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Sense of Place in the Daily Newspaper

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ABSTRACT

The daily newspaper in North America has long been a locally based medium that offers an opportunity for media geographers to explore concepts of place and locality. I explore how newspapers create a sense of place about the locality they serve. I review some of the major geographic theories of place and the local and also the work of communications scholars on how newspapers construct reality in their pages. I apply these ideas to the notion that newspapers construct a sense of place using both the form and the content of the newspaper. I also include a content analysis that examines how the newspaper's constructed sense of place changed from the late 19th century to the early years of the 21st century.

INTRODUCTION

THE DAILY NEWSPAPER IN NORTH AMERICA has long been a locally-based enterprise, rooted in a particular place and time. While a number of national newspapers have emerged on this continent, the local paper, based in a specific town, city or metropolitan area, remains the norm (Bogart 1989; Dornan 2003; Kaniss 1991; Wallace 2005). Since the birth of the penny press in the 1830s and the concomitant rise of local news, the daily newspaper in North America has been a forum for local issues, personalities and events; it has shaped and supported the local public sphere (Wallace 2005). But its role goes well beyond the politics and reportage that are the ostensible reason for reading it. It is a cultural representation, creating an environment through which readers experience and share the local (Nerone and Barnhurst 2003; Kaniss 1991; Schudson 1995). As

such, it is an ideal vehicle for examining concepts of place and locality, and how they are constructed.

I provide a brief introduction to the geography of place and locality. I then review the literature on newspapers and local news in North America, emphasizing the newspaper's cultural role and the social construction of local news. Keeping all these things in mind, I then provide some examples of how newspapers construct a "sense of place" in their pages, and some results from a content analysis of how these constructions have changed over time, from the late 19th century to the early years of the 21st century.

The term sense of place is used widely, but often without definition. I am using it to mean "identification with a place engendered by living in it," a definition suggested by John Agnew and James Duncan (1989, 2). This is the definition most applicable to local daily newspapers, which are creating for their readers—most of whom live in the metropolitan area—a sense of their locality and its place in the wider world.

PLACE IN THE MODERN ERA

What makes something a place? There are actually several schools of thought on this, which span several disciplines. In geography, the discipline for which place is a central concept, there are currently two dominant paradigms. Physical geographers see places as geophysical entities with properties that can best be described using the objective detachment of the scientist. Cultural and humanistic geographers see places as social constructs; space becomes place when humans endow a particular location with meaning or value (Tuan 1977; Relph 1976). The humanistic approach that gained momentum in the 1970s is most relevant to my own work and sees news media as cultural products that participate in the meaning-making process.

Doreen Massey's (1995) approach to place emphasizes its social construction as well as the multiplicity of influences and experiences that combine in particular locations. She speaks of layers of intersecting meanings, social relations and overlapping time and space that come together in any specific place:

The relation between space and place is at the heart of what we are examining here. ...By the late twentieth century, *spatial* movement, interaction, influence and communication have become so extended, so fast, and so available, that the borderlands and boundaries which once used to define *places* as distinct and in some degree separate from each other are so often crossed that the notion of place which was previously viable has to be re-thought. (53-54)

For Massey, the dimensions of space and time (which she also refers to as space-time) come together in place. Thus, a particular place not only brings together local and global influences, multiple cultures and identities, but it also contains historical influences which shape its present, as do its plans and potential for the future. The North American newspaper is a wonderful example of this; while its perspective on the world has long been basically local, it brings together historical, regional, national and international

perspectives in different articles. The newspaper literally “places” readers, and their locality, in the context of the world.

During the modern era, relationships between people and place have changed markedly, with ties to local places decreasing quite significantly. Sociologist Anthony Giddens (1991) calls this process “disembedding” and considers it one of the hallmarks of the modern era. He defines disembedding as the lifting of social relationships out of local contexts, or even contexts requiring physical presence (17-27).

However, there are others who see a bond with place as central to the human experience—something so central that if we do not have a genuine connection to a specific place, we are inclined to invent it. Entrikin (1991) notes that the weakening of ties to place in modernity “has put a greater burden on the (modern) individual to construct meaning in the world.” This task leads individuals to “create new forms of attachment, as a means for gaining at least a ‘borrowed’ sense of centeredness” (1991, 63). In many cases, these chosen attachments are still to particular places, but we are freer to choose the places we bond to; they don’t have to be where we live, or where we live *now*—a retirement home or cottage may be in such a chosen place.

Many places today are taking advantage of this perceived human need, Entrikin (1991) notes, with activities and organizations designed to “create local identities” for new or redeveloped landscapes that have little or none:

The City of Los Angeles has created its own local geography by assigning names to sub-areas within its territory, and has done so in part to maintain and to create a sense of local identity in what has often been described as a socially isolating landscape. Business groups construct ideologies of localism to connect their interest to the perceived needs of the community as a whole. Modern advertising plays on our nostalgia for attachments to local neighborhood, community and region in order to serve its goal of stimulating consumption. (63-64)

Hobsbawm’s (1988) work on “the invention of tradition” ties this type of conscious construction of nostalgia to the underlying tension between modernity and tradition that emerges as an ongoing theme in the study of place. In other words, in many places throughout the modern world, we are manufacturing the idea of community in place of its reality. The image apparently works because its hollow reality appeals to a human urge to attach meaning, identity and the bonds of community to particular places.

Entrikin sees all these place-making efforts—which should be familiar to many people, having been imitated by municipalities, commercial developers, advertisers and, of course, the travel industry—less as legitimate local traditions than as “strategies for resisting the alienation and isolation of modern life through the self-conscious creation of meaning” (1991, 64). Collective narratives and memories, which embody sets of virtues upon which members of the community agree, or once agreed, help constitute and bind communities, he adds. Newspapers, of course, contribute to that effort.

An ecological turn in recent thinking about place is exemplified by the writings of Casey (1996) and Ingold (2000). These theorists say that to view places as purely social constructions results from a false dichotomy between humans and nature, which they argue is a warped but peculiarly modern perspective on the world. Places exist in their own right and animals, including humans, can connect with them in an interactive *relationship*, if they are attuned to nature. Ingold, evoking Martin Heidegger, calls this a “dwelling” perspective.

