proud of. As Thompson pointed out, the fact that the magazine routinely lost money was an issue of secondary importance. "The advertising competition wasn't my problem" (Thompson, 2010).

In general, the self-defined editorial missions of *Post* magazine editors have varied little over the past 50 years. Everyone believed that the magazine should showcase photography; for many years it was among the only sections that could publish in four-color. And nearly everyone believed that the magazine should have a mix of long-form features and short section pieces. Two of the biggest variances were the types of stories to tell—local only versus a mix that included national and international—and who should tell them. Mostly starting with Thompson in the late '80s, the *Post* magazine became a section that aimed to highlight the best storytellers the *Post* newspaper had to offer. For Coll and Frankel, the two editors who immediately followed Thompson in the job, the magazine was not simply another section of the *Post* Sunday newspaper. Rather, the magazine was *of* the newsroom, a section that showcased the great journalism that had long defined *The Washington Post*. Whether or not that journalism was of appeal to those

who read the magazine, or if that journalism was at all relevant to the advertising that financially supported the magazine, was of little concern to most editors.

Graham: *I think going back to '86, I'd have sat down with Ben [Bradlee] and said, "Look, this is part of your newspaper, but it's also a business proposition and I think we ought to hire a publisher together and we ought to hire him with a joint sense of what the magazine should look like. We ought to have a sense of the magazine and we ought to hire someone to edit 'that' magazine. We can't just turn someone loose and let them turn it into the magazine of their choice."*

Conclusion

The conceptualization of these three issues, through the constant comparison method of inquiry that serves as the basis of grounded theory work, led me to a theory rooted in behavioral psychology called social identity theory, or SIT. First developed by the French social psychologist Henri Tajfel in 1972, SIT aims to explain how individuals' perceptions of their social environments, such as groups or organizations, influence how they understand themselves and others. In examining *Washington Post* Sunday magazine editors' attitudes and perceptions about the relationship between editorial decision-making and commercial imperatives of publishing a magazine, I have come to think that self-identity played a central role in how they approached their jobs. However, in the next chapter that discusses my findings, I will extend SIT by incorporating institutional theory to explain how *Washington Post* Sunday magazine editors were influenced both internally and externally. Not only did most *Post* magazine editors work to be part of the perceived "in-group" of the newsroom—namely, national reporters and editors whose

work routinely appeared on the front page of the newspaper—but they were also influenced by an oftentimes irrational desire to mimic the editorial content and style of other magazines they respected, namely *The New York Times Magazine*.

Chapter 8

Discussion: Re-conceptualizing Roles and Identities

My close analyses of the interviews suggest that social identity was a central factor in the editorial decision-making processes of *Washington Post* Sunday magazine editors. Specifically, editors' perceptions of the *Post* organization and of journalists who, they believed, best represented the organization greatly influenced their attitudes about editorial values as well as the role of business values in editorial decision-making. I believe the vast majority of *Post* magazine editors chose to maintain normative values in content creation—specifically, independence from commercial pressures of any kind and journalism as an educational force in the public good—because they wanted to improve how the magazine was perceived, and by association themselves, by respected editors and writers throughout the newsroom. Moreover, because editorial competition with *The New York Times* has long been part of *The Washington Post's* newsroom culture, *Post* magazine editors sought to bolster their organizational legitimacy by pursuing editorial strategies that attempted to emulate the *Times* magazine.

Throughout the 50-year period of this case study, the *Washington Post* has been widely regarded in the news media industry as one of the nation's editorially elite newspapers. Under publishers Phil Graham, his wife, Katharine Graham, and their son Don Graham, the company has dedicated significant financial resources to investigative reporting as well as to local, national and international news coverage (Felsenthal, 1993; Shaw, 2006). As of 2011, *The Washington Post* had won 57 Pulitzer Prize awards, the newspaper industry's highest honor. That's second only to *The New York Times'* 106 Pulitzers through 2011 (New York Times Co., 2012).

As former *Post* ombudsman Bill Green wrote, Pulitzer “winners become the nobility of American journalism” (1981, A15). In fact, studies and media reports have shown that reporters and editors are perceived to carry greater professional prestige after winning a journalism award (Kosicki et al, 1985), and that a newspaper’s prestige is elevated throughout the industry when one of its journalists is honored for his or her work, particularly investigative journalism and enterprise stories (Coulson, 1989). In addition, according to those interviewed for this study, ample professional admiration is often bestowed upon the reporters whose work routinely appears on the front page of the *Post*. Because the newspaper covered the federal government extensively, as well as the various policies and social implications of those policies, page 1 stories often focused on politics and national issues. Reporters and editors looking to advance to higher-profile positions within the newsroom learned that a seriousness of editorial purpose was required. To even consider business values in conceiving or producing a story was antithetical to the organizational culture of the newsroom. Erik Wemple, a former media writer for *The Washingtonian* magazine and today a media reporter for the *Post*, once explained: “The default setting of the *Post*’s publishing model has long hewed toward the puritanical. Journalists do what they do best—put out a paper—and the advertising people do what they do best—sell it” (Wemple, 2009). Although *Post* magazine stories were almost never elevated to the front page, due largely to production limitations—magazine features are planned out months in advance and have a lengthy production and distribution cycle—magazine editors did sit in on newspaper-wide story rundown meetings and saw firsthand the type of stories that earned the attention, interest and praise of the paper’s top editors. These experiences certainly played a role in shaping many

magazine editors' sense of professional identity and their social standing within the organization.

