

NEWSPAPERS AND NEIGHBORHOODS: STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING RESPONSIBLE COVERAGE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A Community Building Workbook
from
The Asset-Based Community Development Institute
Institute for Policy Research
2040 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60208-4100

Edited by
John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, Co-directors
Deborah L. Puntenney, Research Associate

*A Guide to Developing a Community-Based Strategy for Influencing
Local Neighborhood Coverage*
by Byron P. White

*A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program
to Influence Newspaper Coverage*
By Ruth Morris

*A Research Report on Newspaper Portrayals of Six Neighbourhoods in Metropolitan
Toronto*
By Eva Weinroth, Suzanne F. Jackson, and Keith Schloskey

Distributed exclusively by:
ACTA Publications
4848 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60640
Phone: 800-397-2282
773-271-1030
Fax: 800-397-0079

*Supported by the Chicago Community Trust
in consultation with The Kinship Foundation*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORS' NOTE..... iii

ABOUT THE AUTHORS..... iv

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGY FOR INFLUENCING LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD COVERAGE 3

 The Gap Between Citizens and Reporters 5

 How Newspapers Operate 15

 How Citizens Can Make A Difference 23

 The Business Pages: A Model of Balanced Coverage..... 29

A CASE STUDY OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD COALITION'S PROGRAM TO INFLUENCE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE 33

 Fighting Neighbourhoodism: Jane-Finch Leads the Struggle Against Neighbourhood Discrimination..... 33

 The Communities Against Neighbourhoodism Coalition..... 34

 Obstacles..... 41

 Positive Outcomes 42

 Present and Future CAN Strategies..... 43

 Conclusion 45

A RESEARCH REPORT ON NEWSPAPER PORTRAYALS OF SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO..... 49

 Methods..... 50

 Results 51

 Discussion 66

 Conclusion 70

EDITORS' NOTE

This volume brings together three exciting articles into what we consider an important work on newspapers and neighborhoods. Each of these articles explores a different aspect of the relationship between local communities and the newspapers that print stories about them. The works in this volume are individual and distinct: each was written independently of the others, and each takes a different perspective on the subject at hand. They are linked by their common concern for how, as author Byron White states the issue, “the media and citizens are missing each other” and why newspaper coverage of neighborhoods sometimes fails to satisfy local residents.

Each of the articles uses a different framework with which to examine newspapers and neighborhoods.

- Byron White’s article, *A Guide to Developing a Community-Based Strategy for Influencing Local Neighborhood Coverage*, frames the issues from the perspectives of newspaper reporters and editors, suggests ways that citizens can make a difference in terms of the coverage their neighborhood receives, and provides examples from a newspaper’s business pages as a model of balanced coverage.
- Ruth Morris’s article, *A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition’s Program to Influence Newspaper Coverage*, is the story of how several neighborhoods in metropolitan Toronto organized around the issue of negative media coverage, and formed a coalition to fight against the biased and disrespectful images of their communities that were regularly being presented in local papers. The article also discusses the coalition’s activities to educate and mobilize citizens about what they have termed “neighbourhoodism” in the media.
- Eva Weinroth, Suzanne F. Jackson, and Keith Schloskey’s article, *A Research Report on Newspaper Portrayals of Six Neighbourhoods in Metropolitan Toronto* (excerpts from a previously published report), presents several components of a study of newspaper portrayals of six neighborhoods in metropolitan Toronto. This work examines coverage in detail, including both headline and content analyses of neighborhood coverage in several local papers.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Byron P. White: *A Guide to Developing a Community-Based Strategy for Influencing Local Neighborhood Coverage*

Byron P. White is currently the manager of community relations at the *Chicago Tribune*. Prior to undertaking this position, he was a member of the editorial board of the *Tribune* and a former reporter and editor on the newspaper's Metro desk, where he directed the Urban Affairs Team. Mr. White previously was the editorial page editor of *The Cincinnati Post*, where he worked for nine years. He is also a member of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute faculty. Prior to joining the *Tribune* in 1994, Byron spent two years as an administrator and consultant with inner-city, community-based nonprofits in Cincinnati and Chicago. He currently serves on the board of the Community Media Workshop, which trains nonprofits in media relations.

Byron has a master's degree in social science from the University of Chicago and currently is a fellow in the Leadership Greater Chicago program. Byron had assistance on this article from Paul Arntson, James Ettema, John McKnight, and Limor Peer, all of Northwestern University.

Ruth Morris: *A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program to Influence Newspaper Coverage*

Ruth Morris is a Quaker with a doctorate in sociology and social work. In her 25 years as an activist, university teacher, community organizer, author of seven books, and international speaker, she has worked for penal abolition, transformative justice, and community empowerment. Founder of four community alternatives to prisons, her work has been recognized through a variety of special awards: for her work with the homeless, for community organizing, and as a recipient of the YMCA Peace Medallion in 1995. Her life commitment is "to help all of us include those who fall through the cracks of society, and transform negative forces into resources for change." She believes that in risking creative failure we can take on cutting edge tasks, and that her greatest challenge is in learning how to fail gloriously and graciously.

This article is included in this volume by permission from the Communities Against Neighbourhoodism Coalition, and the Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group, North York, Ontario, Canada.

Eva Weinroth, Suzanne F. Jackson, and Keith Schloskey: *A Research Report on Newspaper Portrayals of Six Neighbourhoods in Metropolitan Toronto* (excerpted from the full report, *Newspaper Portrayals of Six Neighbourhoods in Metropolitan Toronto 1992-1995*).

This paper was developed by the three authors as part of research undertaken by the North York Community Health Promotion Research Unit (NYCHPRU). The Unit was a partnership of the North York Public Health Department and the Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto, and was funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health between 1991 and 1997. Its mission was to undertake innovative research on community health promotion.

The Unit's research provided a theoretical and empirical basis for health promotion programs being developed by the North York Public Health Department. Findings from specific research studies conducted in the Unit were intended to contribute to the knowledge base of health promotion in Ontario and elsewhere. This particular study was conducted as a joint research project between the Communities Against Neighbourhoodism Coalition (Keith Schloskey) and the North York Community Health Promotion Research Unit (Suzanne Jackson and Eva Weinroth).

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY-BASED
STRATEGY FOR INFLUENCING LOCAL
NEIGHBORHOOD COVERAGE

By Byron P. White

With Assistance From:
Paul Arntson, James Ettema, John McKnight, and Limor Peer

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGY FOR INFLUENCING LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD COVERAGE

This article is a guide to discovering ways to develop a community-based strategy for directing local media coverage toward the citizen activity of your community. It presumes two things:

- First, that such “news” would be powerfully useful in informing and motivating community people in their efforts to affect community change.
- Second, that these stories feed the media’s competitively and journalistically driven goals to report insightful and interesting stories in a timely manner.

In that sense, the article is neither a manual that instructs you on how to “pitch” individual stories in order to get them in the paper, nor a blueprint for ways to reform the media through protest or confrontation. Rather, it is intended to help you discover where the desires of community people and the objectives of journalists intersect. Further, it offers steps for how you can create a rapport with reporters, editors, and news administrators that takes advantage of these common areas.

The article is presented in four parts:

- Part One examines the gap that exists between what citizens say they want from the media and what the media actually provide. Much of this insight comes from conversations with community people as well as analyses of newspaper coverage in Chicago. It will prompt you to think about what kind of coverage you would like to see in your community.
- Part Two looks at how the media operate and how their focus on news coverage is evolving. It looks briefly at what traditionally has motivated journalists in regard to community coverage and new trends of coverage that are developing. It also will encourage you to consider, in some detail, how your local newspaper operates.
- Part Three helps you put together an action plan for interacting with newspaper representatives to convince them of the opportunities to satisfy both your objectives and their own through insightful community coverage.
- Part Four illustrates how a newspaper business section provides the kind of balanced coverage that communities want to achieve.

PART ONE
THE GAP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND REPORTERS

What is the problem?

Some way, somehow, the media and citizens are missing each other.

For several decades, newspaper readership and network television news viewing have been steadily declining. The percentage of adults who read weekday newspapers dropped from 64.8 percent in 1987 to 58.3 percent in 1997 according to the Newspaper Association of America, an industry trade group. Readership has fallen under 50 percent among the youngest adult age groups. Meanwhile, the three TV networks—ABC, CBS, and NBC—have lost more than a third of their news viewers over the past 15 years.

The reasons are varied, analysts say. New sources of information—including cable television, computer online and Internet services, and a glut of niche magazines—now compete with newspapers and the evening news for people’s attention. And, especially in the case of newspapers, busy schedules increasingly leave less time for reading, even among people who prefer to get their news from papers.

But media scholars say another factor is working against news media popularity: a credibility gap. Many readers find newspapers and television news to be too negative, sensational, and trivial.

When researchers from the Harwood Group talked to patrons at a donut shop in Wichita, Kansas, about their impressions of the media, one person said, “When a reporter or TV crew shows up, the real regulars leave.” Why? Out of fear that their words will be “twisted” and issues will be “polarized,” the patron said. It seems the local folks’ greatest worry was that the reporters just wouldn’t understand the complexities of their views and would rather corner them into extreme viewpoints and pit one neighbor against another.

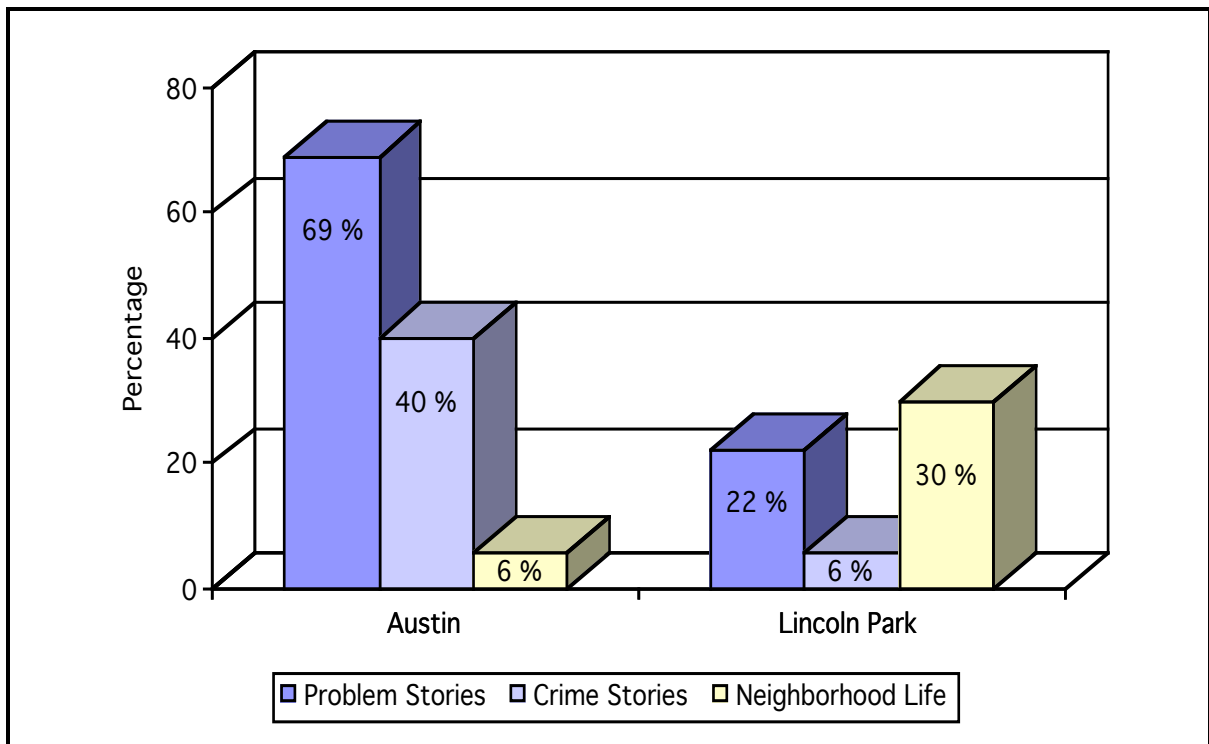
In a broader sense, this is the very problem community people have with the way the media cover their neighborhoods—particularly people who live in areas that are relatively poor in resources. Often, the reports paint a narrow, one-sided picture highlighting the neighborhood’s deficiencies. Even when the stories take a positive slant, the basis of the story often is still related to some problem.

In either case, the media frequently fail to provide a complete picture of these communities. Consequently, they often do not inspire residents to engage collectively in working to improve the community.

Chicago’s West Side: A Case Study

This is precisely what Northwestern University researchers James Ettema and Limor Peer found when they examined the way the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*—two downtown newspapers which cover the metropolitan area—covered two distinct city neighborhoods. One neighborhood was Lincoln Park, an upscale, lakefront community on the city’s tony and mostly white Near North Side. The other was Austin, a largely low-income, working-class community on the predominantly black West Side.

Figure 1
Chicago Tribune and Sun Times Stories
 Austin and Lincoln Park Neighborhoods, 1993

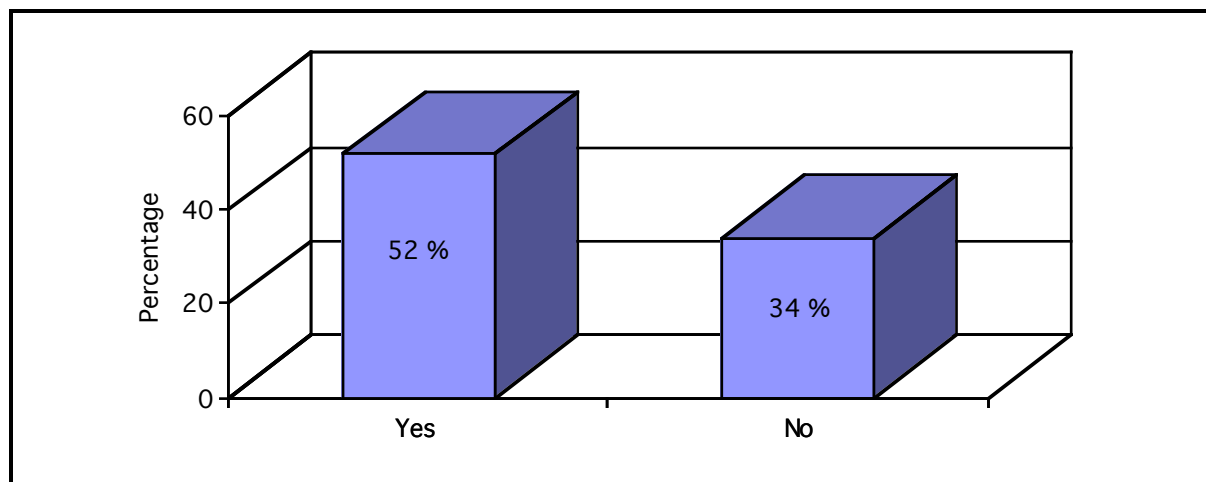


After analyzing a year’s worth of stories from 1993, the study found that while fewer than one quarter of the stories about Lincoln Park (22%) were about social

problems, more than two-thirds of the stories about Austin (69%) focused on social problems. In fact, in Austin 40% of the stories were about crime alone (more than half of all the problem-related stories); in Lincoln Park, just 6% of the stories (and only about a quarter of the problem-related articles) focused on crime (see Figure 1).