Curry (1999) puts these ideas into a clear and compelling historical context. Making the argument that “we live not in a spatial world, but in a world of places” (1) he traces the history of space and place in broad outline, noting that it was not until the rise of the printed word, and the widespread availability of maps and atlases, that the world began to be seen, not as a world of places with associated stories about each of them, but as one of space, in which places were locations on a “flat surface that is imagined to be a replica of the world itself. So it becomes possible to imagine places as located within space” (6). Curry links this concept, and the related concept of the region, to Anderson’s (1991) idea of the nation as an “imagined community”—a new sort of place. He sees places as *communicative* constructs:

When we start from the most basic feature of human life, that we communicate one with another, we are forced quickly to see places as important among the contexts of our actions ... In each case—and note that the scale extends from the home to the nation state—the fundamentally communicative activities of using, variously, dialogue, ritual, narrative, classification, and symbol were the means by which the places in question were defined. (11)

While Curry’s work deals with places at all levels, from the local to the nation state, Appadurai (1996) stresses the crucial importance of the local:

It is one of the grand clichés of social theory (going back to Tönnies, Weber, and Durkheim) that locality as a property or diacritic of social life comes under siege in modern societies. But locality is an inherently fragile social achievement. Even in the most intimate, spatially confined, geographically isolated situations, locality must be maintained carefully against various kinds of odds. (179)

Appadurai explains the cultural mechanisms seen by anthropologists as central to this process of producing locality. One is the “production of local subjects”—which are “actors who properly belong to a situated community of kin, neighbors, friends, and enemies” (1996, 179)—through things like rites of passage and kinship. Another is the “spatial production of locality” through things like house-building, the marking of paths and roads, fields and gardens, and so on – things that cities collect under headings like “planning” and “development,” but also the much less formal kind of place-making that people do when they create gardens or paths. Much of this is done, Appadurai notes,

through ritual: "Space and time are themselves socialized and localized through complex and deliberate practices of performance, representation and action" (180). These, too, are the frequent topics of news and features stories: the festivals, commemorations, celebrations and artistic endeavors that celebrate the locality and its wider context in space and time.

Newspapers also play important roles in the production of local subjects; they abound with notices and stories about rites of passage. Births, deaths, marriages and engagements, graduations and so on are the subjects of notices and, in the case of prominent people or unusual circumstances, full articles. The news also aids in the spatial production of locality, covering debates about the construction of new buildings, housing and commercial developments, public monuments, cultural amenities and roads. Attempts to preserve and enhance public spaces and natural features often make the news. Indeed, all these types of stories are staples of local news.

SENSE OF PLACE

My introduction to this work presented the basic definition of "sense of place" I am using: identification with a place engendered by living in it. But there is more to this expression, particularly its use of the word "sense." This is a word for which the *Oxford English Dictionary* has 30 different definitions, many of them with sub-definitions. The *Merriam-Webster Online* (2008) offers seven, a much more manageable number, four of which would seem to apply to this expression:

- ✦ It suggests the use of the *sense organs* in apprehending place. In the newspaper, the visual sense would be paramount, but place descriptions that evoke the other senses are often included in stories.
- ✦ It implies the *meaning* a person attaches to a place, as in the expression "making sense" of something. Every story or photograph depicting a local place would contribute to a person's sense of the place in this context, as would stories about other places that invite comparison and contrast with one's own locality.
- ✦ There is also a *kind or quality of sensation* one develops about something, as in, "I sense that this is a gloomy place." While this is somewhat similar to the first meaning, it implies the qualities of the place that give it a particular character.
- ✦ There is also a collective sense to the word that *Merriam-Webster* describes as *consensus*. The newspaper gives readers this type of collective consciousness, particularly in editorials, columns and other opinion pieces, but also in news and feature stories that quote people talking about local issues. In this way, for example, one could absorb a sense of place that is conservative or liberal, where prevailing points of view take on a certain perspective.

It is clear from the preceding that there are many dimensions to the sense of place. Eyles and Butz (Eyles 1985; Butz and Eyles 1997) have explored another set of dimensions, both philosophically and empirically, and come up with a list of several distinct “senses of place” that people possess with reference to where they live. I will list them quickly here, simply to give an idea of the very different ways that individuals perceive the place where they live. This is relevant to newspapers because news stories can appeal to any of these categories:

- 1 **Social:** Social ties and interaction dominate this sense of place; the place is seen as the centre of these networks of relationships.
- 2 **Apathetic-acquiescent:** People in this category “may be regarded as having no sense of place at all” (Butz and Eyles 1997, 13) and little interest in the idea.
- 3 **Instrumental:** These individuals see place as “a means to an end” such as goods, services and opportunities. Employment, recreational, and cultural opportunities are central to this sense of place.
- 4 **Nostalgic:** This sense of place is dominated by feelings towards the place at some time in the past. People’s loyalties are shaped by past experiences, with little in their present reality that ties them to the place.
- 5 **Commodity:** This sense of place “is dominated by a search for some ‘ideal’ place to live.” These people see their place of residence as a “consumable” for which they feel no permanent attachment.
- 6 **Platform/Stage:** These people want to choose their place, which they see as a stage on which to act out their lives. They are searching for people like themselves, or a place where they fit in.
- 7 **Family:** Feelings about the place are shaped by the nature of family relationships, which are central life concerns for these individuals.
- 8 **Way of life:** These individuals feel their entire life is bound up in the place. Jobs, friends, other relationships, feelings of belonging, all tie them to the place.
- 9 **Roots:** This sense is based on, or rooted in, the past, but not stuck there, as in Category 4. Family ties in the place bring a sense of continuity or tradition; they feel “at home” in a deep sense.
- 10 **Environmental:** Place is not important for its social, family or traditional meanings but as an aesthetic experience, or a feeling of being “in tune with the countryside.” (Butz and Eyles 1997, 13)

THE ROLE OF THE NEWSPAPER

Anderson (1991) invoked the concept of the “imagined community” to describe the nation-state. Key to the triumph of this modern form of political organization, Anderson argued, was the newspaper’s role in pulling together its readership. The rise

of print media, starting in the 16th century, combined with other factors such as the use of the vernacular form of language at all levels of society, made it possible to bring and hold together larger communities, beyond the size where face-to-face communication would suffice.

Daily newspapers in many parts of the world are national in scope and readership, thus corresponding to Anderson's vision. But the history of locally-based North American newspapers bears witness to the fact that the "imagined community" is born as soon as the local community becomes larger than a village. Wallace (2005) documents the essential role of daily newspapers in building a sense of community in a variety of American places, from the small town to the nation, from urban to suburban to rural. Kaniss (1991) demonstrates how metropolitan daily newspapers bind their readership together using the "symbolic capital" of the downtown, even though most readers, since the Second World War, have lived in suburbs.

