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**A Study of Australian Country News Values**

submitted for the degree of **Master of Arts**

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...
"... we are not competing with bigger papers - we are doing a different job": A study of country Australian news values.

By

Josie Vine

BA (Hons), BLitt

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Deakin University, October, 2001.
I certify that the thesis entitled:

Study of Australian Country News Values

submitted for the degree of: Master of Arts

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"There is no church sayest thou? The voice of Prophesy has gone dumb? This is even what I dispute; but in any case, hast thou not still preaching enough? A Preaching Friar settles himself in every village; and builds a pulpit, which he calls a newspaper. There from he preaches what momentous doctrine is in him, for men's salvation."

(Thomas Carlisle, Sator Resartus, Book III, Ch VII.)
Introduction

Despite its problems, freedom of the press is crucial to the maintenance of democratic ideology. With this in mind, western news media hold tenaciously to current concepts of news values in order to maintain democratic ideology's ideas of freedom of speech and expression. However, as many analysts point out, news values will, theoretically, alter when operating under a different ideology. The following thesis investigates variations in current concepts of western news values when operating under a specifically Australian country ideology. This is not to say the country news media is any less supportive of democracy. It is more an indication that there may exist an altered set of news values running through country newspapers as a result of specifically country ideology.

While there is much written on the news values of the media in western, third world and almost every other type of society, there is very little literature specifically on the news values of country Australian journalism. The following thesis goes some way towards further contributing to the current body of knowledge on this topic.

Although a set of news values specific to country non-dailies has not been documented, the role of the Australian country journalist has become an increasingly prevalent topic in journalism academia and history.

In 1992, University of Queensland Masters student and journalist on Tamworth's Northern Daily Leader, Kate Pretty, undertook the first national survey of Australian country journalists. Pretty found the rural news media had developed “different roles, functions and priorities”, compared to their
metropolitan counterparts. As for country journalists themselves, Pretty suggested they may be a “different breed of news worker altogether” (Pretty 1993: 75).

Rod Kirkpatrick agreed with Pretty when he said country daily and weekly newspapers were “different creatures, as different, sometimes, as the domestic cat is from its cousins the tiger and the leopard” (Kirkpatrick 1995: 219). Kirkpatrick went on to say country newspapers had “different audiences” with “different needs and values”, which “shape a different product” (Kirkpatrick, 1995: 219).

Later, in his history of the NSW’s country press, Kirkpatrick noted that, historically, Australian country newspapers “operated within the most basic units of society: family and local community” (Kirkpatrick 2000: xiii). Kirkpatrick went on to point out that “the nature of gathering news demanded that [the country editor] talk to as many members of the community as possible, attend their meetings and, often, accept office so that their grievances might be publicised, their resolutions implemented”. (Kirkpatrick 2000: xiii).

In 1998, Kirkpatrick examined the introductory editorials of 25 New South Wales provincial papers and found the pursuit of material and social advancement meant the country press were not “card carrying members of the Fourth Estate” (Kirkpatrick 1998: 100). Kirkpatrick found the country press was originally set up to fill a perceived gap in local representation during the pre-council era (Kirkpatrick 1998: 100). Kirkpatrick likened the country newspaper’s historical function to the American term ‘community-ism’, defined by Chicago-based historian, Daniel Boorston, as the media’s
"preoccupation with the growth and prospects of one's city" (Boorston 1965: 134).

Robin Walker pointed out Australia’s country press has, in an historical sense, a function to promote and advance their community in both an economic and social sense:

"The country newspaper came to express an agrarian ideology which exalted country values and virtues against the greed and selfishness of the big cities... One principle to which all country newspapers adhered to was the vigorous promotion and social advancement of their town and district" (Walker 1976: 176).

In his biography of Yarrawonga Chronicle editor, Alfred Ewin, Jeff Brownrigg noted the country press’ role in advancing its town and district has evolved to encompass maintaining the community’s values:

"It is no exaggeration to suggest that a local newspaper forms an organic part of a community’s life. It usually serves an immediate need for various practical information as well as supporting a less tangible, even tacit, need for some confirmation of collective values." (Brownrigg 1997: 30).

Ronald Wild suggested in his 1983 study that the country paper’s role in confirming collective values resulted in “support for consensus and status quo, rather than for conflict or social change”. He further argued that they supported the “values, ideas and interests of the powerful”, contributing to the “maintenance of social inequalities”. (Wild 1983: 1)

The following investigation in no way sought to suggest country newspapers were involved in a conspiracy to support the interests of the powerful. It
did, however, take note of some of Wild’s conclusions and used them in its research design.

There have been numerous others investigating the function of Australia’s country press: Elizabeth Morrison’s 1991 PhD thesis, “The Contribution of Country Newspapers to the Making of Victoria”; Bill Travena’s 1986 Masters thesis researching the history of Victorian country newspapers and Don Woolford’s study, “Pressures On Small Town Journalists”.

These studies are significant contributions to the body of research into Australian country news. However, investigations documenting the set of specific criteria by which country Australian non-daily journalists select and reject information were (at the time of this article’s writing - 1999) virtually nonexistent. The following investigation aimed to reduce this gap by focusing on the set of criteria by which information is selected and rejected in country non-daily newsrooms in comparison with news values taught in tertiary institutions.

This is an important aspect of country journalism and deserves more attention than it is currently given. As Ernest Sommerlad warned in his 1936 Newspaper News article, media scholars should not dismiss country newspapers as irrelevant, or treat them as a non-serious issue:

"The short and simple annals of the country town may seem small to the big metropolis, but they are the very currency of life in the provincial community... The provincial paper is an integral part of the make up of the community, essential to its progress and the mirror of its local life." (Quoted in Pretty, 1993: 76).
Pretty implied the same when she said: "The country press is well-read, fulfils a different role in society from the much-studied metropolitan press, and has been, historically, instrumental in the political, social and economic development of many countries, including Australia" (Pretty, 1993: 75).

Statistics from the Victorian Country Press Association's 1996 Readership Survey support the argument that country newspaper content is a serious issue. This survey suggested 89 percent of adults in country areas read at least one edition of the local paper in a week. Furthermore, 76 percent gained all their information on local events and happenings from their community's newspaper. (Victorian Country Press Association, 1996.) As this survey suggested, country media outlets play a vital role in informing a large number of citizens about important issues directly affecting them.

But of more concern to this thesis, according to Deakin University's 1998 Graduate Destination Survey, about 30 percent of tertiary-trained journalists started their careers on country newspapers in 1998. The remaining 70 percent went on to work on suburban or metropolitan papers, or industries unrelated to journalism. (Deakin University, 1998) And according to RMIT Journalism coordinator, Matthew Ricketson, about the same percent of RMIT journalism graduates started their careers on country papers in 1999. (Ricketson, August, 2000). Furthermore, there were 89 country journalists enrolled in the Country Press Australia's Post-Cadet Training Program in 2000. (Oakham, August, 2000).

Considering these figures suggest a large number of Australian journalists gain their grounding on a country media outlet, the industry requires its own unique set of news values derived from sound quantitative and qualitative research.
The following thesis was based on the theories of myth criticism and social anthropology, both of which, in general, argue a society's ancient myths and stories function to support communal ideology in order to maintain a minimal degree of civilised behaviour (Frye, 1971: 36).

More recently, media analysis has taken on the myth criticism concept to explain the 'news value' phenomena. Media analysts such as Keith Windschuttle have subscribed to this theory. In 1988, Windschuttle argued modern news media subconsciously functioned as conduits for the myths and ideologies of contemporary society (Windschuttle, 1988.)

Although media analyst Murray Masterson did not express it as explicitly, he also suggested current concepts of news values were subconsciously influenced by social ideology (Masterson, 1992: 20). After surveying nearly 300 journalists in 67 different countries, Masterson concluded there existed news values, which were "internationally valid" and "determined whether or not a story was newsworthy" (Masterson, 1992: 20).

Media academic, John Henningham also argued there existed an intrinsic relationship between a particular community's ideology and the criteria by which its news media selected and rejected information. (Henningham, 1990: 2) However, Henningham also implied modern western ideology encouraged ethically dubious journalistic behaviour, which must be restricted for the sake of the profession's reputation. (Henningham, 1990: 2).

However, subscribing to the myth criticism theory, news values will vary according to the particular ideology under which they operate. Furthermore, if country Australia has a unique ideology, then news media outlets
operating in country Australian society will, theoretically, select and reject information according to a different set of criteria than the current concept of news values.

In his 1997 study of country Australian communities, sociologist, Ian Hamilton found small townships had a common ideology that valued certain ideals not necessarily prioritised by modern western democracy. "... there was among them a common belief in the ability of the individual or small community to overcome adversity... the people talked of regional economic development and of towns working together for the common good." he said. (Hamilton, 1997: 212)

Dr Jonathon Sher, President of North Carolina's Country Education and Development Department described this ideology more explicitly in his 1987 Country Australia Symposium speech. Dr Sher argued country ideology was centred around the community's need to "develop vision" and a "united voice" in order to overcome the "tyranny of distance" 

"... the country crisis can not be solved by an outside saviour, so too it can not be solved if the sectorial fragmentation and the political disunity within country communities remains in tact. Narrow factional voices speaking their discord and at cross purposes will do little to advance the cause of country Australia," Dr Sher said. (Quoted in Byrnes and Walker, 1987: 33).

Drawing a relationship between Windschuttle's 'news as myth' theory, and the observations made by Hamilton and Sher, it can be concluded that news media outlets in country areas will select and reject information according to a criteria different from the current concepts of news values. Theorising country communities have an ideology that upholds a "common belief in the ability of the individual or small community to overcome adversity," and
"working together for the common good" so as to "survive and prosper" logically leads to another theory maintaining country newspapers will have news values that support a particular country ideology.

Indeed, a study group held during the 1965 Australian Country Press seminar found country newspapers had news values different from those taught in tertiary institutions. "This sometimes means the inclusion of items which are not necessarily news worthy, but are essential as a service to the public," the study group report said. "In a sense we are not competing with bigger papers - we are doing a different job". (Australian Country Press Association Seminar, 1965: 16).
Theoretical Approach

The following thesis on the specific news values of country journalism is based on the theoretical approaches of social anthropology and myth criticism. In general, both social anthropology and myth criticism theorise that a society's ancient myths and stories comprise a set of inherent archetypal representations - heroes, villains, and the 'femme fatale'. According to social anthropology and myth criticism, these representations function to convey communal ideology in order to maintain a minimal degree of civilised behaviour and social harmony.

Analysts Northorpe Fryel and Claude Levi Strauss are two of the most famous myth critics who recognise the inherent link between a society's myths and its ideology. Frye argues society, "in its earliest phases" sets up a "framework of mythology" which "takes on a central or conical importance", covering its views of its "past, present and future... its ultimate destiny..." (Frye, 1971: 36).

Frye describes these myths as "myths of concern ' which formulate and perpetuate a society's ideology by appealing to the Jungian concept of the "collective unconsciousness" [sic]. (Frye, 1971: 36).

Levi Strauss agrees, stressing the importance of reading myth within its ideological context, including author and teller, past and present. He says looking at ideological contexts reveals myth's function in maintaining a "kinship system", which propels society's acceptance of civilised behaviour in the face of natural barbaric instincts.
"What gives myth its operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past, as well as the future." says Levi Strauss. (Levi Strauss, 1972: 208).

More recently, there has emerged a social anthropological argument that myth has suffered from post-modemism, and has altered its archetypal representations to become nothing more than a set of meaningless symbols. Analyst Roland Barthes even goes as far to say that myth has become a subtle and menacing detriment to society.

"[C]ontemporary myth is discontinuous. It is no longer expressed in long fixed narratives but only in 'discourse', at most it is phraseology, a corpus of phrases (of stereotypes); myth disappears, but leaving - so much the more insidious - the mythical." (Barthes, 1972: 7).

Barthes goes on to say myth, once an anchor for civilised society, has undergone an "ideological abuse" and trivialised into nothing more than mere entertainment. (Barthes, 1972: 7).

Although Barthes agrees with Frye and Levi Strauss - that myth holds great social power - he believes the myth's archetypal representations have become debased, fragmentary cliches, which are as likely to be found in advertising as in great literary texts. According to Barthes, myths in this form can no longer "hold society together". He argues myth continues to be influential in society but, in an Orwellian sense, founds and perpetuates ideologies which value neither debate nor democracy. (Indeed, this could easily be one of Orwell's warnings when he wrote '1984', in which the 'Proles' are kept ideologically passive through meaningless forms or cultural expression in entertainment and the media.)
Evidence of - what Barthes calls - "ideological abuse" is pervasive throughout modern western culture. Commercialised mythical deformities such as The Legends of Hercules and Xena, Warrior Princess, appear to enjoy far greater popularity than the original plays written by Aeschylus or Homer.

The argument of myth critics such as Barthes is cynical and pessimistic. However, there exists a more positive aspect of contemporary myth criticism in the theories of media analysts such as Keith Windschuttle and Barry Lowe. According to Windschuttle and Lowe, today's news media subconsciously function as conduits for the myths and ideologies of contemporary society.

"A myth in this sense is a story, factually based or fictional, a literary theme or character type that appeals to the consciousness of a social group by embodying its ideals for itself or by giving expression to deep, commonly felt emotions." (Windschuttle, 1988: 279). After analysing the predominate existing theories of news values, Windschuttle "wants to argue a great deal of what comprises the news are the myths of our own time". (Windschuttle, 1988: 26).

As part of his "argument", Windschuttle conducts a critique of the prevailing theories on news values. He condemns the 'Free Market Model', in which news is seen as an objective body of truth about the world, and information is selected and rejected in a fine balance between what is deemed "in the public interest and market forces. (Windschuttle, 1988: 26)
Although Windschuttle has since changed his position, and now supports the 'Free Market Model', his earlier criticisms are useful in the context of the following thesis.

The following thesis agrees with Windschuttle, particularly in the country context, where 'public interest' and 'market forces' are under unique pressures. As American analyst Tichenor says, small communities "decide" on public interest by tradition, which is conducted in an "atmosphere of general consensus". (Tichenor, 1980: 50). Furthermore, as English analysts, Franklin and Murphy say, newspapers in small communities "usually" have a monopoly on readership and are rarely in competition with others for advertising. (Franklin & Murphy, 1991: 6).

Windschuttle also decries the 'Manipulative' model of news values. The 'Manipulative' version of news selection and rejection views journalists as acting in direct interests of proprietors. Journalists are seen as "mere hacks", churning out propaganda that suits the needs of their employers. (Windschuttle, 1988: 263). However, as Windschuttle says, as an account of news values, the manipulative model "leaves a great deal to be desired". The theory presumes journalists are mere mouthpieces through which proprietors speak, and exercise no independent editorial judgement of their own. An assertion, as Windschuttle points out, which is "hotly challenged" by many in the industry. (Windschuttle, 1988: 265).

The 'Bureaucratic' model, which Windschuttle describes as "an organised response to a series of routine bureaucratic processes" is also discredited. According to this theory, journalists do not search out stories, but rather, are handed them by public relations activities. (Windschuttle, 1988: 269). Despite the high number of public relations material sent to news outlets,
Windschuttle does not believe it affects news to the same extent that the 'Bureaucratic' model purports.

The final widely known theory is the 'Ideological Consensus' model of news. This model accepts neither the idea that news is an accurate reflection of society, nor that it is a distortion of the world. This model views news as a broad, but selective interpretation of society through a mediating ideology. It is similar to the 'news as myth' theory, but maintains news is selected and rejected according to the ideology of the powerful, rather than a pervasive communal ideology. (Windschuttle, 1988: 269).

After invalidating the existing prominent theories on news values, Windschuttle argues that the criteria by which information is selected and rejected of information is shaped by the news media's prevailing ideology. 'What happens when a journalist recognises a 'good news story' is that he or she is bringing his [or her] own humanity and socialisation to bear on a particular set of events and picking up, instinctively, the mythical elements of his [or her] own culture... The journalist's news sense is the Process of identifying and satisfying the demands of his [or her] audience for myth.' (Windschuttle, 1988: 270).

Barry Lowe does the same type of critique in his analysis of 'Media Mythologies' (Lowe, 1995). Lowe condemns the "universal tendency" to reflect on the role of the mass media in modern society by "dwelling on the negative impacts and influences" of media products and organizations. "This tendency indicates that our dependency on the media is shadowed by a general distrust and reluctance to accept their primacy in our civilisation. However, when this becomes an unfocussed hostility towards the media, it is
pointless: the media are fundamental building blocks which our society could not exist in the form it has evolved into.

"The media are blamed for the effect of their messages, as if they are responsible for the content of their messages. The role of the producer, the one who fashions the messages that media deliver, is often ignored or forgotten, leaving the media to act as scapegoats for the actions of those who simply exploited the efficiency of their communicative function." (Lowe, 1995: 280).

As Lowe says, the mass media industries are run by people who construct their products according to the rules and practices that "play a major role" in shaping the messages the media deliver. The media industries are sites of ideological discourse and their ideologies determine the content and meaning of their messages." (Lowe, 1995: 47).

While Lowe studies ideology's role in shaping news values from the media's perspective, analyst John Carey puts forward a similar argument, but from the audience's view. Carey says the consumption of news is a "ritualistic act" rather than a "mere transmission of information".

"A ritual view of communication will... view reading a newspaper less as sending or gaining information and more as attending a mass, a situation in which nothing new is learned but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed. News reading and writing is a ritual act and moreover, a dramatic one... A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space, but towards the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs... Communication... is the basis of human fellowship; it
produces the social bonds ... that tie men together and make associated life possible. (Carey, 1989: 18 - 22).

Masterson says journalists - who are, after all, members of society's "human fellowship" - subconsciously choose stories which represent their particular community's "shared beliefs". "All journalists claim to know if information is news or not, but only some can explain why, and the explanations are seldom the same. Ask enough journalists and analyse their reasons and a consensus must appear." (Masterson, 1992: 20).

After surveying nearly 300 journalists in 67 different countries, Masterson concludes news values include concepts such as 'Sensation', 'Conflict' and 'Secrecy'. According to Masterson, these concepts are "internationally valid" and "determine" whether or not a story is news worthy. (Masterson, 1992: 20).

Galtung and Ruge also identify a set of criteria for determining news values. They, however, say 'Negativity' tops the list. 31 Again, in keeping with Windschuttle's 'news as myth' theory, Galtung and Ruge argue 'Negativity's' value is derived from its "easy assimilation" and ability to "fulfil latent and manifest needs". (Galtung and Ruge, in Cohen and Young (eds) 1973: 63-72).

Henningham also argues there exists an intrinsic relationship between a particular community's ideology and the criteria by which its news media selects and rejects information.
"News is a human made construct, or a set of conventions which make intuitive sense to journalists in one time or place, but is subject to change as people's ideas and values change." (Henningham, 1990: 2).

However, Henningham also implies modern western ideology encourages ethically dubious journalistic behaviour.

"The level of Australian journalists' professionalism, in terms of a mind or a set of values, leaves much to be desired. Journalists' proneness to error, to the beat-up (don't let the facts get in the way of a good story) and routine distortions are sadly too common." (Henningham, 1990: xi).

While Henningham implies modern western ideology results in news values, which encourage dubious journalistic behaviour, Dagenais believes these same news values are important to propel democratic society. Dagenais says news values, particularly 'Crisis', fulfils latent and manifest needs".

"If a situation of crisis is, axiomatically, a moment of importance to the society concerned, it is necessarily worthy of media attention. The nature of that attention then becomes, itself, an element of crisis ... in a certain sense, media thrive of crisis and are threatened by normalcy... Democracy implies an on-going struggle... if crisis is a structural feature of modern society and media are the agents of social communication by which a crisis is made public, then the media-crisis relationship becomes a key factor in the struggle for democracy." (Dagenais, 1992: 3).

At tertiary level in Australia, contemporary western news sense is taught on the basis of theories of media analysts such as Masterson, Henningham, Dagenais, and Galtung and Ruge. (It is pertinent to point out, however, that universities also emphasise these news values must be treated with great sensitivity and responsibility, as encouraged by the Media Entertainment and
Arts Alliance Journalist's code of ethics.) Theories taught in tertiary institutions claim news values are based on contemporary western ideology, including concepts such as democracy and capitalism, much the same as the Free Market Model, as explained by Windschuttle, and balanced by ethics.

However, in his study of country Australian communities, sociologist, Ian Hamilton concludes small townships have a common ideology that digresses from the general ideals found in modern western democracy. "While they [leaders of country communities] were not always on the same side of the political fence, there was among them a common belief in the ability of the individual or the small community to overcome adversity... the people talked of regional economic development, and of towns working together for the common good... they wanted their towns to survive and prosper." (Hamilton, 1997: 212.)

The country ideology is more explicitly stated by Dr Jonathan Sher, President of North Carolina's Country Education and Development Department in his 1987 Country Australia Symposium speech. Dr Sher argues country ideology is centred around the community's need to develop "vision" and a "united voice" in order to overcome the "tyranny of distance". "...the country crisis can not be solved by an outside saviour, so too it can not be solved if the sectorial fragmentation and the political disunity within country communities remains in tact. Narrow factional voices speaking its discord and at cross purposes will do little to advance the cause of country Australia." (Quoted in Byrnes & Walker (cds), 1987: 33.)

The differing ideology in country areas was recently illustrated when the so-called 'unwinnable' Victorian election was won by the Labor party. As Larry Schwartz wrote in The Age: Saturday Extra at the time, "small towns
may be struggling but, as Jeff Kennett found, the bush still packs a punch.” (Schwartz, 1999: 1). On September 18, 1999, after seven years in government, Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett was voted out of office. His majority was eroded when the normally conservative regional seats swung towards Independent candidates. (Schwartz, 1999: 1).

The same type of situation arose in the 1996 Federal election, when country areas turned to the One Nation Party, creating the now almost defunct "Hanson" phenomenon. The success of both One Nation in the 1996 Federal election, and Independents in the 1999 State election lay in an ability to strike a chord with regional electorates, appealing to, and empathising with, their sense of isolation, struggle and political neglect. (Trinca, 1999: 13).

The 'bush ideology' resulting from the sense of political neglect was epitomised when Murtoa poet, Peter Janetzki put pen to paper in commemoration of his town's 125th anniversary in 1997.

"Now the SEC and Rly's have
Been relinquished
The PMG and Land Department gone
Some banks, the hussies closed.
Without our say in it -
Let's stick in there and make this
town our own. "45

(Quoted in Colebatch, 2000: 5).

As myth criticism and social anthropology contend, ideology is illustrated in myth, legend, literature, art and (as demonstrated above) poetry. (Frye, 1971: 35.) More recently ideology has also been expressed in pop culture,
entertainment and the media. In a specifically country Australian context, television programs such as *Sea Change* and *Something in the Air* demonstrate country communities (in Hamilton's words) "overcoming adversity" and "working together for the common good" so as to "survive and prosper".

Not only is this theme found on the screen, but in novels and even children's literature. In *The Magic Pudding* Norman Lindsay tells the story of a group of "Puddin' Owners", who gather various members of their community to retrieve their stolen pudding. The story's conclusion depicts the community duping the legal system into allowing the pudding to return to its rightful owners and, as with most children's stories of the time, they all lived happily ever after. (Lindsay, 1972).

The theme of struggling together against large metropolitan corporations and government for the communal good is littered throughout Australia's literature, music, art and pop culture. As Schwartz says in his article, "Even though the overwhelming majority of Australians live in the cities, these small towns refuse to be forgotten and continue to loom large in our folklore and in Perceptions of ourselves." (Schwartz, 1999: 4)

Local Beechworth historian, Ian Hyndman, theorises all Australians have a "subconscious feel" that the "real Australia" is in the country and small towns.

"The essence of Australia is in the countryside. That's where the goldrush started and that's where many of our forebears came from."

Hyndman goes on to say Australians have "the same" obsession with country communities as America does with the Wild West." (Schwartz, 1999: 4)
The above evidence suggests the country ideology of (again, in Hamilton's words) "a common belief in the ability of the individual or the small community to overcome adversity", "working together for the common good" so as to "survive and prosper" is alive and well in the hearts and minds of Australians. Drawing a relationship between Windschuttle's 'news as myth' theory, the observations made by Hamilton and the evidence of country ideology in motion pictures, television series, music and literature, it can be concluded media outlets in country areas have news values that support and perpetuate a unique country ideology.

A study group held during the 1965 Australian Country Press Seminar found country newspapers did indeed have news values different from those taught in tertiary institutions, and those put forward by Masterson, Galtung and Ruge, Henningham and Dagenais.

"This sometimes means the inclusion of items which are not necessarily newsworthy, but are essential as a service to the public," the study group report says. "In a sense we are not competing with bigger newspapers - we are doing a different job." (Australian Country Press Association Seminar, 1965: 16).

This "different job" is more akin to developmental journalism in the developing world than the western concept of journalism's function. While analysts such as Windschuttle, Dagenias and Galtung and Ruge believe news values such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' support western ideology, developmental journalism maintains news values support an ideology that holds the "development of a country as its primary goal. According to analyst Damien Kingsbury, developmental journalism follows a general set of rules, including.
1. Reporting on events of a positive nature
2. Not reporting on excessively negative news
3. Reporting on events within cultural, historic and economic contexts
4. Reporting on economic and political issues in an explanatory, rather than an adversarial way

1. Promoting political harmony (or, conversely, not reporting politically divisive issues which can preclude dissent and opposition) (Kingsbury, 1994: 15).

Developmental journalism does not, however, necessarily translate into propaganda. In his article for the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, Mohamed identifies two models of news values; the 'Authoritarian' or 'Communist' model (upholding a dictatorial ideology), and the 'Libertarian' (upholding a 'Fourth Estate' ideology). Mohamed argued journalism needed to find compromise between the two, and came up with the 'Socially Responsible' model of news values.

"Its basic assertions are simple. The individual has rights. So too does society. Whereas the 'Authoritarian' and the 'Communist' will boldly say the rights of society must take precedence over the individual, and the 'Libertarian' will take an equally rigid view that the rights of the individual must over-ride those of society, I believe that is a question Of qualitatively and quantitatively balancing the two rights. The media must be given freedom. But this freedom must be exercised with responsibility." (Mohamed, 1989: 107).

Despite the similarities between the news values of developmental and country journalism, there remains one fundamental difference; the news values of developmental journalism are virtually imposed by governmental influence, while country news values are - according to this theory -
intrinsically linked to a specifically Australian country ideology and are, subconsciously, practised by journalists.

As already discussed, Australian country ideology can be seen to encompass "a common belief in the ability of the individual or the small community to overcome adversity" and "working together for the common good" so as to "survive and prosper". If we are to believe analysts such as Henningham, who contend news values are a "human made construct" or a "set of conventions" which are "subject to change as people's ideas and values change", then we can theorise the criteria by which information is selected and rejected by journalists in country areas will be different from the current concept of news values as put forward by Masterson, Dagenais and Galtung and Ruge. However, because very little quantitative research has gone into the news values of contemporary country Australian news values, asserting such a theory is mere speculation.


While Wild mainly examines "local government and resident action" in small Australian communities, his conclusions have some relevance to the following study of country journalism's news values. Wild uses the
Victorian town of Heathcote as a case study to support his theory that "many" country newspapers "shy away" from the current concept of news values. Wild takes this concept a step further to argue that "this means support for consensus and the status quo, rather than for conflict or social change". (Wild, 1983: 1).