In shining a light on the attitudes and decision-making processes of *Washington Post* magazine editors through the years, I contend that editors were motivated by their pursuit of professional self-esteem within the organization, and sought to improve or maintain their status and legitimacy with highly regarded organizational in-groups by attempting to mimic content production by *The New York Times Magazine*. In this chapter, I will discuss the value and limitations of social identity theory and institutional theory, as well as how an extension of social identity theory through the lens of institutional theory can further understanding of a distinct category of newspaper editors, namely Sunday magazine editors. Lastly, I will discuss the ultimate value of this research study, its contributions to the profession and literature, as well as its limitations and some potential avenues of future scholarly study.

Social Identity and the Pursuit of Status

Social identity theory specifies how individuals' perceptions of various social environments, such as groups or organizations, influence the way they understand themselves and others (Tajfel, 1972). People evaluate themselves in comparison to others, and seek to bolster their social standing and self-conceptions by associating with perceived in-groups. Status is self-reinforced through perceptions of and comparisons with relevant out-group members. A full examination of social identity theory, or SIT, can be found in Chapter 5.

SIT has not been widely used by researchers to study journalists or the news media industry. However, one case holds particular relevance to this study. In the mid-2000s, SIT was employed to examine changes in professional identity among journalists at a daily newspaper in Sweden. Specifically, the study looked at how print journalists' professional attitudes changed after they were re-assigned to work on a new online edition. The authors found that the re-assigned journalists took a more market-oriented, as opposed to content-oriented, approach to their jobs after working in a new group environment (Fagerling and Norack, 2005). The new online journalists' social identities transformed in large part because the journalists were operating in a brand-new unit that lacked many of the institutionalized norms and practices that defined the newspaper operation, including the values of editorial independence from business-side colleagues. In addition, the online team was so small that journalists, advertising sales representatives and information technology personnel had little choice but to work together, fostering a better understanding of shared goals and outcomes. The authors found that an entrepreneurial spirit permeated the online operation, and that the web-based journalists embraced an identity that was rooted in commercial success through editorial innovation and a willingness to experiment.

Interestingly, the social identities of *Washington Post* magazine journalists did not seem to change when they joined the magazine staff from another editorial department at the newspaper. This is likely because editors viewed the magazine as more similar than dissimilar to the rest of the newspaper; it was a print publication that was part of the Sunday newspaper package. In addition, *Post* magazine editors worked in close contact with reporters and editors from the daily newspaper, often in an effort to get daily staffers

to write feature stories for the magazine. In interviews, many *Post* magazine editors said journalists throughout the newsroom held the Sunday magazine in low regard editorially. In each case, the editors said they worked hard to improve the editorial quality of the magazine and, consequently, how it was perceived in the newsroom. Aware that the magazine often lost money on an annual basis, editors said they worked to secure the publication's future by convincing top editors and many national reporters—through word and deed—that the magazine could represent the best of *Washington Post* journalism: well-research, finely-crafted and thoughtful long-form storytelling (Thompson, 2010; Coll, 2010; Frankel, 2010, Shroder, 2010).

In examining the differences between producers of “hard” news and “soft” news at an Argentinean news site, Boczkowski (2009b) found that each group carried negative perceptions of the other. However, hard news producers viewed their counterparts more negatively, perceiving them as a bit lazy and less than serious about their work. To be sure, journalists who work on the *Post* Sunday magazine, with its weekly publishing cycle—and virtually nonexistent online presence, which is explained in greater detail below—operate at a far more relaxed pace than journalists who work for daily sections. Magazine editors simply do not have nearly the same temporal pressures that daily section editors do. Stories are rarely tied to the news value of timeliness, and it is not uncommon that once a story is ready for publication it is actually held for a later date so as to diversify the weekly mix of magazine stories. In contrast, daily journalists routinely publish information as soon as it is sufficiently verified as accurate, an expediency greater enabled by online publishing.