Many years before these two scholars, sociologist Robert Park wrote "The Natural History of the Newspaper," in which he said:

The motive, conscious or unconscious [sic], of the writers and of the press ... is to reproduce, as far as possible, in the city the conditions of life in the village. In the village everyone knew everyone else. Everyone called everyone by his first name. The village was democratic. We are a nation of villagers. Our institutions are fundamentally village institutions. In the village, gossip and public opinion were the main sources of social control. (277-78)

Local news was not a key feature of the earliest North American newspapers. It was not until the era we have just been describing, the late 19th and early 20th century, with its intense competition for circulation, that many newspapers began to emphasize local news because it was popular with readers. "In the beginning, the great staple was foreign news, and the newspaper remained the colonist's window on the world," says Rutherford (1978, 17). "The coverage of the civic scene was not abundant, and given the space available that was hardly surprising, especially not in the party organs where foreign or political news usually had priority" (19).

As Kaniss (1991, 16), Schudson (1995, 47-48), and others note, newspapers have played a crucial role in socializing newcomers to a city since the earliest days of the penny press in the 1830s, when cities were experiencing dramatic growth as a result of industrialization.

The Penny Papers were sold, as their name implies, for a penny rather than the six-cent price of earlier papers, and instead of subscriptions, they were hawked in the city's streets by newsboys. Their content was also a dramatic departure from the earlier commercial newsletters or political treatises. News of abroad and of national government was replaced by local news that had little to do with the economy. As cities had grown in population and spread over space, the average urban dweller could no longer learn the town's happenings

simply by strolling the streets and squares or patronizing his favorite tavern. The newspapers began to take on the function of telling stories about the town that had once flowed directly from person to person in the form of face-to-face communication (Kaniss 1991, 15).

Gradually, newspapers became an essential part of popular culture, and “reading the newspaper became a part of what it meant to be civilized in America” (Schudson 1995, 48). By the end of the 19th century, newspaper readership had grown markedly, especially among the working class, as newspapers found out what readers wanted and that they could make money by delivering it to them. And what these new readers wanted was local news.

The circulation wars of the early 20th century led newspapers to change their tone yet again, appealing to the broadest possible audience in an effort to boost circulation and hence, advertising revenues. Local news was here to stay because the victors, for the most part, had found it part of their winning formula (Kaniss 1991, 22). Indeed, it was deemed essential to their economic survival because it unified their readership by fostering a sense of local identity.

In effect, in order to become a true mass medium, urban newspapers needed to produce local identity as much as they produced local news. They became the chief constructors of citywide local identity and produced a more democratic newspaper because it was in their economic interest to do so. (22)

However, as Kaniss describes, this winning formula started to fall apart in the late 20th century, as suburban development and the decline of the downtown in many North American cities fragmented the newspaper market. Advertisers were more interested in the better-off suburban dwellers, and that market’s interests were less in the downtown core than in their suburban and national communities. Television took over the lion’s share of the advertising market, and “with most programming originating from the national networks, television served to reinforce a homogenized national identity and to effectively loosen local ties” (Kaniss 1991, 29).

In recent decades, with the help of satellite technology that enabled speedy remote printing operations, a handful of North American newspapers have established a significant national readership. Some, such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and Toronto’s *Globe and Mail*, arose out of particular cities. Two more recent arrivals—*USA Today* and Canada’s *National Post*—have no local roots, which may be a sign of Giddens’s concept of disembedding, or of Schudson’s concept of a “national news culture” supplanting earlier forms (1995, 169-188).

In today’s North America there are many people for whom the local means little, who live transient lifestyles¹ filled with travel and frequent changes of residence. This has made it possible for *USA Today*, a national newspaper without local roots that specifically targets that nomadic audience, to become the best-selling newspaper in the

United States (Wallace 2005, 7; Audit Bureau of Circulations 2008b).² The *National Post* has not been so successful in Canada, where the top-selling newspaper has long been, and continues to be, the *Toronto Star*—an unabashed champion of the local.³ However, the Toronto-based *Globe and Mail* has had the kind of success in Canada that the *New York Times* has enjoyed in the U.S., as the leading “newspaper of record” with a national readership.

This shift in “news culture” away from the local and toward the national, if it exists, could be expected to be documented in the pages of the daily newspaper, making it a fascinating object of study. My own project is an extensive content analysis of two Canadian newspapers—the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Toronto Star*—from 1894 to 2005. It has documented the changing sense of place in these daily newspapers, finding significant declines in the proportion of local articles in both newspapers over time, as well as declining *priority* for local coverage (this term will be carefully defined in the next section). While the local is getting less attention from these two newspapers, there has been a corresponding increase in both the amount and the priority given to national news. This effect is significantly more pronounced in a newspaper that is part of a national chain (the *Citizen* has been chain-owned since 1897) compared to one that, for most of its existence, has been independent (the *Star* was independent until the mid 1990s, when its parent company, TorStar Corporation, started a regional chain in southern Ontario). The next section details some of the results of this study. First, it explains some concrete ways in which newspaper form and content shape the sense of place constructed by newspapers.

PLACING THE LOCAL: WITHIN THE NEWSPAPER

It is widely acknowledged that news is a form of culture, presenting a constructed reality that encodes the values and beliefs of the surrounding society (Hall 1997; Williams 1989a, 1989b; Hall *et al.* 1978; Hall 1980; Carey 1988; Burgess & Gold 1985; Schudson 1995). Thus, news is more than just the transmission of messages. News structures the reader’s world, as Carey (1988) suggests, by presenting it in a “symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed” (23). The local newspaper is one of the windows through which residents see the reality of the local; it is structured and “framed” for them (Tuchman 1978).

Readers receive messages about place from the design of the newspaper as well as its content. Everything from news and feature stories to photographs to charts of sports scores and stock market tables is capable of saying something about place. News stories, for example, almost always answer the question “Where?” in addition to the other “Five Ws”: who, what, when and why. Sports scores are based on the places sports teams represent, and fierce rivalries between towns, cities and countries. Photographs depict places around the world. And even the stock market tables are listed according to the city in which the stock exchange is located.