"If such newspapers reflect the underlying social structure, then to some extent they must support the values, ideas and interests of the powerful," he says. "Hence they contribute to the maintenance of social inequalities in our society." (Wild, 1983: 1).

While the following thesis agrees with Wild's theory that the country press does not adhere to the current set of news values, it digresses from his concept that there exists a conspiracy between newspapers and influential groups to maintain the ideology of the powerful. The following thesis does not endeavour to demonstrate the country press conspires to support the values, ideas and interests of the powerful. It does, however, seek evidence to support the theory that the country press inevitably upholds the specifically country ideology in which it operates.

While Wild argues country news values are part of a conspiracy, Walker looks to the country press's origins to explain the reasons for the different set of criteria by which information is selected and rejected in small communities. Walker's theory is more aligned with that of the following thesis than that of Wild's. Walker argues the small beginnings of 'bush ideology' affected the early news values of country media outlets. He says any allegiances small media outlets had with bigger metropolitan papers were "subordinated" to a "general feeling of resentment" of the country against the city. Walker says metropolitan areas were "perceived to be
robbing the country-side of the benefits of its excess births over deaths". (Walker, 1976: 176)

"The country newspaper came to express an agrarian ideology which exalted country values and virtues against the greed and selfishness of the big cities... One principle to which all country newspapers firmly adhered to was the vigorous promotion and social advancement of their town and district." (Walker, 1976: 176)

Kirkpatrick comes to a similar conclusion when he examines the introductory editorials of 25 New South Wales provincial papers. He conducts his study in order to discover whether the media pursued news values that would enable them to become "card-carrying members of the Fourth Estate", or whether the pursuit of material and social advancement created a different set of criteria by which they selected information. (Kirkpatrick, 1998: 85.)

The media historian finds many newspapers were originally set up to fill a perceived gap in local representation during a pre-council era.

"In many incidences, the establishment of a town's first newspaper pre-dated the advent of local government. This placed a heavier onus on the newspaper to represent or advocate the interests of the town." (Kirkpatrick, 1998: 89.)

Kirkpatrick says, in the absence of local government, the confinement of such benefits as roads, bridges, schools, public buildings, railways and other amenities depended much on the local member supported by a public marshalled by the press. Kirkpatrick likens the country newspaper's historical role to the American term, 'community-ism', defined by
Chicago-based historian Daniel Boorston as the media's "preoccupation with the growth and prospects of one's city". (Boorston, 1965: 134).

Although Kirkpatrick argues the Australian country media's historical function was prescribed to fill a gap in local representation, he also suggests news values were influenced by a more practical reason.
"The readiness to attack newspaper proprietors tended to circumscribe the freedom of the press, because the people demonstrated at times that they were less tolerant and lacking in respect for the independence of the opinion and the honesty of purpose of the editors." (Kirkpatrick, 1998: 89).

In a 1995 paper he wrote for Queensland's Charles Sturt University, Kirkpatrick went on to describe regional daily newspapers as "different creatures" compared to their non-daily and metropolitan counterparts. Using previous studies, as well as evidence from his own historical study into Queensland newspaper dynasties, Kirkpatrick theorises regional dailies "have different audiences with different needs and values. These factors help shape a different product". (Kirkpatrick, 1995: 219).

Kate Pretty comes to a similar conclusion. After her survey of 100 Australian country journalists Pretty concludes "country journalists occupy a unique and vital role in Australian society". (Pretty, 1993: 75). She theorises the achievements of country newspapers in the promotion and support of geographically isolated communities have resulted in the development of different roles, functions and priorities for country journalism, as compared with metropolitan journalism.

While Pretty's study is related to the following thesis, her comparison between country journalism and metropolitan journalism departs from the
investigation at hand. The following thesis is in no way concerned with metropolitan journalism. It is, however, concerned with the current concept of news values as taught in tertiary institutions.

However, the basic arguments put forward by Pretty are aligned with the following thesis. As Pretty says, "country journalists and journalism have all but been ignored by mass media scholars". (Pretty, 1993: 75). Both Pretty and the author of this thesis strive to contribute to the small, yet socially and professionally vital, body of knowledge regarding country news values and country journalism.

Although there exists few studies on contemporary Australian country news values, there are several pertaining to American suburban community newspapers. The main theory emerging from the body of American media inquiry is termed the 'Structural Functionalist Paradigm' which, put simply, maintains each news media organization is a prominent and influential subsystem within its specific community. According to this theory, news values maintain a specific communal ideology, as well as being shaped by that same ideology.

The American 'Structural Functionalist Paradigm' is similar to the theory of the following thesis. Although the American theories concentrate on suburban press, we can safely presume the communities under question have a similar homogenous structure as country Australian society.

American media analysts, Phillip Tichnor, George Donohue and Clarice Olien put forward one theory similar to that of the following thesis. "Newspapers are basically creations of the communities they serve. Their size, nature, scope and content are, to a large extent, determined by the
characteristics of the surrounding town, city or region in which the town or city exists." (Tichenor et al, 1980: 49).

Tichenor, et al theorise the type of news values is determined by the size and structure of the society in which the outlets operate. Studying links between community structure and the role of the press, the authors found more pluralistic societies will be likely to include newspapers that tend to produce more articles reporting on 'Conflict'. And vice-versa; more homogenous communities will be likely to include newspapers that produce less articles reporting on 'Conflict'. (Tichenor et al, 1980.)

Tichenor et al's theory maintains the press is a subsystem of a wider communal structure, and its role and news values mirror its particular society's system.

"While the press does serve as a mirror, however contorted its reflective curvature, it is part of a reciprocal process, being affected by that system and affecting it in turn. Rather than being an initiator of basic positions, the press is normally pushed into reporting events by organised forces in the system and its reports become an integral part of the social process... since communication subsystems are themselves creations of the larger structures in which they operate, both media personnel performance and media use patterns of citizens will differ according to structural characteristics." (Tichenor et al, 1980: 220 – 221).

Tichenor et al define pluralistic communities as being "marked by competition among elites in the allocation of valued resources".

"They offer many opportunities for satisfying economic needs, for socialising, for learning and personal development, for religious experience, for altruism and helping others, for being entertained, and for
the array of other values people express. Pluralistic communities need a mass media system to become alerted to conflict in resource allocation and to observe how disagreements are settled. In such places the distribution of information often affects conflict resolution as much as allegiance to elites. Where people act in different ways, adhering to varying beliefs, the press can publicise alternatives through its selection of news sources." (Tichenor et al, 1980: 220 – 221).

Whereas homogenous communities do not possess the same number of services or resources, and the press operating in such an environment do not consider concepts such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' as essential values determining whether or not a story is 'news worthy'. As Tichenor et al say: ... part of the function of weekly papers is to maintain a state of tranquillity, thus avoiding social disruption of small community relationships. Within these relationships, which are based on personal contact and communication patterns, disruptions are not tolerated." (Tichenor et al, 1980: 220 – 221).

A 1960 theory put forward by American media analysts, Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman also maintains the small newspaper selects information according to a criteria different from the current concept of news values. "The newspaper always emphasises the positive side of life; it never reports local arrests, shotgun weddings, mortgage foreclosures, lawsuits, bitter exchanges at public meetings, suicides or any other unpleasant happening. By this constant focus on warm, human qualities in all public situations, the public character of the community takes on those qualities." (Vidich & Bensman, 1960: 321).
Morris Janowitz finds a similar situation in Chicago community newspapers. In his 1967 study, Janowitz theorises the vast percentage of newspaper content is non-controversial. "The overwhelming bulk of non-advertising space is devoted to reports of routine activity and announcements and not to either change or controversy...the emphasis on community and organisation expansion and the absence of items involving contraction gives the community newspaper its 'booster' quality." (Janowitz, 1967: 13).

"Less than five per cent of the space was devoted to controversy in that it dealt with demands for, or opposition to, expansion of community services, activities or programs, or involved larger political situations. Editorial matter, which has been defined as including public affairs columns and letters-to-the-editor, as well as editorials proper, reflects the same bias." (Janowitz, 1967: 76 – 77).

According to Janowitz, the community newspaper's ability to appear controversial, while maintaining a neutral position, exacerbates the study of its news values. But, similar to the following thesis, Janowitz does not find news media outlets, themselves, culpable for renouncing current news values. He suggests news values are guided by the community in which the media outlet operates. He says small societies expect their newspapers to develop a community spirit, to encourage growth of community facilities, and to aid everyday life and commerce - all facets of community maintenance. They do not, according to Janowitz, see the newspaper as a forum for concentrating on social debates and divisions. Janowitz explains the community newspaper is generally seen by its audience as an agent of community welfare and progress. (Janowitz, 1967: 76 – 77).
But Janowitz does not believe small community newspapers renounce controversy as a news value completely. He says controversy is permissible, providing it is the controversy of another community - not one's own. "Controversies which are most popular are those of the local community against the outside urban metropolis. There are very few internal dissenters." (Janowitz, 1967: 77).

Tichenor also argues conflict and controversy are news worthy in small community papers, providing they do not threaten internal social division. "Concentration on local topics tends to dominate the weekly to the exclusion of external matters. Therefore, since most conflicts in these communities involve interdependencies with external agencies, a newspaper tends to exclude conflict to the extent that it excludes reports about external groups. This also means that when the local newspaper does report conflict, it concentrates primarily on conflicts involving external groups." (Tichenor et al, 1980: 55).

The 'Structural Functionalist Paradigm', as put forward by Tichenor et al, Janowitz and Vidich and Bensman, maintains an argument similar to that of the following thesis - that news values guide, and are guided by, the ideology of the community in which the media outlet operates. However, the theories put forward by these analysts pertain to a specifically American suburban community newspaper context. The following thesis takes the same theory and relates it to a specifically contemporary Australian country context.

This theory is supported by that put forward by social anthropology and myth criticism, which argues a society's ancient myths and stories comprise a set of inherent archetypal sequences, which function to convey communal
norms and practices in order to maintain a minimal degree of civilised behaviour. Although the social anthropological and myth criticism theory pertains to art and literature, as analysts such as Windschuttle, Carey and Henningham argue, today's news media subconsciously function as conduits for the myths and ideologies of contemporary society. With these theories in mind, the following thesis investigates contemporary country Australian media and their news values in a specifically country Australian context.
Methodological Framework

Various architects contributed to the methodological framework on which the following thesis is constructed. However, very little inquiry has gone into news values in a specifically rural Australian context. With this in mind, the architects with the heaviest influence on the following thesis are those who have made inquiry into news values in a specifically American suburban context.

To justify the influence of American inquiry on an exclusively rural Australian examination, we can turn to Phillip Tichenor, George Donohue and Clarice Olien's definitions of suburban context. Tichenor distinguishes between pluralistic and homogenous societies. The suburban society, argues Tichenor, is of a homogenous nature and does not possess the same number of services or resources as a pluralistic community. (Tichenor et al, 1980). Considering the lack of services in rural Australian communities (as outlined in the previous chapter) it is safe to conclude rural communities are indeed homogenous, similar to those in a suburban context. And, as Tichenor points out, newspapers are "basically creations of the communities they serve". (Tichenor, et al, 1980: 16).

Tichenor's study concentrates on seven 'issues' that received "widespread attention" in 19 homogenous communities to answer three broad research questions:

1. The role of newspapers in community controversy
2. The role of conflict in generating information and affecting the size of knowledge gaps

3. The link between knowledge and opinions in different kinds of conflict situations.

The basic units of Tichenor’s analysis are the community, and his focal questions and hypotheses relate to structural variations across communities. So while Tichenor looks at how newspapers affect communities, the following thesis is more concerned with how communities affect newspapers and their news values. Although the independent variables of each study are reversed, their basic methodological approaches are similar.

Tichenor conducts in-depth interviews with a sample, and then follows up his findings with a content analysis. This mixture of qualitative and quantitative research ensures the limitations of one are mitigated by the other. (How this relates to the following thesis is discussed later in the chapter.)

However, while Tichenor's study provides excellent starting points on which to base the following thesis on rural news values, it can, in no way, replace such an investigation. Tichenor's primary study is on community variation, with his secondary focus on newspaper variation. In comparison, the following thesis’s primary concern is with differences between specific newspapers, and considers particular communal differences secondarily. Furthermore, Tichenor's work is focussed primarily on Minnesota suburban and urban communities, while the following thesis relates to a broad country Australian ideology, encompassing several different small communities.
Additionally, Tichenor’s work is conducted in the early 1980s - an era with values and beliefs different from contemporary times. Despite these differences, Tichenor’s basic methodological approach and broad hypotheses relating to the role of the newspaper in society are sound foundations on which to construct the following thesis.

Similar to Tichenor, the work of sociologist, Morris Janowitz also lies within the tradition of viewing mass communication as an organic part of a larger social system. Janowitz also bases his assertions on the idea that newspapers, and their selection and rejection of information, are determined by the characteristics of the community in which they operate. And again, like Tichenor, Janowitz distinguishes between homogenous and pluralistic communities in order to test his hypotheses. (Janowitz, 1967).

Janowitz tests four main assumptions:

1. Community newspapers serve a range of unanticipated social, political and effectual needs;

2. The community press acts as a mechanism which maintains local consensus through emphasis on common values rather than on the solution of conflicting values;

3. The community press is related to the process of integrating individuals into the community;

4. The community press is "inextricably linked" to personal communications. (Janowitz, 1967: 10)
"All of the above hypotheses, if correct, indicate that the community press need not be viewed as a survival [sic]. Instead it is assumed that the contents of the community press and the function it performs for its readers are linked to the social requirements of the urban community which are ever changing and not merely survivals of 'village-type' existence." (Janowitz, 1967: 11).

Janowitz's research design involves four main methodological approaches:

1. An historical and ecological analysis of growth and organisation of the community press

2. Interviews with the personnel involved in the community press

3. Content analysis of the community press


Janowitz's first and fourth methodological approaches relate specifically to communal ecology. The following thesis takes communal ecology into account. However, it is not concerned with in-depth research into communal ecology. It is more concerned with communal ideology and how that ideology impacts on the criteria by which newspapers select and reject information. In other words, while Janowitz looks at how newspapers fit in with the wider communal context, the following thesis looks at how the wider communal context impacts on news values. With this in mind,
Janowitz's first and fourth methodological approaches are not appropriate to the following thesis.

However, Janowitz's second and third methodological approaches are particularly pertinent to a thesis concerned with news values. Interviews with those who select and reject information provide valuable insight into a particular newspaper's news values. Even so, while interviews yield useful qualitative data, they need a more quantitative approach to support their resulting findings. A content analysis, using well-defined categories of content, has an ability to identify and decipher news values, and provides useful quantitative data to either support or negate the findings of a series of in-depth interviews. A combination of in-depth interviews and a content analysis will also highlight any discrepancy between the news values editors say they abide by, and the news values that actually appear in the pages of their publications.

Although the study undertaken by Janowitz provides a useful tool of inquiry into rural Australian news values, it by no means replaces such an investigation. Janowitz confines himself to a mere three subjects in the metropolitan Chicago area. Using such a small sample, Janowitz does not allow room for statistical generalisations about the press, which is needed if we are to identify working definitions of rural news values.

Furthermore, Janowitz's research is set in an American urban context during the 1960s, and is confined to 'community' newspapers. These newspapers may have functioned in a homogenous community similar to that in rural Australia. However, urban America in the 1960s is, culturally, a long way from rural Australia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. We cannot merely
assume newspapers in the two types of societies will have the same criteria by which information is selected and rejected.

Another useful study which lends itself to the following thesis's aim is William Rivers and David Rubin's 1968 - 69 study of the press in the San Francisco Bay area. (Rivers & Rubin, 1971). Rivers and Rubin investigate the "anatomy" of newspapers, paying particular attention to their treatment of public policy and community affairs. "Our purpose," the authors proclaim "is to describe the accomplishments and deficiencies of the Bay area press." (Rivers & Rubin, 1971: 6).

Rivers and Rubin devise three subjective standards of evaluating press quality:

1. Objective Reporting;

2. Interpretive Reporting;

(Rivers & Rubin, 1971: 4 - 5).

While these are perfectly valid standards, Rivers and Rubin fail to provide definitions, making their conclusions difficult to evaluate.

Their methodological approach, equally without detail, involved:

1. Reading "as many editions" of the papers under study "as possible" (all papers in the San Francisco bay area.)
2. Interviewing executives and reporters of "many papers", and
3. Using "some quantitative measures" (column inches and story placement) to "give" the "admittedly subjective judgements" a more "solid foundation". (Rivers & Rubin, 1971: 6).

Rivers and Rubin do not provide definitions for their categories of content, nor do they specify how many papers, how many executives and reporters, nor how many column inches contributed to their analysis.

Although Rivers and Rubin's study lacks quantitative scope, their case study presentation of findings holds a wealth of information about their research topic. Rivers and Rubin first look at individual papers as case studies, then at the reporting of three separate issues, each in within its relevant community.

Rivers and Rubin's case study approach uses as many data sources as possible in order to systematically investigate the anatomy of newspapers in the San Francisco Bay area. The case study approach sheds light on phenomena within its real life context. With this in mind, the case study approach is appropriate to an investigation of news values within a specifically rural context.

Rivers and Rubin's methodological processes again present a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. As already discussed, this research design has merit. However, as with Tichenor and Janowitz's studies, the investigation conducted by Rivers and Rubin is not applicable to a contemporary rural Australian context. Furthermore, Rivers and Rubin's investigation is concerned with "accomplishments" and "deficiencies"
(Rivers and Rubin, 1971: 2) (which are, by their very nature, subjective), rather than 'News Values' per se.

Tichenor, Janowitz and Rivers and Rubin offer three of the most valuable and well-known studies into the role of the press in a homogenous community. However, all three are set in either a suburban or metropolitan American context during the 1960s and 1970s. Empirical investigation into the role of today's press in homogenous Australian communities, however, is relatively rare.

Even so, rare does not mean non-existent. Kate Pretty's 1993 survey of 100 rural journalists of non-daily papers is one of a small handful of empirical investigations into news values in a modern Australian context. (Pretty, 1993: 75 – 123). Pretty randomly draws her subjects from Margaret Gee's Media Guide, and asks them a series of core, closed and open-ended questions in order to create a "profile" of the typical country non-daily journalist. Questions relate to the subject's background and demographics, working conditions and perceptions of the country press's function compared to the metropolitan press.

While the following thesis is concerned with neither the Australian country journalist's profile, nor the country press's function in comparison to the metropolitan media, it does find Pretty's methodological approach useful. Like Pretty's investigation, the following thesis selects a sample of rural media outlets from Margaret Gee's Media Guide. However, while Pretty sends out a written survey, the following thesis contacts each subject in order to obtain a more in-depth interview. Furthermore, these interviews are tailored according to each subject's unique features, which were observed during previously conducted content analyses.
While Pretty's surveys are largely quantitative and stand alone as an investigation, the following thesis uses the comments of rural journalists as a qualitative investigation in order to support a previously conducted quantitative content analysis. However, although the two investigations have different goals, Pretty's methodological approach forms the base on which this thesis conducts its in depth interviews.

Ronald Wild's 1983 study into 'Communication, Power and the Country Press' is another in the handful of empirical investigations into news values in a modern Australian context. (Wild, 1983: 1 – 7). However, Wild's methodology is not concerned with news values as such, but more interested in how journalists (allegedly!) conspire to perpetuate the interests of the powerful. Wild uses a case study approach, which he claims, "indicates" that rural news values "manipulate" readers "for the benefit of local politicians, local business and farming interests. "... that is," says Wild, "those in positions of power." (Wild, 1983: 1)

"The dominant ideology surrounding the country newspaper concerns its role as an integrating mechanism and as the upholder of local democracy. In practice this means support for consensus and the status quo rather than for conflict or social change. If such newspapers reflect the underlying social structure then to some extent they must support the values, ideas and interests of the powerful. Hence they contribute to the maintenance of social inequalities in our society," says Wild. (Wild, 1983: 1). Wild's assertions are radical and, if correct, have far-reaching consequences for all those who work within the rural newspaper industry. To support such
an extreme allegation, Wild refers to his 1974 case study of the Bradstow community and his 1983 case study of the Heathcote township.

Wild claims the exclusive topic of Bradstow's editorials (four hailing the importance of Anzac Day within a month) is evidence of the newspaper representing "the values and attitudes of dominant groups". He goes on to say selection and rejection of letters on the same subject is "an illustration of how a country newspaper contributes to maintaining the status quo and dampens down conflict". (Wild, 1983: 2).

Using Heathcote as an example, Wild continues with his hypothesis. He claims the role of local history columns is a "further example of how country newspaper content is designed to emphasise the values and interests on which there is a high level of consensus in the community." He claims "all" of The Melvor Times' history column content during the mid-1960s is "selective history emphasising the value of consensus, progress, achievement and profit as supported and emphasised by those in positions of power". (Wild, 1983: 2).

Wild claims the rural newspaper's habit of publishing regular religious columns is also "strongly concerned with maintaining consensus". "The column reinforces consensus, the status quo and established values morality, duty, loyalty, responsibility, virtue and principles," he says. (Wild, 1983: 2).

Back to Bradstow, and Wild does a "brief" content analysis of the local newspaper from its first publication in 1883 to the time of research in 1969. Although Wild offers no definitions for his categories of content, he claims
91.6 per cent of news and editorial were non-controversial, while the remaining 8.4 per cent highlighted conflict. (Wild, 1983: 3).

Although Wild's case study approach provides a useful method of analysis, its results are merely anecdotal and lack the strength to support radical assertions such as rural news values conspire to perpetuate the interests of the powerful. While case studies offer a wealth of information on certain research topics, Wild's approach (using a mere two samples) generally lacks scientific rigour in order to support such radical assertions. Equivocal evidence and biased views can, quite unintentionally, easily affect case study findings and conclusions. A rigorous and more reliable case study approach would require a far greater sample size, and a tandem quantitative method, so as to provide reliable, statistically based normative statements.

Despite the difficulties with Wild's research design, it does yield many useful aspects. His particular attention to the views of dominant groups, local history, selection and rejection of letters-to-the-editor and Christian religion indicates these subjects are leading news values within the rural press. As will be discussed in the following chapter, these subjects lend themselves appropriately as categories of content to an investigation of rural news values.

Beyond the studies conducted by Wild and Pretty, there exists very little current (at the time of this thesis's writing, 1999 - 2000) empirical investigation into Australian news values. There are, however, two useful historical inquiries into the Australian print media by Rod Kirkpatrick and Robin Walker. The worth of these studies lies in the fact that both authors, independent of each other, discover the rural press has a long tradition of
adhering to a different set of criteria by which to select and reject information than the current concept of news values.

In his study of the New South Wales press between 1803 and 1920, Walker argues the small beginnings of 'bush ideology' affected the early news values of rural media outlets. He says any allegiances small media outlets had with bigger metropolitan papers were "subordinated" to a "general feeling of resentment" of the country against the city which was "perceived to be robbing country-side of the benefits of its excess births over death". Says Walker: "The country newspaper came to express an agrarian ideology which exalted country values and virtues against the greed and selfishness of the big cities." (Walker, 1976: 176).

Although Walker is adamant "every" newspaper "announced its birth to the world declaring its independence and integrity", he notes early rural ideology determined country journalism's function and restricted the criteria by which journalists selected and rejected information. "One principle to which all country newspapers adhered to was the vigorous promotion and social advancement of their town and district." Walker concludes. (Walker, 1976: 176).

Kirkpatrick comes to a similar conclusion when he examines the introductory editorial of 25 New South Wales provincial papers. He conducts his investigation in order to discover whether the media pursued news values that would enable them to be "card-carrying members of the Fourth Estate", or whether the pursuit of material and social advancement created a different set of criteria by which news was selected and rejected. (Kirkpatrick, 1998: 82 – 101).
The media historian finds many newspapers were originally set up to fill a perceived gap in local representation during a pre-local government era.

"In many instances, the establishment of a town's first newspaper pre-dated the advent of local government. This placed a heavier onus on the newspaper to 'represent' or to advocate the interests of the town. (Kirkpatrick, 1998: 82.)

Kirkpatrick says, in the absence of local government, securing benefits such as roads, bridges, schools, public buildings, railways and other amenities depended on unanimous public support. The local press, according to Kirkpatrick, "marshalled" the public support, which was vital to such projects. Kirkpatrick likens the Australian media's historical role to the American term "community-ism", defined by Chicago historian, Daniel Boorston as the "preoccupation with the growth and prosperity of one's city". (Boorston, 1965: 134).

Although Kirkpatrick argues the Australian rural press's historical function was prescribed to fill a gap in local representation, he also suggests this role was influenced by other, more practical, reasons.

"The readiness to attack newspaper proprietors tended to circumscribe the freedom of the press, because the people demonstrated at times that they were less tolerant and lacking in respect for the independence of the opinion and the honesty of purpose of the editors." (Kirkpatrick, 1998: 100).

In his paper for Queensland's Charles Sturt University in 1995, Kirkpatrick argued that community values "inevitably" impact more heavily on the content of country newspapers than on the metropolitan daily. (Kirkpatrick, 1995: 219 – 237). Kirkpatrick believed "the big test" for country newspapers
"comes" when they are implicitly or explicitly asked to withhold coverage that would allegedly adversely affect the advancement of the town.

"How the newspaper perceives 'the public interest'- whether it successfully sees past the private interests of factions and / or personalities - can be the biggest test it faces as an organ of public opinion." (Kirkpatrick, 1995: 237).

With the above in mind, the following thesis asks each of the editors and senior journalists whether or not they would publish known information that posed potential harm to their community. This question is integrated into the qualitative section of the thesis in order to allow various circumstances come to light regarding the publication of potentially harmful information.

Past studies provide several useful elements from which the following thesis's methodological framework is constructed. Tichenor and Janowitz's research design, content analyses followed up by in-depth interviews, is a sound combination of qualitative and quantitative data, which can show up discrepancies between what editors say they publish and what they actually do publish.

The benefits of this approach ensure the limitations of one are mitigated by the other. Where a content analysis is not able to take unique characteristics into account, in-depth interviews are designed to do so. In this case, circumstances unique to a particular media outlet can be taken into account, and may reveal further reasons for individual news values.

In-depth interviews put findings into context and allow for flexibility. Alternatively, flexibility may hinder accuracy when analysing nothing but numbers. Because of this, qualitative data is useful when researching an area
offering little precedent on which to base further research, such as the role and news values of the rural media.

However, to use a large sample size for in-depth interviews results in an over-abundance of unwieldy data. By their very nature, in-depth interviews make reliable statistical generalisations difficult. However, the content analysis is designed to produce statistical data from which generalisations can be made. Furthermore, the use of numbers allows greater precision in reporting results, allows mathematical analysis and a convenient, universal form in which to table results.

The concept of reliability is crucial to the content analysis. To ensure reliability, it is vital that categories of content are clearly defined concepts. The following thesis looks towards the work of Tichenor, Janowitz and Wild to conceptualise its categories of content.

In his study of suburban Chicago newspapers in the 1960s, Janowitz finds: "The overwhelming bulk of non-advertising space is devoted to reports of routine activity and announcements and not to either change or controversy. The emphasis on community and organisation expansion and the absence of items involving contraction gives the community newspaper its 'booster' quality." (Janowitz, 1967: 76).