In some ways, this might have been expected. Austin certainly hosts a disproportionate share of the city's "social problems," including poverty, violence, drug-related crime, and police-community friction. Yet even the non-problem stories were distinctively different. It would seem that neighborhood news that was not about problems would focus instead on what might be called "neighborhood life," that is, the ordinary tales of the residents, places, and events that constitute the community. Indeed, 30% of the Lincoln Park stories fell into this category. But only 6% of Austin stories reported on neighborhood life.

Figure 2
Do the Problem-Oriented Stories About Austin
Mention Problem-Solving Activities?



The research, however, reached conclusions far more subtle than the general impression many people hold that the media only cover "bad news" in their communities. Indeed, while stories about problems dominated the coverage of Austin, most of these stories (52%) took a positive angle and focused on a problem-solving activity in the community. So a story about street gangs typically would be written in the context of how block clubs were trying to address the problem (see Figure 2).

Such coverage does not excuse the tendency of the newspapers to generally avoid looking beyond Austin's problems. But it does suggest attempts by the media to write about solutions or at least go beyond this deficiency-oriented portrayal in order to offer a positive spin on otherwise negative stories.

Making your own evaluation

It would be useful for you to do your own assessment of the way the newspapers in your town cover your community. If you are a regular newspaper reader—and even if you aren't—you probably already have drawn some conclusions about coverage. But documenting coverage in a more objective fashion will help as you determine both what you'd like to see in the paper, and how to go about influencing coverage in that direction.

A year's worth of stories probably is not practical for your group to assemble. A month is a more realistic time frame—short enough that the papers can be pulled together without holding up your project for too long, yet long enough to give you a pretty good overview of the way the paper operates.

There are a couple of ways to go about gathering together the papers you will be looking at. The least difficult is to begin now following a month's worth of coverage. The content of the papers can then be recorded daily or at some other regular interval. This method, of course, means you will not have any results for at least a month from now. Whether that time frame is practical will depend on the timetable you've set for the project.

If you are in a time crunch, another more labor-intensive way to go about doing the analysis would be to pull together a month's worth of papers that already have run. A good start would be to round them up from neighbors who may not have yet tossed them into the recycling bin. If you go this route, there are bound to be a few papers missing. You can fill in the holes (or find all of them, for that matter) by contacting the newspaper itself. Usually, there is a customer services department that handles back issues. Keep in mind that you'll probably have to pay for these, and sometimes quite a bit more than the normal price.

Another avenue is through your local library. The local papers, along with others from around the world, are likely to be kept on microfilm, which you can read and photocopy. The only trouble is you may not be able to access the most recent issues through microfilm records. Many papers are now putting archives of stories from past editions on the Internet through their own Web sites or through online services. The beauty of this method is that you can have the computer identify all the stories on your community or part of town by typing the name of your community into a search engine, rather than having to scan every page of the paper yourself. Sometimes, there is a fee for this service as well.

In order to keep from skewing your results, you ought to avoid examining a month when some exceptional news was occurring in your community, whether a high-profile tragedy or an annual community festival. Rather, try to select an "ordinary" month. Also, it may not be necessary to scan every section of the paper, though that would be ideal. If you are restrained by the amount of time you can appoint to this phase of the project, focus attention on the sections most pertinent to

community coverage. Those include metro or local news, the front page, real estate, and neighborhood news inserts, in particular, though features and business also may be worth monitoring.

Look for articles that mention the name of your community specifically, or the general area of the city that encompasses your community, depending on how narrowly you are trying to define your work. The geographical distinctions are up to you.

It is important to be open-minded as you enter this process. Because the classification of these stories is rather subjective, it is easy to go in and find exactly what you're looking for, whether positive or negative. If you are biased, it will only hurt your credibility when you begin talking with media representatives. For that reason, it is good to have more than one person—perhaps at least three—categorizing stories. When differences of opinion arise, you can discuss them, creating a kind of checks and balance system.

Also, keep track of the bylines that pop up frequently. You'll need to record them later in Part Two in the section on How Newspapers Operate.

Table 1 on the following page is a grid to use in recording each article. Under section, put down where in the paper the article appeared (i.e., metro, front page, business). Under type, identify the story as good, bad, neither, or mixed. Under description, write a brief statement of what the story is about.

Table 1
Newspaper Article Survey

Date	Headline	Section	Type	Description

What do community people want?

Many times, when community leaders complain about media coverage, they are certain of the kind of coverage they don't like, but not quite sure exactly what they would like to see. When they try to articulate their desires, it often comes off as naive and out of line with the newspaper's realistic—and reasonable—objectives.

In one breath, for instance, community people will call a reporter to express a desire for more positive news. "Not all kids in the neighborhood are out here selling drugs," is a common complaint that reporters hear. The caller really is asking for a greater breadth of stories about the community that will encompass positive issues. But a defensive reporter often interprets the narrowly stated request as meaning that he or she is being asked to ignore the stories about kids selling drugs, prompting the writer to resist the caller's demands.

On other occasions, however, community leaders will call the press to complain that a major problem in the community is being ignored. "Our kids are out here dying and nobody seems to be concerned about it," a caller might say, especially after a tragic event strikes the community. In those times, the caller is asking the newspaper for greater depth of coverage, to get beneath the surface story and tell how and why events happen. Still, to the busy reporter, this request sounds like it's contradicting the previous one. The likely interpretation is that the reader is asking for yet another gang story, and the paper does enough of those already.

Finding common ground

In both cases, an opportunity has been missed for the community and the newspaper to connect on some common goals. After analyzing the coverage of the two Chicago papers, Northwestern researchers asked community leaders in the Austin neighborhood how they wanted their communities to be covered. The discussion pushed the participants to go beyond the simple expressions of good news vs. bad news. They ended up articulating a rather sophisticated vision that very much falls in line with what many reporters and editors would say they want to accomplish.

The citizens essentially said they wanted to see improvement in coverage that follows both the public or civic life of the community, and the private or family lives of residents.

In regard to civic life, they wanted two things. First of all, they were interested in stories about emerging issues that focus on how citizens have made and can make a difference in affecting those issues. And second, they wanted stories about events when they occur that give insight into how they came about. In regard to private life, residents wanted more information about everyday actions of

community people in order to help citizens make connections with their neighbors, their city, and the world around them.

“I would love to have media coverage on some of those forums and hearings that we had in the community,” one neighborhood leader said. “I think that they [will] open people’s eyes that you do have intelligent people in the community who also think.” Said another leader: “Another thing I think I would like to see more of is what people are doing to change their community.” Essentially, the leaders reasoned that when reading about their community in the paper, they should be reading about themselves, not as victims or statistics but as active, concerned players in the community—living, working, aspiring and affecting change. Further, they are looking to the media to provide direction in explaining how change can be brought about.

A local newspaper is not likely to be able to cover every community forum. But, perhaps surprising to some, the desires of the Austin leaders line up with the mission statements of many media organizations. One mission statement begins like this: “Our mission is to help people master their world through knowledge.” Understanding that, it may be less surprising to know that when residents were asked to classify the areas where they would like to see more coverage, the categories looked very much like the traditional “beats” already in place at most newspapers. Table 2 illustrates what the categories were.

Table 2
Categories of Coverage Residents Would Like to See

Civic life:	Private life:
• Economic development	• Sports
• Housing	• Religion
• Environment	• Family life
• Health care	• Arts and entertainment
• Education	• Death notices
• Government accountability	• Libraries
• Safety	• Clubs and associations
• Social calendar	• Food
• Transportation	• Fashion
• Public notices	• Announcements
	• Parks
	• Celebrities

Deciding what you want

Now that you have an idea of what the folks in Austin wanted, here's a chance to brainstorm for yourself. Table 3 is an example of how you might think about the kind of stories you would like to see in your local paper. Table 4 on the following page is a blank worksheet that allows you to fill in the blanks and develop a brief description of four stories you'd like to see in your local paper.

The goal here is twofold. First, the process will help you define what you want beyond vague notions. Beyond that, what you come up with will help you later in the workbook to line up your desires with the realities of what your newspaper is looking for. That may mean adjusting your goals, repackaging them to fit your local paper's agenda, or targeting specific publications. *You* may want a record of all neighborhood meetings in your community, but that may not be in any way a practical goal of the downtown newspaper. However, it may fit quite well on the paper's Internet Web site.

For now, dream on. Describe the topic of the story. Then come up with an "angle" for the story, something about it that is timely and would make it interesting to people within and outside the community. Finally, give a sense of what impact the story would have in your community. When you're done, share your thoughts with other community organizers. List the best ones. (You might have everyone share their No. 1 choice or select those identified by more than one person.)

Table 3
Stories You Would Like to See in the Newspaper (Sample)

	Main topic	Story angle	Community impact
Story 1	Preview of community's annual summer arts fair.	Despite last week's announced cuts in neighborhood school arts programs around the city, a record number of youth are participating.	Event attendance would increase; young people would feel greater pride in their work.

Table 4
Stories You Would Like to See in the Newspaper (Worksheet)

	Main topic	Story angle	Community impact
Story 1			
Story 2			
Story 3			
Story 4			

PART TWO
HOW NEWSPAPERS OPERATE

Why newspapers do what they do

Little has been written chronicling the development of neighborhood or urban affairs coverage, as we know it today. But it is acknowledged by many newspaper veterans that newspapers paid precious little attention to events in ethnic minority and low-income neighborhoods until after World War II, and even then not to any great extent. Before that, these neighborhoods typically attracted attention only when some event seemed to threaten the larger community.

However, neighborhood coverage began to build—like so much institutional attention aimed at urban neighborhoods—as a result of the social upheaval of the 1960s. With that change came a strong tendency toward coverage of social problems.

A dramatic shift took place after the summer of 1967, when dozens of U.S. cities saw their central, African-American neighborhoods go up in flames as the result of urban riots. In response to the disturbances, President Johnson created the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (commonly known as the Kerner Commission, named after Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner, who chaired it). One cause for the riots, the commission identified, was the negligence of the media to report “adequately on race relations and ghetto problems.”

“They have not communicated to the majority of their audiences—which is white—a sense of the degradation, misery, and hopelessness of living in the ghetto,” the commission concluded.

Soon after, newspapers began devoting resources to exploring the problems of America’s ghettos. African-American reporters were hired onto mostly white newspaper staffs with new urgency, and a new journalistic discipline was born: urban affairs reporting. Its emergence coincided with the creation of urban institutes on college campuses, an increase in federal programs aimed at cities, and other developments designed to expose and, consequently, eradicate the problems.

In many ways, such journalism has produced extraordinary results. Nearly every year, Pulitzer Prizes are awarded to reporters for their in-depth coverage of some urban problem. Rather than being ignored by society, the many social pathologies of the ghetto are exposed on front pages and at the top of evening newscasts every night.

But like so many of those well-intended innovations of the 1960s, traditional urban affairs coverage has, in many ways, outlived its usefulness. The constant drumbeat of problem stories not only has failed to yield the dramatic improvements that were expected over the years, but it has managed to turn off many readers—both those from outside the so-called “problem communities” and those from within them. And just as government has begun shifting the way it goes about responding to America’s cities, so too are the media rethinking their approaches to urban affairs coverage. The redesign provides an opportunity for community people to play a role in shaping coverage.

New trends in urban affairs coverage

The changing trends toward covering cities follow other shifts in newspaper coverage in recent years aimed at regaining credibility among increasingly cynical audiences. A few years ago, many editors, influential political writers and journalism professors—led to a large degree by prominent *Washington Post* columnist David Broder—called for more meaningful campaign coverage that focused more on issues than on insider politics and the strategies of the “horse race” between candidates. More recently, sports coverage has taken a tougher look at off-the-field issues that had been overlooked for years, including business conflicts, violence against women committed by athletes, and gambling.

In addition to being prompted by the media’s self-critique, the change in urban coverage is being influenced by other factors. Metropolitan areas are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse; covering them with integrity means going beyond the impressions that, in the past, generally were shaped by white reporters and editors. At the same time, as newspapers’ traditional white audiences dwindle, ethnic minorities who haven’t been fully represented in the paper are seen as potential new readers. Reaching them means covering issues in ways they will appreciate and find credible.

The rise of civic journalism

The most fundamental change in community coverage can be found in the tenets of a philosophy called “civic” or “public” journalism. Its elusive definition is debated among media experts and managers. But one of the best explanations comes from Jan Schaffer of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism:

Civic journalism is both an attitude and a set of tools. The attitude is an affirmation that journalists have an obligation—a constitutionally protected obligation—to give readers and viewers the news and information they need to make decisions in a self-governing society. The emerging tools try to help readers and viewers see how they can be active participants, not only in building news coverage, but also in building their communities.

It is the latter half of that definition that has sparked controversy within the news industry and caused some executives to view “civic journalism” as heresy. The line between giving readers and viewers information and *helping* them use that information is drawn at different places depending on the culture and history of the news organization and the philosophy of its managers.

Still, along a continuum ranging from sponsoring opinion polls on one end to hosting community forums on the other, most news agencies are engaged in some attempt to connect with their readers and elevate their voices in the paper. Any one of these efforts provides an avenue for community people to make their case with news agencies. Some of the examples follow:

Reader contributions—For decades, letters to the editor have been a staple of American newspapers. Some newspapers, in addition, allow for guest columns written by average citizens to run on the commentary or “op-ed” pages. While sometimes slightly edited for length and clarity, these writings give readers a chance to express their opinions in their own words.

Opinion polls—Polls always have been popular at election time, particularly among large papers. Increasingly, newspapers are using them to gauge attitudes toward everyday issues like crime and race relations. While their impersonal structure of bunching people together as statistics often misses the complexity of citizens’ views, they nonetheless force reporters to shape a story from the vantage point of citizens.

Neighborhood sections—Many newspapers put out weekly neighborhood sections, zoned for particular areas within the metropolitan region, which focus on local news about a narrowly defined community. Others put out such zoned editions on a daily basis.

Special projects—Some of the more aggressive believers in civic journalism have put together special sections specifically designed to help citizens deal with a particular issue, such as commuting to work or preventing crime. Unlike traditional investigative reports, these projects may involve citizen boards, forums, or even readers’ contributions to drive home their user-friendly point of view.

Digital publishing—As Americans increasingly turn to “new media” for their information needs, newspapers have established their own sites on the World Wide Web to compete. Since the Internet allows for infinite amounts of information, some newspapers are taking advantage of the medium to provide detailed community information that would be impossible to accommodate in the newspaper. Everything from school lunch menus to police blotters are being posted on the Web at these newspaper-generated community news sites.