But the form of news—that is, the design of the pages and the way things are arranged, even within stories—is equally important to the sense of place imparted by newspapers. News historian John Nerone and graphic arts scholar Kevin G. Barnhurst, have documented in great detail how the *form* of news embeds the values and relationships of the surrounding society as much as the words do. Referring specifically to print newspapers,⁴ they wrote:

The form of news creates an *environment*: it invites readers into a world molded and variegated to fit not only the conscious designs of journalists and the habits of readers but also the reigning values in political and economic life. ...Readers do not read bits of text and pictures. What they read is *the paper*, the tangible object as a whole. They enter the news environment and interact with its surface textures and deeper shapes. Readers don't read the news; they swim in it (Barnhurst and Nerone 2001, 6; italics the authors').

Keeping these things in mind, let us look now at some of the ways the newspaper creates a sense of place. The first set of techniques is what I call “placing the local.” Where does local content appear in the newspaper as a whole, and how does its placement influence our sense of the local?

Local Stories

The number of local stories, particularly their proportion relative to other geographic categories, is an important indicator of the newspaper's contribution to a local sense of place. Remember, here, that local stories can occur in business, sports, arts and entertainment news, and not just in the category generally referred to as “local news.” The definition of what constitutes a local story is, of course, crucial to one's understanding of this. In my own content analysis, “local” was defined as occurring within the circulation area (the area in which the newspaper was delivered to subscribers) of the newspaper at the time of its publication. In Canada, information about circulation areas is available, with the newspaper's permission, from the Audit Bureau of Circulation, which has kept track of newspaper circulation since 1905.

Priority Given to Local Stories

There are many ways to give priority or prominence to stories, and the newspaper is a hierarchical medium, so it uses a set of priority “markers,” if you will, to draw readers' attention to certain stories. These include:

- + headline size
- + placement on the page
- + the page the story is on, with front page, section front, and right-hand pages better placements than others
- + the amount of space devoted to the story, including extra features such as photographs, charts, graphics, and “sidebar” stories.

All these criteria are used to indicate where a story fits in the overall hierarchy of priority. Stories that get high-priority treatment—huge headlines, front-page play and large photographs—are flagged for us by these conventions as worth paying attention to. If a newspaper is giving that special play to *local* stories, it indicates that the locality matters in the larger scheme of things. The converse is also true: a newspaper that “buries” local stories in back pages, never giving them front-page treatment, much space or large headlines, is also sending a message about their importance.

For an example of newspapers that feature local news differently, see Figure 1, which shows the front page of the *Toronto Star* from May 13, 2003. On this page, the story with the biggest headline is a World story about bombings in Saudi Arabia, but the story that most readily captures the reader’s attention—it occupies the most space and features a large, riveting photograph with a headline slightly less large than the Saudi bombings story—is about a local MPP (Member of the Provincial Parliament in Ontario) who used an obscene hand gesture in the legislature. Note also that the two “keys” at the top of the page, under the *Toronto Star* banner, both feature individuals from Toronto or nearby (Mike Myers is from Scarborough, a suburb of Toronto, and the term “T.O.” is a nickname for Toronto. Brennan Little, who is caddy for Canadian golfer Mike Weir, comes from St. Thomas, Ontario, which is about 125 miles from Toronto). So the top and left side of the page are dominated by local stories, or stories with a “local angle,” meaning they focus on someone or something local but take place elsewhere. Looking at the page, the reader gets the impression—probably subconscious for most readers—that the Saudi bombings are on a par, in terms of importance, with the stories of three local newsmakers. The two national stories are much smaller and occupy the bottom of the page. The *Star* is famous for giving this kind of priority to local stories.

There is no similar image available for the *Ottawa Citizen’s* front page on the same day, but the four stories it highlighted were: a feature story with a color photo about mountain-climbers in the Himalayas; a story placelined Washington, DC, on the explosions in Saudi Arabia; a story on the Canadian federal government’s proposal to decriminalize marijuana possession; and a local story on plans to protect the Ottawa River and its heritage. Note that the same geographic categories are covered in both papers: world, national and local, or in the *Star’s* case, provincial with a local angle.⁵

But it is not only the number of local stories featured that determines the sense of place readers absorb about their city; their relative prominence plays a key role. Both the *Star* and the *Citizen*, on this date, featured one story as the centerpiece of the front page, with a large photo and headline, story length that necessitated a continuation on another page, and a “sidebar” explaining more about the story. In the *Star*, this centerpiece story was the local-angle story about the politician in the legislature. In the *Citizen*, it was the Himalayan mountain-climbing story, which made no connection to the local. What difference would it have made to the reader’s sense of the local place if the *Citizen’s*

Figure 1. The front page of the Toronto Star, May 13, 2003.



Still insist you didn't do it, Mr. O'Toole? Well, here's the photo that fingered you



Tory John O'Toole is caught on videotape yesterday by the Legislature's broadcast service making a gesture of opposition to MPPs.

Tory MPP 'flips the bird'

Coarse gesture rocks Legislature He denies it, then apologizes

sworn in Italian at one of her caucus members yesterday. "If my children were behaving the way the government members are behaving, they'd be grounded," said Bountrigian (Hamilton Mountain). Watching the proceedings on TV at home, John Williamson of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said he could scarcely believe his eyes when O'Toole gave the finger during a debate on decoupling and tax cuts. "The incident was another setback for the government as it tries to recover from controversy over its decision to present its March 27 budget at an auto-park in Brampton instead of the Legislature. Regular business in the Legislature has been set aside for a debate on whether the Conservative government is in contempt of parliament for the way it handled this year's budget. Last Thursday, Speaker Gary Carr ruled there was a case for contempt.

Pointing the finger This is how Tory MPP John O'Toole explained his actions in the Legislature yesterday: 2:20 p.m. 'I don't remember and I didn't do it. There were a lot of things happening at that time and so I wouldn't say I did that. No, I didn't.' 2:44 p.m. 'I sincerely withdraw the offence that I gave... It will not happen again.'

The history Flipping the bird has quite a pedigree. Its first known use was in a draft of The Clash. Aristophanes play written in ancient Greece in 423 B.C. The first finger's target? Socrates. More recently, U.S. Vice-President Nelson Rockefeller gave the one-finger salute to student demonstrators in Birmingham, Ala., in 1976. Ralph Klein, then Alberta's environment minister, did it to a protester in 1990. And in 2002, then-PM Pierre Trudeau did it to protesters in Salmon Arm, B.C.