According to Janowitz, community and organisation expansion is a highly regarded news value among suburban community newspapers in the Chicago area. The following content analysis takes this concept and tests its value in a rural Australian context. The content analysis defines 'Community
Expansion' as any article outlining the growth of community services or resources.

In their study of perceptions of Britain's local press, Franklin and Murphy find typical rural newspapers are assumed to have a "parochial obsession" with 'Communal Rites'. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 1). The following content analysis, seeking to discover whether or not Australian rural newspapers have the same "parochial obsession" with 'Communal Rights', takes its definition from Franklin and Murphy, who define 'Communal Rites' as "pageants, carnivals, fetes, annual prize givings, mayoral inaugurations and local elections'. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 2). In other words, any regularly occurring event that involves the community as a whole.

In his worldwide study of journalists and news values, Masterson discovers 'Conflict' was a concept considered highly news worthy. (Masterson, 1992: 20 – 30).

"Conflict may sound as though it caters, as a news category, to those who like to hear about violence. It does, but it covers a whole lot more as well. Many stories have great impact because they mirror the conflict, which is everywhere, in the world... the social, psychological, legal and even economic conflicts, as well as the physical conflicts of war and crime. Any protest, even a non-violent one, shows conflict with the establishment... News is, as one definition claims, the reportage of change, or the pressure for change... " (Masterson, 1992: 21).

'Conflict' is what can be called a current news value - as Masterson's study suggests. The following thesis defines 'Conflict' as the "reportage of change or the pressure for change" and, with this definition in mind, tests its value in a specifically rural Australian context.
When Wild tests for the rural press's role in conspiring to perpetuate the interests of the powerful, he argues the majority of articles "represent the values and attitudes of the dominant groups and have become institutionalised... [this is how] a country newspaper contributes to maintaining the status quo and dampens down conflict". (Wild, 1983: 1). While the following content analysis does, in no way, seek to suggest rural newspapers are involved in a conspiracy to promote the interests of the powerful, it does inquire into whether 'Dominant Groups' is a news value within the rural press. The following content analysis borrows Wild's comments and defines 'Dominant Groups' as articles outlining the activities of groups that would not be of interest to the paper's wider readership. In other words, stories that would not be considered news worthy unless connected with a dominant group.

As Franklin and Murphy note, the absence of crime and court reporting would make the local newspaper very sparse indeed. According to Franklin and Murphy, local newspapers tend to put forward a positive image of their town and peoples. "None the less", the paper "always" manages to put forward a "helping of court room drama comprising violence, theft, drunkenness, rape, domestic disturbance, child molesting and, at regular intervals, the occasional murder". (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 1).

However, on close inspection of the articles in the following content analysis, articles reporting on "court room drama" do not necessarily portray the community as crime-ridden and unlawful. Instead, these articles praise the bravery of SES volunteers, police and medical practitioners. No sources such as eyewitneses, who may give the event a more 'sensationalised' version of events, appear in these types of articles. The result is a heroic
picture of authorities in control and, and suggest law and order is fit and well in the community, providing readers with a sense of security. With this in mind, the 'Law and Order' category is defined as reports on crime that portray authorities in power.

In her 1994 study on public relations' influence on news content, Clara Zawawi finds it "possible" to detect public relations' activity in the press. She says "points of identity", which "indicate an article originated from a media release" include connections with large organizations, quotes from prominent people within those organizations, and the view given is that of the organisation. Additional indicators may include the absence of by-line and out-of-character rhetoric for particular newspapers. (Zawawi, 1994: 68). With this in mind, the following content analysis defines 'Media Releases' as any article that has no by-line and indicates connections with a large organisation, quotes from prominent people within that organisation, and promoting a viewpoint that is that of the organisation.

As Franklin and Murphy point out, local papers are keen to set up ordinary townsfolk and their activities as objects of praise. "They [typical local newspapers] all cleaved to a local patriotism which put forward the notion that [their town] was the best town in the world, surrounded by some of the finest countryside in existence and inhabited by good-hearted, literate, tolerant, clean, law-abiding, sober inhabitants..." (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 2). With Franklin and Murphy's comments in mind, the following content analysis identifies articles which promote locals as "good-hearted, literate, tolerant, clean, law-abiding, sober inhabitants". These articles are categorised as 'Deeds of Locals', and outline the stories of ordinary townsfolk undertaking seemingly extraordinary activities.
Franklin and Murphy also suggest local 'Rites de Passage' is a common theme among local newspapers. Franklin and Murphy define 'Rites de Passage' as the "births, marriages, golden weddings, diamond weddings, nineteenth birthdays, hundredth birthdays and deaths" of local individuals. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 2). Using the comments of Franklin and Murphy, the following content analysis defines 'Rites de Passage' as stories documenting the life events of locals.

In his study, Wild claims the "dominant ideology" surrounding the local newspaper involves its role as an "integrating mechanism", or "communicating valuable information to disparate groups and individuals" by providing a "focus for the emotional feelings that people have for a locality". (Wild, 1983: 1). However, Wild provides neither past study, nor statistical data to support this theory. The following content analysis defines 'Communal Links' as any article, which integrates isolated neighbourhoods into the main community. In other words, articles outlining the news of outlaying townships, which are given prominence, are defined as 'Communal Links'. These articles would otherwise not be considered newsworthy if they did not publicise events in outlaying townships.

Wild also claims local history is considered a news worthy subject among the rural media. "Often a column or a special series of articles describes the founding and the development of a locality and usually includes the descriptions of the lives of prominent townspeople." (Wild, 1983: 2). But while Wild argues 'Local History' is a "further example of country newspaper content is designed to emphasise the values and interests of which there is a high level of consensus", the following thesis argues 'Local History' is merely another example of how rural news values are different from the traditional concept of the criteria by which information is selected.
and rejected. However, the following content analysis does borrow Wild's definition of 'Local History' as any article that describes the founding and development of a locality, or involves the descriptions and lives of prominent townspeople.

Masterson says 'Sensation' is a highly regarded traditional news value. "There is such a thing as Sensation and when there is, it makes news. Few newsrooms ignore news of crime and violence, especially if it's sensational. The fact that it's extreme makes it news worthy, even if the crime is a minor one." (Masterson, 1992: 23). The following content analysis defines 'Sensation' as any article that focuses on the "extreme" of an incident.

After categorising all articles appearing in the first four pages of four editions of ten separate rural newspaper outlets, the content analysis goes on to categorise all 'Sensation' articles into groups titled either 'Extreme Played Up' or 'Extreme Played Down'. The content analysis pays particular attention to 'Sensation' because of the category's traditional news value status.

The content analysis then goes on to categorise all 'Conflict' articles into four separate groups: 'Appeals to Community Sentiment', 'Community Against Metropolis', 'Self-congratulations' and 'Local Controversy'. As with 'Sensation', the content analysis pays particular attention to 'Conflict' because of the category's traditional news value status.

The categories of content allocated to the specific 'Conflict' content analysis are derived from some of the aforementioned analysts. Janowitz, for example, says newspapers find themselves in a "dilemma" between upholding rural ideology and meeting journalistic expectations of publishing traditional news values. (Janowitz, 1967: 77).
"Thus a portion of so-called editorials are [sic] merely traditional appeals to community sentiment... Controversies which are most popular are those of the local community against the outside urban metropolis; there are very few internal dissenters." (Janowitz, 1967: 77).

Applying Janowitz's observations, the content analysis of specifically aimed at 'Conflict' articles uses 'Appeals to Community Sentiment', 'Community Against Metropolis' and 'Internal Dissent'. The final category, 'Selfcongratulations', emerges from the content analysis itself, and is identified by its praise of either a local individual or the community as a whole.

Using the same categories as those applied to 'Conflict' articles, the following thesis conducts a further content analysis of letters-to-the-editor and editorials. Such a content analysis is particularly pertinent to an inquiry, which theorises that rural newspapers select and reject information according to criteria different to the traditional concept of news values. This particular study theorises rural journalism undervalues traditional news values such as 'Conflict'. However, this theory runs into problems when analysing letters-to-the-editor and editorials, as they traditionally appear on opinion pages. While letters-to-the-editor convey the community's concerns, editorials are designed to reflect a paper's official public position on an issue. So, by their very nature, letters-to-the-editor and editorials cannot help but reflect conflict and divisiveness within the community.

As Janowitz notes, when it comes to opinion pages, rural newspapers face a "dilemma". "The community news paper feels under journalistic' pressure to have editorialising content, but this runs counter to its normal position in the community." (Janowitz, 1967: 77). Using the same categories of content
as applied to articles identified as 'Conflict', the following thesis conducts a content analysis on letters-to-the-editor and editorials to indicate whether or not the opinion pages of rural newspapers embody news values different to the traditional criteria by which information is selected and rejected.

Using the content analyses' results as a starting point, the next section looks at each paper and its individual anatomy. Using River and Rubin’s approach, the following thesis examines each paper as a case study, and compares and contrasts common links and unique features. Considering each paper’s dynamics, the following thesis attempts to identify a line by which rural newspapers follow to reach a state where traditional news values are more often selected than rejected. Although this section bases itself on the preceding quantitative data, its findings are purely qualitative, and may be the result of the author's subjective views.

The final research section of the following thesis analyses the comments of editors and senior journalists in a series of in-depth interviews. These editors are the people who select and reject information for the same publications that were subject to the above content analyses. The in-depth interviews are designed to highlight discrepancies between what is published, and what the editors say they publish.

Furthermore the in-depth interviews, structured in a similar fashion to those conducted by Tichenor and Janowitz, are designed to place the content analyses' data into context. They take each paper’s unique set of circumstances into account, and provide detailed background information about certain news values and reasons for their worth. Although the section analysing editors' comments is largely qualitative, some common answers are also put into quantitative format.
The final research design is a mixture of three content analyses, ten case studies and ten in-depth interviews. Using a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data, the following thesis aims to identify a working set of news values unique to Australia's rural news media.

Research Design

Aim

*To identify a working set of news values that are unique to the rural news media.*

Hypothesis

"Do rural news media reflect a specifically rural ideology? If so, what is the criteria by which rural news media selects and rejects information, and how does it differ from the traditional concept of news values?"

Key Concepts

*Country News Media*

Non-daily newspapers in Victorian country municipalities with a population less than 20,000.

*Country Ideology*

(Taken from Hamilton)

- Belief in the small community to overcome adversity
- Regional economic development
- Working together for the common good
- Community prosperity.
Current Concept of News Values
(Taken from Masterson, Henningham and Galtung and Ruge.)

➤ Conflict
➤ Sensation
➤ Secrecy
➤ Negativity

Methodological Approach

Content Analysis 1
The first content analysis comprises 40 newspapers, taken from 10 different non-daily country media outlets (see appendix 1). To offer a wide sample, the papers are selected from various weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly outlets from across the state of Victoria (see appendix 11).

List of papers:
The North West Express (weekly).
The Wimmera Mail Times (tri-weekly).
The Portland Observer (tri-weekly).
The Kyabram Free Press (bi-weekly).
The Kilmore Free Press (weekly).
The Colac Herald (tri-weekly).
The Wangaratta Chronicle (tri-weekly).
The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard (weekly).
The Latrobe Valley Express (bi-weekly).
The Snowy River Mail (weekly).

All papers are published between March 18 and April 31, 1999. Each article analysed appears within the first four pages. Taking categories of content
from Masterson, Wild and Franklin and Murphy, the 40 papers yield 500 entries in total.

Categories of Content and Definitions

1. Community Expansion
"Any article outlining the growth of communal services or resources."

2. Communal Rites
"Any article covering a regularly occurring event that involves the community as a whole."

3. Conflict
"The reportage of change or the pressure for change."

4. Dominant Groups
"Any article that would not be considered news-worthy unless connected with a dominant group." (The activities of groups that would not be of interest to the paper's wider readership.)

5. Law and Order
"Any article portraying authorities in control of a dangerous situation"

6. Media Releases
"Any article that is without by-line, indicates connections with large organisation and promotes a viewpoint of that organisation."

7. Deeds of Locals
"Stories of ordinary townsfolk undertaking seemingly extraordinary activities."
8. Rites de Passage
"Any article documenting the life events of ordinary people"

9. Communal Links
"Any article integrating isolated townships into the main community."

10. Local History:
"Any article describing the founding or development of the local community."

11. Sensation:
"Any article focussing on the extreme of an incident."

The value of the above concepts is measured according to its total number of cutrics, the page on which these entries appeared and their position on the page. Print convention dictates that stories of value appear on an odd page, with the most valued on the front page. The more valuable stories appear as 'leads', identifiable by headline size, the existence of photographs and elevated position on the page. All others are considered 'fillers'.

Content Analysis II
The second content analysis takes the articles that demonstrate 'current' news values, and scrutinises them further. The articles displaying 'current' news values are:

Conflict (65 articles)

Sensation (14 articles)
The second content analysis places these articles into subcategories. Those identified as 'Conflict' are subcategorised as:

1. **Appeals to Community Sentiment**

   "Any article rhetorically rousing communal loyalty and patriotism.

**Community Against Metropolis:**

"Any article expressing contention with state or federal government, or the operations of large non-local companies or individuals"

**Self-congratulations**

"Any article praising either individuals or the community as a whole"

**Local Controversy**

"Any article indicating 'internal dissent' within the community."

Articles identified as 'Sensation' are subcategorised as:

**Extreme Played Up**

**Extreme Played Down**

Each 'Sensation' article is subcategorised according to its rhetoric and the shape of its inverted triangle (the order in which facts are presented). The subcategories are also identifiable by the article's position on the page, headline size and accompanying photographs and graphics.

Those identified as 'Extreme Played Up' exhibit:

- Sensational rhetoric
- Sensational facts at the inverted triangle's beginning
➤ Appear on an odd page
➤ Appear as a lead
➤ Appear with a 'Sensational' photograph.
➤ Utilise sources, which give a 'sensationalised' version of events (such as eye-witnesses and victims' family members).

Those identified as 'Extreme Played Down' exhibit:
➤ Toned down rhetoric
➤ Sensational facts at the inverted triangle's end
➤ Appear on an even page
➤ Appear as a 'filler'
➤ Do not appear with a photograph
➤ Uses official sources which may give a 'sanitised' version of events (such as police and ambulance officers.)

Content Analysis III
Using the same 40 papers as above, the third content analysis categorises all letters-to-the-editor and editorials.

For the purposes of the following thesis, letters-to-the-editor are defined as:
Prose written in epistolary form (addressed to 'Sir' and signed). (102 entries).

Editorials are defined as:
Any article appearing under a banner and a deliberate opinion emerging from the rhetoric. (35 entries).

Using this set of criteria, the content analysis yields 102 letters-to-the-editor and 35 editorials, making 137 entries in total)
Letters-to-the-editor and editorials appearing in the sample's first four pages were previously defined as 'Conflict'. These were further categorised into 'Appeals to Community Sentiment', 'Self-congratulations', 'Local Controversy' or 'Community Against Metropolis'.

The third content analysis takes all letters-to-the-editor and editorials (whether appearing in the first four pages of the paper or not) and uses the same categories of content as above. To recap, the categories of content and their definitions are:

**Appeals to Community Sentiment**
'Any letter-to-the-editor or editorial rhetorically rousing patriotism within the local community''

**Community Against Metropolis**
'Any letter-to-the-editor or editorial expressing contention with state or federal government, or the operations of large non-local companies, or the activities of non-local individuals'

**Self-congratulations**
'Any letter-to-the-editor or editorial praising either individuals or the community as a whole'

**Local Controversy**
'Any letter-to-the-editor or editorial indicating 'internal dissent' within the community. '}

Case studies of 10 country Victorian newspapers

Using the same 10 samples as previously, the following thesis examines each paper as a case study. The case studies take as many data sources as possible to systemically investigate each paper on its individual merits. The case study chapter does not, however, use results from the following in-depth interviews. The author's purpose is to analyse each paper as it is presented to its readership, and attempts to avoid clouding conclusions with preconceived ideas about justification for certain news value decisions. (This analysis is, however, expanded upon with editorial comments in the subsequent chapter.)

Taking the percentage of articles displaying current news values ('Conflict' and 'Sensation') as a starting point, the case study chapter goes on to place each publication into a line. Starting with those, which display the least percentage of traditional news values, the case study chapter takes into account each sample's various elements. These elements are as listed:

1. The percentage and type of current news values.
2. The percentage and type of non-current news values
3. The existence and type of editorials.
4. The existence, type and number of letters-to-the-editor
5. The existence of Local History Columns
6. The existence of 'Communal Links' pages
7. The existence and use of by-lines
8. Lay out style
9. The existence and presentation of court reporting
10. Rhetorical style
11. Types of lead articles
12. Types of fillers
13. Types of front page leads
14. Shape of inverted triangle (or the order in which facts are presented).

**In-depth Interviews:**

In-depth interviews were conducted with either the editor or a senior journalist of each of the 10-paper sample. The interviews are designed to allow for flexibility in the types of questions asked, so as to shed light on each paper's unique set of circumstances. However, the interviewer approaches the subjects armed with a certain set of core questions. These are:

- In your opinion, do rural newspapers have different news values than the traditional concept of how information is selected and rejected? Why?

- Is 'Conflict' a news value in your paper?

- Is 'Sensation' a news value in your paper?

- If known information was likely to harm your community, would it be published?

- What is the role of your paper in your community?

- Is this different to how the public regard the news media's role in general?

- If you had to name five news criteria, what would they be?
Although it is presumed the above questions are answered accurately and honestly, there are several variables to keep in mind when analysing the in-depth interviews' results. These include:

1. The respondent may subconsciously wish to present his/her publication as embodying the current concept of news values, and answer accordingly.

2. The limited number of advertisers in a rural community may influence the types of news values published (as opposed to communal ideology influencing news values).

3. Social relationships between editorial staff and the wider community may influence answers.

4. News values may be restricted by a lack of technology in rural areas.

5. The author is not aware of the community's background, and cannot take this into account.

6. The author is not aware of the types of stories that are not published.

Despite the above variables, with the three content analyses and case studies, the in-depth interviews go towards a comprehensive analysis of country news values.
Chapter 1: Content Analysis of the 10-Paper Sample

The following content analysis indicates country newspaper outlets select and reject information according to a set of criteria different from the current western concept of news values. As discussed previously, current concepts of western news values encompass themes such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' and, according to media analysts such as Keith Windschuttle, are designed to support modern western ideology. However, the following content analysis suggests Australian country journalism gives precedence to a different set of news values that upholds a distinctly country ideology.

The content analysis comprises 40 newspapers, taken from 10 different non-daily country news outlets. To offer a wide sample, the papers were selected from various weekly, bi-weekly and tri-weekly outlets from across the state of Victoria. (See appendix 11). All papers were published between March 18 and April 31, 1999. Each article appeared within the paper’s first four pages. Taking categories of content from various English, Australian and American studies, the 40 papers yielded 501 entries in total.

Using the above methodological framework, 11 clear categories emerged from the content analysis. Although some articles displayed the current concept of western news values, the vast majority exhibited themes different from the typical criteria from which information is selected and rejected. The final list of categories reads as follows:

1. Community Expansion
2. Communal Rites
3. Conflict
4. Dominant Groups
5. Law and Order
6. Media Releases
7. Deeds of Locals
8. *Rites de Passage*
9. Communal Links
10. Local History
11. Sensation

Print convention prescribes more news worthy stories are placed on odd pages, with the most news worthy on the front page. The more news worthy stories appear as 'leads' (identifiable by headline size, the existence of photographs and elevated position of the page). Lesser stories appear as 'fillers'. With this in mind, the worth of each of the above concepts was measured according to its total number of entries, the pages on which those entries appear, their position on the page and existence of photographs.

Before embarking on the content analysis, we must keep in mind that almost all entries could potentially fall into the current concept of 'Proximity' as a news value. Masterson says 'Proximity' refers to "information from one's own town, society, culture, religion or audience. (Masterson, 1992: 20). With this in mind, almost all entries could be placed in such a category. However, with the collective whole displaying many other underlying themes, it would be simplistic to merely lump all country news values into the 'Proximity' category.

More than one quarter of articles were concerned with 'Community Expansion' (see appendix 111). With the highest number of entries, 'Community Expansion' was clearly considered one of the most news worthy
themes by Australian country journalists. In his study of suburban community newspapers, Janowitz comes to a similar conclusion.

"The overwhelming bulk of non-advertising space is devoted to reports of routine activity and announcements and not to either change or controversy. The emphasis on community and organisation expansion and the absence of items involving contraction gives the community newspapers its 'booster' quality." (Janowitz, 1967: 76).

In the context of this content analysis 'Community Expansion' was defined as any article outlining the growth of communal services or resources. These articles usually involved the receipt or state of federal government grants.

The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard reported the $487,000 success of an on-property sale at Yea; The Colac Herald told of the Forrest community's win to have its caravan park remain as a public asset; Planning Minister Rob Maclellan approved a council planning scheme in The Kilmore Free Press; the approval for funding application for a skate park made headlines in The Kyabram Free Press; approval for road crossings joining the south and north sides of Morwell CBI) was reported in The Latrobe Valley Express; the Lodden Women's Health Clinic received funding to develop a community garden in The North West Express; All Saints spire underwent a $100,000 restoration in The Portland Observer; the success of a country communications group in Gippsland was reported in The Snowy River Mail; a "positive" government response to a state-wide emergency service involving Wangaratta was reported in The Wangaratta Chronicle, and the then Youth and Community Services Minister, Denis Napthine, opened a sensory room for people with disabilities in The Wimmera Mail Times.
More than 25 percent of articles came under the 'Community Expansion' category (see appendix 111), more than 75 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and more than 50 percent of odd page articles appeared as leads (see appendix V). About 30 percent of 'Community Expansion' entries appeared as front page articles (see appendix VI), almost 70 percent of which appeared as a lead (see appendix VII). In total, 'Community Expansion' entries made up more than 25 percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). 'Community Expansion' clearly took priority in the sample's prime positions, compared to other categories.

Second to 'Community Expansion' was 'Communal Rites'. In their study of perceptions of Britain's local press, English analysts, Franklin and Murphy suggest community newspapers are seen to have a "parochial obsession" with 'Communal Rites', which they define as pageants, carnivals, fêtes, annual prize givings, mayoral inaugurations and local elections. In fact, any regularly occurring event that involves the community as a whole. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 1 – 2). This content analysis used Franklin and Murphy's concept of 'Communal Rites', and defined this category as any article outlining regularly occurring events involving the community as a whole.

*The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* published a full page spread, complete with five pictures of the local gymkhana; in *The Colac Herald* local Anzac Day celebrations were documented with full-page colour on the front page; local collectors for the annual Good Friday Appeal were "gearing up" for a busy period in *The Kyabram Free Press*; Lancefield's swap meet was considered a "bonanza" in *The Kilmore Free Press*; about 100,000 people turned up for the Wings and Wheels expo in *The Latrobe Valley Express*; Ouyen Secondary College held its public
speaking heats in *The North West Express*; Seaweed celebrations were reported in *The Portland Observer*; Orbost Secondary College hosted its music festival on the front page of *The Snowy River Mail*; a half-page picture of the annual doll and teddy show made page four of *The Wangaratta Chronicle* and the Stawell Easter Gift was "ready to roar" on *The Wimmera Mail Times* front page.

More than 16 per cent of the content analysis' articles outlined 'Communal Rites' (see appendix 111), 70 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and 55 percent of odd page entries were leads (see appendix V). About 23 percent of 'Communal Rites' entries appeared on a front page (see appendix VI), 65 percent of which appeared as a lead (see appendix VII). In total, 'Communal Rites' made up more than 16 percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). Similar to the 'Community Expansion' category, 'Communal Rites' yielded a high number of articles in the sample's prime positions.

Despite the prominence given to 'Communal Rites', several variables must be kept in mind when analysing this category. During the specific period of time in which the analysis was conducted, several regularly occurring events involving the community as a whole occurred across Australia. These encompass events such as Easter and Anzac Day, which were included in the 'Communal Rites' category. Each of these events made headlines on the front page of at least one edition of every newspaper outlet under investigation. Over a different period of time, 'Communal Rites' may not receive such attention as it did during the months of March and April.
Although themes such as 'Communal Rites' were given prominence in
country newspapers, the content analysis also found other, more current,
concepts of news values appeared with some regularity.

'Conflict' is a current concept of news values, which is perceived to emit
negative or divisive connotations. As Masterson says, 'Conflict' includes
both war and physical violence. But the category can also encompass legal,
psychological or intellectual differences between people or groups of
people:

"Many stories have great impact because they mirror the conflict which is
everywhere in the world: the social, psychological, legal or even economic
conflicts, as well as the physical conflicts of war and crime. Any protest,
even a non-violent one, shows conflict with the establishment... News is, as
one definition claims, the reportage of change or the pressure for change..."
(Masterson, 1992: 22).

The content analysis used Masteron's comments to define 'Conflict' as "the
reportage of change or the pressure for change". In the context of this
content analysis, 'Conflict' encompassed not only articles which
demonstrated "the reportage of change or the pressure for change, but
letters-to-the-editor and editorials as well. The 'Conflict' category did not,
however, include court reports of police files. These types of articles - as
discussed later in this chapter - displayed a different theme altogether, and
fell under a separate category entirely.

About 13 percent of the content analysis' entries highlighted 'Conflict' (see
appendix 111), almost 70 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see
appendix IV), and nearly 65 percent of odd page entries appeared as a lead
(see appendix V). About 12 percent of 'Conflict' articles appeared on a front
page (see appendix VI), 65 percent of which appeared as a lead (see appendix VII). In total, 'Conflict' made up about 17 percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). The high number of odd page articles suggests editors do consider 'Conflict' to be a news value. However, the low number of articles appearing on a front page also indicates reluctance to make 'Conflict' a front page story. It is almost as if 'Conflict' is deliberately hidden behind the front page headline, but deserves the second most prominent position in the paper.

Theoretically, according to Masterson, 'Conflict' highlights "differences" whether legal, psychological or intellectual - between people or groups of people. However, on close inspection, the 'Conflict' articles in this content analysis are not generally concerned differences within the community. They are more concerned with differences between the community and outside agencies, particularly state or federal governments.

There was public criticism of the then State Government's $32 water levy in *The Colac Herald*; Mitchell Shire Council made an "urgent plea" to the same State Government to boost police numbers in *The Kilmore Free Press*; *The Kyabram Free Press* reported the Campaspe Shire Council was making a submission to the then State Government regarding inadequate road funding; Monash University and the state's student Union negotiated a "financial crisis" in *The LaTrobe Valley Express*; the local member denounced "big city banks" for closing their doors in *The Portland Observer*; Gippsland East MLA, David Treasure, blamed "authorities" for an outbreak of algal blooms in *The Snowy River Mail*; Melbourne management was reported to have closed Wangaratta's Yalka factory in *The Wangaratta Chronicle* and Horsham city councillors "lashed out" at the then
State Government after failing to secure funding for the local railway station in *The Wimmera Mail Times*.

The above finding concurs with the theories of several analysts. In his study Janowitz notes the "most popular" 'Conflict' articles are those which report on the local community in contention with the outside urban metropolis: "There are very few internal dissenters," says Janowitz. (Janowitz, 1967: 77).