Community listening—A growing number of newspaper reporters and editors are taking time from their normal routines to listen to their readers in deliberate ways.

Focus groups are the most popular method for this and often are used by marketing people to develop strategies for increasing newspaper sales. But some newspapers also are hosting small, intimate community forums where reporters and editors sit down with a few residents to find out what is going on in their communities. In some cases, citizens are invited in to the paper to meet the staff and sit in on meetings so that they get a better feel of how the paper works.

Town hall meetings—A few newspapers have hosted large, town hall meetings where dozens or even hundreds of residents are invited. Usually, these events are focused on resolving a divisive citywide issue that needs resolving, such as a tax levy or referendum on the ballot. Frequently done in partnership with a television station, the meetings are professionally moderated, sometimes to purposely balance views from both sides of the matter. Within the industry, it is the most controversial and highly debated form of civic journalism since it launches the media beyond its traditional role of objective observer.

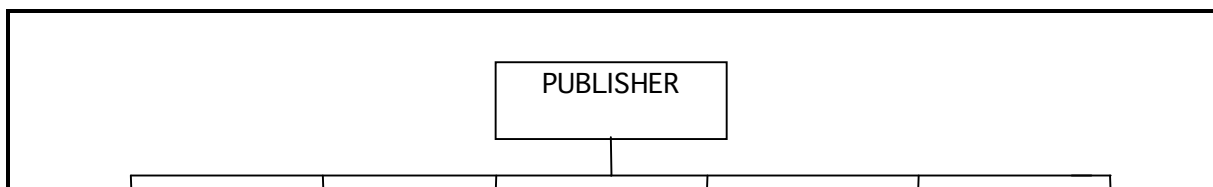
The two sides of the newspaper business

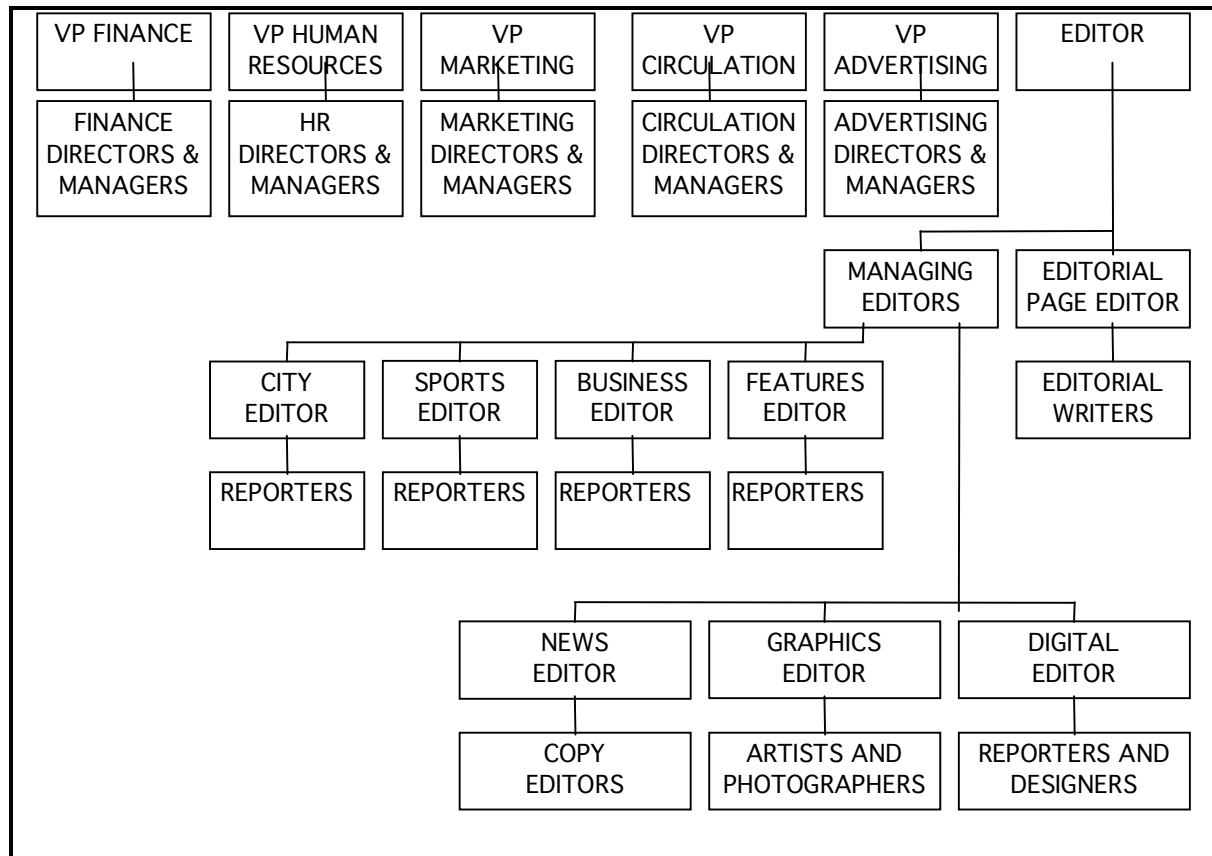
Essentially, there are two sides to the newspaper business: editorial and corporate (see Figure 3). While at credible newspapers, the two functions operate individually (despite the suspicions of some readers to the contrary), each affects newspaper coverage in its own way. Understanding how will help you figure out ways to connect to the paper.

The corporate side

Newspapers are first and foremost, a business; collectively, they constitute a \$46 billion industry. A newspaper’s editorial content can be the most comprehensive and wonderfully written in the world, but if it doesn’t make money, there won’t be the resources to hire staff and buy newsprint and print the paper and deliver it. A newspaper must have an organizational structure in order to run these operations as well as to gather news. Figure 3 is an example of one such structure, although many papers are less elaborate. While, as every reader well knows, many newspapers make money through their subscriptions and street sales, it is advertising—where businesses buy space in the newspaper to sell their goods and services—which provides the primary source of income. At some papers, classified advertisements make up a major chunk of revenue.

Figure 3
Organizational Structure of a Newspaper





A newspaper sets its ad rates based on its circulation. The more papers it sells to the people businesses want to reach, the higher it can set its rates. So a paper makes more money if it reaches more people, and the vehicle for reaching people is the paper's editorial content.

Most publishers take great care to separate their editorial and corporate functions. The old practice of a publisher's canceling a critical story about a major advertiser for fear of losing its ad contract no longer occurs at credible, daily newspapers. But the wishes of potential advertisers necessarily determine which people the newspaper tries to reach. That, indirectly, affects editorial content.

Newspaper executives, for instance, try to get their product in the hands of middle-class residents who are prime targets for advertisers. It would not be surprising to find in your city that the major daily is trying to increase its circulation in expanding areas of the suburbs. The strategy for this, along with marketing and promotion campaigns, probably includes shifting editorial content to attract those potential readers. Maybe the paper has started special weekly sections focused specifically on different suburban communities. Some papers produce a separate

news section each day for different sections of the metropolitan area, a practice commonly known as zoning.

Because newspapers, like all businesses, have limited resources, a push in staffing and attention in one area of coverage can mean a reduction—or at least stagnation—in resources devoted to other areas. So coverage of the central city may very well suffer, or at least not enjoy the same relative staffing attention, as the suburbs where population—and readership—often is growing.

The editorial side

For the most part, reporters don't care about the corporate end of the business. The organizational structure of a newspaper insulates the news gatherers from the advertising and circulation people. And the last thing most reporters want hanging over their efforts to be fair and balanced are the financial concerns of executives who make six-figure salaries.

But there are basic principles that fuel reporters' and editors' perceptions of which stories deserve the most attention. One factor is the desire to disclose wrongdoing, particularly committed by powerful people. Part of this appeal is adherence to the long-standing notion that the media ought to be a watchdog on the halls of power and influence. But part of the draw is the desire for celebrity. Ever since *Washington Post* reporters Robert Woodward and Carl Bernstein forced President Richard M. Nixon to resign in 1974 after their relentless pursuit of the Watergate scandal, generations of reporters have yearned to bag their own big official, whether in City Hall or a corporate boardroom.

Another motivating factor is the zeal for competition. Reporters long to "break" a story, that is, report it before their competition does. Oftentimes, a story that already has been broken continues to receive prominent attention in the media as various organizations jockey each day to get some new morsel of information that the competition failed to find.

Finally, reporters seek simply to tell stories that are interesting and persuasive. They look for that tearjerker or explanatory essay that evokes empathy or anger in readers, or, best of all, moves them to action. Consequently, tragedy is a common theme. The profile of a child abuse victim—or a child abuser, for that matter—would satisfy this drive, for instance.

Reporters also tend to exhibit a fierce independence, priding themselves on being beholden to no one.

Not all reporters, of course, are motivated by all these things. And there are many other driving forces. But these are ones universally valued in newsrooms. They can either work for or against the goals of community people. What is certain

is that your ability to shape your case around these factors will make you that much more persuasive.

Understanding your local paper

This section will give you some direction in learning more about your local newspaper and how it functions, and in taking the first steps in interacting with newspaper representatives.

The bottom line is, you need to go where the newspaper is headed if you are to launch a persuasive strategy for influencing coverage. In most cases, the newspaper in your town probably is embarking upon, or at least considering, some of the strategies and changes mentioned above.

In the exercise on the next page, you are asked to provide detailed information about your paper, so that you can better understand its intentions, strengths, and shortcomings. What you learn—along with the content analysis described early on in this manual—will be the basis for your conversations with reporters and editors (which we will discuss in Part Three).

There are two kinds of questions you will need to answer: ones that can be answered through observation, particularly as you count community stories; and ones that will take some deeper investigating, perhaps even contacting the newspaper staff (see Table 5).

When it comes to getting information from within the newspaper, there are at least three approaches you can take. The best people to talk to are staff members you already know—no matter where they fit into the organization or how casual your relationship. Ask them to get the information for you. If they aren't able to obtain the answers, have them get you in touch with whomever you should contact. When you make that connection, be sure to say the person you know suggested you call.

Finally, if neither of those avenues works out, check to see if the newspaper has an ombudsman or public editor who fields calls from readers. This person probably can help you as well. What you don't want to do is make a cold call to the city desk; you're likely to get nowhere fast.

Table 5
Local Newspaper Survey

Observation questions:

Which reporters write most about community news?

In what sections of the paper do their stories mostly appear?

Who are the editors of those sections?

Internal questions:

What is the newspaper's mission statement?

What public journalism or community listening strategies are being tried?

Where are those strategies being implemented?

Which staff persons are spearheading the efforts?

In what geographical area is the newspaper looking to increase circulation?

PART THREE
HOW CITIZENS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Developing a strategy for change

Now that you have thought about what you'd like to see in your local newspaper and have considered the way newspapers operate, it is time to develop a plan of action for persuading the press to generate fair and balanced coverage of your community.

This workbook has laid the foundation for a strategy that helps you incorporate your desires and insights within the values and goals of your local newspaper. This does not mean you are seeking a friendship that compromises the goals of your group or the newspaper's editorial independence. Rather, you are proposing a partnership—a win-win proposition—in which your community goals are met through the newspaper's pursuit of its own stated values.

Of course, at this point, *you* may be more aware that such potential exists than are the reporters and editors at your local paper. And you likely are more determined to see it happen. The question is: How do you persuade the local paper to get on board?

The best plan for you is one custom-made for your situation. Ultimately, it will involve a face-to-face meeting with at least one key newspaper editor, and a presentation on your part. You will have to determine the specifics of that presentation, but essentially it will need to cover at least four areas:

1. *What the community wants and why*

- What general observations did you make in Part One about the newspaper's community coverage?
- Based upon your work in Part One, what stories would you like to see in the paper?
- Why are these stories important to the community and to providing a fair and balanced picture of your community?

2. *How your objectives fit the newspaper's interests and goals*

- In what ways would the pursuit of your story ideas meet the broad journalistic goals outlined in Part Two?
- How do the stories address the newspaper's specific goals identified in Part Two?
- What civic journalism initiatives identified in Part Two do your stories tap into?

3. *Ways citizens in your community will assist the paper*

- What individuals or structure will be put in place to provide information and direction to cooperative reporters?

4. *Mechanisms for holding the newspaper accountable*

- What mechanisms will citizens use to monitor future coverage of the community?
- How will citizens be encouraged to respond in the future to newspaper reporters and editors concerning coverage of their community?

Write out your plan and share it with others in the community so that there is broad ownership. Then schedule a meeting with the appropriate newspaper representatives. You will have to determine exactly who those people should be. In general, consider which reporters or editors community people have a relationship with, which reporters or editors—based on what you know about them—would be most receptive to your request for an audience, and which are responsible for directing community coverage?

You may find it necessary to schedule more than one meeting or conversation in order to get to the right people. Initially, you might involve just two or three community representatives. Eventually, however, it would be ideal to host a meeting in the community (perhaps with a tour included), and to involve several community people.

A model proposal

Here is an example of what a community plan might look like if it followed the outline presented above.

A Community Plan for Affecting Coverage Of the *Main Street Gazette*

I. What our community wants

The *Main Street Gazette* reports on the entire metropolitan area with a variety of stories. Our community is regularly covered. Yet a majority of these stories deal with crime and social problems.

A survey of stories written about our community during the month of April found that, out of eight stories, six of them were about crime. It is our general impression that this focus on crime is typical of coverage throughout the year.

As residents of the community, however, we know that there are many other things going on other than crime. For instance, during April, a program was held at the local library honoring a long-time community leader. Also, the city council approved the demolition of a building that a neighborhood nonprofit group was trying to purchase as a site for a community center. And plans were finalized for our annual spring arts fair. All these stories went unnoticed by the *Gazette*.

Without such stories, readers in the area do not get a full picture of the issues that are of importance to our community, or of the commitment citizens put forth to address those issues. They do not see that ours is a place characterized by interesting people, active residents, and neighborhood successes, as well as by crime and other social problems. Likewise, our residents are not affirmed or motivated to get involved and participate in community activities.

II. How our objectives meet the newspaper's goals

Coverage of these non-crime stories would make the *Gazette's* city report much more interesting to readers who are tired of focusing solely on problems in communities like ours. It also would give the *Gazette* a competitive edge over the TV stations in the city and the city's weekly newspaper, which are just as focused on crime. And these stories would prove far more interesting to reporters who may not know such stories exist in our community. A crusading reporter, for instance, would have had a field day with the demolition story, which no doubt would have gotten much attention at City Hall.

These kinds of stories seem to fit well within the *Gazette's* stated mission to "make our readers fully informed about the world around them." These also seem to be the kinds of articles the *Gazette* set out to find when it launched its weekly suburban sections last year. It would seem that city readers would be just as interested in similar stories about urban neighborhoods.