To win the social approval and feature-writing services of daily staffers, magazine editors had to maintain the professional values that defined the entire *Post* newsroom, where commercial necessity was of little consideration and journalistic purpose trumped all. In addition, a number of Sunday magazine editors noted that they often pursued stories that they believed might earn the publication positive attention and praise from top *Post* editors and respected journalists. It is not entirely clear which members of the *Post* newsroom magazine editors perceived as being in the out-group, but they most certainly perceived advertising sales staff in that light. To work closely with business-side colleagues and share many of their organizational goals would damage magazine editors' sense of professional identity and perceived social standing within the newsroom. Said Paul Herron, the founding editor of *Potomac*: "There was only one person in the *Post* advertising department who dealt with us and the ads in the magazine. There was not a whole group of people, just this one person. And we wouldn't have listened to him if he had [suggested a special section]. If he had said we want more automotive issues, we'd say, 'Go to hell! 'We don't want to do more automotive issues, or furniture issues or...'" (Herron, 2010). Editors oversaw content; advertising reps sold ads, Herron explained.

In addition, *Post* magazine editors maintained a clear separation between their editorial staff and those who worked in advertising; none of the editors allowed their staffs to communicate with those on the business side. Editors routinely cited their concern that staff members might feel undue pressure to change editorial content for non-journalistic reasons, such as to win the business of potential advertisers. That said, editors acknowledged that they often pursued certain feature stories—so long as the story had editorial merit, meaning it was rooted in actual news values—because *Post* advertising

sales managers thought they could sell ads around that general theme. However, editors said they didn't often share the original motivation for the story with their staffs or, if they did, were clear to point out that the story was only running, first and foremost, because it was a story worth telling. Many editors so deferential to the church-state divide at the *Post* that they wouldn't even meet their publisher/general manager on the *Post*'s 6th floor, where the business operation was located. Instead, the publisher/general manager would have to travel to the newsroom, located on the 5th floor, or they would meet on "neutral territory" in the company's cafeteria, according to former Sunday magazine publisher Leslie Morgan Steiner (2011). In their efforts to explain this practice, editors routinely pointed to the organizational identity of the *Post* and the maintenance of such normative values as editorial independence.

However, no editor could cite a specific example of when a staff member was pressured to change or alter content due to the incursion of business considerations into the editorial equation. Rather, a number of editors suggested that it was the maintenance of such boundaries that prevented problems from occurring in the first place.

In short, magazine editors largely approached their section as if it was like any other news section in the paper. This is noteworthy given that newspapers throughout the country began shuttering their Sunday magazines in the late 1970s and early '80s for the stated reason that the publications did not earn enough advertising revenues to cover costs. Facing significant revenue declines due to Internet competition, newspapers have consolidated other sections of the daily paper, most notably Business. While the move was always attributed to cost savings, it was also a recognition that most people were getting their stock listings online (Ovide, 2009).

That said, “church-state” boundaries were not absolute over the 50-year period of study. *Post* magazine editors helped to devise an increasing number of special thematic editions of the magazine to win advertising revenues, and the two most recent editors—Debra Leithauser and the current editor, Lynn Medford—spoke more extensively than any of their predecessors about the importance of generating advertising revenues. This can likely be attributed to a variety of factors, including a cultural shift within the entire company toward a shared awareness concerning revenues and expenses, and the jarring realities of staff layoffs, section and property closures, and overall newsroom cutbacks that were reflections of economic—as opposed to journalistic—events. As Medford (2011) explained: “The whole newspaper is very conscious of the bottom line right now. You’re conscious that you want to at least break even, and we’re not right now....Historically, newsrooms have never paid the least bit of attention to the business side, and that was a value actually. Katharine [Weymouth, the publisher,] has said you need to be business savvy, you need to pay attention to the business, because it’s a battle of survival.”

Even Tom Shroder, who served as editor prior to Leithauser and left the *Post* in 2008 through a buyout because he felt senior leaders at the paper were going to weaken the editorial quality of the magazine in the pursuit of advertising revenue, said he eventually became more open to working with business-side colleagues. “I was trying to learn creative ways to survive, and I thought that if I could serve my journalistic goals and allow the magazine to survive, that the survival of the magazine is important enough to try to be creative and to try to understand [the ad sales reps’] perspective and their

concerns in order to maybe do something really smart that would both produce good journalism and enable them to help support the magazine” (Shroder, 2010).