Wild agrees, saying when matters of change or controversy are discussed within country newspapers, it is "usually" with reference to perceived threats from outside the community. (Wild, 1983: 1). Tichenor also agrees when he says "when a newspaper does report conflict, it concentrates primarily on conflicts involving external groups". (Tichenor, et al, 1980: 55).

In his study of the New South Wales Press between 1803 and 1920, Walker suggests 'Conflict' with external agencies is integral to 'bush ideology'. He says, historically, there existed a "general feeling of resentment" in the country against the metropolis, which was perceived to be "robbing the country-side of the benefits of its excess births over deaths". (Walker, 1976: 176).

The current content analysis found that the page where one would expect to find 'Conflict' the page containing letters-to-the-editor, editorials and other expressions of opinion - dealt with local issues by outlining Walker's idea of an "agrarian ideology", which emphasises communal rivalry with the "big cities" and enmities for local patriotism and loyalty. This is discussed in further detail in later chapters. But here it is pertinent to point out that this finding concurs with Janowitz's comments that community editorialising has
the "unique" style of appearing to enter a 'Conflict' without being controversial. (Janowitz, 1967: 77)

The category defined as 'Dominant Groups' came up with the next largest number of entries. Wild theorises local papers are part of a wider conspiracy to promote the interests of dominant groups in the community, such as business people, politicians, councillors, community leaders and any other peoples of prominence. (Wild, 1983: 2). While the following thesis, in no way, attempts to support or negate Wild's theory, the content analysis finds 'Dominant Groups' to be considered a news value.

The content analysis defines 'Dominant Groups' as any article outlining the activities of groups that would not be of interest to the mass readership. In other words, the article would not be considered newsworthy unless connected with that particular group. Articles praising the activities and promoting the interests of local clubs, such as the RSL and CWA comprised the majority of this category's entries.

There was the "Redgate CWA Ramblings" in The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard; retailers were "uniting" over Easter trading hours in The Colac Herald; the local Rotary Club conducted a study in The Kyabram Free Press; Director of the Society of Florence was visiting in The LaTrobe Valley Express; national church leaders were visiting in The North West Express; the local Catholic Church minister blessed palms on the foreshore in The Portland Observer; senior citizens set a "hectic pace" in The Snowy River Mail and the national Party held its annual meeting on Mt Buller in The Wangaratta Chronicle.
More than eight percent of articles fell into the 'Dominant Groups' category (see appendix 111), 42 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and not 30 percent of odd page entries appeared as a lead (see appendix V). Furthermore, 'Dominant Groups' had the lowest percent of front page entries (see appendix VI), and no front page leads at all (see appendix VII). However, 'Dominant Groups' did score an overall six percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). These findings suggest that although 'Dominant Groups' articles do appear with some regularity, they are not considered news worthy enough to appear in the paper's most prized positions. This suggestion appears to contradict Wild's assertions on 'Dominant Groups'.

Following 'Dominant Groups' was 'Law and Order', which is concerned with local crime and all its initial seemingly negative connotations. As Franklin and Murphy note, in the absence of crime and court reporting, news in a small paper would be very scarce indeed. According to Franklin and Murphy, local papers put forward a positive image of their town and community, but "none-the-less" townsfolk "always manage" to provide each edition with a "helping of courtroom drama comprising violence, theft, drunkenness, rape, disturbance, child molesting and, at regular but decent intervals, the occasional murder." (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 2). However, as Franklin and Murphy imply, these types or articles do not necessarily put forward negative connotations, but rather, they reinforce the notion that 'Law and Order' is alive and well in their particular community.

Eildon police reported a "reasonably quiet" Easter period in The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard: police found used syringes in a public park in The Colac Herald; a student's notes were stolen from a crashed vehicle in The Kilmore Free Press; a Kyabram man was attacked in The Kyabram
Free Press; vandals went on a "rampage" in the local cemetery in The Latrobe Valley Express; street signs were damaged in The North West Express; police called for public help to solve a series of burglaries in The Portland Observer; there were "ugly scenes" in a brawl at a local hotel in The Snowy River Mail; a man was charged after footy tipping money went missing in The Wangaratta Chronicle and police warned locals about a charity "scam" in The Wimmera Mail Times.

More than seven percent of articles fell under the 'Law and Order' category (see appendix 111), 65 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and a relatively low 20 percent of odd page entries appeared as a lead (see appendix V). Although eight percent of 'Law and Order' entries appeared on a front page (see appendix VI), none of these appeared as a lead article (see appendix VII). In total, 'Law and Order' made up five percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). The low number of 'Law and Order' front page leads can be attributed to the fact that many entries appeared as the paper's regular police 'round up' or in a court report, most of which were used as words to fill a regularly allocated space and not treated as spontaneous or 'hard news' at all.

As Franklin and Murphy suggest, local papers strive to portray their communities in a positive light, yet publish 'Law and Order' articles that can not fail to emit negative connotations. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 2) Although Franklin and Murphy recognise this paradox, they fail to provide an explanation. But on close inspection of 'Law and Order' articles in this content analysis, 'Law and Order' does not necessarily portray the community as crime-ridden and dangerous. Without exception, all 'Law and Order' articles used police, SES volunteers or medical practitioners as sources. No eye-witness or any other source who may give a more
'sensationalised' version of events were quoted. By portraying the authorities as 'in control' of the situation, all articles suggested 'Law and Order' was fit and well in the community and provided readers with a sense of security in their town.

The category with the next largest number of entries could only be described as 'Media Releases'. Articles in this category mainly promoted state or national community appeals, but the subject of which was unrelated to the paper's locality. In her 1994 study of public relations contributions to newspapers, Clara Zawawi concluded there existed "points of identity", which indicated an article originated from a media release. (Zawawi, 1994: 71). Hallmarks included connections with organizations, quotes from prominent people within those organisations, and the view given is that of the organisation.

Using Zawawi's criteria, the content analysis found seven percent of articles bore the typical hallmarks of 'Media Release' (see appendix 111). Additional indicators included and absence of by-line and out-of-character rhetoric for that particular newspaper. These articles usually appealed for donations or outlined safety campaigns.

*The Colac Herald* encouraged readers to dial 000 instead of 'phoning the local hospital in a medical emergency; *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* reported on national Arthritis Week; *The Kilmore Free Press* asked readers to "dig deep" for the Good Friday telethon; *The Kyabram Free Press* reported on the State Ombudsman's role; *The Latrobe Valley Express* warned parents about a recent nation-wide measles outbreak; *The North West Express* warned men of gender-specific health risks; *The Portland Observer* appealed to readers to "keep safety in mind" over the
Easter break: *The Snowy River Mail* outlined the benefits of learning CPR and *The Wimmera Mail Times* reported on Centrelink benefits "continuing as normal" over the Easter holidays.

About seven percent of articles fell under the 'Media Release' category (see appendix 111), about 68 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and 50 percent of odd page entries appeared as a lead article (see appendix V). A relatively low one percent of 'Media Releases' appeared on a front page (see appendix VI), none of which appeared as a lead (see appendix VII). In total, 'Media Releases' made up about five percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). Although 'Media Releases' scored a relatively high percentage of odd page entries, the category did not appear on many front pages, and not once as a front page lead. From these figures, we can conclude these articles are little more than words used to fill holes in the pages behind the headline.

Interestingly, the number of 'Media Release' articles exceeded the number of stories about deeds of local heroes. As Franklin and Murphy point out, local papers are keen to elevate ordinary townsfolk and their activities to praiseworthy status: "They [typical local papers] all cleaved to a local patriotism which put forward the notion that [their town] was the best in the world, surrounded by some of the finest countryside in existence and inhabited by good-hearted, literate, tolerant, clean, law-abiding, sober inhabitants..." (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 2). With 29 articles outlining the 'Deeds of Locals', the content analysis suggests the stories of ordinary townsfolk who undertake seemingly extraordinary activities is a news worthy theme within the country press.
Yea's champion bull won the Senior Grand and Supreme Hereford at the Sydney Show in *The A Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*; the junior fire brigade "exelled" in the state titles *The Colac Herald*; local police were commended for bravery in *The Kilmore Free Press*; Wayne Billing won a state apprentice award in *The Kyabram Free Press*; a Monash University student received a state award in *The Latrobe Valley Express*; Brenton Logan won the Under 14 Track Cycling Championship in *The North West Express*; Ilka White's craft exhibition attracted "many" visitors in *The Portland Observer*; a 64-year-old grandmother helped set a world record for the most number of heads shaved to raise money for the Leukaemia Foundation in *The Snowy River Mail*; Gina Furs, a local who "fled war-torn Europe" in the 1940s, "knew" the "anguish" of Kosovo refugees bound for Australia in *The Wangaratta Chronicle* and Gail Pollard received an Australian Photographic Society award in *The Wimmera Mail Times*.

Almost six percent of articles fell under the 'Deeds of Locals' category (see appendix 111), 55 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and about 62 percent of odd page entries appeared as a lead (see appendix V). About five percent of 'Deeds of Locals' entries appeared on a front page (see appendix VI), 80 percent of which appeared as a lead (see appendix VII). Overall, 'Deeds of Locals' made up about eight percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). The low number of front page articles suggest 'Deeds of Locals' is not headline news. However, the high number of lead articles indicates country newspapers value 'Deeds of Locals' enough to allocate this news value a relatively prominent position on the page.

Receiving almost equal attention as 'Deeds of Locals' was *Rites de Passage*. Franklin and Murphy define *Rites de Passage* as the "births, deaths,
marriages, golden weddings, diamond weddings, ninetieth birthdays and deaths" of local individuals. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 2). The content analysis used a similar concept to categorise any article reporting on the life events of local peoples.

Kelly Read and Stuart Gilmore had a wedding reception in Deer Park after their marriage in The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard; Kaye Harris took on the Mitchell Shire's Tourism and Economic Development Manager position in The Kilmore Free Press; the Mitchell family had a reunion in The North West Express; Dr Saunders retired as resident locum in The Portland Observer; Ken Morrison OAM died in The Snowy River Mail; former Mayor, Tony Gleeson, died in The Wangaratta Chronicle and Ben Douglas took over as Grampians Mayor in The Wimmera Mail Times.

'Rite de Passage' made up almost six percent of the total number of articles analysed (see appendix 111), 42 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and 67 percent of odd page entries appeared as leads (see appendix V). About seven percent of 'Rites de Passage' entries appeared on the front page (see appendix VI), 58 percent of which appeared as leads (see appendix VII). Over all, 'Rites de Passage' made up about seven percent of lead articles overall (see appendix VIII). Again, country papers seem to consider 'Rites de Passage' to be worthy of a prominent place on an odd page, but rarely important enough to make front page headlines.

The next category was created to encompass the large number of articles that served to draw outlaying townships into the main community. Despite these articles demonstrating very little of the current concept of news values, they appeared with some regularity throughout the sample. For the purposes of
this analysis, these articles were categorised as 'Communal Links', defined as "any article integrating isolated townships into the main community".

'Communal Links' articles included The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard's regular "Out-and-About" column; The Kyabram Free Press's "Tatura Tattles; The North West Express's "News From Underbool"; The Snowy River Mail's "Orbost News" and The Wimmera Mail Times's "Man in the Corner". Each of these were regular columns, which integrated isolated townships into the main community.

About three percent of articles were definable as 'Communal Links' (see appendix 111), a relatively low 25 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and no odd page entry appeared as a lead (see appendix V). Needless to say, this meant 'Communal Links' scored in neither front page entries (see appendix VI), nor front page leads (see appendix VII). Overall, 'Communal Links' made up just under one percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). This leaves the majority of 'Communal Links' articles appearing on an even page as fillers. Based on these statistics, we can presume 'Communal Links' is not valued as highly as concepts such as 'Community Expansion', 'Conflict', 'Law and Order' and even 'Media Releases'. 'Communal Links', however, appeared to have a regular and important place in the country press as even page fillers. These mainly appeared in regularly-appearing columns or pages.

As 'Communal Links' articles appeared in a regular column, so too did 'Local History'. Wild points out that "often" a column or a special series of articles describes the founding and development of a locality and usually includes descriptions of the lives of prominent townspeople. (Wild, 1983: 2) However, while Wild argues 'Local History' is a highly valued news concept
(and also argues the concept is a "further example of how country newspaper content is designed to emphasise the values and interests on which there is a high level of consensus in the community"), the content analysis found relatively few articles fell into this category.

*The Colac Herald* published its regular full-page spread, "Down Memory Lane"; *The Kilmore Free Press* ran a story on the "historic" Whitburgh cottage and its restoration; *The Kyabram Free Press* ran its regular "Memories" column; a WWII veteran told readers that "freedom is priceless" in *The Latrobe Valley Express*; *The North West Express* published its regular "75 Years Ago" column; *The Portland Observer* published its regular "Files From the Days Gone By" column; a story outlining the life of Freda Andrews, born in Mallacoota, 1912, appeared in *The Snowy River Mail*; *The Wangaratta Chronicle* published a story on "our first Anzac Day" and the history of the Stawell Easter Gift appeared in *The Wimmera Mail Times*.

Despite 'Local History's' import, not three percent of stories fell under its umbrella (see appendix 111), 56 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and 56 percent of odd page entries appeared as lead articles (see appendix V). However, 'Communal Links' scored no front page entries (see appendix VI) and, needless to say, no front page leads (see appendix VII). Over all, 'Communal Links' made up just on four percent of lead articles (see appendix VIII). The low number of entries is a result of 'Local History' appearing as a regular weekly column, rather than a news value in every edition. The number of entries appearing as leads on odd pages, however, indicates that these columns are considered as news worthy, but rarely highly enough to make front page headlines.
Interestingly, 'Sensation' had an equal number of entries as 'Local History'. 'Sensation' articles, however, were more likely to appear as leads on the front page.

As Masterson says, 'Sensation' is regarded highly as a current concept of news values. "There is such a thing as sensation, and when there is, it makes news. Few newsrooms ignore news of crimes and violence, especially if it's sensational. The fact that it's extreme makes it newsworthy, even if the crime is a minor one." (Masterson, 1990: 15 – 16). For the purposes of this content analysis, 'Sensation' was defined as any article that focused on the "extreme" of an incident.

The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard reported a tremor was felt at Eildon; The Colac Herald reported a "fatal" traffic accident; locals were "hunting" for "killer grass in The Kilmore Free Press; The Kyabram Free Press reported a "missing tractor mystery"; an "out of control" truck caused an accident in The Portland Observer; a tourist "fell to his death" in The Snowy River Mail; The Wangaratta Chronicle reported on the "little hope" for two missing fishermen and V-Line had "stripped" jobs from the Wimmera in The Wimmera Mail Times.

Less than three percent of articles were defined as 'Sensation' (see appendix III), 72 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IV), and about 60 percent of odd page entries appeared as a lead (see appendix V). Almost 10 percent of 'Sensation' entries appeared on the front page (see appendix VI), 56 percent of which appeared as a lead article (see appendix VII). Overall, 'Sensation' made up almost 5 percent of the total number of lead articles (see appendix VIII). Based on these statistics, 'Sensation' can be considered a highly newsworthy concept. However, the small number of
total entries suggests 'Sensation' rarely occurs in country communities. When they do, however, they usually make front page headlines.

Although the content analysis indicates country newspapers appreciate the current concepts of news values (such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation'), it also demonstrates about 84 percent of news is selected according to a different criteria (see appendix IX). The most valued stories in the country press, according to this content analysis, involve 'Community Expansion' and 'Communal Rites'. News involving 'Conflict' is prioritised next, followed by news concerning particular 'Dominant Groups', 'Law and Order', 'Media Releases', 'Deeds of Locals', 'Rites de Passage', 'Communal Links', 'Local History' and 'Sensation' (see appendix III). The majority of these concepts are integral elements of myth, which indicates country journalism's subconscious tendency to perpetuate communal ideology.

According to some analysts, such as Wild, this criteria's absence of the current concept of news values is designed to perpetuate the status quo of the community's power structure. However, according to this content analysis, current concepts of news values, such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation', continue to receive a relatively high priority in the country press. Yet on closer inspection, these news values also function to uphold a country ideology. The consistent denigration of 'big city' government and bureaucracy ideals perpetuates the concept of a secular community with its own idiosyncratic, and apparently more noble, ideological principles.

According to the above content analysis, there exists very little evidence that country news values are designed - as Wild argues - to maintain the status quo. There is, however, several suggestions that the country news selection
criteria is designed to perpetuate a uniquely country ideology to support communal progression and development.
Chapter II: Content Analysis of Letters-to-the-Editor, Editorials, Articles Categorised as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation'.

The preceding chapter demonstrated country newspapers have news values different to current concepts of the criteria by which information is selected and rejected. Concepts such as 'Community Expansion' were found to have precedence over current news values such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation'. However, although the content analysis found country newspapers selected and rejected information according to a different set of criteria, it also found some current concepts of news values were given consideration. The following content analysis studies the current concepts of news values found in the 10-paper sample in order to determine the country news media treatment of them.

The previous content analysis found current concepts of news values in the country news media were predominantly 'Conflict' and 'Sensation'. It found these concepts in general news articles, editorials and letters-to-the-editor. The following content analysis first investigates letters-to-the-editor, followed by editorials and finally looks at articles defined in the previous content analysis as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation'.

As Masterson says, 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' are currently considered as the most prominent concepts of news values. (Masterson, 1992: 20). Yet the preceding content analysis found 13 per cent of articles in country newspapers were definable as 'Conflict', and a mere three per cent as 'Sensation'.
However, by necessity, the opinion page is a means of publishing conflict within a community. By publicising letters-to-the-editor and editorials, country newspapers find themselves in a dilemma between upholding country ideology and maintaining journalistic expectations of publishing current news values.

In his study of small community media outlets in America, media analyst, Janowitz, claims newspapers circumvent this dilemma by applying their particular news values, such as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' and 'Community Against Metropolis', to the opinion page. (Janowitz, 1967: 77). Tichenor agrees, saying that when conflict is reported, "there is high likelihood that the conflict will be reported in a way that minimises local differences". (Tichenor, et al, 1980).

Wild also says when matters of conflict or change are discussed it is usually with reference to perceived threats from outside the community. "Conflicts and disputes internal to the community are downplayed in comparison to such external issues." (Wild, 1983: 1).

Using the same 40 newspapers as previously, taken from the same 10 different non-daily country media outlets, the following content analysis of letters-to-the-editor and editorials applied the observations of Janowitz, Tichenor and Wild, and came up with the following two categories of content:

- Appeals to Community Sentiment
- Community Against Metropolis
A further two categories of content emerged from the content analysis itself.

- Self-congratulations

- Local Controversy

While letters-to-the-editor were defined as prose written in letter form (addressed to 'Sir' and signed), editorials were more difficult to determine. All publications adhered to the letters-to-the-editor convention, but editorials were absent from five out of the 10 newspaper outlets. Out of the remaining five, a mere two were detectably sign-posted as opinion. The remaining three were recognisable as opinion only after a close reading of the article itself. However, meeting with the analysis' defining criteria, these columns were identified as 'editorial'.

The final defining criteria of editorial involved the use of a banner (not necessarily a banner indicating opinion) and a deliberate opinion emerging from the rhetoric. Using this set of criteria, the 40 papers yielded 102 letters-to-the-editor and 35 editorials, making a total of 137 entries.

The category receiving the largest number of entries was 'Community Against Metropolis'. This category yielded 41 entries in total. The content analysis defined 'Community Against Metropolis' as any letter or editorial expressing contention with state or federal government, or the operations of large metropolitan companies or individuals.

Reverend Ray Cleary voiced his concern over the public education system in *The Kilmore Free Press*; Frank Jordan expressed "alarm" over the heroin trial proposal in *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*; Bernie
Moran targeted Jeff Kennett over privatisation in *The Wangaratta Chronicle*; Ron Fischer warned against a merger between a "giant chemical company" and a local grain company in *The Wimmera Mail Times*; JB Archibald complained about the community being deceived by "the puppets of Kennettism" in *The Kyabram Free Press*; Arnold Jago was troubled over the state of public health care in *The North West Express*; Anne Pietsch claimed a republic Australia would become a "dictatorship" in *The Portland Observer*; Brain Hadley told readers Jeff Kennett's preamble was a "load of feel-good gobbledygook" in *The Latrobe Valley Express* and Alan Provanz wanted to know what the government was doing about drugs, illegal immigrants and "God knows what else" in *The Colac Herald*.

About 32 per cent of the total number of entries fell into the 'Community Against Metropolis' category (see appendix X). But, almost 90 percent of these were descended from letters-to-the-editor, while about 10 percent were derived from editorials (see appendix XI). Furthermore, in total, just on 16 percent of editorials were categorised as Community Against Metropolis (see appendix XII), compared to the much larger 36 percent of letters-to-the-editor (see appendix XIII).

The 'Community Against Metropolis' figures can be related to Walker's idea of "bush ideology". In his study of the NSW's press between 1803 and 1920, Walker says country newspapers came to "express an agrarian ideology" which "exalted" country values and virtues against the "greed and selfishness" of big cities. (Walker, 1976: 1).

Supporting Janowitz's comments, the 'Community Against Metropolis' figures suggest country editors are reluctant to take a public stance against state or federal governments and large companies in editorials, but are
willing to allow their readers express anger with these types of metropolitan groups.

The category receiving the next highest percentage of entries suggests that the country newspaper does indeed publish "internal dissent" within its pages and often does not "downplay" conflicts and disputes internal to the community. And, when 'Conflict' is reported, it is not always in a way that "minimises local differences".

The category with next largest number of entries was 'Local Controversy'. Defined as any letter-to-the-editor or editorial indicating division between internal groups, or "internal dissent" (including dissatisfaction with local government), 'Local Controversy' made up about 31 percent of the combined letters-to-the-editor and editorials (see appendix X).

Denis Kennedy opposed the Mitchell Shire Council's investigation into establishment of a private prison in the area in *The Kilmore Free Press*; Bob Tate expressed anger at the management of the Alexander tip in *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*; Christine Waters was "appalled" with the service in a local supermarket in *The Wangaratta Chronicle*; Robert Kelm defended a proposed merger between the Taylors Lake and North Horsham football clubs in *The Wimmera Mail Times*; an anonymous letter against a proposed skate park appeared in *The Kyabram Free Press*; Rose Parsons expressed anger towards a local vet in *The North West Express*; Dawn Sherry was angry at vandals who stole her garden gnomes in *The Latrobe Valley Express*; Or Allan Billing was "dismayed" at the amount of "misinformation" during the Colac Otway Shire council election in *The Colac Herald* and Frank Brunt was "disgusted" at
"unfounded" allegations over vandalism of a bull-dozer in The Snowy River Mail.

About 31 per cent of entries fell into the 'Local Controversy' category (see appendix X). However, a much higher percentage of these were derived from letters-to-the-editor than from editorials. While about 82 per cent of the 'Local Controversy' entries descended from letters, a mere 18 per cent came from editorials (see appendix XI). Furthermore, in total, 23 per cent of editorials expressed 'Local Controversy' (see appendix XII), while 33 per cent of letters did the same (see appendix XIII).

These figures support neither the contentions of Janowitz, Tichenor nor Wild. Although these figures suggest country editors do not regard 'Local Controversy' highly as a news value in editorials, they do imply country newspapers value readers bringing the subject into the public sphere.

This finding suggests there may be merit in Wild's argument that country newspapers feel restrained by the community's wider ideology. However, the finding also indicates that country newspapers may perceive their function as a forum for public debate and do not, as Janowitz suggests, make "selective use" of letters-to-the-editor, despite obligations to the community's wider ideology.

The following largest number of entries fell into the 'Self-congratulations' category. Defined as any letter-to-the-editor or editorial praising either individual locals or the community as a whole, this category made up about 24 percent of the total number of letters-to-the-editor and editorials (see appendix X).
JR Canter thanked the Alexandra and District Basketball president for a "mighty job" in *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*; a letter signed "Eager Spectator" congratulated the basketball representative squad in *The Wangaratta Chronicle*; Robert Bell sang the praises of the 1999 Arts Festival in *The Wimmera Mail Times*; Trevor Walmsley gave "great credit" to Kyabram. Churches for "presenting the true meaning of Easter" in *The Kyabram Free Press*; Rosemary Muller publicly thanked former councillors John Konnert and Cliff Tann in *The Colac Herald* and Allison Portelli gave "sincere thanks" to the Moe Pet Shop in *The Latrobe Valley Express*.

About 24 per cent of entries were categorised as 'Self-congratulations' (see appendix X). About 28 per cent of these were derived from editorials, and 72 per cent from letters-to-the-editor (see appendix XI). However, when looking at the total numbers of letters-to-the-editor and editorials, there was very little difference in the percentages of 'Self-congratulations'. In total, 'Self-congratulations made up 27 percent of editorials (see appendix XII) and 23 percent of letters-to-the-editor (see appendix XIII). These figures indicate country editors regard 'Self-congratulations' as a news value, both in editorials and letters-to-the-editor.

The concept of 'Self-congratulations' may be related to Hamilton's observations of country Australian leaders. The community's newspaper, chronicling "optimism" and an "invariably positive" outlook on life, regard Self-congratulations as a newsworthy concept to perpetuate the "common belief" in the ability of the individual or the small community to overcome adversity.
'Appeals to Community Sentiment' came last on the list of country news values. The 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' definition involved the rhetorical rousing of communal loyalty and patriotism.

*The Wimmera Mail Times* reported on the local Anzac Day's "Dawn Service Like No Other"; *The Wangaratta Chronicle* wrote about "Memories of a Respected Citizen" after former Mayor, Kevin Gleeson died in a light air crash; *The North West Express* hailed the Mallee area's history; *The Kyabram Free Press* told how "Life Is Really Precious" among family and friends of the Kyabram community during a health scare and *The Kilmore Free Press* gave the community a locally-focussed Easter Message.

About seven percent of entries were categorised as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' (see appendix X). More than 90 percent of these were derived from editorials, while less than 10 percent descended from letters (see appendix XI). Indeed, 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' made up more than 30 percent of the total number of editorials (see appendix XII), while the category made up a mere one percent of letters-to-the-editor (see appendix XIII). These figures suggest country newspapers feel a sense of obligation to rally communal patriotism and loyalty before they allow the populous, itself, to do so. Alternatively, country newspapers may not receive many letters Appealing to Community Sentiment, and feel the need to fill the void.

Appeals to Community Sentiment can again be related to Hamilton's theory on country Australia. While not many Appeals came from letters-to-the-editor, it was a popular concept among editorials. Editors may (subconsciously?) feel there is a place for appealing to community sentiment
in their publications to perpetuate the ideology of "optimism" and a "positive outlooks" on life.

As the above content analysis suggests, Australian country newspapers do regard 'Conflict' as a news value in letters-to-the-editor and editorials. However, as Janowitz suggests, 'Conflict' is often altered to be "merely" 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' or are the stories outlining the local community's contention with the outside urban metropolis. Yet, unlike Janowitz's assertions, country newspapers do see "internal dissent" as a news value in letters-to-the-editor and editorials, more so than 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' and 'Selfcongratulations'.

In an analysis of 'Conflict' entries themselves, much the same conclusion was reached. As said earlier, the content analysis drew on Masterson's definition to identify 'Conflict' articles. Masterson says 'Conflict' involves the "reportage of change or the pressure for change".