Scores injured in Saudi blasts

Three dead, 60 hurt as explosions hit Westerners' compounds in Riyadh U.S. suspects Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terror network

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA—Hours before a visit by the U.S. secretary of state, attackers shot their way into three gated compounds housing Westerners and Saudis and set off car bombs. At least one person was killed and 60 injured, hospital and security officials said. "We have unconfirmed reports of a couple of American deaths, but we do have confirmation on those at this time," said U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Robert Jordan. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. three people were confirmed dead. Jordan also told CNN that more than 40 of the injured were Americans. It was not immediately clear whether any Canadians lived there. The string of attacks occurred in quick succession, capped by a fourth explosion, early today outside the headquarters of a joint U.S.-Saudi owned company in Riyadh. And missile launchers were behind the three blasts that ripped through the compounds, Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef told a pro-government newspaper today. "The three explosions that occurred in eastern Riyadh were outside bombings," he told Al-Riyadh daily. "They were set off by car-mounted explosives that were driven into the targeted compounds."



Barbara Budine suddenly leaves her job in Baghdad for one in Washington.

Shakeup in U.S. Iraq team

WASHINGTON—The increasingly chaotic situation on the ground in Baghdad is being mirrored in the Bush administration as it strives to find a team that can build peace with the same efficiency with which it can fight a war. The White House has yanked a number of key figures in the reconstruction team set off in recent days, leading observers here to conclude that U.S. President George W. Bush badly underestimated what was needed to stabilize post-war Iraq. Bush's new civil administrator, L. Paul Bremer, arrived in Baghdad yesterday, conceding there was much work ahead. He said he was determined to put Iraq on the road to self-government.

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Martin unveils his secret donors

ALLANTHOMPSON OTTAWA—Liberal leadership frontrunner Paul Martin has revealed details of \$225,000 in previously secret contributions to a blind trust supporting his campaign. But Martin strategists were adamant they were not responding to pressure from leadership rival John Manley, who has attacked Martin for failing to release information about contributions to the blind trust. "Only Mr. Manley is moralizing this point," Martin adviser Scott Reid said yesterday.

The four contributors identified yesterday were One Corp. chief executive Gerald Schwartz who gave \$75,000, B.C. entrepreneur Jimmy Pattison, who gave \$100,000, Kovva Software of investment firm Griffin McManamy & Partners, who gave \$50,000, and Miles Nadal of

Amadeus Capital Corp. (also head of MDC Corp.) who contributed \$100,000. Yesterday, the Martin camp released information about \$1.6 million in public campaign donations made in the last 60 days. Please see Secret, A16

Conservative wins by-election

Tory Gary Schellenberg topped ahead of Liberal rival Brian Ilnac to win the federal by-election in the riding of Perth-Midwest last night. "Tonight is a dream come true," said Schellenberg. The win, the first for the Tories in Ontario since 1997, delighted the party leader Joe Clark, Star, A4

centerpiece story with the color photograph had been the Ottawa River story? Instead, the Ottawa River story was relegated to the bottom of the page in the *Citizen*, as were the national stories on the *Star's* front page.

This was not an isolated instance of the *Star* and *Citizen* expressing different priorities and different senses of place. Some results from my content analysis of these same two Canadian newspapers are relevant here. It analyzed three “constructed weeks”⁶ from the *Star* and the *Citizen*, from three time periods over a span of 112 years, from 1894 to 2005. It coded every page that contained articles, and every article on those pages, for a total sample of 7,129 articles on 1,311 pages. The coding took note of between 20 and 22 features⁷ such as each story’s length, headline size, placement on the page, and geographic category.

The 112-year time span was divided into three periods, with one “constructed week” of newspapers randomly selected from within each time period, based on historical evidence about similarities and changes in newspaper design during the late 19th and entire 20th centuries. Much of this evidence was assembled in a series of detailed content analyses by Barnhurst and Nerone (1991, 2001) but the periodization also paid attention to the special history of Canadian newspapers, written by scholars such as Rutherford (1978), Sotiron (1997), Kesterton (1967), Walkom (1983), and a helpful review of that historiography by Buxton and McKercher (1998).

Period One, which covers the first 35 years (1894-1929), is considered part of the Victorian era of newspaper design by Barnhurst and Nerone (2001, 20). This designation is confirmed by other scholarly accounts of this period of newspaper history (Sotiron 1997; Walkom 1983). The other two time periods fall into the era that Barnhurst and Nerone call Modern. The first of them (my study’s Period Two), runs from 1930-1970, and is called the Professional period due to the predominance of professional news judgment and values in newspaper design. Period Three, from 1971-2005, is a period Barnhurst and Nerone call Corporate, because of the increasing evidence of corporate control of newspaper design during those decades (Barnhurst & Nerone 2001).

The content analysis looked at the changing priority given to local news in these two newspapers over time by first measuring the proportion of local stories in the newspaper as a whole in each time period, and whether their relative numbers changed over time compared to other geographic categories; and secondly by measuring the relative priority accorded to different geographic categories in different time periods. In addition to the standard geographic categories (local, provincial, national and world), it also measured stories with a local “angle” (or focus) that were primarily in other geographic categories⁸-these formed a separate category, but could also be combined with the local category, as seen in the third column from the left in Figures 2 (*Star*) and 3 (*Citizen*), which graph the results for all categories. And finally, included is a category called “no place” that makes no mention of place, even indirectly (for example, by mentioning an athlete that readers know to be associated with a particular place).