III. Ways we will assist the *Gazette*

We desire to assist cooperative reporters and editors in writing more comprehensive, balanced, and accurate stories about our community. There are at least three ways we will do this:

1. **We will put together a community resource guide.** The guide, which will be made available to reporters and editors, will provide a comprehensive list of key community associations, organizations, and churches and their representatives. It also will include the names and phone numbers of vital neighborhood institutions, including our schools, libraries, and parks.

Finally, it will include a list of community “experts.” These individuals will be arranged by area of interest and neighborhood involvement. For instance, the leader of our community policing program will be listed under “safety.” Long-time homeowners may fall under categories of “neighborhood history” or “real estate trends.” Student leaders will be listed under “youth” or “education,” as will parents of children who are excelling in various arenas. The guide will be updated twice a year.

2. **We will establish a neighborhood news bureau.** It will serve as a clearinghouse connecting reporters with citizen leaders and spokespeople. Rather than advocate for particular groups or causes, it will be an unbiased conduit for information. Its primary focus, however, will be to draw attention to community-building activities in the community.

Communication between the media and neighborhood will flow in both directions through the bureau. Community groups will be able to post “press releases” there. A summary of these releases will be faxed or e-mailed periodically to reporters who request the information or who have been identified as being likely to use it.

At the same time, the bureau will field calls from reporters who want comment from community leaders and residents for particular stories. Using the resource guide, computerized compilation of press releases and other information provided by neighborhood groups, knowledge of the community and other resources, the center’s staff will attempt to aid reporters in talking to appropriate residents and in gathering accurate and timely information.

The center will be housed in a central and highly regarded location in the community. It will be staffed by a part-time worker with media or public relations experience, and two volunteers, one of whom will be a resident with in-depth knowledge of the community and one of whom will serve in a clerical role, gathering, filing (conventionally and electronically) and distributing information.

3. **We will host community information sessions for reporters each quarter.** The sessions may take a variety of forms, including:

- Neighborhood tours focusing on new development, demographic changes, creative neighborhood initiatives, or other points of interest.
- Panel discussions on hot topics featuring key community leaders and experts.
- Meet-and-greet luncheons where reporters and residents can share insights and expectations with one another.

Every attempt will be made to make these sessions coincide with current events, so that they can be of practical use to reporters.

IV. Ways we will hold the *Gazette* accountable for its coverage

As a community, we will hold a media-training program for residents. The goals here will be twofold:

- To help citizens in our community understand how reporters do their jobs and what their objectives are, so that residents will be prepared to respond in a way that best serves community interests. The primary goal is to foster understanding of the media by bolstering citizen self-confidence. Topics to be covered might be: *How should families deal with reporters when a personal tragedy makes the headlines?* or *What does it mean when you're stopped for a 'man on the street' interview?*
- To instruct citizens on the most effective ways to voice their praise and criticism concerning newspaper coverage. Topics to be covered might include: *Who to call when you've got something to say?* and *How to write effective letters to the editor.*

If at all possible, the program will be done in partnership with a media organization and will include the participation of working journalists.

We will also monitor the coverage of our community and schedule a meeting with key editors every three months in order to discuss how coverage concerning our community has changed.

Conclusion

There is no way of knowing how your local newspaper representatives will respond to your presentation. If they are honest, they probably will stop short of guaranteeing you that some particular story will end up in the paper on a given day. But simply taking time to do your homework and initiating dialogue will in itself do wonders to get the newspaper to take notice. More than that, you very likely will open up new lines of communication and cooperation with the

newspaper—and perhaps convince editors to commit to their own plan of action concerning coverage of your community.

At the very least, you will have put together an informed case for the advantages your local newspaper stands to gain by deliberately pursuing more comprehensive coverage of neighborhoods. Any newspaper serious about pursuing more fair and balanced community coverage will recognize such information as valuable and necessary to its mission.

PART FOUR
THE BUSINESS PAGES: A MODEL OF BALANCED COVERAGE

In making your case for balanced coverage of your community, you may find it useful to hold up the local paper's business section as a model of what the newspaper could be doing in its community coverage.

In most cities, the business section consistently provides the array of news coverage community people seem to be asking for. In its coverage of the entrepreneurial "community," it offers, on most days, a mix of "hard news" and profiles. Some stories result from the action of a major institution the previous day, and other information comes from enterprising reporters who spend time out in the business "community" with their sources. Usually, each day offers a mix of good news and bad news, and much in between.

Consider the front pages of the *Chicago Tribune's* business section from two consecutive days:

Day 1 headlines:

"Edison reversal on deregulation"

(Breaking news story about how the local electric company caved in to pressure from state legislators to invite competition.)

"Smartcard fingerprint checks for O'Hare cargo"

(Feature on how technology will check fingerprints of truckers heading to restricted cargo areas at the airport.)

"Lender joins top tier with merger"

(Upbeat story about how a credit company's \$1 billion acquisition makes it No. 2 consumer-finance company.)

"Franchisees attack McDonald's"

(Problem story on how disgruntled restaurant owners complain about the Chicago-based company's marketing tactics on the eve of its annual shareholders meeting.)

Day 2 headlines:

"Chicago-area, state jobless rates decline"

(Good news economic story.)

"Greenspan backs plan from House Republicans"

(One of a two-story information package—along with the next article—about changes in the banking industry.)

“Some consumers like the one-stop shopping idea; others have concerns”
(Down-the-middle story on banking innovation.)

“McDonald’s pledges to improve”
(“Other side” follow up to previous day’s story.)

In addition to these, there is, each day, a lineup of six short “insider” items about local developments in the business field, such as mergers and promotions, and a market report on how well the stock market performed. Over time, a regular reader of the *Tribune’s* business section would get a comprehensive picture of Chicago’s business community—its successes and shortcomings, its key leaders, and the trends and forces affecting it, positively and negatively.

The business section is designed to provide business people the information they need to be effective in their work. The same standards should be applied to the neighborhood news. It should provide local residents the information they need to be effective citizens in their community.

a case study of a neighbourhood coalition's program to
influence newspaper coverage

By Ruth Morris
Communities Against Neighbourhoodism
Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group

Included in this volume by permission from:
Communities Against Neighbourhoodism
Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group
North York, Ontario
Canada

A CASE STUDY OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD COALITION'S PROGRAM TO INFLUENCE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

This is an adventure story about how the residents of a community under attack by the media and the wider world led the way toward creating a new concept to fight prejudice against neighbourhoods perceived to be low in income and high in minorities. It tells how residents of the Jane-Finch neighbourhood played a central role in building a collaboration of neighbourhoods in Toronto that has engaged in a common struggle against "neighbourhoodism," a form of bigotry comprised of classism and racism.

The story of the Communities Against Neighbourhoodism Coalition (CAN) is a story of community leaders engaged in creative, risk-taking activities designed to promote the understanding of the neighbourhood as a beautiful place. After visiting a community gathering in Jane-Finch, an Australian visitor commented, "I'm going back downtown and tell people 'Jane-Finch is where the beautiful people live.'"

FIGHTING NEIGHBOURHOODISM: JANE-FINCH LEADS THE STRUGGLE AGAINST NEIGHBOURHOOD DISCRIMINATION

The Jane-Finch neighbourhood is named after two main thoroughfares that intersect at the busy corner of Jane and Finch. The neighbourhood is sometimes labeled a "corridor" because the two streets are lined by a series of side-by-side, high-rise buildings that tower over the community creating two shadowy aisles. Although it is about 15-20 kilometers from the center of Toronto, Jane-Finch is a suburb that acts as a point of first entry for many new immigrants. In the past, the public housing authority joined developers in promoting the community as an appropriate location for numerous high-rise residential developments, with no concern for providing adequate play areas, meeting areas, or public space for all kinds of community needs. Thus, although Jane-Finch is a suburban neighbourhood, it has many of the characteristics of inner-city neighbourhoods.

Jane-Finch is both better off and worse off than might appear from the description. Toronto has justly received two international awards as the best city in the world for multicultural living, so even its worst aspects do not compare to the worst of the deteriorated neighbourhoods in the United States. On the other hand, a York University study documented that suburban low-income neighbourhoods in general, and Jane-Finch in particular, receive only a fraction of the supportive service dollars that inner-city Toronto neighbourhoods receive. So Jane-Finch resident leaders have been fighting against the developers to prevent further decimation of the community and to urge funding for adequate space for healthy recreation and services.

A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program

Single-parent mothers were beginning to make progress against the rampant development when Peter McLaren wrote a book that prompted a negative response from the media. A dedicated teacher in the Jane-Finch public schools, Mr. McLaren was horrified by the conditions he found there, and the lack of supports available for the needy immigrant families that continued to arrive. *Cries from the Corridor* (1980, Toronto: Methuen Press) was a powerful book pointing out the problematic conditions in the community and calling for help. In response, the print media, the public, and the local politicians used the book's description of Jane-Finch as an excuse to label the community a bad place. What was needed—more teachers, more resources, an end to overcrowding—was not forthcoming. Instead, more focus and blame was directed toward the individuals who live in Jane-Finch.

After the media attention, people from even remote parts of Canada became convinced that Jane-Finch was a terrible place, although people living and working in the community did not share this view. Through an agency known as the Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group, people began to work on building a stronger community image. This agency believed that communities, like people, need a sense of self-worth to fulfill their potential. The community includes people from 120 countries, speaking 30 different major languages, a fact that prompted the agency to organize events around the many cultural traditions of the people living in Jane-Finch. One local agency formed a community theatre group that produced three-to-four plays every year, which highlighted these traditions, and presented these plays in local venues such as the high school. In 1992 a neighbourhood Multicultural Fair attracted 4,000 people, all celebrating the multicultural richness of the area. At the same time, the agency operated a community radio program, "Jane-Finch in Focus," which emphasized the positive aspects of the community. A local newspaper was printed in five languages, and the agency worked very hard to generate positive publicity for the community's many strong points.

THE COMMUNITIES AGAINST NEIGHBOURHOODISM COALITION

In 1993, Ruth Morris, Director of the Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group, visited with the Warden Woods community development group in another part of Toronto to develop networks and exchange community-building strategies. The meeting turned into an "ah-ha" experience for Ms. Morris when the other group described how they were having identical problems with a negative neighbourhood image, generated at least in part by the way they had been portrayed in the media. Some of the disappointing experiences that were occurring in both communities included:

- Police who spoke negatively about the neighbourhood and sometimes handled local police calls in ways that discouraged the residents, inflamed the neighbourhood, and ultimately worsened its reputation.

- Media coverage that focused exclusively on negative events to the exclusion of positive aspects of the neighbourhood and its activities.
- Media faulting the neighbourhood and its residents for things that occurred far outside the boundaries of the area.
- Media publication of quotes elicited for the specific purpose of making the neighbourhood look bad and exposing the worst possible perspective, but not representing the average person's view.

The result was a lack of confidence and pride in the neighbourhood, even among the people living there. Many community members reported that their address was a handicap when they were job hunting, as well as in other settings, and that they felt humiliated by the reactions of outsiders to their place of residence.

The “ah-ha” experience that occurred was a realization that the tactics used by both communities to fight their negative media portrayal had failed. In other major historical social movements—the Civil Rights movement, the Women's movement, and the Gay and Lesbian Rights movement—no forward progress occurred until the problem was labeled for what it was (i.e., racism, sexism, and homophobia are all examples of bigotry). The two groups realized that the only way to fight the problem of bigotry was head on: naming bigotry and demanding equal rights for all was the only effective means of turning these problems around. The groups came up with the concept of “neighbour-hoodism,” prejudice against certain neighbourhoods that are perceived to be low income and occupied by a concentration of racial minorities. In order to effectively fight neighbourhoodism, the Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group and the group from Warden Woods decided to join forces and name the evil, and then fight for the right to a fair representation of their communities.

Representatives from both organizations contacted other labeled communities in Toronto, and established a loose coalition of 15-20 groups around the negative image issue. Calling themselves the Communities Against Neighbourhoodism (CAN) Coalition, each neighbourhood had the opportunity to share its experiences with discriminatory media practices. A central meeting place was selected and the coalition continued to meet for the purpose of mutual support and direct action. The coalition developed four goals that guided its work.

1. **BILL OF RIGHTS:** To develop a Bill of Rights for media treatment of neighbourhoods.
2. **DOCUMENT THE PROBLEM:** To do research illustrating the extent of the problem.

A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program 35

3. **ADVOCACY NETWORK:** To develop a joint network—one for all and all for one—so the coalition could advocate for all of the neighbourhoods whenever any one was attacked.
4. **WORKING WITH THE PRESS:** To work with the press through advocacy and dialogue to narrow the gap between the Bill of Rights and the way things were operating.

The Bill of Rights was fairly straightforward and simple. It included the following eight points:

1. All quotations should be accurate and reasonable in content.
2. There shall be research and presentation on all sides of the issues.
3. There shall be an immediate appeal process through an Ombudsman, for retractions and corrections.
4. Stories shall be accurate, headlines will reflect their true content and not distort the facts.
5. There shall not be stereotypical negative names for neighbourhoods, and there must not be racist or classist terms or innuendoes.
6. Where locations are identified, street addresses shall be used, not neighbourhood names.
7. When exceptional news stories are covered, broader facts shall be included to show these events are exceptional.
8. There shall be a balance of positive facts when writing stories about negative events, especially those affecting a community, institution, agency, neighbourhood, racial, or economic group.

In the process of building the coalition and developing the goals and Bill of Rights, CAN members knew that it would be critical for participating neighbourhoods to provide mutual support to members under attack in the press. As it turned out, Jane-Finch was the victim of an extremely negative portrayal in a local paper during this period, and so it became the first coalition member to receive support from the others. CAN immediately mobilized a letter-writing campaign directed at the editors of the offending newspaper. It prepared an action sheet for general distribution that provided highlights (or “lowlights” as they came to be called) of the article in question; a list of names, titles, and addresses to which to send the letters or direct a protest; a request for copies to come back to CAN for monitoring purposes; and a short list of salient points from which each writer might choose to elaborate on in his or her own way. Although CAN recognized that it

might be difficult to mobilize writers with such a general request, it quickly reached its target of 100 letters.

In the process of developing the letter-writing campaign, CAN built a list of people from all of the neighbourhoods who might be prepared to write letters on any issue of neighbourhoodism. This list became known as the Network on Bad Press. Because network members came primarily from fairly mobile populations, and because some were more comfortable writing letters on certain topics than others, it was difficult to use the Network as effectively as CAN would have liked. However, just the process of developing the list gave members the sense that they were growing in versatility and strength.