The content analysis used "change" or the "pressure for change" as a definition to identify 'Conflict' articles. The content analysis, however, found there was not "conflict of some kind in almost every story". Indeed, even court reports and police files displayed neither the "reportage of change", nor the "pressure for change". (Court reports and police files were more an affirmation of communal security, and were allocated a separate category.)

By far the most popular news value among news articles defined as 'Conflict' was 'Community Against Metropolis. Defined as any article expressing contention against state or federal governments, or the operations of metropolitan commercial companies or individuals, 'Community Against
Metropolis' made up 65 percent of articles defined as 'Conflict' (see appendix XIV).

In *The Colac Herald* "public criticism" forced the state government to "slash" its "controversial: $32 Catchment Management Authority water levy; in *The Kilmore Free Press* local residents expressed "anger" with "the big boys at the bank" as Broadford's Commonwealth branch closed; Campaspe Shire Council made a submission to the state government to stop funding "cuts" to country roads; *The Latrobe Valley Express* reported three staff lost their jobs in a local bakery when Sunnicut moved into Traralgon and *The North West Express* reported a "rate win for farmers" when agriculture and resources minister, Pat McNamara announced a "major change" to the Catchment Management Authority's rating.

Wannon local member, David Hawker "called" for a "turn around" in the decline in banking services in *The Portland Observer*; Gippsland East MLA, David Treasure, "called" for the Catchment Management Authority to "act quickly" and combat an "outbreak" of green algae in *The Snowy River Mail*; Wangaratta Country City was "devastated" at the closure of Yakka's Wangaratta factory in *The Wangaratta Chronicle* and *The Wimmera Mail Times* reported on farmers "campaigning strongly" to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for assistance after the area's "devastating" October "freeze".

About 65 per cent of 'Conflict' articles were further defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' (see appendix XIV), and 55 percent of these appeared as a lead article (see appendix XV). Almost 80 percent of 'Community Against Metropolis' entries appeared on an odd page (see appendix XVI), 30 per cent of which appeared on the front page (see appendix XVII). These figures
support Janowitz's contention that "the most popular" 'Conflict' articles are those of the local community against the outside urban metropolis.

However, despite supporting some of the analysis' findings, Janowitz's comments did not concur with others. His comment that there are "very few internal dissenters" did not correspond with the category with the next largest number of entries, 'Local Controversy'.

Moe resident Sue Landy declared the turnout at the Drugs and Crime Prevention forum "disappointing" in The Latrobe Valley Express; a former Glenelg Shire Mayor and a local government candidate "clashed" over counter allegations of "unethical behaviour" in The Portland Observer; 2000 people signed a petition against the council's mosquito control work in The Snowy River Mail; local landholders objected to road name changes in The Wangaratta Chronicle and a local Koori leader "deplored" a racist graffiti attack in The Wimmera Mail Times.

In total, nearly 30 percent of 'Conflict' entries were categorised as 'Local Controversy' (see appendix XIV), 83 percent of which appeared as leads (see appendix XV). Furthermore, 58 percent appeared on an odd page (see appendix XVI), almost 20 percent of which was found on the front page (see appendix XVII). These figures suggest there are more than a "few internal dissenters" and, unlike Janowitz's claim, the country press considers their stories newsworthy.

Not considered so newsworthy was 'Self-congratulations'. A mere two articles fell into this category, both of which were derived from the one publication, and both in the form of letters-to-the-editor. In The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard winning residents praised the "gourmet
hamper, crammed with delicious district produce", and congratulated local businesses who had donated it. The next week, Marina and Peter Williams congratulated the owners of local business, MYNET, for providing a "first class internet services".

'Self-congratulations' made up not three percent of 'Conflict' entries (see appendix XIV). However, 100 percent of these were lead articles (see appendix XV), but all appeared on even pages (see appendix XVI). Needless to say, 'Self-congratulations' made up no percentage of front page entries (see appendix XVII).

Neither did the 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' category correspond with Janowitz's statements. Janowitz notes small newspapers feel under 'journalistic' pressure to have editorialising content, which runs counter to its normal position in the community. "Thus," Janowitz claims, "a portion of so-called editorials are merely current appeals to community sentiment."12

Yet, the content analysis yielded one sole 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' article. This was found in The Kyabram Free Press. In the form of an editorial, Gus Underwood relived memories and merits of growing up in Kyabram. Percentage-wise, 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' made up a mere two percent of the total number of 'Conflict' articles (see appendix XIV). The article did, however, appear as a lead (see appendix XV), but on an even page (see appendix XVI). Needless to say, 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' scored no front page entries (see appendix XVII).

A content analysis of conflict articles, letters-to-the-editor and editorials invalidates the theory that a portion of country newspapers are "merely" 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' or strive to avoid 'Conflict'. Country
newspapers do, however, redefine current concepts of news values to set up their own criteria by which to select or reject information. The above content analysis used 'Conflict' to illustrate the country media's ability to distort current news values so they correspond to a unique country ideology. Many 'Conflict' articles were altered slightly to create concepts such as 'Community Against Metropolis', 'Selfcongratulations' and 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'.

Alterations to 'Sensation' articles in country newspapers can also be seen to create different news values. As Masterson says, 'Sensation' is fundamental to current concepts of news value. "There is such a thing as a sensation and when there is, it makes news. Few newsrooms ignore news of crime and violence, especially if it is sensational. The fact that it is extreme makes it newsworthy, even if the crime is a minor one." (Masterson, 1988: 20).

Yet, on close inspection of sensational articles in the country press, we find they can be divided into two categories:

* 'Extreme Played Up' and

* 'Extreme Played Down'

As said earlier, 'Sensation' articles were defined as any story that focussed on the "extreme" of ad incidence. The further categories of 'Extreme Played Up' and 'Extreme Played Down' were identified by the article's rhetoric, its angle and the shape of its inverted triangle (or the order in which facts are presented). These articles were also identifiable by their position on the page, headline size and accompanying photographs and graphics.
Needless to say, 'Extreme Played Up' articles were identified by 'sensational' adjectives and anecdotes and the most extreme facts presented in their first paragraph. 'Extreme Played Up' articles took up the most prominent positions and appeared on odd pages with large photographs or graphics. The use of eyewitnesses, victims and other sources who may give a more 'sensational' account of events also indicated 'Extreme Played Up'.

In comparison, 'Extreme Played Down' articles were identified by their more moderate rhetoric, less extreme facts appearing in their first paragraphs and smaller headlines and photographs. Their position and even page number further indicated 'Extreme Played Down' articles.

Out of the 14 articles categorised as Sensation, six were identified as 'Extreme Played Up', and eight as 'Extreme Played Down'. In percentage terms, this means 43 percent were defined as 'Extreme Played Up' and 57 percent as 'Extreme Played Down' (see appendix XVII).

In the Extreme Played Down category, despite the fact that an accident caused one fatality and blocked 100 metres of road, The Colac Herald relegated this story to page two, subordinating it to a story about Anzac Day. Again in The Colac Herald, a story about a boy's death after falling from a tractor and under a wheel was approached by sourcing the Work Cover Chief Executive Officer, rather than focussing on the incidence's extreme or sensational nature.

Although the earth tremor in Eildon was the strongest in the area since 1944, The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard reported the incident as if it were a scientific report. "An earthquake of Richter magnitude 3.2 occurred at 8.15pm last Friday..." the report read. Rather than speaking to witnesses
or gathering emotional comment, *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* chose to source a Seismology Research Centre employee. "No reports of any structural damage have been reported and none would be expected from an earthquake of this magnitude," was his quote.

In the same issue, *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* also played down the extreme aspects of an SES rescue. The paper focussed on lost walkers being found "safe and well", despite this being the second full-scale rescue conducted in the area in as many weeks.

Despite its sensational headline, Hunt for Killer Grass, *The Kilmore Free Press* played down this story's extreme nature. Not only was it relegated to page two, but the paper also emphasised the "remote possibility" of the Texan Tussock weed spreading as quickly as its cousin, the Serrated Tussock. *The Kilmore Free Press* treated a bomb scare at a local hotel in much the same fashion. Despite the story's sensational aspects, *The Kilmore Free Press* relegated it to page two and gave it no more than six paragraphs. Although the story sourced "police", it lacked any direct or indirect quotes to draw attention to its 'sensational' aspects. Although the article appeared with a photograph, this was a general picture of the hotel, rather than during the scare when its may have conveyed a more dramatic depiction of the incidence.

*The Kyabram Free Press* also played down a sensational story when it reported a hit-and-run involving a four-year-old boy on his way home from school. Despite receiving severe head and spinal injuries, *The Kyabram Free Press* emphasised his "stable" condition, and even went so far as to head line the story "Four year old in stable condition"!
The Snowy River Mail did the same with a story on a man who fell while painting and died after hitting his head on a rock. Although the story appeared on the front page, the paper gave it no more than three paragraphs, the last of which described funeral details. The headline, in small font, was unsensational; "Death Follows Fall". Stories taking precedence over the "freak" accident included a call for expressions of interest in the Snowy River Management Group and the annual Mallacoota Festival.

About 43 percent of articles defined as 'Sensation' were further categorised as 'Extreme Played Down' (see appendix XVIII). 61 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix XXX), and 51 percent as filler articles (see appendix XX). About 56 percent of 'Extreme Played Down' articles appeared on the front page (see appendix XXI). These figures suggest that more than half of the extreme aspects of 'Sensation' articles are played down and, at least 50 percent of the time, are placed in the paper's most prized positions.

In the 'Extreme Played Up' category, The Wangaratta Chronicle's page one lead article announced "74 jobs lost in Yakka closure". Accompanied by a full-colour photograph with a red and yellow graphic striped across it, the article used a "very disappointed" Managing Director and an "anonymous" veteran employee as its sources, both of which gave a 'sensational' account of events.

The Wangaratta Chronicle treated "Little hope for anglers" in much the same fashion. Although authorities said they would "continue" the search for the missing fishermen, this fact was relegated to the article's last paragraph. The Wangaratta Chronicle preferred to give a rescue volunteer's comment that he held "little hope" more prominence. Accompanied by a large
photograph depicting a desolate expanse of lake, the article appeared as a front page lead.

Again in *The Wangaratta Chronicle*, a local family stumbled across an early Pablo Picasso piece in the attic. Describing the piece as a "long lost work of art", the article sourced a Picasso expert, who described it in glowing terms. *The Wangaratta Chronicle* did not mention the expert also said it may not be authentic until the article's final paragraph. Although the article appeared on page four, *The Wangaratta Chronicle* gave it lead position, large headline and quarter page photograph.

In *The Portland Observer*, two car drivers were "lucky to survive" a crash between a car and a truck. *The Portland Observer* sourced the crash victims who "watched in horror" as an "out of control" truck came "hurting towards" them. Although there were no serious injuries (a fact which was not mentioned until the article's final paragraph) the story made page three lead and was accompanied by large headline and photograph.

In *The Kilmore Free Press*, the local hospital had "slashed" elective surgery after it "faced a funding crisis". *The Kilmore Free Press* reported "urgent efforts" were being made to "reverse the drastic move". Choosing to source an irate hospital Chief Executive Officer rather than a state government authority, *The Kilmore Free Press* maximised the story's 'extreme' aspects. Furthermore, the article appeared as a page one lead, complete with large headline and boxed quotes.

*The Wimmera Mail Times*, reported Horsham V-Line Freight employees were "reeling in shock" after learning by fax their jobs had been "axed". Sourcing the irate workers, rather than V-Line authorities, *The Wimmera Mail Times* focussed on the story's 'extreme' nature. The article appeared as
front page lead and was accompanied by large headline and a half-page full colour photograph.

About 42 percent of 'Sensation' articles were further categorised as 'Extreme Played Up' (see appendix XVIII), more than 80 percent of which appeared on an odd page (see appendix IX), and 100 percent as leads (see appendix XX). However, a relatively low 45 percent of 'Extreme Played Up' entries appeared on the front page (see appendix XXI). These figures suggest less than half of 'Sensation' articles have their 'Extreme' aspects played up in country newspapers. However, they do take higher priority on the paper's most prized positions than 'Extreme Played Down' articles.

Although concepts such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' are evident among country newspapers, the majority of news values function to support "optimism", an "invariably positive" outlook on life" and a "common belief in the ability of the individual or the small community to overcome adversity." (Hamilton, 1997: 210 – 212). It also strives to dispel "sectorial fragmentation and the political disunity" in an effort to overcome the "tyranny of distance".
Chapter III: A Study of the 10-Paper Sample on a Case-by-Case Basis

The preceding content analysis indicated country newspapers do value the current concept of news values. However, these news values were habitually altered to accommodate a specific country ideology.

Studying each paper on a case-by-case basis, much the same conclusion is reached. Starting with papers yielding the least percentage of the current concept of news values, the following content analysis investigates each individual sample's unique composition.

Looking at every paper as a case study, the analysis looks closely at each paper's current concepts of news values and goes on to take individual dynamics into consideration. These dynamics include the subsequent categorisation of the current concept of news values ('Sensation' and 'Conflict'); categorisation of letters-to-the-editor; existence and style of editorial; type of front page lead; use of by-lines and colour photographs and graphics; rhetorical style; type of layout; presence of court reporting, police rounds, religious and history columns and, finally, overall percentages of news values.

With two 'Conflict' and two 'Sensation' articles, The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard had the least number of entries displaying the current concept of news values. In percentage terms, this means six percent of The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard's articles involved the current concept of news values (see appendix XII). Furthermore, the two 'Conflict' articles were subsequently defined as 'Self-congratulations' (see appendix
XXIII) and the pair of 'Sensation' articles was further defined as 'Extreme Played Down' (see appendix XXIV).

The first of the paper's 'Sensation' articles involved an earth tremor felt at Eildon. Although the tremor was the biggest since 1944, *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* reported the incident as if it were a scientific report. "An earthquake of Richter magnitude of 3.2 occurred at 8.51 pm last Friday, with its epicentre about 10 kilometres north east of Lake Mountain," the introductory paragraph read. Although the introduction had all the elements of a news article (Who, What, Where and When) it lacked the pace and style of a typical 'Sensation' article. Furthermore, *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* chose to source a Seismology Research Centre authority, rather than eyewitnesses who may have given a more 'sensational' account.

The paper treated its second 'Sensation' article in much the same fashion. "Four canoeists were rescued from an island near the Archeron Cutting on the Goulburn River on Saturday by police and the Alexandra State Emergency Service volunteers," the article's introductory paragraph read. Not only did the introductory paragraph lack a typical pacy style (notably caused by passive voice), but the article was also presented as a filler at the bottom of page one, with small headline and no pictures to indicate its import. The article was a mere four paragraphs long, and was awarded neither sources nor background to fill the story out. The local Rotary Club's annual art show, complete with three photographs, appeared as lead on the same page as the rescue story.

*The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* had 11 letters-to-the-editor, eight of which were defined as 'Self-congratulations' and one as 'Local Controversy'. The remaining two were uncategorisable. There was no
editorial in this paper. In percentage terms, this means almost 73 per cent of The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard's letters-to-the-editor praised either individual locals or the community as whole, compared to nine per cent displaying internal dissent (see appendix XXV).

The subject matter of The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard's letters-to-the-editor included the state of the local tip (the sole letter-to-the-editor defined as 'Local Controversy'); new business owners publicly "wishing" the previous owners "all the best"; public expressions of gratitude towards the newly-retired Basketball Association president; praising local business for supporting community projects; hailing the benefits of the local nursing homes and health services and correspondence from a local on holiday in Canada.

The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard's front page leads included four 'Community Expansion' and two 'Communal Rites' articles. Although four papers were analysed, two leads appeared on two of the paper's front pages. In percentage terms, this means 66 percent of The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard's front page leads outlined the growth of community resources or services, and 34 percent reported on regularly occurring events that involved the community as a whole (see appendix XXVI).

The subject matter of 'Communal Rites' leads included the local Rotary Club's annual art show, complete with three large photographs and a quote from the club's president: "Rotary is responsible for creating Victoria as the art state of Australia," he said. "The Rotary Club of Alexandra shows great determination in its efforts."
The second 'Communal Rites' front-page lead involved the start of the local football season. The event was heralded by a half-page photograph of local footballers abseiling as part of their pre-match training, with a three-paragraph caption beneath.

The subject matter of 'Community Expansion' leads included the Murrindindi council's decision to support of a combined health service. This article had the potential to display conflict and negativity. However, *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* chose to outline the health service's "coordinated, streamlined system" which was "responsive to people when and where it is needed". Furthermore, quotes in the article were dominated by sources in favour of the health service - not one was obtained from sources against.

Also a 'Community Expansion' front-page lead article in *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* was the Ythanbrae annual bull sale. The story was angled to highlight the record amount spent by cattle traders from around the nation, and to emphasise the quality and value of local stock.

The "impressive" new clubhouse at Eildon Boat Club also obtained front-page lead status, when the then deputy Premier, Pat McNamara, opened the facility. The story was made up of a full half-page picture and a three-paragraph caption outlining the number of people who attended the opening before "enjoying" a formal luncheon.

The "tourism winners" in the local tourism awards appeared as the front-page lead in the same *Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* edition. Hailing the awards' presentation dinner as "the night of stars", *The
*Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* listed the "best" in the district, complete with judges' comments.

'Community Expansion' articles made up more than 25 percent of *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*’s entries, while 'Communal Rites' made up just on 25 percent. 'Dominant Groups' made up just over 18 percent, while 'Rites de Passage' made up almost 10 percent. 'Communal Links' made up six percent, and 'Law and Order' just over four. 'Local History' made up no more than two percent, as did 'Deeds of Locals'. *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* did not rate any 'Media Releases' (see appendix XXVII). As already explained, 'Conflict' made up just on three percent of *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*’s articles as did 'Sensation' (see appendix XXII). From these figures, it is evident that *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*’s most popular articles are, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Communal Rites', 'Dominant Groups', 'Rites de Passage', 'Communal Links', 'Law and Order', 'Conflict', 'Sensation', 'Local History' and 'Deeds of Locals'.

The majority of *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*’s articles were not written in typical pacey journalistic style. Most of the paper’s rhetoric was straight reportage, rather than coloured with adjectives or anecdotes.

Many of the paper’s lead articles are derived from local community group or school events, including the local Rotary Club art show, the local college athletics results and the CWA’s 60th birthday celebrations (complete with half-page photograph.)
Regular weekly columns were highlighted, including news from the Alexandra Urban Fire Brigade (often a whole page and accompanying photographs), the Alexandra Senior Citizens Club, a 'community diary' and contributions written by the local council. There were country, history and religious pages. However, *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* reported neither local courts, nor police rounds.

*The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* is a weekly publication, with a target audience of farmers, tourists and country townspeople. It has a circulation of 2,350 throughout Alexandra, Eildon, Marysville, Thornton, and Lake Mountain in Victoria's northeast. It is not a free paper, charging $1 per issue and a casual advertising rate of $2.70.

Similar to *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*, *The Snowy River Mail* had a low yield of current news values. This paper had three 'Conflict' articles and one 'Sensation', making seven percent of its editorial content holding the current concept of news values (see appendix XXII). About 75 percent of *The Snowy River Mail*’s 'Conflict' articles were further categorised as 'Local Controversy', while 25 percent was identified as 'Community Against Metropolis' (see appendix XXIII). All 'Sensation' articles were defined as 'Extreme Played Down' (see appendix XXIV).

The first 'Local Controversy' article appeared as a letter-to-the-editor and could be described as a true conflict article. It involved a long-running community dispute over an alleged arson attack on a logging bulldozer. Many in the community were accusing local anti-logging protesters for the attack. According to the letter, there had been a long-running dispute over who was responsible for the attack and, in a previous letter, the bulldozer's owner had been accused of setting fire to his own vehicle. The letter, written
by the accused owner, vicious attacked his accuser and the "so-called nonviolent conservationists". The letter clearly demonstrated there existed much communal division and "internal dissent" over the issue.

The second 'Local Controversy' article reported on a petition, with 2000 signatories, being tabled at the local council. The petition was calling for increased mosquito control work. Despite the article's 'Conflict' theme, it appeared as a filler on page four. Furthermore, the article sourced the council's Chief Executive Officer, who "thanked" residents for their "continued interest" in the issue. The CEO went on to outline council's efforts in current and future mosquito control programs. The article did not source petition signatories, who may have given a more controversial account of events. The article portrayed the community as being in accord, rather than internal dissent.

The 'Conflict' article dealt with 'Community Against Metropolis' involving the Gippsland East MLA, David Treasure, calling for the state-government run Catchment Management Authority to increase the flow of water in the Snowy River following an "outbreak" of blue-green algae. As well as Mr Treasure, The Snowy River Mail sourced the Authority's chairman, Duncan Malcolm, who dampened down the story's controversial aspects by agreeing with the MLA. Even so, the article highlighted the value of the issue's conflict by giving it front-page lead status and headlining it in large font.

The sole 'Sensation' article involved the death of a "well known Orbost man". Although the article, outlining an event of an 'extreme' nature, appeared on page one, it was tucked away at the bottom of the page and was no more than three paragraphs long. Although the article's first paragraph
emphasised the incident's 'extreme' nature, the rest gave no more information than the gentleman's funeral details.

_The Snowy River Mail_ yielded eight letters-to-the-editor, two of which were further defined as 'Community Against Metropolis', three as 'Self-congratulations' and three more as 'Local Controversy'. In percentage terms, this means about 25 percent was deemed as displaying conflict with state or federal governments, or big business, 37 percent praised local individuals or the community as a whole and another 38 percent demonstrated internal dissent (see appendix XXV).

The first 'Community Against Metropolis' letter involved the long-running dispute over the alleged arson attack on a logger's bulldozer. The letter's author claimed the East Gippsland MLA, David Treasure had accused anti-loggers of vandalism, and his comments were a "feeble attempt to redeem his local profile in the lead up to the next state election". Although the letter dealt with 'Local Controversy', its main bone of contention was against the state government and was allocated the 'Community Against Metropolis' label.

The second 'Community Against Metropolis' letter involved an upset local disgruntled by the area's "snow storm" television reception. Implying government authorities favoured city-dwellers, the letter complained "Melbournians would not put up with such bad reception".

The first 'Self-congratulations' letters included one "congratulating" the local National Party representative for his opposition to the proposed republic. The second was an invitation from the local RSL president for all citizens to attend the Anzac service. The president said the service would be "very
special", with local school bands, choirs, scouts, cubs and guides participating. The final 'Self-congratulations' letter had "nothing but praise" for the new Orbost Information Centre.

*The Snowy River Mail*’s high number of 'Local Controversy' letters-to-the-editor can be seen as a direct result of the long-running dispute over the alleged arson attack on a logger's bulldozer. Some claimed anti-logging protesters vandalised the vehicle, while others accused loggers of self-vandalism in order to set up the conservationists. This long-winded and drawn-out argument was being played out through *The Snowy River Mail*'s pages. It can be concluded the allowance of personal arguments through the paper's pages contributed to the high number of 'Local Controversy' letters.

Although playing out personal arguments through letters-to-the-editor was not unknown in other papers studied, there was an unusually high number in *The Snowy River Mail*. In total, five out of the paper’s eight letters-to-the-editor entered a local controversy (although two of these were defined as Self-congratulations and Community Against Metropolis). In percentage terms, this means 63 per cent of *The Snowy River Mail*'s letters-to-the-editor were a response to allegations made in previous letters.

Although *The Snowy River Mail* published these letters, it did not enter the debate itself. No article on the incident itself could be found in the paper’s pages and, with an absence of official editorial or comment, the paper appeared reluctant to enter into local controversy.

Not only was *The Snowy River Mail*'s selection of letters unusual, but also its layout was also unconventional, with many pages made up of filler
articles only. With such a layout, it was difficult to identify lead articles. Nevertheless, the content analysis chose the front page's most prominent articles to analyse as leads (although many front page leads were equally as prominent as other articles appearing on the same page).

The Snowy River Mail's front page leads included four 'Community Expansion', one 'Communal Rites' and one 'Conflict'. Although four editions were studied, two papers yielded two lead articles. In percentage terms, this means 67 percent of The Snowy River Mail's lead articles outlined the growth of community services or resources and 16 percent reported on regularly occurring events involving the community as a whole. The remaining 17 percent outlined 'Conflict' - however, this was further defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' and did not highlight internal dissent (see appendix XXVI).

The 'Community Expansion' front page leads included the formation of the State Government-run Snowy River Management Group, designed to advise the Catchment Management Authority on environmental policies and a State Government decision to extend the waterway management district to cover the whole of the Snowy River catchment. Using clearly biased sources, both articles painted the Catchment Management Authority in a positive light. The paper interviewed the-then minister for Agriculture, Pat McNama and Authority Chairman, Duncan Malcolm. However, the paper did not talk to community members and failed to mention the controversial S32 water levy entwined within the issue.

The last two 'Community Expansion' front-page leads included a story about a Gippsland-initiated series of discussions on drought, which was "drawing country people together across the whole of Gippsland and beyond". The
other announced Orbost’s new $2.32 million water treatment plant beginning operations. While the first emphasised the marketing of Gippsland’s ideas, the other highlighted the size and monetary value of new infrastructure. With no sources disagreeing on the issue, both articles painted their subjects in a positive light.

The ‘Communal Rites’ front-page lead reported on the 10th Mallacoota Festival. The article was a mere three-paragraph caption. However, with three large photographs, *The Snowy River Mail* drew attention to the festival’s value as news and, discussing the number of participants compared to past years, emphasised the event’s ritualistic importance to the community as a whole.

The ‘Conflict’ front-page lead, already discussed in the above analysis of ‘Conflict’ articles, was subsequently defined as ‘Community Against Metropolis’. Although the East Gippsland MLA, David Treasure, “called” for authorities to increase the Snowy River’s flow, by sourcing an authority in total agreement with Mr Treasure, *The Snowy River Mail* dampened down the story’s controversial nature.

Articles defined as ‘Community Expansion’ made up almost 35 percent of *The Snowy River Mail*’s entries, while ‘Communal Rites’ made up almost 20 percent, as did ‘Dominant Groups’. ‘Rites de Passage’ made up almost six percent, as did ‘Law and Order’, and ‘Local History’ made up almost five percent. ‘Media Releases’ made up just over four percent, and ‘Deeds of Locals’ made up almost four percent, while ‘Communal Links’ made no score at all (see appendix XXVII). As already discussed, ‘Conflict’ made up five percent of *The Snowy River Mail*, while ‘Sensation’ made up two percent (see appendix XXII). These figures indicate *The Snowy River Mail*’s
most popular news values are, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Communal Rites', 'Dominant Groups', 'Rites de Passage', 'Law and Order', 'Local History', 'Conflict', 'Media Releases', 'Deeds of Locals' and 'Sensation'.

Similar to The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard, The Snowy River Mail articles were not written in pacy, journalistic style. The paper's unusual 'ad-hoc' type of layout meant no column appeared regularly, and a high number of lead articles were derived from community groups and school events. Although The Snowy River Mail stood out from The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard with a regular police round up, columns potentially highlighting conflict (court reporting and editorials) were absent.

The Snowy River Mail is a weekly publication with a circulation of 2,725 throughout Orbost, Cann River, Bairnsdale and Mallacoota. It is not a free paper, charging 50c per issue and a casual advertising rate of $2.70.