Although there were some slight variations in the editorial approaches and content preferences of all *Washington Post* Sunday magazine editors interviewed for this study, every editor maintained that he or she was in the business of storytelling and journalism. Figuring out the revenue side of the equation was someone else’s job, many said. As professional journalists who worked at a widely respected institution such as *The Washington Post*, they said they were paid to produce a weekly print product rooted in editorial excellence. The editors defined excellence as “impact,” “buzz,” “serious,” “narrative,” “compelling” and “award-winning.” In the case of “buzz,” editors explained that a good story is sometimes one that gets people talking in the barbershops and beauty salons, and that gets picked up by radio or local television. Berkowitz (1992) came to call these “What-a-Story!” stories; these are stories that are so unusual or that catch journalists off guard. Berkowitz uses the example of the unexpected announcement by President Lyndon Johnson in 1968 that he would not seek reelection. Romano (1986) slightly tweaked the label, calling them “Holy-shit!” stories and citing as an example a wire story headlined “Guests Drowned at Party for 100 Lifeguards.” However, in both cases the researchers were not analyzing the stories through an information gatekeeping prism or through professional or social identity. Rather, studies were operational analyses that examined the processes used by journalists and news media organizations to cover non-routine news work that altered established content production practices.

According to the findings of this study, *Post* magazine editors’ accomplishments were largely self-measured based on awards won and stories that earned the praise and

admiration of top newsroom editors and respected journalists who primarily worked on the front section of the newspaper. “When [individuals] identify strongly with the organization, the attributes they use to define the organization also define them” (Dutton et al, 1994, 239).

Interestingly, the editor who arguably struggled the most while leading the magazine, Jay Lovinger, sought to remake the publication into something editorially distinct from the daily newspaper. Lovinger was seemingly uninterested or even aware of specific in-groups throughout the newsroom, and quickly found himself lost and lonely within an organizational setting he did not understand or even like. He proudly shared the story of how he wore sweatpants and a tattered sweater to his first meeting with executive editor Ben Bradlee to talk about the job. “If someone was going to hire me, I wanted them to know what they were getting and to not hire me thinking that I was somebody that I wasn’t. And then I’d wind up at the place and we’d both have been confused about why I was even there in the first place....I think I was often fighting the institution’s perception of itself. But as I would always say, what does the perception have to do with...this magazine? In trying to create a magazine that was somehow the same as a newspaper just really never worked and in my opinion couldn’t work” (Lovinger, 2010).

Institutional Theory and Keeping up With the *Times*

Institutional theory is “characterized by the elaboration of rules and requirements to which individual organizations must conform if they are to receive support and legitimacy” (Scott and Meyer, 1983, 149). Developed as an offshoot of rational-choice organizational theory, which explains behaviors as purposeful, efficiency-driven

reactions to market forces, institutional theory attempts to explain the bases for mimetic behaviors that are seemingly irrational. For this reason, institutional theory is often used to make sense of behaviors in industries with “vague criteria for judging value and quality” (Lowrey, 2005, 497), since individuals in these industries have different motivations based on their position within the organization. Chapter 5 provided a full examination of institutional theory and its relevance to the news media industry.

Sparrow (1999) found that risk-averse organizations most closely monitor competitors, or peer groups, to more effectively copy practices that are perceived to bolster cultural and political legitimacy. However, seemingly rational strategies at one organization may not serve other organizations’ interests well due to differences in staffing, resources and external relations. “Yet, the very fact that they are normatively sanctioned increases the likelihood of their adoption” (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, 148).

In the case of *Washington Post* magazine editors, findings suggest they often sought to emulate the editorial ambition of *The New York Times*’ Sunday magazine in large part because they saw themselves as journalistic equals to their contemporaries at the *Times*. This was standard belief among journalists throughout the *Post* newsroom, in large part because the two newspapers often chased the same national, political and international news stories. When the *Times* began publishing stories in June 1971 based on what had become known as the Pentagon Papers, a history of U.S. decision-making processes relating to the Vietnam War, the *Post* had to scramble to catch up. According to Bradlee, “The *Post* did not have a copy [of the Pentagon Papers], and we found ourselves in the humiliating position of having to rewrite the competition. Every other paragraph of the *Post* story had to include some form of the words “according to the

Times,” blood—visible only to us—on every word” (1995, 311). Bradlee routinely referred to the *Times* as competition, and that mentality certainly influenced the stories *Post* journalists pursued. In his biography, Bradlee acknowledged that when he became editor of the *Post* his top goal was to have “people in the know, people in power,” speak of the two newspapers “in the same breath, instead of just the *New York Times*” (1995, 370).

Post magazine editors routinely cited *The New York Times* as having the “gold standard” of Sunday newspaper magazines, with lengthy feature and investigative stories, engaging and thoughtful columns, and beautiful photography. Others reported that they took additional editorial inspiration from such consumer magazines as *The New Yorker*, *New York* and *Esquire*. Like *The New York Times Magazine*, these publications have a national circulation. And like the *Times* magazine, all are highly regarded in the journalism industry for their long-form narrative articles. Yet, the *Post* magazine never could seem to compete with the *Times* magazine, often to the great chagrin of journalists throughout the *Post* newsroom, who suffered plenty of “ego bruises” from the comparative critiques (Zagoria, 1984, A18). Sam Zagoria, the *Post*’s public editor in the early to mid-1980s, publicly welcomed a magazine more like the *Times*’—despite the fact that his paper operated in a very different economic market—calling on a “top-side commitment” at the *Post* to more “thoughtful articles and quality art, beautifully printed,” thus leading to “an editorial concept that would give Washington a Sunday magazine more like the *Times*” (1984, A18). Editors interviewed for this study said there were many reasons why the *Post* magazine was routinely editorially inferior to the *Times* magazine. These include a lack of financial investment in the magazine’s paper quality,