Figure 2.
 Geographic Categories by Proportion in each of the Three Time Periods, *Toronto Star*

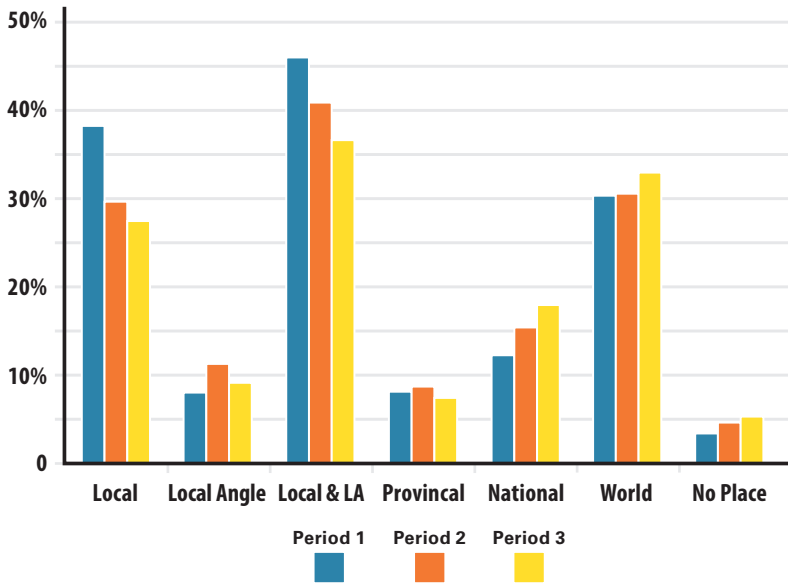
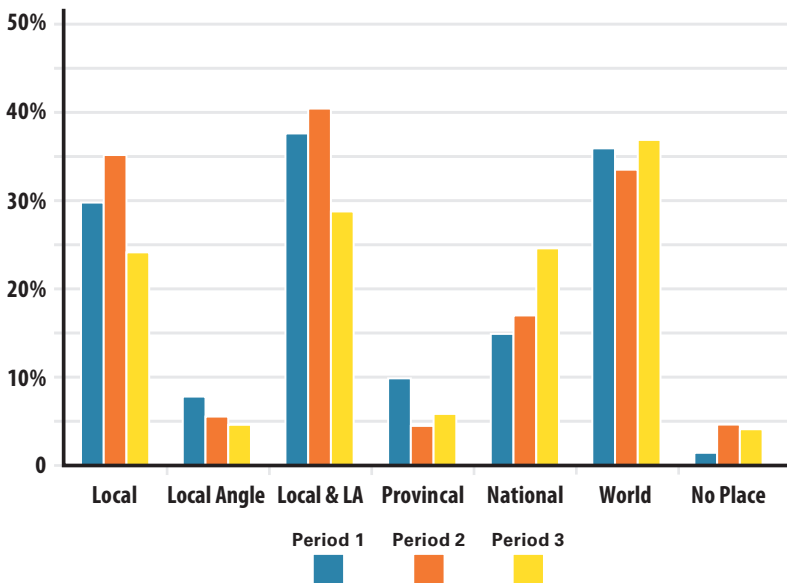


Figure 3.
 Geographic Categories by Proportion in each of the Three Time Periods, *Ottawa Citizen*



In Figure 2, note that the *Toronto Star*'s local news category (far left) was highest in Period One, then declined steadily in Periods Two and Three. The same is true for the category "local plus local angle" (LA), which is third from the left. When the newspaper's

focus turned away somewhat from the local, where did it shift? The national column shows a clear, steady increase over time, as does the much smaller but still statistically significant category called “no place.” World news also increased in Period Three, but the results for the world category are not statistically significant using a chi square analysis. It is somewhat surprising that world coverage did not increase significantly in Period Two, with the extensive coverage given to the Second World War. However, in the *Star*, much of this coverage was classified as local angle because it covered local residents serving abroad, or relatives of local people affected by the war. Note the *Star*'s sharp increase in the local angle category in Period Two, which is not matched in the *Citizen*.

In the *Ottawa Citizen* (Figure 3), the percentage of local news stories was significantly lower than the *Star*'s in Period One, while the *Citizen* gave much more attention to provincial, national and world stories than did the *Star*—which would seem appropriate for a newspaper in the nation's capital. The *Citizen*'s local coverage increased in Period Two to a level higher than the *Star*'s in the exclusively local category, and was about the same as the *Star*'s in the “local plus local angle” column, third from the left. However, in Period Three, the *Citizen*'s local news category dropped sharply, to a level well below that of the *Star*. The *Citizen* graph (Figure 3) shows increases in the proportion of national stories in each time period, but the increase from Period Two to Period Three is quite sharp, mirroring the sharp drop in local stories. World stories remain at about the same level throughout, with no statistically significant difference between time periods. Decreases in local and local/LA categories, and increases in national (and in the *Citizen*, no place), are statistically significant at below the .001 level using a chi square test. This significance is true for changes throughout the three time periods, as well as changes from Period One to Period Two, and from Period Two to Period Three, for each newspaper in these categories. Differences between the two newspapers are also statistically significant at $p < .001$, using a loglinear analysis.⁹

Calculating Priority

The second set of results from the content analysis of the *Toronto Star* and the *Ottawa Citizen* applied a Priority Factor to each story then summed the priorities in each geographic category to give a “percent of sum” statistic. The Priority Factor was arrived at through the following procedure: during coding, a set of indicators was marked for each story and the scores on these indicators were summed.¹⁰ Then scores for each time period were converted into three categories: 1=low, 2=medium, 3=high, standardized over the three time periods. Standardization was designed to overcome the fact that priority indicators differed over time, as newspapers developed additional ways of indicating priority. The priority indicators chosen in this study took into account things like front-page or section-front placement, headline size, story length and placement on the individual page (at the top, in the middle, or at the bottom), as appropriate for the time period.¹¹ Figure 4 shows the priority by geographic categories for the *Toronto Star*,

using the “percent of sum” statistic.¹² This figure results from adding up all the priority scores in each geographic category and dividing that sum by the total of all the priority scores for the entire sample, then converting that to a percentage. Figure 5 graphs the *Citizen* results using the same calculations.