Following the letter-writing campaign, CAN organized a meeting between the managing editor of the publishing paper, the offending reporter, and community representatives. CAN arranged the meeting in the neighbourhood rather than at newspaper offices. It was held at an elegant restaurant in the center of Jane-Finch whose very existence belied the negative image of the community that had been presented in the article. The meeting seemed like a success to CAN members, but shortly thereafter, the managing editor left Toronto and yet another attack on Jane-Finch appeared in the same paper. As a result, CAN members decided that courteous advocacy is limited in what it can accomplish, given the reality that the media playing field is not a level one. In spite of vigorous efforts on behalf of residents, CAN learned that only 1% to 5% of letters to the editor are ever printed. In addition, it grew to understand that the freedom the press enjoys can sometimes work to protect them from the need to take responsibility for their own errors and for the damage they may do with inaccurate or inflammatory reporting. CAN members also recognized that once the harm was done to a particular neighbourhood, no amount of defensive action could reverse it. As a result, although they continued their efforts with courteous advocacy, they also began to take a more aggressive and offensive stance, including several other specific strategies that were very effective in the fight for fair treatment by the media.

Media Training

CAN organized media training sessions to provide residents with the opportunity to learn skills in interacting with media representatives, and to speak for their community without falling into any media traps. At the sessions, residents learned how to express their own views, how to stick to their own agenda for portraying their neighbourhoods, how to avoid making any negative statements about their community, and how to focus on positive and exciting stories no matter what the media may ask for.

Residents have been very interested in the sessions, which are provided for free, and which include child care for parents with children. The mix of residents from various communities builds solidarity and a sense of common experiences and

*A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program*³⁷

common purpose. This newfound solidarity is best illustrated by one resident who said at the end of a training session, "Now that I have met all of you, I won't say to the media anymore, 'well, at least we're not as bad as Jane-Finch.'"

Flexibility and Linkages with Local, National, and International Groups

CAN members recognized early on that in building a new advocacy network it is vital to be flexible and to make changes as conditions alter. During the period when CAN was developing, Ontario experienced some of the most dramatic changes in government in its history. Funding for social services was being slashed and the safety net dismantled in an unprecedented way. In the midst of this chaos, local groups working with CAN came and went, unable to sustain their involvement. But as some groups disappeared, CAN opened itself to other groups elsewhere. At the same time that its members continued to support their local allies, they reached out for new ones.

As new groups joined, CAN began to rotate the location of membership meetings. Despite the logistical difficulty of doing so, it resulted in stronger ties with members, as the residents of each neighbourhood had the opportunity to sponsor a meeting and show off their locale.

At the same time, a research group at the University of Toronto interested in the "Inventory of Community Assets" developed at Northwestern University's Asset-Based Community Development Institute became excited about CAN's work and became active participants. This group, the North York Community Health Promotion Unit, became an active participant in CAN, and its research played a key part in the progress of the coalition later on.

By remaining flexible and welcoming relationships with other neighbourhoods and other entities, CAN was able to create linkages with national and international people and groups who were excited about the concept of neighbourhoodism. These ties and the ability to work at different levels to attack a problem that they represent, enabled CAN to mobilize neighbourhood residents more effectively and to generate strength for all.

Ryerson Community College and Journalism Training

When the *Ryersonian*—the student newspaper of a local community college—printed a negative article about one of the CAN neighbourhoods, the coalition responded with a letter-writing campaign. It was not optimistic about the outcome, but the community response had a much larger effect than it ever imagined. Although the newspaper itself was somewhat defensive about CAN's response to the article, one journalism professor was so impressed by the issue that he designed a journalism course around the article, the community's response, and the concept of neighbourhoodism. CAN considers this to be a breakthrough event that will contribute positively to the education of future journalists. Another result is that

CAN now has a relationship with the college and works with them through speaking engagements and involving the college in local events.

Production of Videos Representing Alternative Views of the Neighbourhoods

In its video work, CAN has a simple motto: if the media can't do it right, we'll show them how. In two CAN neighbourhoods, video projects have been undertaken that expose neighbourhoodism and how it works. In the first case, a Regent Park neighbourhood group, with the help of a talented young staff person, made a video contrasting clips of typically negative media coverage with interviews with local residents talking about the neighbourhood. The video presented the interviews in the context of more realistic scenes of the neighbourhood. Views of kids eating ice cream and playing happily in the water in the summertime provided a sharp contrast to the scary media images. In another case, a resident of another neighbourhood has been working on video projects and training youth to recognize neighbourhoodism and how it works.

Documentation of Neighbourhoodism in the Media

In 1996, another breakthrough occurred for CAN that illustrates the value of following through on general plans while being flexible about its form. Modeled on earlier work by the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, CAN attempted to gather evidence of neighbourhoodism in the local press, hoping to use the evidence in its fight against the problem. After a number of false starts, the North York Community Health Promotion Research Unit from the University of Toronto offered to assist with the effort. It assigned a student who was prepared to make it a major project, and who, with faculty supervision, carried out the work. The student compared articles from the three major local papers in their coverage of three disadvantaged and three elite neighbourhoods. The student's work revealed vast differences in coverage, a fact that did not surprise any of the CAN members. The coalition called a press conference to present the findings of the study, expecting a modest response. Instead, they were met by a roomful of media representatives, including the three local papers, and a handful of local radio and television reporters. As a result, the editors of the two largest papers acknowledged that a problem existed and that they needed to do something about it. The article was eventually circulated on the Internet and new interest was generated among academics in the notion of neighbourhoodism.¹

Conference on Neighbourhoodism

During all of its successes, CAN had still struggled with the ups and downs of maintaining a strong membership. Due to funding difficulties and conflicting responsibilities for many, groups dropped out or failed to participate; on the other

¹ [Editors' Note: For an abbreviated reproduction of the study, see the article by Weinroth, Jackson, and Schloskey in this volume.]

A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program39

hand, every meeting generated its own enthusiasm and burst of new energy. The research article and press conference were major successes for the Communities Against Neighbourhoodism and, following this achievement, the group had to identify another activity in order to maintain its momentum. A community resident supplied the answer by suggesting that CAN should attempt to gain press participation in the process of changing neighbourhood portrayals in the media. As a result of this suggestion, CAN decided to organize a conference and, with a \$25,000 foundation grant, it hired two part-time conference coordinators and put on a one-day conference that included more generous features than many community-based conferences can afford (including speaker honoraria, hotel accommodations and expenses, and a sliding scale participation fee that allowed local residents to participate). CAN also invited John McKnight of Northwestern University's ABCD Institute to participate as the keynote speaker, a key condition of its foundation funding.

From the opening keynote through the workshops, panels, and media interviews, the conference was a success. General understanding of neighbourhoodism took a giant step forward, and coalition building occurred as a result of the trainings and celebratory events that were part of the process. The conference launched a vital new concept at the same time that it followed the basic principles of empowerment and respect. In this way it planted the seeds of a healthier community and of new directions to developing it.

Among the 160 conference participants, about 15-20 were media representatives who presented their point of view. Most were friendly and sympathetic to CAN and the neighbourhoods, expressing similar frustrations at the media coverage such communities receive. But CAN was also disappointed in a few of the media representatives who came to cover the conference, but did not seem able to get the point, and who mingled their coverage of quotes from community leaders with stereotypical negative images of their communities.

OBSTACLES

CAN faced many obstacles in launching its campaign against neighbourhoodism.

- **LACK OF RESOURCES:** Every group connected with CAN experienced severe financial difficulties during their participation, and as a result CAN experienced a serious lack of staffing. But this forced the coalition to share tasks among members in a very egalitarian way. Many imaginative techniques—videos, workshops, trainings—had to be passed over at times because of lack of resources. Other strategies, such as the Network on Bad Press, could have been far more effective with additional resources. At the same time, a real sense of pride developed among CAN members in their ability to take on such a well-funded opponent as the media.

- **POTENTIAL RIVALRIES:** This is a general hazard in any coalition, although it did not adversely affect CAN, thanks to the selflessness of its participants and its use of community-building strategies based on cooperation.
- **MEDIA INERTIA AND BAD HABITS:** The media tend to be set in their ways, making it difficult for small initiatives to have any effect upon their practices. In most cases, there are only limited mechanisms for community input, so after taking advantage of them, opponents must step beyond these limits. It is not a level playing field, and some communities get a better deal from the media than others. This point has to be internalized by everyone, from neighbourhood people, to the media themselves, to politicians, and to the wider public.
- **GENERAL PUBLIC INERTIA AND BAD HABITS:** The general public, including members of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, are also in a powerful state of inertia that contributes to neighbourhoodism. It is important to develop strategies that will help overcome even residents' habits of thinking of their neighbourhoods as weak, bad, and fundamentally flawed.

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

Ongoing advocacy efforts by CAN included major struggles with several local papers. Although these struggles did not result in a meeting of minds between neighbourhoods and the media, there were a number of very positive outcomes.

- **STRENGTH RESULTS FROM WORKING TOGETHER:** The press advocacy campaigns mobilized CAN members and demonstrated to them that strength can result from working together. CAN members gained confidence upon reading letters of support from residents of other communities and members of other groups.
- **STRONG COALITION THAT SEES BEYOND EACH NEIGHBOURHOOD:** One of the most important outcomes of the CAN efforts has been the building of a strong coalition of residents and community staff to work for purposes that transcend those of any one agency or neighbourhood. CAN supports individual members and neighbors, and has a vitality that gratifies its participants.
- **DEVELOPMENT OF A "WE CAN" ATTITUDE:** The activities demonstrated to CAN members that they were capable of organizing a large campaign and succeeding with efforts they might once have thought too ambitious. This built a new sense of "we can do it" among residents who may never have felt this way before.
- **LAUNCHING OF A NEW CONCEPT AND APPROACH:** CAN challenged old ways of thinking by launching a new concept called neighbourhoodism. In doing so, it identified neighbourhoods as targets of prejudice and pointed out that much of this prejudice is racism and classism in disguise.

A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program#1

- **POSITIVE PUBLICITY AND EVENTS:** Over the years, CAN achieved a great deal of publicity as a result of its own promotional efforts. Its greatest visibility was achieved through the press conference on its research and through its conference, and additional coverage was achieved through smaller events.
- **MEDIA ALERTED TO RESIDENT ATTENTION:** The newspapers were alerted to the fact that residents were beginning to stand up for their neighbourhoods. They had to recognize that they would no longer be able to attack such neighbourhoods as Jane-Finch or Parkdale with impunity.
- **IMPROVED SKILLS AMONG RESIDENTS:** Through the process of neighbourhood advocacy, CAN members learned to be more precise in their articulation of truths about neighbourhoodism, and to be confident in their ability to participate in daily dialogues on neighbourhood issues, and to defend their neighbourhoods when called upon to do so.
- **NEW TOOLS—VIDEOS, MATERIALS, NEWSLETTERS:** The videos and newsletters developed by CAN members represent new tools in the fight against neighbourhoodism.
- **BROADER RECOGNITION OF THE CONCEPT OF NEIGHBOURHOODISM:** The fact that neighbourhoodism is recognized and inquired about over the Internet and through progressive groups is a positive result of CAN's work. It has found that when national and local groups work together on an issue, there is a ripple effect. Its own efforts at promotion contribute positively to this effect.
- **LINKS TO RACISM, CLASSISM, AND OTHER -ISMS:** CAN has involved groups working against racism and classism in its efforts from the beginning because the relationships are so obvious. Its members believe that by cooperative networking against all forms of bigotry, it is possible to defeat them.
- **DIRECT IMPACT ON THE LOCAL MEDIA:** CAN's campaigns against bad press, in addition to its meetings with key media staff representatives from the local newspapers have achieved a modest improvement in their coverage.

PRESENT AND FUTURE CAN STRATEGIES

Ruth Morris, Director of the Black Creek Anti-Drug Focus Community Group, uses two analogies to describe how CAN does its work: starting a bonfire and quarterbacking a football game. Both suggest an eclectic try-anything approach, but do not exclude learning from experience. If you have gathered the wood well, the fire may still take a few matches to get going. If the wood is damp in one place, you try your matches in another and learn from the experience. You don't give up or waste your time worrying about your first failure; you keep trying until suddenly the fire leaps up and your efforts are a success.

Similarly, if there is a 350-pound lineman to your right, you don't call too many plays in that direction. If the lineman succeeds in stopping your efforts to move the ball, the quarterback doesn't walk off the field; he plans the next play and gets on with it. In planning strategies for social advocacy it is important to figure out the gains and losses from the last effort and get on with the game. Expecting to score a touchdown with every play or light a fire with the first match is a recipe for defeat. A series of creative new strategies, built on previous successes and failures, is the way to win. CAN is currently working on:

- A video and pamphlet that highlight the conference. CAN has commissioned one of its neighbourhoods to prepare an educational video of the conference. It is also exploring the possibility of printing a pamphlet based on a workshop that covered reports of successful strategies in four different neighbourhoods.
- Continued media trainings and coalition development. CAN is planning another media training in Jane-Finch and it has already held a follow-up meeting for new coalition members recruited through the conference.
- Widening the impact of CAN. CAN plans to widen its efforts to reach more groups both locally and across North America. It is still working on the precise strategies it will use, and including new members in its brainstorming sessions. One new impact is that residents report that when they read an article back to a reporter, substituting the name of an affluent neighbourhood for the one mentioned in the article, the reporters have been able to grasp the offense perceived by the neighbourhood people.
- The Jane-Finch TTC advertisement. The Black Creek Group recently decided on a new strategy for developing a better image of its neighbourhood. It commissioned an artist to create a collage of activities in the community—family picnics in the ravine, teens in the library, adults voting and going to community meetings, for example—and will display the work on two sets of buses in the public transportation system. The collage will be captioned “Jane-Finch—our home—we love it.” One set of buses runs through the neighbourhood, the other runs through one of the more elite sections of Toronto.

CONCLUSION

The Communities Against Neighbourhoodism Coalition was born out of the ability to create new concepts and act on them. It has been fueled by the ability of people in Toronto and beyond to see that “no one is an island, anyone's death affects me, for I am involved in humanity” (paraphrased from John Donne). It is CAN's hope that this report on its work will inspire others to make similar efforts in

A Case Study of a Neighbourhood Coalition's Program#3

their communities. The Coalition's greatest success came through seeing the positive potential that can emerge from negative events—some of the worst media coverage led to its members developing some of their most creative strategies. They accept the reality of good and bad events, and work together for community, creating stronger communities in the process. Neighbourhoodism must go in order for true neighbourhood pride to bloom.

A RESEARCH REPORT ON NEWSPAPER PORTRAYALS OF SIX NEIGHBOURHOODS IN METROPOLITAN TORONTO

By Eva Weinroth, Suzanne F. Jackson, and Keith Schloskey
North York Community Health Promotion Research Unit

*This report was prepared in consultation with members of the
Communities Against Neighbourhoodism Coalition*

Excerpts from the original report reproduced by permission from:
Communities Against Neighbourhoodism
North York Community Health Promotion Research Unit
(who hold the copyright on this report)
North York, Ontario
Canada

A RESEARCH REPORT ON NEWSPAPER PORTRAYALS OF SIX
NEIGHBOURHOODS IN TORONTO

The focus of this paper is on the issue of media, specifically newspaper portrayals of various neighbourhoods in Toronto. This issue was raised by members of a community-based coalition in response to their observations that newspapers were portraying their communities in negative ways. The Coalition, known as Communities Against Neighbourhoodism (CAN), is made up of community residents and agency representatives who are concerned about the stereotypical ways in which their communities are portrayed in the media. The Coalition uses the term “neighbourhoodism” in a similar way to terms such as racism, sexism, and classism, to refer to prejudice and stereotypes based on one’s neighbourhood or community. The term will be used in the same way throughout this paper.