design, editorial budgeting and staff size. *Post* management was largely reluctant to invest in upgrades because the magazine was relatively expensive to produce, even in its often-criticized state, and it often failed to win sufficient advertising support to cover costs. Moreover, the *Post* had a far different readership and advertising base than the *Times*. The *Post* is largely local whereas the *Times* is national; the *Times* has long enjoyed nearly 40% higher circulation than the *Post* (Ives, 2009). But because editorial competition with *The New York Times* was so deeply engrained within the culture of the *Post* newsroom over the period of this study, *Post* magazine editors sought to bolster their organizational social standing through a variety of mimetic behaviors in the form of editorial decision-making.

In the mid-1980s, Bradlee finally convincing Publisher Don Graham to invest in a wholesale redesign of the Sunday magazine, to win the business of national advertisers and to bolster the journalistic value of the publication. It was Bradlee's final chance before retirement to create a Sunday magazine even better than *The New York Times Magazine* (Nelson, 1993). For a variety of reasons explained in Chapter 4, which examined the history of *The Washington Post* and its Sunday magazine, the effort failed miserably due to a combination of poor leadership, bad luck and an irrational desire to one-up the *Times*.

As previously stated, isomorphism is often driven by uncertainty of goals. Without clearly defined directives and organizational goals, individuals will often copy external practices that they are simply fond of. With the exception of Paul Herron, the founding editor of the *Post's* Sunday magazine in 1961, no editor interviewed for this study said they were given an editorial mission to fulfill; Herron said then-Executive

Editor J. Russell Wiggins told him to keep the magazine “local and low key. No controversy. Keep the thing short” (Herron, 2009). This lack of direction and editorial mission ultimately led to what *Post* magazine editor Walter Pincus (2010) called a “hobbyhorse effect”; editors used the publication to simply further their personal editorial interests. I contend that these interests were largely informed by magazine editors’ desire to produce the same type of lengthy narrative articles about national and international issues and events that largely defined *The New York Times Magazine*, because doing so bolstered their internal status and their efforts to join perceived in-groups of highly respected *Post* journalists.

Editors sought to strengthen their social identities within the *Post* newsroom through the maintenance of journalistic values and professional norms, but those values and norms were influenced just as much by external factors. Magazine editors routinely attempted to emulate in their work the editorial identity of *The New York Times Magazine*, despite the apparent irrationality of doing so, since the locally oriented *Post* served very different audiences, in terms of readers and advertisers, than the nationally oriented *Times*. Moreover, even though the *Post* magazine only rarely made money, and in fact lost up to \$3 million some years, editors were generally unwilling to risk their social legitimacy, both internally and externally, by redeveloping editorial content to better appeal to new readers and potential advertisers.

Of course, workplace norms and cultures that are embedded within an organization are not formulated over night. Instead, they are adopted from a complex system of slightly evolving technical and social routines that are tied to isomorphic pressures. Moreover, not all copying is necessarily bad. Under the right competitive

circumstances, adoption of industry best practices can bolster efficiency and legitimacy. The key is in consideration of the circumstance. Like any theory, institutional theory cannot fully explain the complex relationships and phenomena that give rise to change and maintenance in all established organizational settings. However, through this extension of social identity theory, institutional theory can help explain context-specific individual and organizational attitudes and actions.

The findings of this study have shown that *Post* magazine editors' social identities were intrinsically tied to a desire to bolster their professional status both within their organization and in comparison to their contemporaries at *The New York Times Magazine*. The fact that the *Post* magazine had long lost millions of dollars annually and that newspapers throughout the country were shuttering their own locally produced magazines due to financial shortfalls was seemingly of little importance to most editors. Ultimately, they were less concerned with keeping up with the times, and more interested in keeping up with newsroom colleagues...and the *Times*.

Study Limitations

John Harris left *The Washington Post* in 2006 after 21 years as a political reporter for the newspaper. Along with colleague Jim VanderHei, Harris wanted the *Post* to create a subsidiary publication that focused entirely on politics and policy. But *Post* executives never warmed to the idea, fearing that the new publication—even in a digital-only form—would siphon away precious advertising revenues from the print newspaper. So, Harris and VanderHei left the company, found financial backing from Albritton Communications, former owners of the *Washington Evening Star* in the mid- to late

1970s, and launched Politico.com and an accompanying free weekly print publication.