Figure 4.
Compare Time Periods, *Toronto Star*, Priority

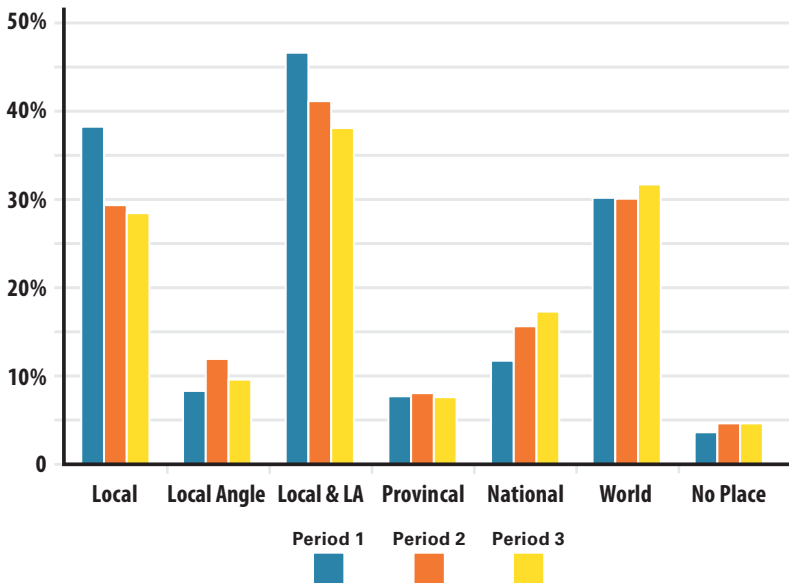
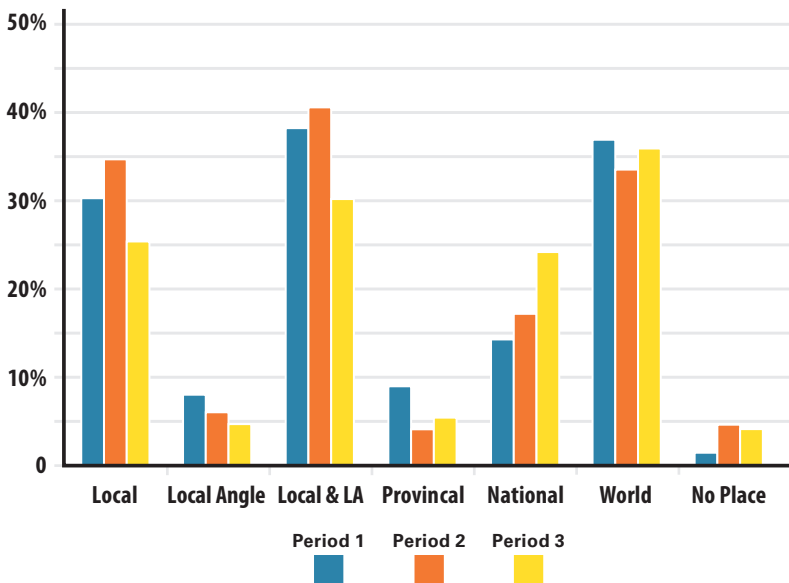


Figure 5.
Compare Time Periods, *Ottawa Citizen*, Priority



The graphs make it clear that local news has long been a high priority for the *Star* (though it did drop over time), and that the *Citizen* only exceeded the *Star*'s level of local news priority in Period Two (bearing in mind that in this period, the *Citizen* and *Star* totals were very close when local and local-angle stories were added together, with the *Star*'s total slightly higher.)¹³

However, the graphs also show that the priority that the *Citizen* gave to local news dropped quite significantly after 1970, while the *Star*'s level dropped by much less. Note that increased priority was given to national news in both newspapers after 1970 (though the increase is much higher in the *Citizen*) and world news increased in this time period in the *Star*, while world news actually dropped in priority in the *Citizen* in Period Two, then returned to its former level in Period Three.¹⁴

City Section

Continuing with the analysis of how the local is constructed in newspapers, we come to the relatively late appearance, historically, of the separate section for local news. In today's newspapers we are accustomed to seeing a city section, or perhaps a metropolitan section, where local news is featured. But in the not-so-distant past—as recently as the 1970s in the newspapers I have studied—local news appeared alongside national and international news in every section of the paper. Sections for other topics, such as sports, business, entertainment and women (which have spawned today's sections focusing on fashion, food and everyday life) date back to the early 20th century. But the idea of segregating local, national and international news is relatively recent in the newspapers I have studied. Does this segregation devalue local news by treating it as a special interest, akin to sports or entertainment? Does it imply that local news is optional reading? Or does giving local news a section of its own provide a lot more scope for creating a sense of place about the city? It is not clear whether a separate local section indicates anything about the priority of the local; but it certainly does indicate something about the place and where it fits in the world. A city whose local happenings include national business, sports, arts and/or political stories will see itself prominently displayed in these sections, and on the newspaper's front page, as well as in the local news section.

Photographs

Pictures are a very prominent feature of the modern newspaper, and methods such as content analysis and social semiotics would be of great help in uncovering how they contribute to the sense of place in newspapers. One thing that I have noticed in my research is that an increasing number of news photos, in the past decade or so, fit the definition of "decontextualized" images given by semioticians Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen (1996). The absence of background or setting in such pictures means that "represented participants become generic, a 'typical example,' rather than particular, and connected with a particular location and a specific moment in time" (165-6).

Machin (2004), who also finds this trend alarming, attributes it in part to the rise of the “image banks,” such as Getty Images and Corbis, which buy and resell such generic photographs to various media, from newspapers to advertisers. The image banks have become “a \$2 billion a year industry, and one which has entirely transformed the world of media images” (317). Machin also suggests that the very existence of the image banks, and their eagerness to purchase generic photographs, encourages photographers everywhere to take more decontextualized pictures.

What does this do to the sense of place created by the newspaper? It is a topic that could benefit from further study. It would seem obvious that visual images of local places in the newspaper are important to sensing place, since vision is one of the five senses. Are pictures that depict local people and places in context becoming scarcer?

PLACING THE LOCAL WITHIN STORIES

There are several items that occur *within* stories that also contribute to a sense of place; placelines, place mentions and the tone of local stories all contribute to the impressions readers absorb about their locality.

Placelines

Most people don't notice these little words at the beginning of stories: the capitalized name of the town or city where the story originated (for an example, see the two world stories on the Star front page in Figure 1). However, their obscurity doesn't mean that readers are not influenced by placelines. As Rantanen points out, the fact that local stories do not have a placeline gives us a way of distinguishing stories about Us from stories about Them (Rantanen 2003). However, this is not a hard-and-fast rule; my own content analysis kept track of which stories got placelines, and found many non-local stories that did not have them, such as opinion columns and editorials. It also found a large number of stories from within the paper's circulation area that did get placelines, particularly during the first half of the 20th century.

Place Mentions

Mentioning local places in stories helps to evoke a sense of place. This is particularly true when places are described, and/or mentioned repeatedly, using different forms of their name. For example, a story set at the University of Toronto might start out using the university's formal name, then refer to “the downtown campus” on second reference, and perhaps the popularly used short form, “U of T,” in another reference to the same place. The use of nicknames (such as “U of T”) indicates fondness and/or familiarity, which may evoke feelings for and about the place. Placing it in the center of the city by calling it “the downtown campus” might evoke feelings of identification from those who are fond of downtown Toronto and the architecturally distinct buildings and grounds of the university. This short descriptive phrase might evoke visual images in the memories of those who had visited or passed by the university campus in the core of Toronto, thereby stimulating the senses—an important component of the sense of place.