The North West Express also yielded a relatively low percentage of current concepts of news values. This paper had four 'Conflict' and no 'Sensation' entries, resulting in eight percent of its editorial content made up of current concepts of news values (see appendix XXII). Furthermore, all the North West Express's 'Conflict' articles were subsequently categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis' (see appendix XXIII).

The 'Community Against Metropolis' articles included Mildura member, Russell Savage, criticising council's contracting out of parking services to Melbourne-based company, Parking and Traffic Regulation. Mr Savage claimed the city company "consistently shown a ruthless and unsympathetic attitude and little local knowledge,". The North West Express allocated this
article on an odd page and as a lead, demonstrating the paper considered it of high news value.

The second 'Community Against Metropolis' article was Headlined "Catchment Rate Win for Victorian Farmers". The story of then Agriculture minister, Pat McNamara, announcing "major changes" to the Catchment Management Authority was reported as small country communities triumphing over big-city policies. Although this article appeared as a filler, it was allocated front page space.

The first of the two 'Community Against Metropolis' articles appearing as letters-to-the-editor involved anger towards the-then State Government's education policies. The second was objecting to the same State Government's proposed privatisation of the Mildura Base Hospital. Both letters appeared as leads on page two.

*The North West Express* yielded five letters-to-the-editor, three of which were categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis, and two as 'Local Controversy'. In percentage terms, this means 60 percent conflict with state or federal governments, or large city companies and 40 percent highlighted internal dissent (see appendix XXV).

The 'Community Against Metropolis' letters, two of which already outlined above as 'Conflict' articles, involved the-then State Government's education and health policies. The third accused "dishonest Parliament" of "destroying the grain industry".
The 'Local Controversy' letters-to-the-editor included an expression of anger with local vet advice on "inhumane" methods of killing rodents, and an objection to the council spending $9.8 million on a public swimming pool.

Unlike *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* and *The Snowy River Mail, The North West Express* published an editorial. However, although the regularly appearing column met the content analysis' definition of editorial - appearing under a banner and a clear opinion emerging from the rhetoric - it was unlike conventional editorials with which readers are familiar. *The North West Express's* form of editorial appeared regularly alongside the letters-to-the-editor and under a banner. Yet the banner indicated neither editorial nor opinion. Instead, the banner titled the editorial as "Around the Electorate", and was written by member for Mildura, Russell Savage. Mr Savage used the 'editorial' to give his (or the paper's?) official opinion on various local, state and national issues.

Political editorialising in newspapers is not unusual. However, conventional opinion pages usually publish an opposing point of view either in the same, or a subsequent edition.

*The North West Express's* editorials were further categorised as 'Local Controversy', 'Community Against Metropolis' and two as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. In percentage terms, this means 25 percent of *The North West Express's* editorials emphasised internal dissent, another 25 outlined contention with state or federal government, or the operations of metropolitan companies or individuals, and 50 percent rhetorically roused communal loyalty and patriotism (see appendix XXVIII).
The 'Local Controversy' editorial subject matter involved the Mildura City Council's grave error" in selling the Koorlong Tennis Court's land. "On this occasion, council has failed the community badly," Mr Savage asserted. "Instead of admitting its mistakes and rectifying the situation... council has attempted to offload the blame onto the tennis club." Mr Savage's accusing tone emphasised internal dissent caused by the issue.

The 'Community Against Metropolis' editorial involved the then recent New South Wales state election in which, Mr Savage asserted, "confirmed that the National Party [was] heading in the wrong direction". Validating the editorial's label as 'Community Against Metropolis, Mr Savage argued "the ruthless economic rationalist policies of the Kennett Government (well supported by the National Party) have exacted a terrible toll on service delivery and jobs and have impacted significantly on the viability of small communities".

The 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' editorial subject matter included praise for the Mallee's pioneers, who "have shown great ingenuity in developing in unique farm machinery and at one time were world leaders in building harvesters". Mr Savage said he "admired" the community's antecedents and their "make do attitude" that "derived some brilliant adaptations and machinery modifications". Mr Savage's positive rhetoric was designed to petition the community to take a sentimental view of its history.

In the second 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' editorial, Mr Savage gave his Easter message. Accumulating an emotional tone, Mr Savage reminded the community "Easter [was] the most important feast in the Christian calendar".
"Easter is a wonderful holiday, symbolising new beginnings and reminding us to count our blessings," he said. "Best wishes to all in the Mildura electorate for a pleasant Easter."

Similar to The Snowy River Mail, The North West Express layout was unusual, with filler articles making up the contents of whole pages. As with The Snowy River Mail, The North West Express's unconventional layout made identifying lead articles difficult. Nevertheless, the content analysis chose the front page's most prominent articles to analyse as front page leads, although many were equally deserving of the front-page label as others.

The North West Express's front page leads included two 'Community Expansion' and two 'Communal Rites' articles. In percentage terms, this means 50 percent of The North West Express's front page leads outlined the growth of community services or resources, and 50 percent reported on regularly occurring events that involved the community as a whole (see appendix XXVI).

The 'Community Expansion' front page leads included a report on Ouyen receiving piped water from the Murray River. Implied country hardship, the article asserted the $5.7 million water infrastructure would bring the community "long-awaited security" against "inevitable" future droughts.

The second 'Community Expansion' front-page lead involved the opening of the Mallee Vocational Educational Centre and the Online SkillsNet Project. The $5 million state government initiative attracted a headline reading: "Community Commended for Entering the Information Age", suggesting the area was keeping up with its metropolitan counterparts.
The 'Communal Rites' front page leads included a report on a "successful" Clean Up Australia Day. Listing all school participants and comparing amounts of garbage collected compared to last year, the article emphasised the ritualistic importance of the event to the community as a whole. With three large photographs and large headline on page one, the story was clearly the edition's most valued article.

The second 'Communal Rites' front page lead involved the annual public speaking competition at Ouyen High School. "Debating has demonstrated remarkable growth in this college and students have experienced outstanding success in recent years," the article read, emphasising the ritualistic nature of the event. "[Debating] provides many key skills that many students will learn to appreciate as they make their way in the broader community," it continued, implying the importance of the event to the community as a whole.

"Public Speaking at Ouyen Secondary College" provides an appropriate example of The North West Express's unusual rhetorical style. "Mrs Poole is to be congratulated for allowing students to 'grow' and develop their talents in a variety of areas..." the article read, demonstrating a style that is neither pacey nor journalistic.

Furthermore, no column appeared regularly on any particular page. A high number of lead articles were derived from community groups and schools. The North West Express published a regular police round up, however, but the news contained in the column was mainly an update on police events, rather than criminal activity - reports on the new divisional van, the latest
police blitz and the like. Columns with potential to highlight 'Conflict' (such as court reporting) were noticeably absent.

'Communal Rites' made up about 30 percent of *The North West Express*'s entries, while 'Community Expansion' made up about 20 percent. 'Dominant Groups' made up about 16 percent, while 'Media Releases' made up eight percent. *Rites de Passage* made up six percent, as did 'Law and Order', while 'Local History' made up four percent and 'Deeds of Locals' made up two percent. *The North West Express* scored no 'Communal Links' (see appendix XXVII). As already discussed, 'Conflict' made up about eight percent of *The North West Express*'s entries, but the paper scored no 'Sensation' at all (see appendix XXII). These figures suggest the most popular news values in *The North West Express* are, in descending order, 'Communal Rites', 'Community Expansion', 'Dominant Groups', 'Media Releases', 'Conflict', 'Rites de Passage', 'Law and Order', 'Local History' and 'Deeds of Locals'.

*The North West Express* is a weekly publication with a circulation of 1,200 throughout the Northern Mallee. It is not a free paper, charging 80c per issue and with a casual advertising rate of $2.25. It produces neither colour photographs, nor colour graphics.

*The Kyabram Free Press* yielded the almost same percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values as *The North West Express*. However, while the articles displaying current concepts of news values in *The North West Express* were all defined as 'Conflict', those in *The Kyabram Free Press* included three articles categorisable as 'Conflict', and one as 'Sensation' (see appendix XXII). On closer inspection, two of the three 'Conflict' articles were identified as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment',
while the remainder was categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis' (see appendix XXIII). The one 'Sensation' article was further classified as 'Extreme Played Down' (see appendix XXIV).

In keeping with the views of Wild, Tichenor and Janowitz, *The Kyabram Free Press* focussed on 'Conflict' between the community and the outside urban metropolis. A report on the district's local council "moving" to "fight" proposed road funding appeared as lead on page three. The article's rhetoric implied country people joining together against the State Government. "The Moyne Council in the Port Fairy area is leading a South West Victoria move to fight the proposed cut," the article read. "A regional submission will be made by the Moyne, Corangamite and Warrnambool councils."

The paper's sole 'Sensation' article involved the story of a four-year-old boy who received head and spinal injuries after being run over by a four-wheel-drive in Kyabram's main street. Despite the accident's 'sensational' aspects, and the boy's 'sensational' injuries, *The Kyabram Free Press* highlighted his "stable condition" as he lay in The Royal Children's Hospital. The article's lack of 'sensation' was also caused by its straight news report style and its deficiency of quotes from eyewitnesses or ambulance crewmembers.

*The Kyabram Free Press* produced seven letters-to-the-editor. Two of these were defined as 'Community Against Metropolis', another two as 'Local Controversy', one as 'Self-congratulations' and another as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. The remaining letter was uncategorisable. In percentage terms this means 29 percent of letters highlighted internal dissent, another 29 evidenced community angst against government or big
business, 14 percent praised the deeds of locals or the community as a whole and another 14 appealed to community sentiment (see appendix XXV).

The subject matter of the Kyabram Free Press's 'Community Against Metropolis' letters-to-the-editor included one accusing the local government of being the "puppets of Kennettisin", and another against former Premier Jeff Kennett's "ideology of privatisation". The 'Self-congratulations' letter 'thanked' The Kyabram Free Press for giving the local passion play "such wonderful coverage", and the community as a whole for witnessing the "crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his love for us all". The one 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' letter requested the local community as a whole to remember the "true meaning of Easter".

The subject matter of The Kyabram Free Press's 'Local Controversy' letters-to-the-editor was dominated by an issue concerning a proposed skate park designed for the district's youth. One reader prophesised "smoking" and "loud foul language". The letter read: "Groups of gangs will form, fights over who skates when and other issues will start." The reader declared s/he could not "give a rat's" where the park was situated. Using strong, hostile language, the letter emphasised internal dissent caused by the issue.

The second letter on the subject was a little more subdued and conciliatory in its language. "if it is popular, then there could be a large crowd of young people, so I am asking [the park committee] to make a compromise by accepting the site in the railway area," the letter read. The letter's non-controversial tone implied the issue had caused community concern, but not serious internal dissent.
The Kyabram Free Press was one of the four papers studied with an editorial. Six editorials were gathered from the four editions investigated. Four of these were identified as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment', while the remaining two were uncategorisable. In percentage terms, this means 67 percent of The Kyabram Free Press's editorials involved the rhetorical rousing of communal patriotism and loyalty (see appendix XXVIII).

The Kyabram Free Press's form of editorial was curious. It met the content analysis' criteria for defining editorial - a banner and a clear opinion emerging for the rhetoric yet it was unlike conventional editorials with which readers are accustomed. The Kyabram Free Press's editorial was published regularly on page four. It appeared alongside letters-to-the-editor and under a banner. The banner did not, however, indicate opinion or editorial. Rather, it simply set out the name of the page - Page Four. Furthermore, the columns were contributed articles commenting on philosophical life questions.

Whimsy dominated The Kyabram Free Press's editorial subject matter. Memories of experiences as a teenager in Kyabram through the '50s and '60s, and how they affect the older person today; the emotions when a semi-adult child leaves the nest; a brush with death and how it makes one "cling to and enjoy and savour" all the "very simply things in life" and the deprived childhood that may have contributed to the then current ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia.

Four editorials were categorised as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. The first was a plea for the community to "recognise the little people". "I would like to see a few more awards for the unsung heroes, the quiet achievers who don't make a public display of their good works," read the editorial. The
Aussie battler was a running theme through the article, supporting Hamilton's suggestion that the 'battler', or a "common belief in the ability of the individual or small community to overcome adversity" is entrenched in Australian ideology.

The second editorial categorised as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' involved the author reliving memories of growing up in Kyabram during the '50s. Using the 40th anniversary of the deaths of Buddy Holly, 'the Big Bopper' and Ritchie Valens as an angle, the author took a nostalgic trip down memory lane. The editorial was inspired by a documentary screened on ABC television the week before. 'I hope those people of my vintage were tuned into ABC television on Monday night," read the editorial (the pitch is indicative of the paper's main readership). 'I was just a teenager at the time attending Kyabram High School. But I can vividly remember it as if it were yesterday... Like millions of teenagers at the time, I thought Buddy Holly was the bees knees.'

The sole editorial in *The Kyabram Free Press* which could be compared to a conventional editorial with which today's readers are familiar involved the influx of Iraqi migrants seeking "happiness in the Kyabram community". The editorial, written in current feature-style, began with an anecdote painting an idyllic picture of "women in current Muslim dress, pushing strollers" and men "chattering as they kick a round ball through the goal posts on the oval of a local primary school". The editorial claimed these were the people who had "embraced the lucky country as their own". The article, full of positive rhetoric and, ultimately, appealed for communal support for increased funding to Kyabram Hospital for new health services specifically designed for Iraqi women.
The Kyabram Free Press's front page leads included one each of 'Deeds of Locals', 'Community Expansion', 'Communal Rites' and 'Sensation'. The remaining front page lead was uncategorisable. In percentage terms, this means 20 per cent of The Kyabram Free Press's front page leads told the story of ordinary townsfolk undertaking seemingly extraordinary activities, 20 percent outlined the growth of community services or resources, 20 percent reported on regularly occurring events involving the community as a whole and another 20 percent reported on an extreme incident (see appendix Y-XVI).

The 'Deeds of Locals' front page lead involved the story of Kyabram model aircraft flyer winning a national competition in South Australia. The article's large, loud headline, glorifying the deed, read: 'Ky Flyer takes Top Gun Title'. Complete with a half-page colour picture, the article was highlighted as the edition's most valued story.

The 'Community Expansion' front page lead outlined the benefits of the new Kyabram Water Treatment Plant (original capitals). The Kyabram Free Press's sole source was the Goulburn Valley Water Chairman, Mijo Darveniza. Mr Darveniza told The Kyabram Free Press the new plant was a "window of opportunity" and explained how it would bring $380,000 worth of infrastructure to the Kyabram community. Mr Darveniza's comments were clearly biased in favour of the plant and, with no other sources in the article, The Kyabram Free Press was unable to give an opposing view.

The 'Communal Rites' front page lead promoted local efforts during the annual Good Friday Appeal. The article outlined amounts raised in the local community in past years and listed where and when people could make
donations, emphasising the ritualistic nature of the event. The article was complete with an attention-grabbing half-page picture and large headline.

The 'Sensation' front page lead, previously described in the analysis of current news values, was further defined as 'Extreme Played Down'. The article told the Q sensational story of a four-year-old boy who released himself from his father's hand and sustained 'sensational' spine and head injuries after being run over by a fourwheel drive. Despite the large headline, its rhetoric played the incident down: "Fouryear-old in stable condition," it read.

Unlike other papers so far commented upon, The Kyabram Free Press's rhetorical style was currently pacy and journalistic. The paper's paragraphs were one sentence long and it adhered to the current inverted triangle tradition. However, current by-lins were absent from the paper.

As with most papers, The Kyabram Free Press published advertising features. However, unlike many papers, its most valued editorial space (front page lead) was often dedicated to in-house promotion and positive stories regarding its main advertisers.

Unlike other country papers so far commented upon, The Kyabram Free Press published Tanberg-style cartoons. Political cartoons currently satirise and scrutinise people and organizations that hold society's power. By their very nature, cartoons are controversial and often highlight conflict within society. However, out of The Kyabram Free Press's three cartoons studied, a mere one was categorised as 'Local Controversy'. The others were identified as 'Community Against Metropolis' and 'Community Expansion'. 
The 'Community Against Metropolis' cartoon portrayed a bristly farmer wearing an akubra, gumboots and a cynical expression listening to a clean-shaven 'farm consultant', who was advising him not to retire as he had a "wife and three kids to support". The cartoon, satirising the clean-shaven city-dweller, pointed out the man-on-the-land's hardship and metropolitan greed.

The 'Community Expansion' cartoon portrayed the local computer skills class, where an old man, wearing footy scarf and beanie, discovered the www.football.com.au site. The supervisor points out "Old Bob's" computer skills have "improved quite a bit" since he discovered the site. The cartoon, portraying several computers in the Kyabram Work skills building, points out the community has entered the modern age and encourages all citizens to use the new technology.

The 'Local Controversy' cartoon portrayed the Kyabram library. Except for the case reserved for 'Space' subjects, its shelves overflow with books. A smarmy young man points to the empty shelves and says to the librarian struggling under a pile of books,
"I suppose it refers back to one's definition of.. SAPCE!!" The cartoon is clearly poking fun at the local library's confined space.

About 25 percent of *The Kyabram Free Press*’s articles were made up of 'Community Expansion', while 'Communal Rites' made up 20 percent. 'Media Releases' made up 14 percent, while 'Deeds of Locals' made up nine percent and 'Communal Links' made up seven percent. 'Law and Order' made up six percent and 'Rites de Passage' made up four percent. 'Local History' made up two percent, as did 'Dominant Groups' (see appendix XXVII) As already discussed, 'Conflict' made up six percent, and 'Sensation' two percent (see appendix XXII). These figures suggest *The Kyabram Free Press*’s most popular news values are, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Communal Rites', 'Media Releases', 'Deeds of Locals', 'Communal Links', 'Law and Order', 'Conflict', 'Rites de Passage' 'Local History', 'Dominant Groups' and 'Sensation'.

Regular weekly columns were prominent in *The Kyabram Free Press*. 'Around the Traps' a column categorised as 'Communal Links' and telling readers amusing anecdotes about local personalities and snippets of news from outlaying townships was regularly allocated the whole of page two. Also defined as 'Communal Links' was the 'Tongala Pages', column outlining news from the small community of Tongala. There were columns
specifically for church news, new babies and weddings. However, history pages, court reporting and police rounds were absent from The Kyabram Free Press.

The Kyabram Free Press is a bi-weekly paper, with a circulation of 3,418 and targets itself to an A, B and C audience. It is not a free paper, charging 80c per issue and with a casual advertising rate of $4.40.

Similar to other papers commented upon, The Kyabram Free Press had news values different to current concepts of the criteria by which news is selected and rejected. All have so far supported Janowitz's claim that country editorialising "mainly appeals to community sentiment". However, with editorials, satirical cartoons (albeit mostly noncontroversial) and pacy journalistic rhetorical style, The Kyabram Free Press can be seen to have a different approach to news values than The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard, The Snowy River Mail and The North West Express.

There was very little difference in the percentage of articles displaying current news values between the preceding four papers. Although varying slightly in rhetorical style and features such as editorials and cartoons, all
four had a similar percentage of articles categorised as 'Conflict' or 'Sensation'.

However, an analysis of The Colac Herald showed a large jump, in percentage terms, of articles displaying current concepts of news values. About 17 percent of this paper's editorial content was categorisable as either 'Conflict' or 'Sensation' (see appendix XXII). Out of The Colac Herald's four 'Conflict' articles, two were further defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' and one as 'Local Controversy'. The final 'Conflict' article was uncategorisable (see appendix XXIII). Out of The Colac Herald's two 'Sensation' articles, one was subsequently categorised as 'Extreme Played Up', and the other as 'Extreme Played Down' (see appendix XXIV).

The Colac Herald's first 'Community Against Metropolis' article involved the State Government-run Catchment Management Authority "slashing" its "controversial" $32 water levy as a result of "public criticism" in the local area. This article appeared on page three (the page saved for the paper's second most valued articles) and as a lead.

The second 'Community Against Metropolis' article involved "local representatives" submitting their case against the State Government's Regional Forest Agreement, which constricted local logging activity. Although this article appeared on an even page (reserved for not-so valued articles) it filled the non-advertising space and was complete with large photograph and headline, as well as boxed comments from local representatives in large, bold font.

The 'Local Controversy' article involved the current conflict between local tourism and logging industries. According to the article, tourists were
camping along a logging road, causing 'local controversy' between local tourism operators and logging leaders. Quoting sources from both sides of the argument, the article emphasised the internal dissent caused by the issue. The article, appearing as lead on pages three and complete with two large photographs, drew attention to its considered value.

The 'Sensation' article defined as 'Extreme Played Down' involved the story of a boy's death after falling from a moving tractor. Although the article appeared on page one, it did not take lead status. Furthermore, despite the incident's extreme nature, the article sourced a Work Cover Chief Executive, who implied this was an ordinary incident in the school holidays, rather than eye-witnesses, hospital staff or family members who may have given a more 'sensational' account.

The 'Sensation' article defined as 'Extreme Played Up' involved a "fatal" accident on the local area of the highway. Although the article appeared on an even page, it was accompanied by a large photograph and headline. The article emphasised the large number of police, SES, CFA and ambulance officers attending the scene, highlighting the incident's 'extreme' nature.

The Colac Herald produced six letters-to-the-editor, including one 'Local Controversy', two 'Community Against Metropolis' and two 'Self-congratulations'. The remaining letter-to-the-editor was uncatologisable. There existed no editorial in this paper. In percentage terms, this means 17 percent of The Colac Herald's letters-to-the-editor outlined internal dissent, 33 percent emphasised anger towards federal or state governments, or big business and another 33 praised local individuals or the community as a whole. The remaining 17 percent was uncatologisable (see appendix XXV).
The 'Local Controversy' letter involved a local argument over the-then recent council elections. A previous letter had accused candidates of focusing only on environmental issues and ignoring other local concerns in order to secure votes. In response, the 'Local Controversy' letter claimed the previous correspondent of "ignoring reality". As with The Snowy River Mail, The Colac Herald allowed personal arguments to be played out through its pages, contributing to percentage of 'Local Controversy' articles, which may not have been so high during a different period of time.

The two 'Community Against Metropolis' letters included a call for the Catchment Management Authority to "scrap" its $32 water levy and an expression of anger towards the Government for sending a naval ship to the Gulf when "our coastline is so vast that drugs and illegal immigrants and who knows what else is coming into our land". Both letters expressed 'Conflict' between the country community and the outside urban metropolis.

The two 'Self-congratulations' letters included a public expression of "thanks" to the former Colac Otway Shire Council and an articulation of applause for the former Mayor, Cr Cliff Tann. Both letters expressed praise for local individuals and the community as a whole.

The Colac Herald's front-page lead subject matter included two 'Communal Rites' articles and one 'Community Expansion'. The remaining front-page lead was uncategorisable. In percentage terms, this means 50 percent of The Colac Herald's most valued articles reported on regularly occurring events involving the community as a whole and 25 percent outlined the growth of community resources or services (see appendix XXVI).
The two 'Communal Rites' front page leads both included full-page colour photographs, with captions underneath. The first, a 1915 snap of three Colac brothers at training camp before being posted to war in Europe, appeared in commemoration of Anzac Day. The second, a portrait of two small curly-haired girls clutching chocolate eggs, was published in celebration of Easter. Both appeared in response to a regularly occurring event involving the community as a whole, and their news value lay entirely within their pictorial qualities.

The one 'Community Expansion' front-page lead reported on the community's "fight" to maintain its caravan park as a public asset. According to the article, the park's land was to be sold but, after community and council "outrage", it was given back to the public. "The park has enormous potential, with many people already making the community a base to then travel to nearby coastal places," The Colac Herald's source said, emphasising the growth of the community resource.

'Community Expansion' made up about 25 percent of The Colac Herald's entries, while 'Media Releases' made up 15 percent. 'Law and Order' made up 12 percent, while 'Communal Rites' made up 11 percent and 'Deeds of Locals' made up nine percent. 'Rites de Passage' made up six percent, but 'Local History' and 'Communal Links' scored no entries at all (see appendix XXVII). As discussed, 'Conflict' made up about 12 percent of The Colac Herald's entries, while 'Sensation' made up six percent (see appendix XXII). These figures suggest the most popular news values in The Colac Herald are, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Media Releases', 'Law and Order', 'Communal Rites', 'Conflict', 'Deeds of Locals', 'Rites de Passage' and 'Sensation'.
The Colac Herald's letters-to-the-editor did not appear on a regular page but, rather, were interspersed throughout the paper's pages. Furthermore, the paper lacked an editorial, resulting in the perception that letters appeared in an 'ad hoc' fashion.

Unlike The North West Express and The Snowy River Mail, The Colac Herald's layout was a current mix of fillers and lead articles, not 'patch worked'. However, similar to The Snowy River Mail and The North West Express, many of The Colac Herald's articles were derived from community groups and school events, yet these stories were not given prominence. The Colac Herald featured regular history pages, church columns and police round up. However, it published neither court reporting nor editorial.

*The Colac Herald* is a tri-weekly publication with a circulation of 5,845 from Colac to Lorne and Apollo Bay to Camperdown. It is not a free paper, charging 50c per issue and a casual advertising rate of $3.50.

*The Colac Herald* had almost the same percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values as *The Wangaratta Chronicle*. However, while *The Colac Herald*'s articles bearing current concepts of news values were mostly defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' and 'Extreme Played Down', *The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s were generally categorised as 'Local Controversy' and 'Extreme Played UP'.

About 18 percent of *The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s articles were identified as demonstrating current concepts of news values (see appendix XXII). The paper yielded seven 'Conflict' and three 'Sensation' articles. Three of the seven 'Conflict' articles were further defined as 'Local Controversy' and three as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The remaining 'Conflict' article was
deemed uncategorisable (see appendix XXIII). All three 'Sensation' articles were subsequently identified as 'Extreme Played Up' (see appendix XXIV).

The three 'Conflict' articles defined as 'Local Controversy' included the story of a Wangaratta police officer found guilty of common assault after holding a fellow officer in a headlock, causing him to convulse and lose consciousness. The article was complete with the names and photographs of those involved in the incident. With large headline and appearing as lead on an odd page, the 'Local Controversy' article was clearly considered of high news value.

The second 'Local Controversy' article involved a spat between the district's federal and state members of parliament over the condition of the local dentist clinic and the third concerned objections to council's proposed road name changes. As with the story concerning the local police officer, both these articles appeared as leads on an odd page.

All three 'Community Against Metropolis' articles involved the closure of Wangaratta's Yakka factory, resulting in the loss of 74 local jobs. The Wangaratta Chronicle made the most of this 'newsy' story, with large colour photographs appearing with front page leads, human interest feature stories further in the paper, council's reaction to the event and comment in the paper's editorial area. All three clearly implied "Melbourne management" was culpable for the closure.

The three 'Sensation' articles defined as 'Extreme Played Up' also involved the Yakka factory's closure. Appearing as front-page lead, the first 'Extreme Played Up' article included a quarter-page colour photograph with red graphic placed diagonally across. The attention-grabbing graphic read
"Closing Down!". Furthermore, the large, loud headline screamed across the front page, reading "74 jobs lost in Yakka closure", sensationalising the event to its full potential.