Said Harris, whose website celebrated its sixth birthday in January 2013:

“[O]rganizations like the *Post* or *The New York Times* have been insulated from the spirit of the [entrepreneurial] age—precisely because they were secure and prestigious places to work” (Rosen, 2006). In short, the companies’ past successes have contributed to their recent struggles. This point was later echoed by Melanie Sill, a former executive editor of the *Sacramento Bee* and *The News & Observer* in Charlotte, N.C., who left the newspaper industry for academia: “Organizations, especially those with long histories, are driven mostly by culture, and some of the newspaper industry’s greatest challenges are cultural, not strategic” (Bechtel, 2011).

What makes these prestigious papers so distinct, in terms of the editorial resources they allocate to newsgathering and reporting, and the national and international scope of editorial coverage, is precisely what makes this study somewhat limited in scope. However, *The Washington Post* is a major metropolitan newspaper with a local circulation and advertising base. In that regard, the business underpinnings of the company are not all that different from most any other daily metropolitan paper in the United States. And because the business operation is not mutually exclusive from the editorial operation, the *Post* faces the same economic and technological challenges as most every other daily newspaper.

As a case study, the research focuses on the history and evolution of *The Washington Post* Sunday magazine, with particular attention to the editorial decision-making processes and attitudes of those in leadership positions at the publication. Those processes and attitudes were certainly shaped by a variety of internal conditions

somewhat unique to the *Post*: The newspaper is owned by a diversified company that includes education and cable television; the company is publicly traded, but the Graham family and close associates own the majority of voting shares; and the newspaper produces far more original editorial content about national and political issues in no small part due its geographic location in the nation's capital. Because the Post Co. has been wildly successful financially thanks to the diversification of revenue streams—the newspaper contributed just 15% of the company's total revenues in the first quarter of 2012, yet lost \$23 million in all (Chittum, 2012)—the *Post* magazine has enjoyed significant financial resources through the years, even though the publication has only rarely generated an annual profit. Newspapers whose Sunday magazines lost far less money have shuttered the publications. Lastly, the newspaper boasts a large internal talent pool from which to choose new editors of its magazine—if it wants to hire from within, which has been the norm over the past 50 years—and editors of the magazine have access to many talented potential writers in the *Post* newsroom.

For all of these reasons, extending or generalizing the results of this study for application to other daily newspapers is difficult. However, I contend that the findings pertaining to social identity and its extension through institutional theory to better understand editorial decision-making and attitudes about changing professional values can be applied to daily newspaper journalists in most any market. Pfeffer (1994) has argued that people are limited in their “ability to even recognize the need for change, let alone to accomplish it” (304). When recognition does occur, resistance to change at the individual level can be attributed to cultural persistence within certain organizational settings (Zucker, 1977). The more institutionalized norms and practices are within an

organization, the more that the organization's internal culture recognizes and rewards the status quo. Institutionalization often constrains individual behavior by limiting operational choices, preventing certain actions, and restraining resources allocation in the pursuit of innovation.

Final Thoughts

As I believe this study has shown, it is incredibly difficult for individuals to break free from the norms and practices that have long defined the professional positions they inhabit. Those who attempt to invariably meet resistance from people within the organization who seek to protect their own resources, internal status and power. For this reason, facilitating substantive changes that challenge the status quo must start at the organizational level, namely the top leadership of the organization.

It is noteworthy that almost every editor and business-side executive interviewed for this study staunchly defended his or her role in improving the *Post* magazine. It didn't matter if the magazine lost millions of dollars during their tenure, or made millions. It didn't matter if Sunday circulation fell during their time with the publication, or if it rose. Only Donald Graham freely owned his perceived failures as a leader when it came to the Sunday magazine. He should have insisted on greater collaboration between the newsroom and advertising departments, Graham said. He should have been at least somewhat involved in hiring decisions, to ensure that people with the right professional experiences in the magazine and publishing were brought on, Graham added. He should have killed the magazine altogether following the 1986 relaunch debacle, Graham admitted.

But the reality is that Graham didn't do any of these things during his 22 years as publisher of the *Post* newspaper. In terms of the magazine, he left decision-making largely in the hands of editorial-side people with little vested interest in fundamentally reevaluating the value and purpose of the section. Why would he do this? Why keep the magazine going during years of multimillion losses? According to most editors interviewed for this study, it was because Graham fully embraced the same high-achieving journalistic identity of the *Post* that most every magazine editor embraced. If editors were happy with the magazine, then Graham was largely tolerant of some financial losses because he ultimately wanted his newspaper to be guided by a journalistic compass.