Neighbourhoodism can be seen as incorporating racist and classist prejudices into the stereotyping of certain areas. This can lead to neighbourhoods being labeled as “bad” places, “ghettos,” “low-income,” “poor,” or “high-immigrant” areas. Thus, using such “neighbourhoodist” terms is a way of indirectly expressing stereotypical views about people of certain races, classes, and immigration status.

CAN takes issue with such stereotypes and is fighting against neighbourhoodism in the media. Its activities include meetings with media representatives to discuss neighbourhoodism, organizing letter-writing campaigns, conducting media training workshops, publishing a newsletter, and educating various people about the effects of neighbourhoodism on community members.

The perceived negative portrayal of certain neighbourhoods by Toronto newspapers led to a desire for verification on the part of CAN. Therefore, the purpose of this research project was to examine and characterize the newspaper reporting of some selected neighbourhoods in metro Toronto. Using CD-ROM databases, a search was conducted to obtain available newspaper articles from the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Sun* related to six neighbourhoods in metropolitan Toronto. Three of these neighbourhoods are often stereotyped negatively (Jane-Finch, Regent Park, and Parkdale) and three are generally stereotyped as positive (Rosedale, Forest Hill, and Bridle Path).

The concept of “neighbourhoodism” may have implications for the health of people who live in certain neighbourhoods, and therefore for health promotion. This is especially true if negative portrayals of neighbourhoods or communities lead to development of stereotypes that are detrimental to the mental health, self-esteem, and well-being of community members. Thus, combating negative

stereotypes of neighbourhoods, communities, and the people who live in them is an important challenge for health promoters.

In this report, the first section describes the method used to select and conduct a content analysis of the newspaper articles. Following this is a presentation of the results, a discussion, and a conclusion section.¹

METHODS

Information for this study is based on newspaper articles from the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, and *Toronto Sun*. Searches were conducted using the Canadian News Disc CD-ROM data base (for the *Star* and *Sun*) the *Globe and Mail* data base, also on CD-ROM. Articles were obtained by searching for neighbourhood names in titles and text of the articles. The names are: Jane-Finch, Regent Park, Parkdale, Rosedale, Bridle Path, and Forest Hill. These neighbourhoods were chosen because they have geographically defined and understood boundaries and names. The first three are members of CAN, have public notoriety, and are subjected to neighbourhoodism. The last three are recognizable neighbourhoods where neighbourhoodism is positive or does not exist. The six areas are of different sizes, income distributions, populations, and other characteristics. Inclusion of six neighbourhoods allows for exploration of the extent of differences in reporting about different neighbourhoods.

The searches retrieved 116 articles (by title search) from the *Toronto Star* from 1992-1995 inclusive. A title search for the *Toronto Sun* retrieved 19 articles from August 1994 to December 1995 (the time frame for which the CD-ROM was available). There were 217 articles from the *Globe and Mail* (title and text search) from January 1, 1994 to June 30, 1995. A text search was conducted for the *Globe and Mail* because of the limited number of articles (6) with neighbourhood names in their titles.

These time frames were used to keep the number of articles for analysis manageable for completion of the study within four months. Title searches were used because of the association of the neighbourhood name with an event in a way likely to catch readers' attention (in headlines). This search strategy yielded results for the *Toronto Star* but not for the *Globe and Mail*. Therefore, a text search strategy was used for the *Globe*. Since the purpose of this study was not to compare how different newspapers reported the same events, but to investigate how the same neighbourhoods were described in different newspapers, the different search strategies and varying years covered by the searches did not affect the results.

¹ Editors' Note: In the original publication of this report, there is also a section that reviews the literature relevant to the research. With a limited amount of space for the reproduction of this work, we have not reprinted that review here.

The articles were printed from the CD-ROM (*Star* and *Sun*) or saved onto a disk (*Globe*). Articles from each newspaper were organized by neighbourhood and given a code number for future reference. The analysis involved reading the articles and recording titles and phrases within the text (in the computer spreadsheet program Lotus) that described the different neighbourhoods. Words and phrases were recorded if they described the area as a whole, the physical structures of the neighbourhood, the people who live there, neighbourhood events, residents' interactions, and residents' views of their neighbourhood. The topics of the article headlines (*Star* and *Sun*) were also recorded.

Descriptive phrases within the articles were classified as either positive, negative, or neutral based on the adjectives used to describe the above aspects of the neighbourhood and the context in which the phrase was mentioned. Classification of phrases from a 10% sample of the *Toronto Star* articles was done by two coders other than the main investigator. The agreement between coders in classifying phrases as positive, negative, or neutral was deemed to be satisfactory. Articles were classified as positive, negative, neutral, or a combination of positive and negative. Positive articles contained only positive or neutral phrases. Negative articles contained only negative or neutral phrases. Neutral articles contained only neutral phrases. Articles with both positive and negative phrases were classified as positive/negative. There was no subclassification related to more positive than negative phrases or vice versa.

RESULTS

The number and percentage of articles retrieved from the *Toronto Star*, *Globe and Mail*, and *Toronto Sun* for each neighbourhood are illustrated in Table 1 (rounded to the nearest percentage). Although the years and the type of search (title vs. text) differ between the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, the distribution of articles in Table 1 illustrates important differences between these newspapers. The two neighbourhoods most frequently written about in the *Toronto Star* are Parkdale and Regent Park (71%, n=82). In contrast, the two neighbourhoods most frequently written about in the *Globe and Mail* are Rosedale and Forest Hill (60%, n=137). The *Toronto Sun* seems to be similar to the *Toronto Star* in that 10 of the 19 articles retrieved (53%) were about Parkdale. However, the limited number of articles for the *Sun* cannot be used to draw conclusions about its general coverage of neighbourhoods.

Table 1
Number and Percentage of Articles for each Newspaper and Community

	Jane-Finch	Regent Park	Parkdale	Rosedale	Forest Hill	Bridle Path	TOTAL	YEARS
Toronto Star (Title)	12% (n=14)	19% (n=22)	52% (n=60)	10% (n=12)	5% (n=6)	2% (n=2)	100% (n=116)	4 years 1/92 to

Search)								12/95
Globe & Mail (Text Search)	5% (n=11)	12% (n=27)	20% (n=46)	36% (n=83)	24% n=54	3% n=7	100% (n=228)	1.5 years 1/94 to 6/95
Toronto Sun (Title Search)	0	26% (n=5)	53% (n=10)	21% (n=4)	0	0	100% (n=19)	1.3 years 8/94 to 12/95

Note 1: *Toronto Star* and *Toronto Sun* articles were retrieved using a search for names of neighbourhoods in the titles of articles. *Globe and Mail* articles were retrieved using the same search in the text of articles.

Note 2: A title search for *Globe and Mail* yielded 6 articles for a similar time period (17 months) and a title search for *Toronto Star* yielded 39 articles for the period of August 1994 to December 1995.

The content of the articles can be categorized based on the words, phrases, and descriptors used in conjunction with the name of the neighbourhood (see Table 2). The articles were categorized as: positive (+), negative (-), neutral (N), or a combination of both positive and negative (+/-), based on the nature of all of the words, phrases, and descriptors present. Descriptors include adjectives describing people, places, and events in each neighbourhood. An article fit the combined positive and negative category if it contained any number of both positive and negative descriptors. Descriptors were classified as positive if the context and words were commonly recognized as positive (e.g., inviting paths, wonderful services, labour of love). Descriptors were classified as negative if the context and words were commonly recognized as negative (e.g., shabby, dreary, slum, loiterers, undesirable). Descriptors were classified as neutral if there were no positive or negative adjectives attached to the descriptions (e.g., residents, apartment building).

The *Toronto Sun* was not included in Table 2 because the total number of articles was so small (19) and articles focused on only three neighbourhoods.

Table 2 Part 1: *Toronto Star*

Overall Categorization of Article Content: Percentage of Articles Classified as Positive, Negative, Neutral, or Positive and Negative for each Neighbourhood

	Jane-Finch	Regent Park	Parkdale	Rosedale	Forest Hill	Bridle Path
(+)	29%	9%	10%	17%	50%	0%
(-)	29%	45%	43%	33%	0%	100%

(n)	36%	9%	40%	33%	33%	0%
(+/-)	7%	36%	7%	17%	17%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 2 Part 2: *Globe and Mail*
 Overall Categorization of Article Content: Percentage of Articles Classified as Positive, Negative, Neutral, or Positive and Negative for each Neighbourhood

	Jane-Finch	Regent Park	Parkdale	Rosedale	Forest Hill	Bridle Path
(+)	9%	15%	17%	34%	30%	14%
(-)	73%	33%	39%	14%	11%	0%
(n)	18%	44%	35%	43%	56%	43%
(+/-)	0%	7%	9%	8%	4%	43%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Title Analysis

The titles of newspaper articles were analyzed separately because they present the name of a neighbourhood in association with a certain topic. For the casual newspaper reader (e.g., someone who scans headlines only), this association can feed into stereotypes of neighbourhoods. For example, incidents of crime, drugs, or prostitution in certain neighbourhoods mentioned in the titles of articles

Table 3 Part 1
 Classification of Topics Associated with each Neighbourhood in Titles of Articles in the *Toronto Star* into Positive/Neutral and Negative Categories

Neighbourhood	Positive/Neutral	Negative
Jane-Finch (n=14)	community fair summer program community group anniversary new college site (x3) crime not JF	drugs gang battle JF "projects" stabbing traffic accidents

Regent Park (n=22)	job centre anniversary local bakery demand for housing residents want success image of RP (x3): [look past predictable," residents seek respect, changing stigma] RP housing profile of RP by a child	crime/police (x6): [murder (x3), march vs. police (x2), police blitz] drugs (x2) negative remarks housing problems RP melee "no victors in Regent Park"
Parkdale (n=60)	community structures (x4): [schools (x2), women's shelter, library] student success story riding, election, politics (x5) community structures (x4): [coffee shop, barber shop, school, roads] lobby group petition "spare Parkdale" "Parkdale named in error"	crime (x12): [murder (x4), stabbing (x2), shooting (x2), bail releases, beating, abduction, illegal garbage removal] property issues (x9): [tenant-landlord disputes (x3), "wild" restaurant (x2), property violations (x2), apartment security, rent issues] fires (x8) prostitution (x5) deaths (x3) drugs (x3) psychiatric patients/facility (x2) "troubled" Parkdale (x2)
Rosedale (n=12)	politician visit (x2) election (x2) garbage service train derailment geyser in R	assault (x2) deaths (x2) party crashing/stabbing shooting
Forest Hill (n=6)	"classical" homes school reunion traffic in general (x2) historical cottage	traffic problems
Bridle Path (n=2)	petition about roads	road conditions

reinforce the stereotype that these are "bad places." Thus, the headlines of the retrieved *Toronto Star* and *Sun* articles were categorized into positive/neutral or negative topics for each neighbourhood. Topics were classified as negative if they were about a subject generally agreed by society to be undesirable (e.g., crime, drugs, prostitution). All other topics were classified as positive or neutral.

Table 3 Part 2
Classification of Topics Associated with each Neighbourhood in Titles of Articles in the *Toronto Sun* into Positive/Neutral and Negative Categories

Neighbourhood	Positive/Neutral	Negative
---------------	------------------	----------

Regent Park (n=5)	goodwill and hope in RP bake sale community bakery	drugs peace ending in RP
Parkdale (n=10)	community event riding/election/politics	crime (x6): [murder (x4), mugging, sex attacks] psychiatric facility property issues (vandalism)
Rosedale (n=4)	resident profile	murder stabbing protest in R

From these categories of titles, it can be observed that there are positive/neutral headlines about community structures or events in all neighbourhoods. These include community fairs, programs, centres, bakeries, schools, women's shelters, and libraries. In Rosedale and Forest Hill in particular, famous people who come from the area or who are visiting the area are mentioned. Other positive/neutral topics in the headlines were traffic accidents/problems for Jane-Finch, Forest Hill, and Bridle Path, politics for Parkdale and Rosedale, and articles about the neighbourhood and image of Regent Park (e.g., how residents want to change its negative image). Special garbage collection was discussed as an elite frill for Rosedale, whereas the focus in Parkdale was on illegal garbage removal. Parkdale was also the only neighbourhood that had headlines dealing with fires. This potentially gives a negative perception of the community, although reporting of these stories was neutral.

In terms of negative headlines (which associate the name of the neighbourhood with a negative topic), one finding that did not match the existing stereotypes of the selected Toronto neighbourhoods was that Rosedale was associated with similar words as Jane-Finch, Regent Park, and Parkdale. For example, headlines about Rosedale were about an assault, stabbings, a dead body, and a shooting over drugs. Topics mentioned in headlines about the other areas included murder, drugs, and prostitution. For Parkdale in particular, property issues were discussed in a negative way. These issues included tenant-landlord disputes and property violations. In contrast, for Forest Hill and Bridle Path, the only negative references were to traffic problems in the area and poor road conditions respectively.

Analysis of Article Content

Tables 4 and 5 below provide a breakdown of positive and negative topics discussed by newspaper and neighbourhood. The table shows many similarities across the two newspapers in the way the six neighbourhoods are described. (The number of articles in which the topic appears is in brackets.)