The 'Extreme Played Up' articles also included a story involving a local discovering a long lost" painting "believed to be" by the "famous Spanish artist" Pablo Picasso. With quarter-page photograph and large headline, the *Wangaratta Chronicle* made the most of the discovery's extreme characteristics.

The last of the 'Extreme Played Up' articles involved the "disappearance" of two fishermen on a local lake. "Little Hope For Anglers", read the large headline. With two large colour photographs appearing alongside the front-page lead and many adjectives within the rhetoric, the extreme aspects of the disappearance were highlighted.

*The Wangaratta Chronicle* yielded 19 letters-to-the-editor, seven of which were further defined as 'Local Controversy', three as 'Self-congratulations' and six as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The last three letters were deemed uncategorisable. In percentage terms, this means 37 percent of *The Wangaratta Chronicle's* letters-to-the-editor highlighted internal dissent, 16 praised the deeds of locals or the community as a whole and 32 expressed anger towards state or federal governments or big business (see appendix XXV).

The 'Local Controversy' letters included anger at complaints about the use of 'bird cannons' in the grape industry; council parking restrictions outside the local hospital; complaints about the local dental service; council's decision to demolish Wangaratta's "historic" Royal Victoria Hotel; council's decision
to outlaw dogs in local parks and a complaint about the attitude of supermarket customer service.

The 'Self-congratulations' letters included a "congratulations" to the Wangaratta Men's Basketball representative squad; praise for the Mt Beauty Textile and Fibre Exhibition and a "thank you" to local businesses for supporting the Good Friday Appeal.

The 'Community Against Metropolis' letters included two complaints about the state government's public dental system; anger at then Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett's "ideology of privatisation"; two accusations that Mr Kennett was responsible for Yakka's closure and anger towards the Federal Government's proposed drugs policies.

*The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s letters-to-the-editor page appeared similar to those with which readers are accustomed. Letters appeared regularly on page six and always in groups of four or five. Furthermore, they were published alongside current-style editorials which, although not specifically signposted as opinion or editorial, appeared under *The Wangaratta Chronicle*’s logo, indicating the column was the paper's official attitude towards an issue.

Two of the four editorials studied in *The Wangaratta Chronicle* were subsequently defined as 'Local Controversy' and one as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The remaining editorial was classified as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. In percentage terms, this means 50 percent of the paper's editorials outlined internal dissent, 25 rhetorically roused communal patriotism and loyalty, and another 25 emphasised angst against state or federal governments or big business (see appendix XXVIII).
The subject matter of *The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s 'Local Controversy' editorials included a demand for local council to "push for" the old Glenrowan railway station's heritage listing. "As the location of Ned Kelly's last stand it is rich in historical value," read the editorial. "For both historical and tourism reasons, everything possible must be done to preserve and promote Glenrowan's significance." Although the editorial's mild rhetoric did not emphasis anger at council, it sent a clear message that the community was looking towards local government for support.

The second 'Local Controversy' editorial also targeted council, this time for its "indecisive action" in replacing Wangaratta's Cultural Services Manager who, according to the editorial, was "indeed a woman of vision". Implying council was to blame for the manager's resignation, the editorial claimed her new position would "reap the benefit of her skills and experience" while Wangaratta "misses out". The editorial's accusing tone clearly indicated the local controversy over the state of Wangaratta's arts and culture.

The 'Community Against Metropolis' editorial accused Melbourne-based Yakka management of ignoring workers' "loyalty, skill and dedication" in favour of "the bottom line" and the 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' sent out a plea for communal commemoration to former mayor, Kevin Gleeson after his death in a light plane crash.

*The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s front-page leads included one 'Deeds of Locals', two 'Sensation' and one 'Rites de Passage'. In percentage terms, this means 50 percent of *The Wangaratta Chronicle*’s lead articles emphasised an extreme incident, while a mere 25 outlined stories of ordinary townsfolk undertaking seemingly extraordinary activities and another 25 percent reported on the life events of local people (see appendix XXVI).
The two 'Sensation' front page leads, already described above in the analysis of The Wangaratta Chronicle's current news articles, involved the disappearance of two fishermen and the Yakka factory closure.

The 'Deeds of Locals' front-page lead involved the story of a local grandmother who "fled" a "war-torn" Yugoslavia as a refugee 50 years ago. The Wangaratta Chronicle used the-then recent Kosovo crisis as an angle on which to hang Gina Furs' stories of life in her hometown during World War II.

The 'Rites de Passage' front-page lead reported on the death of former Wangaratta mayor, Kevin Gleeson, after a light plane crash. The article outlined Mr Gleeson's life events, including his family history, birth, marriage, and time spent on council and community services, as well as the circumstances surrounding his death.

'Community Expansion' made up about 30 percent of The Wangaratta Chronicle's entries, while 'Law and Order' made up 16 percent. 'Rites de Passage' made up 13 percent, while Communal Rites made up 10 percent and 'Local History' six percent. 'Deeds of Locals' made up two percent, but 'Media Releases' and 'Communal Links' scored no entries at all (see appendix XXVII). As already discussed, 'Conflict' made up about 12 percent of The Wangaratta Chronicle's entries, while 'Sensation' made up about six percent (see appendix XXII). This suggests the most popular news values in The Wangaratta Chronicle are, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Law and Order', 'Rites de Passage', 'Conflict', 'Communal Rites', 'Local History', 'Sensation' and 'Deeds of Locals'.
The Wangaratta Chronicle's layout and rhetorical style was current, with paragraphs one sentence long and articles adhering to the inverted triangle convention. The paper used by-lines as a tool of credibility and often gave its most important stories colour photographs. Furthermore, while school events and community groups made news, these stories were reserved as fillers, rather than lead articles.

As with other papers studied, The Wangaratta Chronicle published history, religious and wedding columns. However, unlike other papers studied, The Wangaratta Chronicle also had police rounds and court reporting. The Wangaratta Chronicle also had an editorial and a letters page that was definitely recognisable as 'Opinion'.

The Wangaratta Chronicle is a tri-weekly paper, with a circulation of 4,641 throughout the Wangaratta district. It is not a free paper, charging 70c per issue and a casual advertising rate of $3.50.

While 18 percent of The Wangaratta Chronicle's editorial matter yielded current news values, The Latrobe Valley Express's produced 21 (see appendix XXII). This paper evidenced nine 'Conflict' articles, seven of which were classified as 'Community Against Metropolis' and two as 'Local Controversy' (see appendix XXIII). However, unlike other papers studied, The Latrobe Valley Express produced no 'Sensation' articles (see appendix XXIV).

The 'Conflict' articles defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' included reports on the-then State Government's failure to meet the deadline to build a magnesium smelter in the area; the same State Government refusing council permission to relocate its offices; the loss of local jobs after V-Line's
privatisation and restructure; Sunicrust knocking local bakeries out of sponsorship deals with Latrobe Football Club and the eternal problem of police numbers.

The two 'Local Controversy' articles included a report on disagreement between Monash University and student unions over a financial dispute. However, despite the subject's controversial nature, the article's angle emphasised a "prominent" local's role as mediator between the two parties. Appearing as page three's lead, this disagreement, and the local's involvement as mediator, was clearly considered of high news value.

The second 'Local Controversy' article reported on the "disappointing" turnout to the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee forum. Headlined "Turnout shows drugs apathy", the article sourced the forum organiser, who was particularly scathing of the community. "Does the community suffer from apathy?" read the organiser's quote. Despite the article's filler status, it appeared on page three and, using the organiser's anger, focussed on internal dissent.

*The Latrobe Valley Express* yielded 14 letters-to-the-editor, six of which were categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis', two as 'Self-congratulations' and five as 'Local Controversy'. The remaining letter was uncategorisable. In percentage terms, this means 43 percent of *The Latrobe Valley Express*'s letters-to-the-editor highlighted anger towards state or federal government, or big business, 14 percent praised local individuals or the community as a whole and 36 percent indicated internal dissent (see appendix XXV).
The 'Community Against Metropolis' letters included objections to the Federal Government's environment policy; a description of then Premier Jeff Kennett's proposed preamble as a "load of feel good gobbledygook"; anger towards the student union board of management over the controversy with Monash University; "disappointment" in the local member of Parliament and anger towards the then State Government's education policy.

The 'Local Controversy' letters included an objection to the proposed Traralgon sex shop; an expression of infuriation towards late-night gnome-nappers; anger towards dog owners who allow their animals to wander; an objection to Sunicrust taking over the Latrobe Football Club sponsorship and a call for council to clean up a "disgraceful" local recreation reserve.

The two 'Self-congratulations' letters included a "thank you" to organisers of the Good Friday united Easter Service and "sincere thanks" to the Moe Pet Shop's owners, who were "so understanding" after a young girl lost her pet rabbit.

The Latrobe Valley Express's front-page leads included one 'Deeds of Locals', two 'Conflict' and two 'Community Expansion'. In percentage terms, this means 20 percent of The Latrobe Valley Express's front-page leads outlined the extraordinary deeds of ordinary townsfolk, 40 percent reported on change or the pressure for change, and another 40 percent outlined the growth of community services or resources (see appendix XXV).

The 'Deeds of Locals' front-page lead involved the story of Doreen Bronstein who, after overcoming a rare disease of the spinal cord, declared she "wanted to help others". On closer inspection, Ms Bronstein's story was
a 'hook' on which to hang information about the disease and a new support group for sufferers. Even so, the article, complete with colour photograph and large headline, was clearly considered newsworthy.

The two 'Conflict' front page leads, already described above in the 'Community Against Metropolis' analysis, involved Sunierust taking over local sponsorship of the Latrobe Valley Football Club and the then State Government refusing council permission to relocate its offices.

The 'Community Expansion' front page leads included a story on a planned crossing joining the south and north sides of Morwell's Central Business District, and another joining Traralgon CBI) to a main road. *The Latrobe Valley Express*, describing the proposal as a "drawn out issue", highlighted how the crossings would make the subway "a safer avenue for people". The article sourced the local member and Latrobe's Shire Mayor, both of whom spoke of the proposal as a growth in community resources and services.

The second 'Community Expansion' front page lead involved the-then State Government considering future options for the former Latrobe Regional Hospital's site. *The Latrobe Valley Express* reported the site was being considered for a number of community-based services or medical archival purposes. Although an Expression of Interest process had failed to generate commercial interest, *The Latrobe Valley Express* emphasised the "prime piece of real estate's" potential for community benefit, rather than its current vacant state.

'Community Expansion' made up about 36 percent of *The Latrobe Valley Express's* entries, while 'Deeds of Locals' made up 16 percent and 'Communal Rites' 10 percent. 'Law and Order' made up nine percent, while
'Dominant Groups' made up four percent and 'Local History' two percent. 'Rites de Passage', 'Media Releases' and 'Communal Links' scored no entries at all (see appendix XXVII). As already discussed, 'Conflict' made up 21 percent of The Latrobe Valley Express's entries, but 'Sensation' scored no entries at all (see appendix XXII). This suggests the most popular news values in The Latrobe Valley Express are, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Conflict', 'Deeds of Locals', 'Communal Rites', 'Law and Order', 'Dominant Groups' and 'Local History'.

The Latrobe Valley Express is a bi-weekly paper with a circulation of 32,102 throughout the Latrobe Valley including Morwell, Traralgon and Moe. Its outstandingly high circulation rate is a result of its Free Paper status.

As a 'Free Paper', The Latrobe Valley Express performs a slightly different function to paid-for papers. The Latrobe Valley Express is posted routinely through the carefully selected doors of the advertiser's target publics. This results in both a higher circulation and advertising rate. As Franklin and Murphy state, 'Free Papers' quite openly market themselves as a means of advertising 2. So while 'Free Papers' continue to strive to publish 'news' (in order to attract readers) they will also have a much higher percentage of advertorial content as compared to editorial content. So while their readers consider 'Free Papers' a legitimate source of information, they are also approached with the knowledge that they will have a slightly different set of news values.

However, The Latrobe Valley Express's articles were written in current journalese and maintained the inverted triangle convention. Although many of the paper's articles were derived from community events and school
groups, these were generally used as fillers on even pages, rather than as odd page leads.

As with other papers studied, *The Latrobe Valley Express* published regular weekly columns. However, unlike other papers studied, *The Latrobe Valley Express* published neither history, religious nor country columns and had many 'Conflict' lead articles, including front page leads.

The percentage of *The Latrobe Valley Express'*s editorial matter made up of current concepts of news values was similar to that of *The Kilmore Free Press*. While *The Latrobe Valley Express* produced 21 percent of current concepts of news values, *The Kilmore Free Press* yielded 27 percent (see appendix XXII). However, while a number of *The Latrobe Valley Express'*s 'Conflict' articles were defined as 'Local Controversy', every one of *The Kilmore Free Press'*s eight 'Conflict' articles were classified as 'Community Against Metropolis' (see appendix XXIII). Furthermore, while *The Latrobe Valley Express* did not produce any 'Sensation' articles, *The Kilmore Free Press* evidenced three. About 33 percent were defined as 'Extreme Played Up', while the remainder was identified as 'Extreme Played Down' (see appendix XXIV).

*The Kilmore Free Press'*s 'Community Against Metropolis' articles included reports on Mitchell Shire Council "urgently pleading" the-then State Government for more police in the area; "the big boys of the bank" ignoring community "anger" over the Broadford Commonwealth branch's closure; local pleas for the-then State Government to reverse its decision to change place names; the-then State Government refusing to release statistics on local gambling; the axing of the local station master's position; the lack of
domestic violence refuges in the area and angst over a proposed youth jail in Mitchell Shire.

The first of the 'Sensation' articles defined as 'Extreme Played Down' included a report on a "bomb scare" at the Kilmore Hotel. Although the subject matter of this story was 'sensational', The Kilmore Free Press placed it on page two, and gave it no more than eight paragraphs. The article appeared with a picture, but it was no more than two columns wide and the headline was in small font.

The second 'Sensation' article defined as 'Extreme Played Down' was treated in much the same way. Headlined "Hunt for Killer Grass", the article reported on the new Texan Tussock Grass and its threat to farmers. Despite the story's 'sensational' headline, it appeared on page two, and went on to emphasise the grass's "potential" threat, rather than its "real" threat. Furthermore, the article lacked photographs and its headline was in small font.

The Kilmore Free Press's sole 'Extreme Played Up' article involved the Kilmore District Hospital "slashing" elective surgery because its patient demand exceeded approved funding levels. The article appeared as a front-page lead, and the loud headline screamed across the top in large font. With dramatic adjectives such as "urgent", "drastic" and "slashed", this article attracted the 'Sensation, Extreme Played Up' label.

The Kilmore Free Press yielded 11 letters-to-the-editor, six of which were defined as 'Community Against Metropolis', four as 'Local Controversy' and one as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. In percentage terms, this means 55 percent of the paper's letters outlined anger towards state or federal
governments, or big business, 36 percent emphasised internal dissent and nine percent rhetorically roused communal loyalty and patriotism (see appendix XXV).

The six 'Community Against Metropolis' letters included objections to the Government's proposed preamble; the-then State Government's plan to build a youth jail in the area; government education policies; the proposed republic and NATO's policy on Kosovo.

The four 'Local Controversy' letters included a complaint about the "bad attitude" of local businesse's; two rhetorical "questions" about the "mentality" of "the person" who allowed heavy vehicles to use a local road and, anger at local council and its grant scheme.

The 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' letter involved the controversy over place names. But while The Kilmore Free Press approached the same subject by highlighting the controversy between locals and the-then State Government, the 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' letter roused communal loyalty and patriotism. 'I live at Sunday Creek!', declared the letter. 'I don't live at Broadford or Kilmore!... Why should our heritage - and our current situation - disappear off official maps?' With nationalistic tone, the letter attracted the 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' label.

The Kilmore Free Press's letters-to-the-editor appeared regularly on either page six or seven. They were clearly identifiable, appearing under a recognisable banner and in italicised style. However, unlike The Wangaratta Chronicle, The Kyabram Free Press did not publish an editorial, neither alongside its letters, nor anywhere else in the paper.
The Kilmore Free Press’s front-page leads included one ‘Conflict’, three ‘Community Expansion’, one ‘Sensation’ and two ‘Communal Rites’. In percentage terms, this means 14 percent of The Kilmore Free Press’s front-page leads emphasised change, or the pressure for change, another 14 percent outlined an extreme incident, 44 percent reported the growth of community services or resources and 28 percent told the story of a regularly occurring event involving the community as a whole (see appendix XXVI).

Although four editions were studied, The Kilmore Free Press often published a frontpage picture with short caption related to a story further in the paper alongside its lead article. Because of their prominence, the content analysis included these pictures in its analysis of front-page leads. However, it can be seen the news value of these frontpage leads lay in their pictorial quality only.

The front-page lead ‘Conflict’ article, already defined above as ‘Community Against Metropolis’ in the paper’s current news value analysis, involved the Mitchell Shire Council “urgently pleading” the-then State Government to provide more police in the district.

The three ‘Community Expansion’ front-page leads included a report on Wallan’s “new and larger” mobile library. This front-page lead involved a half-page photograph, accompanied by a three-paragraph caption, which told readers the service had grown to include internet access, CD-ROM and a book stock of 1,500 titles.

The second ‘Community Expansion’ front page lead was a report on the-then State Government’s proposed youth jail in the area. Although other articles on the subject outlined conflict between locals and the Government over the
proposal, the front-page lead promoted the jail as a growth in community resources. "State parliament has been told a specific site in the Mitchell Shire is being proposed for a new multi-million dollar juvenile justice centre," read the opening paragraph. "Major economic and employment opportunities are being advanced as pluses for any area where the juvenile justice centre will be located."

The last 'Community Expansion' front-page lead involved the-then planning and local government minister, Rob Maclellan approving the Mitchell Shire Council's planning scheme. The approval was described as "long awaited" and "indeed welcome". "This will enable future development within the shire to maximise the infrastructure in each of our population centres," the article read.

The 'Sensation' front-page lead, already defined above as 'Extreme Played Up' in the current news value analysis, involved the Kilmore and District Hospital "slashing" its elective surgery.

The two 'Communal Rites' front-page leads included a quarter-page photograph of a local primary school girl wearing an Easter bonnet, with a three-paragraph caption beneath. Involving the community as a whole, the local "grand" Easter parade was promoted within the caption's rhetoric. The second 'Communal Rites' front-page lead, also involving Easter, was a photograph of 'the Easter bunny' holding hands with two small children during Kilmore's Easter parade. The caption beneath had the dual purpose of reporting on the parade as well as promoting one of The Kilmore Free Press's major advertisers.
'Community Expansion' made up 19 percent of entries, while 'Communal Rites' and 'Deeds of Locals' made up 10 percent each. 'Media Releases' made up eight percent, while 'Communal Links' made up seven percent. 'Law and Order' made up five percent, while 'Rites de Passage' and 'Local History' made up two percent each. 'Dominant Groups' scored no entries at all (see appendix XXVII). As already discussed, 'Conflict' made up 19 percent of The Kilmore Free Press's entries, while 'Sensation' made up seven percent.

This means that The Kilmore Free Press's most popular news values are, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Conflict', 'Communal Rites', 'Deeds of Locals', 'Media Releases', 'Sensation', 'Communal Links', 'Law and Order', 'Rites de Passage' and 'Local History'.

The Kilmore Free Press is a weekly paper, with a circulation of 4,600 throughout Kilmore, Broadford, Wallan, Seymour and Whittlesea. Despite its name, The Kilmore Free Press is not a free paper, but charges a minimal fee of 20c and a casual advertising rate of $3. (The 'free press', in The Kilmore Free Press context, relates to 'freedom of the press, as opposed to 'free papers', which have a different tradition in news values entirely).

While current concepts of news values made up 23 percent of The Kilmore Free Press's editorial matter, they made up 25 percent in The Portland Observer (see appendix XXII). Although The Portland Observer produced 10 'Conflict' articles, it managed one 'Sensation' entry. Six of the 10 'Conflict' articles were further defined as 'Local Controversy', while the remaining four were categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis' (see appendix XXIII). The one 'Sensation' article was subsequently identified as 'Extreme Played Up' (see appendix XXIV).
The 'Conflict' articles defined as 'Local Controversy' included a "clash" between a former mayor and a local government candidate over "unethical behaviour"; an outgoing mayor "hinting" at the "great cost" of "clashing" viewpoints between council and residents; the new mayor changing policy to exclude managers from official meetings; the Glenelg Shire Council giving a proposed wharf project the "thumbs down"; the maritime history advisory committee "swaying under the strain" of "soured relationships" and "battles" between state government candidates.

The 'Conflict' articles subsequently defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' included reports on a Portland ex-builder "fighting" to overturn the federal court's declaration on his bankruptcy; angst towards the State Government after V-Line's privatisation caused "at least" seven Portland people lose their jobs; the state of roads "hampering" the "multi million dollar expansion" of the local blue gum industry and local member "calling" for a "turnaround" of the decline in regional banking services.

The sole 'Sensation' article, subsequently defined as 'Extreme Played Up', involved an "out of control" truck narrowly missing a head-on collision with two cars in Portland's main street. The article, appearing on an odd page and accompanied by a large photograph, described how the two car passengers were "lucky" to have "survived" the incident.

*The Portland Observer* yielded 13 letters-to-the-editor, six of which were further defined as 'Local Controversy', two as 'Self-congratulations' and four as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The remaining letter was uncategorisable. In percentage terms, this means 46 percent of letters demonstrated internal dissent, 31 percent anger towards state or federal governments or big-city companies and 15 percent praised local individuals or the community as a whole (see appendix XXV).
The subject matter of *The Portland Observer*’s ‘Local Controversy’ letters-to-the-editor included an objection to the removal of traffic lights; two accusations of error towards a local historian; another accusation of “bully boy tactics” from one local council candidate to another; anger towards a local councillor from a resident over the rating strategy and an “expression of extreme disappointment” in the public meeting launching United Way.

The 'Self-congratulations' letters-to-the-editor included a "thank you" to "all people" who were involved with the hospital's 150th anniversary. "You are all so lucky to have such a wonderful hospital," read the letter. "It is spotless." The second 'Self-congratulations' letter involved a declaration that the southwest was "fortunate" to have a local who promoted organ donation awareness.

The 'Community Against Metropolis' letters included two expressions of anger towards the "Liberal betrayal" over the republic issue; an objection to the State Opposition's education policy and annoyance at the-then State Government's promotion of the morning after pill as contraception.

*The Portland Observer*’s front-page leads included one ‘Communal Rites’, two ‘Conflict’ and two ‘Community Expansion’. In percentage terms, this means 40 percent of *The Portland Observer*’s front-page leads reported on change, or the pressure for change, 20 percent outlined events involving the community as a whole and another 40 percent outlined the growth of community services or resources (see appendix XVI).
The 'Communal Rites' front-page lead involved a feature story on Glenelg Shire's newly inaugurated mayor, Terry Grant, and his wife Lynne who had recently recovered from a life-threatening illness. The story's news value was twofold; to announce the shire's new mayor and to tell a human-interest story about his refusal to stand for leadership until his wife overcame breast cancer.

The 'Community Expansion' front-page leads involved a half-page colour photograph of a tradesperson atop a local church spire. Beneath, the caption informed readers that All Saints Spire was undergoing a $1 00,000-plus restoration. The second 'Community Expansion' front-page lead told readers the future expansion of the area's "lucrative" timber industry was "on the cards" after a "US timber giant" indicated it planned to invest in the district.

The two 'Conflict' front-page leads, already outlined in the analysis of current news values, were further defined as 'Local Controversy'. The first of these involved the maritime history advisory committee "swaying under the strain" of "soured relationships", while the second informed readers of the "battles" occurring between state government candidates.

'Community Expansion' made up 23 percent of The Portland Observer's entries, while 'Media Releases' made up 18 percent and 'Rites de Passage' made up seven percent. 'Communal Rites' made up six percent, as did 'Law and Order'. Meanwhile, 'Local History', 'Dominant Groups' and 'Deeds of Locals' each made up four percent, but 'Communal Links' scored no entries at all (see appendix XXVII). As already discussed, 'Conflict' made up 23 percent of The Portland Observer's entries, while 'Sensation' made up two percent. This means that The Portland Observer's most valued news stories involve, in descending order, 'Community Expansion', 'Conflict', 'Media
Releases 'Rites de Passage', 'Communal Rites', 'Law and Order', 'Local History', 'Dominant Groups', 'Deeds of Locals' and 'Sensation'.

*The Portland Observer* is a tri-weekly paper with a circulation of 3,699 throughout the Shire of Glenelg and Portland district. It is not a free paper, charging 90c per issue and with a casual advertising rate of $3.65.

With 35 percent of its editorial content defined as 'Sensation' or 'Conflict', the paper with the most percentage of articles containing current concepts of news values was *The Wimmera Mail Times* (see appendix XXII). Furthermore, out of the 16 articles defined as 'Conflict', six were further defined as 'Local Controversy', and 10 as 'Community Against Metropolis' (see appendix XXIII). The one 'Sensation' entry was subsequently identified as 'Extreme Played Up' (see appendix XXIV).

The subject matter of the 'Community Against Metropolis' entries included Wimmera farmers "pushing" the federal government for 'exceptional circumstances' status after the area's "crippling" drought; an editorial objecting to the downsizing of banks; a letter protesting against the Federal Government's drug policy; Horsham City Council "lashing out" at the-then State Government over the city's railway station; two articles reporting the Wimmera "going it alone" in a "Victorian battle" with the-then State Government to gain 'exceptional circumstances' status "in the wake" of freezing conditions; Wimmera farmers "urging" Vicgrain to "drop" its court battle over rates; a letter against the newly privatised Kinetik Energy and the Victorian Farmers Federation "pushing" for counter stock bans over border restrictions with South Australia.
The subject matter of the 'Local Controversy' articles included local council "cutting" eight jobs; political party One Nation branching into the Wimmera; an article reporting on a "deplorable" racist attack against the local Koori community; and editorial on the same subject and an argument between a local adult shop owner and the council over signage.

The sole 'Sensation' article, further categorised as 'Extreme Played Up', told the story of two Horsham V-Line employees "reeling in shock" after learning their jobs were "axed". Although the story's subject matter could be categorised as 'Conflict', *The Wimmera Mail Times* treatment of the article truly sensationalised the issue, portraying it as an extreme incident. With a half-page colour photograph, large-font headline and rhetoric such as "reeling in shock" and "stripping the centre of operation staff", the article clearly played the story's extreme nature.

*The Wimmera Mail Times* yielded 13 letters-to-the-editor, six of which were categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis', five as 'Self-congratulations' and two as 'Local Controversy'. In percentage terms, this means 46 percent of letters were written against big business, state or federal governments, 38 percent praised the deeds of locals or the community as a whole and 15 percent outlined internal dissent (see appendix XXV).

The 'Community Against Metropolis' letters included anger against a large chemical company buying out a local seed producer; an objection to the Government's proposed drugs harm minimisation policy; anger over toxic waste being "dumped" Wimmera River catchment; an accusation towards NATO for using "war propaganda" and two letters of dissatisfaction with the Government's proposed drug rehabilitation policy.
The 'Self-congratulations' letters included praise for local dams; commendation for gas supply to the local area; acclaim for the new P12 system of Murtoa primary school; a "congratulations" to the Wimmera area for attracting government funding for health, education and transport and a "thank you" to the community for supporting the annual art festival.