Can a newspaper produce great journalism without a Sunday magazine? Of course it can. Does a newspaper need a Sunday magazine to maintain or grow its Sunday circulation? Of course not. But I would contend that a Sunday magazine, at least if its editors are publicly empowered by organizational leaders to experiment and innovate editorially and in collaboration with an equally empowered advertising department, could be an invaluable tool to win back print readers and advertisers. This would likely require the hiring of a magazine editor who would embrace such empowerment, and possibly even locating the magazine department away from the main newsroom so as to allow the department to develop its own norms, values and culture. As previously noted, evidence supports the idea that removing newspaper journalists from a traditional newsroom environment and placing them in a new group environment that includes business-side personnel will foster an increased market orientation toward their work (Fagerling and Norack, 2005).

Then again, perhaps recent changes in the publishing market will, incidentally, enable editors to stay the course. The case of *The Washington Post* Sunday magazine suggests a longtime misalignment between editorial and business values, with editorial values largely trumping the pursuit of revenue that are necessary to maintain the company's operations. But today's newspaper companies are increasingly reliant on circulation revenue—through raising newsstand and home-delivery prices, as well as charging readers to access online editions—to make up for losses on the print advertising front. *Washingtonpost.com* has announced plans to construct a “pay wall” around much of its content starting in the summer of 2013 (Berkovici, 2012). But print edition readers will rightfully come to expect more for their money, and a Sunday magazine is arguably the most distinct vehicle through which a newspaper could deliver an editorial experience unlike any other. Some advertisers might continue to forsake Sunday magazines, opting instead to hawk their wares and messages through lower cost media alternatives or media whose content better reflects an advertiser's brand identity. But with the revenue model shifting toward circulation, such lost opportunities would be less consequential.

Newspapers are working to supplement advertising revenues through the development of standalone niche magazines that cater to relatively affluent readers and advertisers. The profits earned by these magazines generally help subsidize newspaper operations. Some examples of newspapers that publish offshoot magazines include the *Houston Chronicle (Gloss)*, the *Dallas Morning News (FD Luxe)*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch (FEAST)* and the *Miami Herald (Indulge)*. The idea that a standalone magazine, an inserted magazine section or even a newspaper section that is conceptualized and designed in a magazine format to help subsidize “hard news” operations isn't

revolutionary. Rather, editors rarely speak of it in those terms; that is likely because most editors want to be identified first and foremost as journalists, not businesspeople. However, when you are the editor of the nation's most journalistically respected newspaper, there is little risk in speaking the truth. Bill Keller, then *New York Times* executive editor, said during a news staff meeting in 2006: "We don't put out a daily newspaper; we put out a daily newspaper plus about 15 weekly magazines. Some of them are actual magazines. But a lot of them, although they're printed on newsprint, are still—in format, in conception, in design—magazines" (Calame, 2006). Keller freely acknowledged that the newspaper invests in "soft news" sections because they generate advertising revenues that "help subsidize the stuff that drew most of us into the business." The "stuff" Keller was referring to was the core news reports that are the work of the national, foreign, metro, business, sports and culture news desks. "That's the inner wall of the castle," he said (Calame, 2006).

Standing in defense of that wall, however, are not generic general-interest magazines. The sections do not yield profits simply because of their paper stock or page designs.⁹ Rather, almost all of them cater to a specific niche audience that businesses want to reach through advertising. Byron Calame, the *Times*' public editor, had deep concerns about the strategy, worrying that the publication of "frivolous" content was a

⁹ The *Boston Phoenix* is a good example. The alternative weekly newspaper changed formats in late 2012 and became a glossy magazine. The weekly was merged with a standalone entertainment publication, and the new *Phoenix* featured four-color printing throughout and more photography. However, the *Phoenix* went out of business six months later. Although the leadership team had hoped the new format would win the business of high-end national advertisers, those advertisers largely remained away. The readership of the *Phoenix* was still young and educated, but the publication remained largely local in content (Kahn, 2013). Format alone could not repair the necessary interwoven connections between editorial content, readers and advertisers.

“risky venture” (2006) that could damage the *Times*’ reputation as a serious news organization. But I would argue that Calame’s fears are not born from a rational concern for the *Times* brand and economic well-being. Rather, they are rooted in Calame’s self-perceptions and social identity, namely as someone who used to produce what he called “serious news.” As this study has shown, it is not always easy to embrace changes that can potentially challenge one’s identity.

Most newspapers have been changing, though, often out fear of their own mortality. Some newspapers are cutting back on print editions, publishing just three days a week; Sunday is always one of those days. Other papers, namely *The U-T*—formerly known as the *San Diego Union-Tribune*—are experimenting with publishing their own Sunday magazines solely through tablet-based e-editions. These magazines often include photo slideshows, videos that complement text-based stories, and interactive graphics. If the largest reason for shuttering locally produced Sunday magazines is the high costs of production, then eliminating printing, binding, inserting and distribution is an obviously compelling idea. These also provide great opportunities for further study through the prisms of social identity and institutional theory. As news products evolve, the technical requirements of professional practices change, and the revenue balance slowly shifts away from advertisers and toward readers, scholars and practitioners would be well served by a better understanding of the various internal and external factors that influence editorial decision-making.