Table 4

Positive Topics Associated with the Selected Neighbourhoods in all Articles from the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*

Neighbourhood	Toronto Star	Globe and Mail
Jane-Finch Star: n=14 G&M: n=11	resident's view of neighbourhood as home (1) community events/programs (4)	appearance of the area (1) description of residents (2)
Regent Park Star: n=22 G&M: n=27	community safety (2) residents' interaction as neighbours (3) community organizations (5) description of area (3)	residents' activities to clean up neighbourhood (3) community program (6) description of area (1)
Parkdale Star: n=60 G&M: n=83	sense of community (2) residents' activities to rebuild neighbourhood (6) residents' interactions and cooperation (9) residents vs. prostitution (3) buildings in the area (7)	view of community (2) residents' activities to improve community image (3) residents vs. prostitutes (1) buildings (2)
Rosedale Star: n=12 G&M: n=83	appearance of area (2) community image (5) homes (5) description of residents (2) community businesses (1)	appearance of area (4) community image (14) homes (7) description of residents (11)
Forest Hill Star: n=6 G&M: n=54	community image (3) appearance of area (1) homes/buildings (3)	community image (7) homes (8)
Bridle Path Star: n=2 G&M: n=7	residents' wealth (1) community image (1) homes (1)	wealth (examples) (3) homes (3)

Topics that received the most positive coverage in the *Toronto Star* were community image, community events, programs, and organizations, residents' activities/interactions, and descriptions of physical structures (e.g., homes and buildings) in the neighbourhoods. In the *Globe and Mail*, these topics were community image and descriptions of neighbourhoods, physical structures,

Table 5
Negative Topics Associated with the Selected Neighbourhoods in all Articles from the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*

Neighbourhood	Toronto Star	Globe and Mail
Jane-Finch Star: n=14 G&M: n=11	drugs (3) crime (5) community image (1) appearance of area (1)	drugs (3) crime (5) "corridor," negative image (6) appearance of area (1)

	description of residents (1) buildings (1) unemployment (1)	description of residents (3) buildings (1) unemployment (1) prostitution (1)
Regent Park Star: n=22 G&M: n=27	community image (12) appearance of area (3) drugs (11) crime (6) poverty (3) description of residents (3) buildings (4) unemployment (1)	community image (3) drugs (3) crime (2) poverty (1) buildings (5)
Parkdale Star: n=60 G&M: n=83	crime (15) buildings (12) legal/property issues (12) psychiatric patients (6) community image (9) poverty (2) drugs (15) prostitution (13) alcoholics (3) fires (9)	crime (4) buildings (6) legal/property issues (2) psychiatric patients (4) community image (8) drugs (4) prostitution (6) alcoholics (2) fire (1) appearance of area (2)
Rosedale Star: n=12 G&M: n=83	crime (3) crime as foreign to R (2) dead body (2) drug deal (1)	crime (3) shock at crime in area (2) description of residents (7)
Forest Hill Star: n=6 G&M: n=54	traffic problems (3)	crime (4)
Bridle Path Star: n=2 G&M: n=7	road conditions (2)	crime (1)

residents and their activities. Topics that received the most negative coverage in the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* were drugs, crime, community image, description of residents, and description of physical structures in the neighbourhoods.

Because of the limited number of articles for comparison, the *Toronto Sun* was not analyzed in detail. However, there were similarities to the other two newspapers. Positive coverage tended to focus on topics such as descriptions of residents and community events/projects. Negative topics included community image, drugs, crime, and prostitution.

The following section will provide more detailed and specific analysis of the way the text of the newspaper articles describes each of the six neighbourhoods. Newspaper quotes will be presented in the following groupings: a) descriptions of the area as a whole, b) descriptions of people, c) descriptions of physical structures,

d) descriptions of residents' interactions, e) descriptions of events, and f) residents' views of their neighbourhood as expressed in the articles.²

Jane-Finch

Descriptions of the area as a whole. This neighbourhood is commonly described neutrally as the "Jane-Finch community" (TS, GM) or the "Jane-Finch area" (TS, GM). It is commonly negatively described as the "Corridor" (TS, GM). It is also written about as "tough" (GM), "desolate" (GM), "crime ridden" (GM) with a "notoriety for crime" (TS), and a "ghetto where positive role models are rare" (TS). The "problems of the Jane-Finch community" (TS) are brought out by "crime stories that have blackened the area's reputation since the late 1960s" (TS).

One journalist describes Jane-Finch in contrasting terms. On the one hand, it is "a district that's particularly synonymous with hell," "shabby, and littered," "dreary," "vacuous," and a "dead zone" containing "crime and ruin" (all GM). The area that "sinks to a particular grimy ugliness at the Jane-Finch intersection," is compared to "other suburban high-rise slums" (GM). On the other hand,

Vast parklands lie open to the sky at the foot of generously spaced high-rises, community centres stand in the midst of lawns and little forests traversed by inviting paths, malls bulging with commodities invite passers-by to browse, socialize, and spend (GM).

Descriptions of people. People of Jane-Finch are described as "streetwise kids and their parents" (TS), "prostitutes and drug pushers" (GM), "drug dealers and other felonious folk" (GM), and "immigrants struggling to make it" (TS), "living there out of necessity" (TS), and because "the rent is cheap" (TS). The area "woefully" lacks "the extended family," and "single parent situations" are "presided over by a hopelessly poor woman" (all GM). The "mounting rage" of the area's "protesters, community activists, and educators" is noted (GM). Neutral descriptors include "a community with a high concentration of low-income earners and immigrants who live in public housing" (TS), Jane-Finch area/community "residents" (TS, GM), that are "ethnically diverse" (TS). On a positive note, the "good" people of Jane-Finch are "many," and there are "well-meaning, responsible activists" in Jane-Finch (GM).

Descriptions of physical structures. The physical buildings in Jane-Finch are described as a "heavy congestion of high-rises," "looming" and "bleak apartment towers" (GM) that are "run-down" and "subsidized" (TS). In this "concrete jungle," "the stench of rotting garbage hangs thick" and stairwells contain "the

² Editors' Note: Each quotation is followed by a bracketed, abbreviated reference to the newspaper(s) in which the quotation appeared. The reader may refer to the original version of this report—available from the North York Community Health Promotion Research Unit—for complete references to the newspaper articles.

smell of urine” and “an empty whisky bottle” (all TS). One “public housing project” is described as having “a 20-year history of robberies, assaults, crack and cocaine dealing, murder, and the terrorizing of elderly and helpless residents” (GM). The Jane-Finch mall is described as “hideous” (GM). In contrast, the side streets are:

Winding avenues free of pushers and full of pride. Each bungalow seeks to outdo its neighbour in the neatness category; every flower bed has been planted meticulously and tended for maximum dazzle (GM).

Descriptions of events. Events written about in the Jane-Finch area include “a drug sweep in North York’s Jane-Finch Corridor,” and “prostitutes who have taken to hurling bricks at local folks with the guts to protest against the takeover of their sidewalks by the sex trade” (GM).

Residents’ views of their neighbourhood. Residents quoted in the newspapers described Jane-Finch as “an okay place,” “in a way it’s a ghetto, but it’s still home to a lot of people,” “a neighbourhood to a lot of people, but for some, it’s where you come home and lock the doors” (all TS). Similarly, “area politicians” say that “images of an area of high crime and drug deals” conjured up by the name Jane-Finch are “largely a myth” (TS).

Regent Park

Descriptions of the area as a whole. Regent Park is most commonly described neutrally as “Canada’s oldest public housing project” (TS, GM). The area as a whole is described negatively as “massive public housing compounds” (GM), “North Regent Penitentiary” (TS), “a vast area” with “hazardous pathways” (TS), “troubled” (GM), “one of Toronto’s most depressed neighbourhoods” (TS), and a neighbourhood with “collective criminality” (TS). One journalist writes, “Regent Park sits like a canker on the downtown, an inner-city slum several blocks wide” (TS). The area is a “target for lurid crime headlines and campaigning politicians” (TS). Regent Park is given the label “drug-plagued,” where “traffic in crack cocaine has become a formidable problem” (TS). On the other hand, the area is described as “bucolic—lots of trees, green grass, and space for the kids,” and commonly as “the Park” (TS), “the community,” and “the neighbourhood” (TS, GM).

Descriptions of people. People in Regent Park are described as “an awful lot of good people living here” (TS) in one instance, but are also referred to as “frustrated and fed up” (because of the drug problem) (TS), and “threatened [by drug dealers] because they were trying to clean up the neighbourhood” (GM). People in the area (who may not actually live there) are described as “winos and crack addicts who float through here each and every night,” “weapon-toting loiterers,” and

“undesirables who terrorize tenants in their quest to buy, sell, and smoke crack cocaine” (all TS).

Descriptions of physical structures. The physical buildings of Regent Park are described as “troubled housing project,” “rundown buildings” with “ongoing maintenance problems,” and “grungy, graffiti-covered hallways” that are “spray-painted by vandals” (all TS). There is “the sickly stench of urine and vomit” (TS). The buildings are “plagued by guns and drugs,” and “remain hotbeds of criminal activity” (TS). Articles discussed how “aging” and “crumbling” buildings must be saved from “collapse,” otherwise they will become “uninhabitable” (TS). The area also contains a “grittier community centre” (GM).

Residents’ views of their neighbourhood. In an article profiling Regent Park through a child resident’s eyes, the area is seen as “a wonderful place for kids, village-like and safe” (TS). In a letter to the editor, one resident writes, “To call Regent Park a ‘jungle’ is a grave injustice. The people who live here are honest” (TS). Another resident stated, “If a crime happens anywhere in the area...the media say it happened in Regent Park, which causes a public perception that everything that happens here is bad” (TS). For example, “The media...tend to demonize the poor, blaming people in places like Regent Park for the drug problem” (TS). On the other hand, Regent Park was described as “a pretty bad area with drug dealers around 24 hours a day, so more police are needed” (TS). Another opinion is that “The reason drug dealers come to Regent Park is because it has that reputation, as a place you come to do drug deals” (GM). One article states,

Residents...ask that others show more respect for them, for the tremendous work they have done in their community, the strength they must have raising families on low income. They also ask that we “show more respect for their homes, most commonly referred to as The Park” (TS).

Descriptions of events. Regent Park was written about in terms of police-community relations. Articles described an incident between police officers and Regent Park residents. It started with a “take-down...on a late summer’s eve in Regent Park” (TS). This led to a community march with “Regent Park regulars lined up against the cops of 51 Division” and a “frightening confrontation between police and scores of residents in Regent Park” (TS). The author described “mutual fear and loathing that exists between 51 Division officers and, mostly, the black male residents of Regent Park” (TS). Residents “say the incident was racially motivated and accused the police of using excessive force” (TS). Also, there was mention of Regent Park residents upset over “what they describe as constant police disrespect,” “police brutality in Regent Park,” and “illegal arrests and harassment” (TS).

One positive Regent Park event described by the newspapers is the plan to establish a local bakery. The group of women are characterized as “all so positive,

it rubs off on each of us" (TS). However, negative events predominate, such as a "Regent Park slaying," "shot dead last night in Regent Park," "the police focused on ridding the community centre of crack dealers," "103 drug arrests this year in a Regent Park area," "foot patrol officers trying to break up a drug deal" (all TS) and "Metro police are looking for anyone who may have seen five people stab a man for \$20 in Regent Park" (GM).

Descriptions of residents' interactions. Residents are described as interacting positively with each other, although about issues (such as drugs) that give the community a negative image. They have made "compromises...to live in a safer community," and have "cleared drug dealers from their doors by removing easy access" (TS). "Residents here are joiners, good neighbours" (TS). They "feed the hungry, ignored children of crackheads. They shut down the crackhouses with a quiet courage only the cops notice" (TS). Also, "Regent Park residents have asked for decisive action to deal with the problems in our community" (TS). People are "trying to rid the area of its drug trade" by "attending the sentencing hearings of convicted dealers to testify about the effects of the trade" (GM). On an even more positive note:

Regent Park residents have built their own community health centre, community centre, and youth employment centre. They run an organization for young families and a drug prevention program. They sustain other long-term efforts around security, housing redevelopment, nutrition, economic development, health care, poverty, programming for their youth and seniors" (TS).

Another journalist writes, "I'm not afraid of this place anymore. People know each other here. Kids play together and parents nod to one another as they do in a small village" (TS). Similarly, "There's casualness, but also a quiet formality that exists between residents, a shared sense of place" (TS). Residents are also seen as part of "a highly organized community that knows what it wants, and is fighting back against its detractors, especially the media" (TS).

Parkdale

Descriptions of the area as a whole. Parkdale is described positively as "a neighbourhood with a strong sense of community" (TS). A police officer commented, "I have never seen a community more in tune with regulating itself...they actually picket local drug dealers and hookers" (TS). However, this comment still refers to problems in the area, and gives the area a negative image. Parkdale is also described as a "blighted landscape" (TS), "a part of town where nothing is easy" (TS), and a "rough area" (GM) with "condoms and syringes left in the streets" (TS). Parkdale is described as a "run-down neighbourhood, which has been the source of more bad news than good" (GM). It is written that "much of the known prostitution goes on in the Parkdale area of the city," and "the heroin trade

remains centred in the aging residential district known as Parkdale" (GM). Neutral descriptors include "community" (TS, GM), "neighbourhood" (TS, GM), "district" (GM), and "area" (TS, GM).

Descriptions of people. People in Parkdale are described as "crazies," "the highest concentration of former mental patients in the country," "ordinary poor," "troubled merchants on a hardscrabble street," "troubled individuals," "street corners frequented by the area's hookers," and "the johns who roam the area looking to buy sex" (all TS). "Media accounts invariably say...that a large number of down-at-heel alcoholics and former psychiatric patients live here" (GM). People are described neutrally as "residents" (TS, GM), "ethnically diverse" (GM), and "working-class" (TS, GM).

Descriptions of physical structures. One building in Parkdale, the library, is described as "an important cultural and community centre" (TS) and "an oasis of civilization and learning in a tough neighbourhood" (GM). There was mention of a "massive Parkdale home" (GM). However, "twin high-rises...have sparked tense (landlord-tenant) legal battles" (TS). Maintenance of these buildings was "so poor it 'borders on abandonment,'" with "broken elevators, and security locks, falling plaster, water damage, garbage and cockroaches" (TS). One "dilapidated" building "is plagued with power outages, heating failures, and lack of hot water" (TS). "Grand old Victorian homes" (GM) have "faded over time to ramshackle rooming houses and drug dens" (GM). There are "dilapidated Victorian storefronts" (GM). Restaurants and donut shops are patronized by "drug addicts and dealers, prostitutes and alcoholics" and having "illicit dealings" (TS). Buildings are neutrally described as "Victorian" (TS), "apartment building" (TS), "high-rise" (GM), and "rooming house" (TS).

Residents' views of their neighbourhood. Parkdale residents have expressed the view that they are "empowered as a neighbourhood" (TS). They were quoted as saying "This is a great neighbourhood; it's nowhere as bad as it seems" (GM), and

Parkdale is like a small town...but if you go along Queen Street and all you see is rubbies and crazies and prostitutes, you'll miss it. Parkdale has families, older people who have lived here a long time and wonderful services. That is the Parkdale I know (GM).

However, one resident was quoted as saying, "Our children are seeing sex acts, they're picking up needles, hookers aren't allowing us past the corners—and we live here" (TS). Another said, "We have prostitutes, we have drug addicts and we have drug dealers...they go hand in hand" (GM).

Descriptions of residents' interactions. In terms of interactions between residents, one resident said "the neighbours have been really good," and "cooperation exists between police, schools, and residents" (TS). Residents have united to try to "force hookers out of the area," and "banish drug dealers from their

neighbourhood" (TS). Residents "waged a campaign to reclaim their community by taking part in watch programs and regularly walking along the streets to deter prostitutes" (GM). As a result, there were "clashes between homeowners and neighbourhood prostitutes" (GM).