The number of local places mentioned in the newspaper, relative to the number of non-local places, would be another indicator of the contribution that particular newspaper is making to the overall sense of place, as we have defined it.

Tone

While the sheer number of local stories is important to the sense of place, their tone and other aspects of their content are even more important. It is in this area—examining the sense of place within stories—that quantitative research methods are less helpful than qualitative approaches, such as discourse analysis. For example, Burgess (1985) has used discourse analysis to explore how depictions of the “inner city” belie the reality and exaggerate certain (usually negative) characteristics of low-income areas. The tone of these stories creates a negative sense of place.

CONCLUSION

Things are changing in the world of newspapers, as they migrate to the Internet seeking younger readers and new sources of revenue, and circulation figures for print copies continue to decline. This significant shift, as Gasher and colleagues (2007; Gasher & Gabriele 2004) have documented, is changing the geography of news. Still others have noted how a changing conception of what is “local” has redefined the scope of the local newspaper. For example, Hau Ling Cheng describes the role of Vancouver’s Chinese-language newspaper *Ming Pao* (West Canadian Edition), whose readers consider both Vancouver and Hong Kong to be “local” because they live, or have lived, in both cities (Cheng 2005). As Cheng notes, the word “local” is becoming more and more difficult to define as the boundaries between places become blurred in this way.

The daily newspaper offers scholars an opportunity to explore place and locality, and how these things were depicted before, during, and after the changes wrought by electronic communication and rapid transportation. As Burgess and Gold (1985) pointed out two decades ago, the intersection of geography and news offers a rich vein for critical scholars to mine. My research is part of a larger effort to document how the print versions of newspapers have, since the rise of local news as a major journalistic genre in the late 19th century, constructed a “sense of place” about the locality they serve.

ENDNOTES

¹Wallace (2005, 180) cites research done by Al Neuharth before the startup of *USA Today*, showing that “in 1979, 28 million Americans traveled by air, 1.5 million people stayed in hotels and motels each night, and 100 million people had moved (residence) in the past ten years.” Those numbers have steadily increased. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics in the U.S. reported that in 2006, U.S. airlines carried 744.4 million scheduled domestic and international passengers, and of those, 658.2 million were domestic passengers (U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics 2007).

²Of course, with a national readership to draw on, it is easier for *USA Today* to increase its circulation figures than for a local newspaper without national appeal.

- ³The September 2007 average daily circulation figure for the *Toronto Star* was 430,931 copies; its nearest rival, the *Globe and Mail*, is well behind at 329,099. The *Ottawa Citizen*, the other newspaper in my sample, is No. 10 on the list of Canada's highest-circulation newspapers, with 121,664 average daily circulation. In 2003, the *Star*, *Globe* and *Citizen* were in the same positions in the top-10 list (Audit Bureau of Circulations; Canadian Newspaper Association 2004, 18).
- ⁴Clearly the online form of newspapers produces a different effect, just as radio and television offer very different forms of news, with differing impacts on readers and viewers. Barnhurst has expanded his research, with colleagues, to examine other forms of news (see for example Barnhurst 2002).
- ⁵While it could be argued that "the local" for the *Ottawa Citizen* includes the federal government because Ottawa is the nation's capital, and the story on decriminalizing marijuana might be a "local" story for the *Citizen*, this was not the approach my content analysis took. If a story in the *Citizen* concerned national politics exclusively, it was considered national, just as a story in the *Toronto Star* that concerned the provincial legislature would not be considered local just because it took place in Toronto, which is home to the legislature. It was possible for such stories to have a "local angle" if part of the story's focus was a local person, place or event—as is the case in the story on the *Star's* front page. But the simple fact it took place in Toronto was not enough to code it as "local angle."
- ⁶The constructed week consists of one randomly selected Monday, one separately selected Tuesday, etc. until you have a week of newspapers from different, randomly selected dates within the time period. The 112-year span was divided into three time periods, with one constructed week from each for each newspaper.
- ⁷The total was larger for local stories, in which place names were counted and classified as local or non-local.
- ⁸An example of a "local angle" story would be something about a person from Toronto or Ottawa who was fighting overseas during the Second World War, or in Afghanistan today. It would be classified as a World story with a local angle. The story had to focus on the local person or group of people, or object or place, and make an explicit connection to the local.
- ⁹The three-way loglinear analysis (newspaper by time period by geographic category of stories) produced a final model that retained all effects. The likelihood ratio of this model was $\chi^2(0)=0$, $p=1$. This indicated that the highest-order interaction (newspaper x time period x geographic category) was significant, $\chi^2(10)=55.040$, $p<.001$.
- ¹⁰Three coders were used for this process, and the level of intercoder agreement—using Krippendorff's alpha, which sets .700 as the cutoff for an acceptable score—was .780 or greater for all variables used in this article. Krippendorff's alpha is considered superior to the more widely used Holsti test for intercoder agreement, because it corrects for agreements that would occur by chance. It is also preferable for studies, like this one, which use more than two coders, and a mixture of nominal, ordinal and scale variables (Hayes & Krippendorff 2007; Neuendorf 2002, 149).
- ¹¹In Period One, for example, the front page was not a reliable indicator of priority. For much of that time period, the front page in the *Citizen* featured classified advertising, with only a few short stories of low priority. The biggest, most significant stories ran inside the paper. So front page placement only became part of the Priority Factor in Period Two. In Period Three, boxes that set stories apart from others on the page, as well as "keys" that promoted certain stories on the front page or section fronts, became indicators as well. The factors for each time period were then divided into Low, Medium and High priority so they could be compared on the same scale.
- ¹²I chose not to use the mean for comparisons because it does not indicate anything about the relative number of stories in each category, which is an important component of priority; the

amount of coverage a newspaper gives to a topic is the most significant indicator of priority.

The percent of sum indicates both the amount of coverage and the prominence of the stories in each geographic category, making it an ideal measure for the construction of sense of place.

¹³Thus, there is duplication of both the local and local angle categories. To get 100 percent of the sample, select all columns except the third, or omit the first two columns and select the third plus all columns to the right of it.

¹⁴The results in the World category, however, do not achieve statistical significance at the .05 level.

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