The once sacrosanct church-state divide between editorial and advertising departments has diminished at many newspapers over the years, due in large part to increased revenue competition from local TV stations, city magazines and, most of all,

the Internet. However, additional implications from the findings of this study are that newspaper leaders must do a better job explaining to journalists the value of closer cooperation between the newsroom and business-oriented departments, namely advertising and circulation. It is not enough for a publisher or executive editor to simply call for closer cooperation when financial times become tough. *The Washington Post's* decentralized newsroom structure provided section editors tremendous freedom to operate with little oversight, but it also fostered a disconnect between different section editors, and between section editors and advertising department personnel. Current publisher Katharine Weymouth has chided the various departments throughout the newspaper for acting as if they exist alone, and has implored them to work together. In telling this story, Medford (2011) explained that editors have become more amenable to communicating with business-side colleagues, but that journalists still make revenue-based changes to the editorial product only when they are “comfortable” with the idea. As an example, Medford cited the running of strip ads on the bottom of the front pages of the Style and Sports sections. However, Medford has resisted allowing an ad to appear on the cover of the magazine—a publication that is distributed within a plastic bag that includes the comics section and free-standing inserts, and is then tucked within the Sunday newspaper—because she does not want to lose any editorial cover space. Clearly, change cannot occur from imploring alone.

The *Post's* Sunday magazine has similarly been allowed to lag on the digital front, despite the fact that the newspaper is actively seeking revenue growth online. None of the editors interviewed for this study embraced digital opportunities for the publication. Although the *Post* was among the first newspapers in the United States to

have a presence online, starting in 1996, none of the magazine editors since that time has put much effort in developing multimedia content to expand their publication's readership and advertising revenue opportunities. Tom Shroder, Leithauser and Medford, the three editors who oversaw the magazine during this period, all said the topic would come up in meetings from time to time, but that the company never placed a priority on it. Evidence of that is clear from the magazine's presence online. In late 2012, the magazine section was listed next to last, or ninth out of 10 categories, under the "Lifestyle" tab at the top of the website. Lifestyle is listed ninth out of 12 tabs. For those who are able to find the magazine section online, stories are largely cut and pasted from the print edition; only rarely do they contain photo slideshows of additional images or complementary video packages. All three of the magazine editors said they had never created unique content specific for the web, pointing to limited staff resources and a personal lack of interest in doing so.

Another challenge for the *Post* moving forward is the ability of editors to regularly rework and refine the Sunday magazine. As the company's newsroom resources have shrunk—the *Post* still has one of the largest newsroom workforces of any daily newspaper in the country, with approximately 600 people as of 2012 (Mufson, 2012)—and the demands of the Internet have required journalists to work in both print and pixels, less time is available to experiment and innovate. In addition to currently running the *Post's* Sunday magazine, Medford is editor of the Sunday Arts section and the Sunday Style section. Sunday Style is a tabloid version of the daily Style section. However, unlike the daily Style section, which largely features general interest content, Sunday Style focuses on entertainment and pop culture. Medford said she was tasked with the

additional responsibilities due to personnel cutbacks. Moreover, she said finding the time to reflect on her work, assess challenges and plan for the future is extremely difficult. Medford is the only editor of the Sunday magazine whose editorial responsibilities extended beyond the magazine.

Steve Coll wore multiple hats for a time as editor of the magazine in the early '90s, but he was charged with overseeing both the editorial and business operations of the publication. Donald Graham (2010) said he asked Coll to do both jobs in an effort to bridge the divide that had long separated editorial and advertising. However, when Coll left the magazine about a year later to become managing editor of the entire newspaper, the dual editor-publisher position was abolished. Graham said Glenn Frankel, Coll's successor as editor of the magazine, lacked Coll's understanding of business and that newsroom leaders prioritized filling the position with the best journalist they could find.

For newspaper publishers moving forward, there may be great value in providing section editors with various business-side responsibilities. It would surely require the hiring of people with more diverse skill sets, but it would also accomplish the increasingly important goal of helping newsroom personnel become true partners with business-side colleagues. It would also fundamentally change organizational operations that have enabled the maintenance of the status quo. In interviews for this study, most *Post* magazine editors said they did not particularly enjoy working with business-side leaders because those leaders cared about revenue generation far more than they cared about the journalistic product. But by giving editors some responsibility over the business operations of the print sections or digital products they oversee, it is highly likely that greater cross-departmental understanding between editorial and business would ensue. If

Sunday magazine editors want their sections to survive, it is in their interest to re-conceptualize their own identities, both within the newsroom and throughout the industry as a whole.

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