Descriptions of events. Typical negative events in Parkdale are described as: "a Parkdale man has been charged with second-degree murder," "a woman was attacked...while a number of drunks looked on," "a man was stabbed to death on a Parkdale street," "a suspicious fire swept through a three-storey apartment building in Parkdale...arson is suspected," "murders of two Parkdale residents," and "found dead in a Parkdale hotel room" (all TS). One positive event mentioned in Parkdale was the building of a "community sponsored and organized" (TS) women's shelter:

It's been a labour of love for hundreds in the Parkdale area, volunteering and building a shelter for abused women and their children...individual members of the Parkdale community have chipped in to make sure the shelter would open...a lot of support has come from smaller companies and individual area residents (TS).

Rosedale

Descriptions of the area as a whole. The Rosedale area is described as "affluent" (GM), "wealthy" (TS), "posh" (GM), "tony" (GM) and "swank" (TS) with "winding" (TS) and "leafy" (GM) streets. A "secluded, snow-covered street" is part of an "isolated" area (TS). This "desirable Toronto neighbourhood" (GM) is "lined with expensive homes and luxury cars" (TS). Rosedale is "an upscale midtown district of modish shops, trendy children's boutiques, and fashionable restaurants" (TS). Ravines are described as "gloriously picturesque" (GM). Crime is described as being foreign to the area. For example, "the residents and workers...didn't know what to make of the gunfire, the screams, or the blood" (TS). The drama of crime is "so foreign to this neighbourhood" (TS), and "well-dressed passers-by were shocked to learn that such an event (shooting) could take place in their usually quiet neighbourhood" (GM).

Descriptions of people. People in Rosedale are described as "prominent Toronto families" (TS), "the wealthy of Rosedale" (GM), "Rosedale elite" (GM), the "equestrian executive class" (GM), and simply as "residents" (TS).

Descriptions of physical structures. The houses in Rosedale are "stately" (GM) and "classical" (TS). One is described as "an elegant, red brick Rosedale mansion" (TS). Another is a "40-room Rosedale mansion" (GM). In describing a house, a journalist writes, "'hotel scale' certainly came to mind when one toured the Rosedale house he decorated...next door to the mansions...it boasted linenfold wood paneling, a grand staircase and a 60-foot living room" (GM).

Descriptions of residents' interactions. The interaction between Rosedale residents is not often mentioned, but they were described in one case as "rather private homeowners who may, but probably don't, know much about each other, and don't care to" (GM). They were also described as having "bulletproof complacency" (GM).

Descriptions of events. Some negative events were reported as occurring in Rosedale. In one incident, "a nanny was sexually assaulted and pistol-whipped after she appeared at a Rosedale home for a job interview" (TS). In another, "six teens were stabbed when a party for a student at a large Rosedale home turned ugly...violence erupted when up to 20 teens tried to crash the party" (TS). Also, a "badly decomposed body was found in the Rosedale ravine" (TS), "a drug deal apparently went wrong near the heart of Rosedale" (TS), and "the shooting occurred....across from the edge of the upscale Rosedale district" (GM). There are also "nocturnal gay sex parties in an otherwise staid Rosedale park" (GM).

Forest Hill

Descriptions of the area as a whole. Forest Hill is described as "affluent" (GM), "exclusive" (TS), "posh" (TS, GM), "tony" (GM), "upper-crust" (GM), a "wealthy residential enclave" (TS), "one of the finest areas of the city" (TS), "a select Toronto neighbourhood" (GM), having "tree-lined streets" (TS). The main streets are part of "a busy urban neighbourhood" that is "a natural gateway to downtown" (TS).

Descriptions of people. People in Forest Hill are called "residents," "local homeowners," and "ratepayers" (TS). One resident is quoted as saying, "Forest Hill is a nice neighbourhood" (GM). It is said that "neighbours don't want any new construction that fails to meet the lofty standards of their 1950s monster houses, built on 15-metre lots" (GM).

Descriptions of physical structures. The homes of Forest Hill are described as "classical" (TS), "mansions" (GM), "fashionable but far from flamboyant" (GM). There was a story about a "historic...19th century cottage," "among the last remaining log cabins of its era" (TS). Others are described as a "large Tudor-style homes" and "pricy" (GM).

Descriptions of events. All the events that are noted as occurring in Forest Hill are negative. For example, "two of the posters have gone missing from a bus shelter in Forest Hill Village," "killed in his Forest Hill apartment," and "busted for growing 48 (marijuana) plants in the middle of Forest Hill" (GM). These are not the same type of crimes described for Jane-Finch, Regent Park, and Parkdale.

Bridle Path

Descriptions of the area as a whole, people, and physical structures. The roads of the Bridle Path “neighbourhood” (TS) are a popular subject for newspaper articles. In this “exclusive” area, “wealthy residents” and “homeowners” live (TS). For example, one couple is described as having “\$1.33 million worth of paintings that graced their Bridle Path mansion” (GM). The Bridle Path is a road “without sidewalks that is lined with exclusive homes” (TS) and “million-dollar mansions” (GM). This “much-traveled” (TS) road, according to some drivers, is “badly deteriorated,” “to the point where it’s damaging cars and is unsafe” (TS). There are “constant bumps,” said to be “the Bridle Path’s version of speed bumps” (TS). The road is “way below standard” with “poor drainage” (TS). The street is “the subject of numerous driver complaints over its bumpiness” (TS). One driver claimed, “It’s just a terribly uneven road and damages cars. Residents do not want the road used as a shortcut, so they are not eager to have the road repaired. This leads to the claim that “there seems to be a law for the rich and a law for the poor” (TS).

Descriptions of events. Descriptions of Bridle Path events also include descriptions of wealth. For example, “he has since moved to The Bridle Path. There, he spent an estimated \$5 million in renovations” (GM). Even in negative events, the same is true: “someone fired several shots at his \$5.3 million house in the Bridle Path neighbourhood of North York” (GM).

DISCUSSION

It was interesting to find that the *Globe and Mail* had very few (6) articles with names of neighbourhoods in their titles. Perhaps this is because it is a national newspaper, and does not want to focus headlines on particular Toronto neighbourhoods as a local newspaper would. The *Toronto Star* and *Toronto Sun*, both local newspapers, also differed in the frequency of appearance of neighbourhood names in headlines. The *Sun* only had 19 such articles, dealing with 3 neighbourhoods, which was less than expected. The *Star* named all 6 neighbourhoods in headlines, and more than half of these (52%) were about Parkdale. In contrast, the *Globe and Mail* focused on Rosedale and Forest Hill. This may have been done in order to project a positive image and appeal to the business and upper classes of Canada. In Toronto, people from these classes may be more likely to live in these areas. Thus, differences between newspapers may arise because the *Globe* may be trying to cater to different audiences (national, upper-class) than the *Star* and *Sun* (local, middle- and lower-class).

The Jane-Finch area had an almost equal number (about 30%) of positive, negative, and neutral articles in the *Toronto Star*, while in the *Globe and Mail* most articles about Jane-Finch were negative (73%). Almost all of the Regent Park articles in the *Star* were either negative (45%) or a combination of both positive and negative (36%), while articles about Regent Park in the *Globe* were either neutral

(44%) or negative (33%). Articles about Parkdale in the Toronto *Star* and *Globe and Mail* were mostly negative (43% and 40% respectively) or neutral (39% and 35% respectively). In the *Star*, Rosedale had twice as many negative and neutral articles (both 27%) as positive or combined positive and negative articles (both 33%), and the *Globe* had mostly neutral (43%) or positive (34%) articles about Rosedale. Articles about Forest Hill were mostly positive or neutral in both the *Star* (50% and 33% respectively) and the *Globe* (30% and 56% respectively). The two Bridle Path articles in the *Star* were negative, while in the *Globe* the majority were neutral or a combination of both positive and negative (both 34%).

This newspaper coverage of neighbourhoods could be put into an historical context by outlining the main events of the time. During the time period covered by the study, there were some common events reported, such as elections, community events, and high-profile crimes. These might have affected particular neighbourhoods differently depending on the frequency of occurrence and the location in which they happened. It would be interesting to explore general political/legislative changes or major events that may have affected certain neighbourhoods, but this is beyond the scope of this paper.

Despite the number of positive or neutral articles about Jane-Finch, the overall impression given by the descriptors within the articles is a negative one. The Jane-Finch area as a whole, the people in the area, and the buildings and events are all described negatively. However, most of the negative descriptors were concentrated in a few articles, which were opinion pieces and not strictly “news” stories. Positive interaction between residents and efforts by residents to do positive things for their community were not reported in the articles reviewed, but surely do occur.

The Regent Park area as a whole was described in negative terms (in relation to crime and drugs), but, in contrast to Jane-Finch, there were also positive descriptors (trees, space). People were also described in the context of drugs and crime, but were also portrayed as doing something good for their neighbourhood. Buildings were described negatively, like Jane-Finch, in terms of their appearance and maintenance problems. Residents’ views recognize media stereotyping of Regent Park as a place for crime and drugs. It is interesting that these comments are printed by the same media that may play a part in the stereotyping. Residents are portrayed positively as a group (unlike Jane-Finch) and in interactions with each other to help their community, but some are portrayed as having a poor relationship with the police. There is reporting of both negative and positive events. The presence of positive statements about people/events in Regent Park presents a more balanced overall impression than that of Jane-Finch. However, the image of Regent Park projected by these articles is still mostly negative.

The descriptors of Parkdale as a whole consisted of a few positive ones with many negative ones (dealing with drugs and prostitution). This is similar to Jane-Finch and Regent Park. The people of Parkdale were described in a somewhat

unique way, being poor, troubled, and having poor mental health. The residential buildings were described in the context of maintenance problems (similar to Jane-Finch and Regent Park), but the library in Parkdale was described positively. The residents expressed both positive and negative views of their neighbourhood, and they were portrayed as having positive interactions. They were usually doing something to “clean up the neighbourhood,” as in Regent Park. Mostly negative events (dealing with crime) were mentioned, but there was also mention of some positive things that had occurred. The overall impression of Parkdale is similar to that of Regent Park. That is, although there are negative and positive descriptions, readers are presented with a more generally negative picture of Parkdale.

There was mention of wealth in most descriptions of Rosedale, plus mention of the usual absence of crime. People of Rosedale were always described positively (such as prominent and elite). Only houses (and not apartment buildings), are described, and they are “mansions” and “classical.” The interaction between residents was described negatively, as non-existent because people keep to themselves. There are crimes that happened in Rosedale, which are also negative. However, articles describing crime also point out how unusual these events are in Rosedale. Thus, the overall impression of Rosedale is still a positive one.

Like Rosedale, the Forest Hill area is also described positively (as affluent and posh). People are described more neutrally than in Rosedale, as residents and homeowners. The houses of Forest Hill are the only “buildings” described, and they are also “classical,” “mansions,” and “pricy.” Negative events are written about, but somewhat “milder” crimes than Rosedale. Thus, a positive impression is also left about Forest Hill.

The Bridle Path area is described in a similar way to both Rosedale and Forest Hill (as exclusive). The people are described as wealthy and homeowners, like Rosedale and Forest Hill. The homes are also “exclusive” and “mansions.” The Bridle Path area is unique in that the only negative descriptors have to do with the roads in the area (their driving condition). Even negative events have some mention of wealth when they occur in the Bridle Path. Once again, the overall impression of the Bridle Path area is positive, except perhaps if one wanted to drive through it.

The findings of this study are similar to that of one carried out by Ettema and Peer (unpublished monograph, 1996) in Chicago. They conducted a content analysis to examine the coverage of two urban neighbourhoods in the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*. The two neighbourhoods, Austin and Lincoln Park, differed in average income levels and racial composition. Ettema and Peer found that newspaper coverage of Austin (lower income and mostly non-white) tended to focus on “urban pathology.” More than two-thirds of the stories about Austin were framed in terms of a social problem, compared to less than one quarter of the stories about Lincoln Park. Austin was portrayed as a “bad neighbourhood,” “crime-

ridden and drug-infested” in the two newspapers. Crime was the topic of more than half of the problem-oriented stories in Austin. These contrasting portrayals of Austin and Lincoln Park are similar to portrayals of Jane-Finch, Regent Park, and Parkdale when compared to portrayals of Rosedale, Forest Hill and Bridle Path.

The overall impression one forms about an area based on newspaper portrayals may be affected by journalists who write opinion pieces more than pure “news” stories. For example, two of the *Globe and Mail* articles about Jane-Finch and one article from the *Toronto Star* contained most of the negative phrases describing the area. These articles were neighbourhood “profiles,” and much longer articles than the others about Jane-Finch. The journalists who wrote these articles (columnists) may have had more freedom to include their (mostly negative) opinions and perceptions about Jane-Finch than staff reporters, who may be more carefully monitored by editors. This illustrates the power that individual members of the media may have. Overall impressions about neighbourhoods may also be influenced by agenda-setting in the media, and “news” values.

Both the titles of articles and descriptors within them can contribute to the development and reinforcement of stereotypes of neighbourhoods, and the people, buildings, and events within them. Negative descriptors can give a false impression of a neighbourhood if there are no accompanying positive ones. Only a few negative impressions may lead to the development of a stereotype or its reinforcement. It may take many positive and neutral articles to counterbalance or change the perception people in general may have of a neighbourhood. Perhaps describing neighbourhoods, people, buildings, and events without adding negative descriptors will help eliminate “neighbourhoodist” statements and attitudes over time.

Residents of neighbourhoods that are stereotyped in the media may also develop perceptions of how their communities are portrayed by newspapers. A few negative articles or descriptors can lead residents to think that there is a constant negative portrayal. Although this may not always be the case, the perception may arise because there are more negative descriptors in articles than positive or neutral descriptors. Also, crimes and other “bad” news can be very vivid. This may lead to residents’ and activists’ complaints about over-emphasis on bad news (Ettema & Peer, 1996). It seems that many positive or neutral portrayals are required to overcome a few negative articles. The relationship between such perceptions would be an interesting topic for future research.

CONCLUSION

The issue of neighbourhoodism and media portrayal of communities is a very important one. It has implications for community members, journalists, researchers, health promoters, and media consumers in general. It seems that many cooperative efforts, among concerned citizens and members of the media, will be

needed to improve the way communities are portrayed. Members of the Communities Against Neighbourhoodism Coalition in Toronto are contributing a great deal of time and energy to the issue of neighbourhoodism, and are progressing towards their goals of having neighbourhoodism recognized as a stereotype, and eliminating it from the media. There are many future research possibilities that may grow out of this paper. These data could be analyzed to examine the location of the articles within newspapers, the amount of space devoted to positive and negative headlines and articles, and where the positive and negative statements appear within articles. A similar analysis could be conducted for other newspapers across Canada. An annotated book of newspaper articles could be put together. Community members could collect and display photographs from community events or projects that capture the way people see their own neighbourhoods. Interviews and focus groups could be conducted with community members to determine the extent to which residents are affected by print media portrayals of their neighbourhoods. Research and projects of this type could be used to educate members of the media and community groups about the issue of neighbourhoodism.