The 'Local Controversy' letters included the "abandoned" merger between the Taylors Lake and North Horsham football clubs and an expression of "sadness" over a racist attack on a local Koori's house.

Like The Wangaratta Chronicle, The Wimmera Mail Times' letters-to-the-editor appeared regularly on the same page every edition and alongside an editorial. The Wimmera Mail Times' letters page was, however, different to that of The Latrobe Valley Express, which scattered its letters throughout the paper and lacked an editorial.

One of The Wimmera Mail Times' editorials was categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis' and two as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. The remaining editorial was defined as 'Conflict'. In percentage terms, this means 25 percent of The Wimmera Mail Times' editorials were written against state or federal governments or big business, 50 percent rhetorically roused communal loyalty and patriotism, and 25 percent reported on change or the pressure for change (see appendix XXVIII).

The 'Community Against Metropolis' editorial gave the paper's official position on the operation of large banking corporations. "Even though there are many fine people working in banks, you would be hard pressed to find anyone who has a kind word for the institutions themselves," read the
editorial. "Their massive profits make people uneasy, especially when banks seem to have no qualms at all about closing down their country branches even though they fulfil such vital functions in these communities."

The two 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' editorials included a tribute to Anzac and the local dawn service, and an Easter message. "It is a minor miracle Easter has not been swallowed up by the crass commercialism that has completely overwhelmed Christmas," the editorial read. The Wimmera Mail Times went on to talk about Easter symbols and what they mean to humanity as a whole.

The one 'Conflict' editorial was further defined as 'Local Controversy' and involved an attack on a local Koori's house. "You don't have to be Sigmund Freud to sketch a profile of the person or persons responsible for the racist graffiti attack on a Koori's Horsham house at the Easter weekend," read the editorial. The editorial went on to argue such conflict was caused by unemployment and its subsequent frustration and boredom. Not only did the editorial report on change or the pressure for change, but it also used internal dissent as an angle.

As with The Latrobe Valley Express and The Wangaratta Chronicle, The Wimmera Mail Times' layout was as such that only one or two articles appeared on the front page. As a consequence, although four editions were studied, two editions yielded two lead articles. The Wimmera Mail Times' front-page leads included three 'Communal Rites', one 'Sensation' and two 'Conflict'. In percentage terms, this means 50 percent of front-page leads reported on regularly occurring events that involved the community as a whole, 17 percent reported on an extreme incident and 33 percent reported on change or the pressure for change (see appendix XXVI).
The three 'Communal Rites' front-page leads included a full-page colour photograph of "track legend", Linford Christie, who was to "lead the pride of British lions" in the Stawell Easter Gift. The second 'Communal Rites' front-page lead involved a half-page colour photograph of the local Historical Society's president with two antique dolls. The accompanying caption told readers of the annual Collectors Fair and Bottle Show. The third 'Communal Rites' front-page lead involved two colour photographs and an article reporting on Ararat's fourth annual 'Scarecrows in the Vineyard' competition. All three front-page leads were drawing attention to regularly occurring events that involved the community as a whole.

The 'Sensation' front-page lead, already analysed above in the current news value article section, involved Horsham V-Line freight employees "reeling in shock" after learning their jobs had been "axed". Although the story's subject matter could be categorised as 'Conflict', *The Wimmera Mail Times* focussed on the incident's extreme nature. With a half-page colour photograph, large-font headline and rhetoric such as "reeling in shock" and "stripping the centre of operation staff", the article attracted the 'Extreme Played Up' label.

The first of the two 'Conflict' front-page leads, already analysed above in the current news value section, was further categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The article involved Wimmera farmers "urging" Vicgrain to "drop" its court battle over rates. The second 'Conflict' front page lead, also analysed above in the current news value article section and also further categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis', involved Wimmera farmers "going it alone" in a "battle" with the-then State Government to gain
exceptional circumstances status "in the wake of a recent "devastating freeze".

Interestingly, all front-page lead articles defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' outlined conflict between farmers and the-then State Government. The subject was, clearly, considered as high news value by The Wimmera Mail Times.

The Wimmera Mail Times was the only sample which scored a higher percentage of 'Conflict' than other categories. 'Communal Rites' made up about 16 percent of The Wimmera Mail Times' entries, while 'Communal Links' made up 13 percent. 'Community Expansion' made up 10 percent, while 'Deeds of Locals' and 'Media Releases' each made up eight percent. 'Law and Order' made up four percent, while 'Rites de Passage', 'Local History' and 'Dominant Groups' made up two percent each (see appendix XXVII). As already discussed, 'Conflict' made up 30 percent of The Wimmera Mail Times' entries, while 'Sensation' made up two percent. This means that the most popular news values in The Wimmera Mail Times are, in descending order, 'Conflict', 'Communal Rites', 'Communal Links', 'Community Expansion', 'Deeds of Locals' and 'Media Releases', 'Law and Order', 'Rites de Passage', 'Local History', 'Dominant Groups' and 'Sensation'.

The Wimmera Mail Times is a tri-weekly paper with a circulation of 10,027 throughout Horsham and the Wimmera. It is not a free paper, charging 80c per issue and a casual advertising rate of $4.80.

Similar to The Latrobe Valley Express and The Wangaratta Chronicle, The Wimmera Mail Times' rhetoric was pacey and its articles maintained the
inverted triangle convention. Although *The Wimmera Mail Times* published stories on community groups and school events, these were relegated filler status on even pages, rather than the paper’s most prized positions.

Although the majority of *The Wimmera Mail Times* articles had news values different from the current way in which news is selected as rejected, it had the most number of articles embodying current news values. Furthermore, 30 percent of front-page leads were categorised as 'Conflict' and 15 percent of its letters highlighted internal dissent. The paper published editorials, a large percentage of which emphasised internal dissent.

**Discussion:**
The above study of each example on a case-by-case basis suggests there exists a relationship between a paper’s size and its percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values. (Size in this context is measured by circulation, number of issues per week and casual advertising rate).

**Circulation**

The above graph demonstrates those papers with the lowest percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values tend to have lower circulation rates. The glaring exception, of course, is *The Latrobe Valley*
Express which, as a 'Free Paper', has a much higher circulation rate than others.

**Advertising Rates**

![Bar graph showing advertising rates over a period of time.]

The Latrobe Valley Express's Free Paper status was also evident in the above analysis of advertising rates. However, as demonstrated, those with a lower percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values generally tend to have lower advertising rates.

**Publications Per Week**

![Bar graph showing publications per week for various sources.]

The above graph suggests there exists a relationship between the number of editions a paper puts out per week, and its percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values. The three papers producing the lowest percentage of stories with current concepts of news values were published on a weekly basis. Meanwhile, the two papers exhibiting the highest percentage of articles with current concepts of news values were published
on a tri-weekly basis. However, as the above graph those which fell into the middle ground did not appear to have a relationship between the percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values and the number of times they are published per week. This aberration emphasises the fact that these findings are generalisations and may not be applicable to every individual newspaper.

The graph below demonstrates papers with lower percentages of articles demonstrating current concepts of news values are more inclined to alter 'Conflict' so it is "merely" an 'l'appeal to community sentimentC or a "controversy against the outside urban metropolis". The papers with higher percentages of articles displaying current concepts of news values appear more inclined to emphasise the "internal dissent" inherent in 'Local Controversy'.

**Subcategories of Conflict**

![Graph showing subcategories of conflict]

When reading the above graph, one should remember the high percentage of 'Local Controversy' articles in *The Snowy River Mail* was attributed to the allowance of personal arguments to be played out through the paper's pages. Taking this into consideration, the above graph demonstrates incidences of 'Local Controversy' do not appear until the paper registers at least 17 percent of its articles as having current concepts of news values. Furthermore, the
lower the percentage of 'Appeals to Community Sentiment or 'Community Against Metropolis', the higher the 'Local Controversy' percentages.

The graph below suggests papers with lower percentages of articles demonstrating current concepts of news values are more inclined to play down 'Sensation'. Meanwhile, those with higher percentages of articles displaying current concepts of news values appear more inclined to play up 'Sensation'.

**Percentage Comparison of Extreme Played Up and Extreme Played Down**

![Graph showing percentage comparison of extreme played up and extreme played down.]

The below graph demonstrates, at least 35 percent of letters in four out of the five papers with higher percentages of articles displaying current concepts of news values were identified as 'Local Controversy'. Again, *The Snowy River Mail* was the main aberration. As explained previously, the high percentage of *The Snowy River Mail's* 'Local Controversy' letters-to-the-editor was attributed to the allowance of personal arguments to be played out through the paper's pages.

**Letters to the Editor**
Although a mere four out of the ten examples published columns categorisable as editorial, an analysis of these indicates papers with a lower percentage of articles demonstrating current concepts of news values tend to value 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. Meanwhile, those with a higher percentage or articles displaying current concepts of news values tend to value 'Local Controversy' in their editorials.

However, the below graph also suggests there exists merit in Janowitz's argument that a "portion" of all country editorial content is "merely appeals to community sentiment".

Editorials

Walker says the phenomena of country newspapers focussing on appeals to community sentiment and external conflict is inextricably linked to "bush ideology".

"The country newspaper came to express an agrarian ideology—, which exalted country values and virtues against the greed and selfishness of the big cities." (Walker, 1976: 176).
The categories derived from Walker, Janowitz, Tichenor and Wild - 'Appeals to Community Sentiment', 'Community Against Metropolis', 'Self-congratulations' and 'Extreme Played Down' - are aligned with the subconscious set of values and beliefs running in the country psyche which, according to Hamilton, supports a "pulling together" to overcome adversity and, according to Dr Sher, counteracts "sectorial fragmentation" and "political disunity".

It can be seen the alteration of current news values - 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' functions to support an ideology that encompasses "optimism", an "invariably positive outlook on life" and a "common belief in the ability of the individual or the small community to overcome adversity". Categories such as 'Extreme Played Down', 'Self-congratulations', 'Community Against Metropolis' and 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' support the specifically country ideology, while 'Extreme Played Up' and 'Local Controversy' parallels "sectorial fragmentation" and "political disunity". Using this as a theoretical framework, it can be concluded those with a lower percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values support a specifically country ideology more than those with higher percentages.

Implicit in this conclusion is the idea that papers with lower percentages of articles displaying current concepts of news values will support a specifically country ideology more than others. The first four papers altered current concepts of news values 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' - to support an ideology of "optimism", an "invariably positive outlook on life" and a "common belief in the ability of the individual or the small community to overcome adversity" far more often than the final four. The final four more
often maintained current concepts of news values, which can be seen as implying the existence of "sectorial fragmentation" and "political disunity".
Chapter IV: Interviews with Editors and Senior Journalists

The previous chapter demonstrated some rural newspapers rate the current concept of news values more highly than others. Interestingly, those that appeared to value 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' were more likely to emphasise 'Local Controversy' and 'Play Up' the 'Extreme' of sensational occurrences. Furthermore, these outlets emphasised traditional sources of 'Conflict' and 'Sensation', such as letters-to-the-editor and editorials, while others were more concerned with 'Community Expansion' and 'Communal Rites'.

While useful, the previous content analyses offered a mere snapshot of outlets and their news values during a specific period of time (March 18 - April 31, 1999). Talking, in-depth, to those who work on a day-to-day basis within the industry, and analysing their comments may offer a broader understanding of rural newspapers and their news values. Through speaking to those who decide on policies regarding selection and rejection of news values, the following research endeavoured to qualify some of the findings in the previous chapter and provide further insight into rural news values.

Integrating the previous quantitative data into the following qualitative research ensured contextual considerations were taken into account, and revealed further reasons and factors relating to individual selection and rejection of news values. Where the previous content analyses were unable to take individual characteristics into account, the following in-depth interviews were specifically designed to do so. Furthermore, the following qualitative data was able to interpret the previous academic findings into clear language, which may be of more relevance to those working within the rural media industry.
The following analysis arranged the comments of editors and senior journalists according to the previous order of papers.

**The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard**

One of the smallest papers out of the sample (in terms of advertising and circulation rates), *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* published not one 'Sensation' or 'Conflict' front-page lead. Front-page leads did, however, include four 'Community Expansion' and two 'Communal Rites' articles.

According to editor, Geoff Hayes, the above findings concurred with *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*'s policy on news values. Mr Hayes said *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*'s news values focus on concepts such as "success of locals", "council issues" and the "town's development".

*The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*'s total percentage of articles displaying current concepts of news values reflected the comments of Mr Hayes. With two 'Conflict' and two 'Sensation' articles, *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* had the least number of entries displaying the current concept of news values. Furthermore, the two 'Conflict' articles were subsequently defined as 'Self-congratulations' (both of which appeared as letters-to-the-editor). The pair of 'Sensation' articles was further defined as 'Extreme Played Down'.

Mr Hayes said his policy on news values was a conscious effort to avoid 'Sensationalism'.
"In a small local community you've got to avoid sensationalism, because you might hurt people who you have to live with every day," he said.

"You see these people in the street, buy your groceries from them, eat in their restaurants, they may even be your neighbour, or your kid's teacher - and if you blow their story out of proportion, they are A) going to view the paper as being inaccurate and B) not going to give you information you need for any future stories. In a small community where sources and readers are limited, you have to be very careful not to sensationalise."

Despite Mr Hayes's critical view of 'Sensation', he considered 'Conflict' to be "open slather". Yet he qualified this statement by saying the paper "tries to avoid focussing on it" because "that's dishonest".

"Although I will publish internal conflict because the community has right to know what's going on and a right to react," he said.

However, when looking at traditional sources of 'Conflict' - letters-to-the-editor, editorials and opinion pages in general - within *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard*, the paper appeared to avoid 'Conflict' as a news value.

The majority of *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standards* 11 letters-to-the-editor were defined as 'Self-congratulations'. The remaining few were identified as 'Local Controversy'. Furthermore, there was no editorial in this paper. The editorial situation in *The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* was, according to Mr Hayes, a conscious decision in order to avoid accusations of bias. 'We very rarely publish editorials because there is a mistaken belief. people want to make up their own minds, rather than listen to my views on an issue,' Mr Hayes said.

However, Mr Haycs said he was "beginning" to "think differently" about the merits of editorial.
"I might do more editorialising because it's a useful tool to encourage debate. But if I did write editorials it would only be when there is an issue buzzing around that needs to be resolved, or if there is a threat to the community. I don't want to end up doing most editorials to criticise council ... that would just be boring.

The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard reported neither local courts, nor police rounds. But according to Mr Hayes, the absence of these sources of 'Conflict' was not related to an abstract policy, but rather a result of a more practical reason.

'We don't do courts, mainly because there isn't a court in our town, " he says. "With the court out of town, it's just too inconvenient to cover it. But if there were one in town, we would probably cover it regularly. Occasionally we'll publish the results of court, but we consciously avoid publishing names [as a method of avoiding legal ramifications].

According to Mr Hayes, The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard's receptiveness to court reporting was part of its policy of full disclosure. However, Mr Hayes said there might be situations when this policy was not applicable.

'I wouldn't publish known information if it was likely to harm the community, he said. 'We're here to inform the community of what's going on, and making them feel they have got a forum for themselves to express an opinion. We're not here to harm the community.

Mr Hayes, however, expressed discomfort at the concept of withholding information:

'I have withheld information in the past, but only for a certain amount of time to allow my source to be able to go on the record. If something's happened, you've got to recognise it has happened ... and there are ways to report it without harming the community. "

The Snowy River Mail
The Snowy River Mail was very similar to The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard. The Snowy River Mail's front-page leads were predominantly defined as 'Community Expansion', with a small number of 'Communal Rites' and 'Conflict'. ('Conflict' articles, however, were further defined as 'Community Against Metropolis', rather than 'Local Controversy'.)

According to Snowy River Mail editor, Kevin Hennessy, the paper's "most highly prized" news values involve stories that "minimise the bad things". 'We try to be positive, and we try to make the paper a friendly choice of information. If someone is doing well, then we want people to know about it. " he said.

Although The Snowy River Mail "definitely tried" to put good news on the front page, Mr Hennessy said "sometimes" the paper could not avoid it. "Country newspapers always try to give it a happy outlook on the front page, but sometimes you can't avoid it. You don't always go and choose something bad, or good, it just depends on the day. You just want to present something good for the community."

Mr Hennessy said school events were one of the best means of "presenting something good" for the community. "School events are highly valued I mean, school kids are always getting awards. We usually give it a write-up and maybe a few photos. Because in this community, just about everybody is involved with schools in some way or other, so we know our readers are interested in these stories."

The previous content analysis, reflecting Mr Hennessy's comments, found The Snowy River Mail had a relatively low yield of the current concept of news values. This paper contained three 'Conflict' articles and one 'Sensation'. About 75 percent of The Snowy River Mail's 'Conflict' articles were further categorised as 'Local
Controversy', while 25 percent was identified as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The 'Sensation' article was defined as 'Extreme Played Down'.

As Mr Hennessy said, the paper does 'sensationalise' positive news stories, but is more reluctant when it comes to more negative articles:

"They [country newspapers] do have different news values. Rural papers have to have a more community outlook. But if sensationalism means it's better for the story, then we'll do it. But if it's a bad news story, then you don't want to go overboard. But if the story is good for the community, there's nothing wrong with adding a bit of colour to flavour it up."

The previous content analysis demonstrated The Snowy River Mail published a slightly higher percentage of 'Conflict' articles than The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard. Furthermore, a large number of these were defined as 'Local Controversy'. The previous content analysis attributed the relatively high percentage of 'Local Controversy' entries to several letters-to-the-editor regarding a long-running local dispute regarding an alleged arson attack on a local logger's bulldozer. Although The Snowy River Mail published these letters, it did not appear to enter the debate itself. No article on the incident could be found in the paper's pages and, with an absence of official editorial or comment, the paper appeared reluctant to enter into 'Local Controversy'.

However, according to Mr Hennessy, the paper was - at the time of this document's writing considering a change in editorial policy:

"We don't do editorials at the moment, but it's something we may do in the future. Editorials are usually well-read columns. It lets people know where the paper stands on a local issue. But we won't be editorialising on 'bad' news stories all the time - we'll try to put good news in there as well."

With an enthusiasm for the 'good' news story, *The Alexandra Eildon and Marysville Standard*’s absence of court reporting could be construed as a means of avoiding negative news. However, according to Mr Hennessy, *The Snowy River Mail* rejected covering local court stories simply because there exists confusion over how to select and reject the information:

'We don't go to court... not many country papers do courts. Because if you go to one then you've got to go to them all. If you don't do them all, then it's unfair to those who appear in the paper."

Although Mr Hennessy claimed a right to censorship in court reporting, he did not assert a similar right in relation to publishing potentially harmful information.

"You've got to check your facts, make sure the information is right before you print anything. If you can do that, and only if you can do that, then you have an obligation to print, even if it's harmful to the community.

"Some bad stories make headlines, and some don't. Even if you don't like doing it, you've got to publish some bad news stories sometimes, especially if it's going to have a big effect on the community.

**The North West Express**

Similar to other papers so far studied, *The North West Express* is a relatively small publication in terms of advertising and circulation rates. The analysis of *The North West Express*’s front-page leads found the paper valued concepts such as 'Community Expansion' and 'Communal Rites'. Indeed, *The North West Express*’s front page leads included two 'Community Expansion' and two 'Communal Rites' articles.

The above findings agreed with the comments of *North West Express* editor, Bernic Clohesy:

'We look for anything that has local interest or local content, says Mr Clohesy. 'We like our front page leads to promote anything that our locals are doing ...
Something positive for the area. to boost local moral In a way, we have a role in making the community feel good' about itself. We don't publish much 'Conflict'. But it depends on how big the issue is. It probably wouldn't make front-page headlines, but it depends on what's been done. Something like residents up in arms over an act of local council would get front page. "

Reflecting Mr Clohesy's comments, the previous content analysis found The North West Express yielded a relatively low percentage of traditional news values. This paper had four 'Conflict' articles, but none defined as 'Sensation'. Furthermore, 100 percent of the North West Express's 'Conflict' articles were subsequently categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis', two of which appeared as letters-to-the-editors.

The above findings agreed with Mr Clohesy's belief that "for sure" rural newspapers select and reject information according to a criteria different from the current concept of news values:

"For a start, we are more targeted to the local area. The type of news we cover is more suited to the people who live here. And we do try to avoid sensationalism. I think country people are more inclined to see through sensationalism anyway, and, to be practical, our readers know the issue inside out anyway, so we don't need to be sensational. "

In keeping with Mr Clohesy's comments, the previous content analysis found The North West Express had very few sources of 'Sensation' or 'Conflict'. The exception was the regular column written by Mildura member and infamous Independent representative, Russell Savage. Mr Savage's column, titled Around the Electorate, met the content analysis' definition of editorial - appearing under a banner and a clear opinion emerging from the rhetoric. However, it was unlike conventional editorials with which readers are familiar. The column appeared regularly alongside the letters-to-the-editor and under a banner. Yet the banner indicated neither editorial nor opinion.
Although the previous content analysis construed Mr Savage's column as editorial, according to Mr Clohesy, this is not *Around the Electorate*'s purpose:

"The column written by Russell Savage is not classed as editorial," he said. "The local National Party representative also gets his own column, and they are both clearly signposted as their opinion and have their headshots above them, so the columns are clearly the opinion of the representatives. People know directly that that's the view of the politicians."

But according to Mr Clohesy, *The North West Express* did not have a specific policy on opinion. To complicate matters, although the previous content analysis found no official editorial, Mr Clohesy said *The North West Express* did publish opinion under certain circumstances:

'It's not that we're adverse to publishing editorials, it's just that if we did it regularly it would lose its punch. People would get blase about it and start saying 'oh, what's he crapping on about now!'. It's not our place to push an opinion, we're more a reflection of what the community is thinking and feeling, rather than a watchdog. It's not that we're avoiding conflict.

"But we only very occasionally publish editorials. We don't want to publish comment just for the sake of saying something, especially when the issue doesn't warrant it.

According to Mr Clohesy, the paper's official opinion was warranted when the community rallied in support for a project, or when *North West Express* editorial staff "saw a wrong being done".

Despite willingness to publish editorials when "there's a wrong being done", *The North West Express* did not publish "wrongs" found by the local judicial system. However, according to Mr Clohesy, the absence of court reporting was not due a contradiction in the paper's policy.
'We don't do courts, but that's only because we don't have the opportunity. We're 100 kilometres away from the nearest court. In all honesty, we haven't really considered it, but we wouldn't shy away from court reporting if we had the opportunity. '

Mr Clohesy, however, also expressed reservations regarding the concept of court reporting.

'I don't know if it would be worthwhile us doing courts, " he said. 'I don't think our readers would be interested in that sort of story... I just don't think people would hang out to read it. "

Mr Clohesy's comments imply reporting on courts is not part of The North West Express's function. Mr Clohesy, however, was adamant the paper had a role as a conduit of information but this role was more important in delivering communal views to outside parties than in disseminating information throughout the community:

"The North West Express provides an opportunity for local residents to have a voice. And it's important for them to have a voice with the government.

'I know our paper is picked up by the National Party, because it has a subscription. The Nationals like to keep tabs on what's going on in their electorates, and the community likes to have a means of letting government know where they stand on issues. "

Despite The North West Express's implied importance as a conduit of information, Mr Clohesy expressed reluctance to publish certain information particularly if it posed a threat to the community. However, he qualified this by saying, "It would depend on how good" the paper's sources were. "If it was public knowledge, then we would print something, but if we had no solid information, then we couldn't," he said. "And because our readers are our sources, then it's our readers who decide if the community has the right to know."
The Kyabram Free Press

Unlike the three papers previously studied in this chapter, The Kyabram Free Press is published bi-weekly and has a slightly higher circulation rate. It too is not a free paper, charging a similar price per issue, but with a slightly higher casual advertising rate.

The previous analysis of the paper's front page leads found The Kyabram Free Press's published one each of 'Deeds of Locals', 'Community Expansion', 'Communal Rites' and 'Sensation'. These findings agreed with the comments of Kyabram Free Press editor, Gus Underwood. According to Mr Underwood, the paper's top news stories involve topics such as personal milestones, community expansion, personal issues and "anything with a local angle".

"In some ways our role is to promote people in the area and to promote positive things. If there was a factory opening and creating 20 jobs, we'll go the whole hog. But, conversely, if a factory was closing, and 20 jobs were being lost, we don't give it as much prominence, or just report the positive aspects," he said.

"We look at our role as promoting personalities and people. We have front-page photos of people who have been married for 50 years. Our main role is to alert people to what is going on in the community."

Mr Underwood's comments concurred with the previous content analysis, which found eight percent of The Kyabram Free Press's editorial matter was made up of the current concept of news values. The Kyabram Free Press evidenced three articles categorisable as 'Conflict', and one as 'Sensation'. On closer inspection, however, two of the three 'Conflict' articles were identified as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' (each of which appeared as an editorial), while the remaining one was categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The 'Sensation' article was further classified as 'Extreme Played Down'.
According to Mr Underwood, the treatment of the 'Sensation' story is typical of the paper:

'We don't try to glorify things, or focus on the sensational... accidents, murders and rapes. People might want to read about them, but we have a very elderly population, and most of these people want to read about local personalities, rather than sensational incidents,' he said.

Despite the paper's solid policy on 'Sensation', its treatment of 'Conflict', according to Mr Underwood, varied according to circumstances:

'We do report internal conflict, but only if someone came to us with a worthy case. We don't have reporters snooping around looking for conflict. But if we do report it, we always give a balanced view,' he said. 'We always give both parties a chance to answer.'

The Kyabram Free Press's selection and rejection of letters-to-the-editor supported Mr Underwood's comments on internal conflict. The Kyabram Free Press yielded seven letters-to-the-editor, two of which were defined as 'Community Against Metropolis', another two as 'Local Controversy', one as 'Self-congratulations' and another as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. The remaining letter was unclassifiable.

However, The Kyabram Free Press's editorial indicated the paper was reluctant to take on internal conflict. Six of The Kyabram Free Press's editorials were gathered from the four editions investigated. Four of these were identified as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment', while the remaining two were unclassifiable.

The Kyabram Free Press's form of editorial was curious. It met the content analysis' criteria for defining editorial - a banner and a clear opinion emerging for the rhetoric- yet it was unlike conventional editorials with
which readers are accustomed. The Kyabram Free Press's editorial was published regularly on page four. It appeared alongside letters-to-the-editor and under a banner. The banner did not, however, indicate opinion or editorial, but it did set out the name of the page - Page Four.

Despite the column's similarities to conventional editorials, Mr Underwood said Page Four was not designed to convey an official position on issues. "We don't do editorials," he said. "Page four is a little feature page, and the response to it is unbelievable. The subject matter is anything and everything. Most are written by me, but we also have a local house wife who puts in others... they're just personal little stories or views on life."

The Kyabram Free Press's political-style cartoon added to Page Four's appearance as editorial. Political cartoons traditionally satirise and scrutinise people and organizations in power. By their very nature, cartoons are controversial and often highlight conflict within society. According to Mr Underwood, however, The Kyabram Free Press's cartoon was not intended to function as traditional cartoons. "A very talented local farm girl is our cartoonist. But they're in no way not classed as opinion, or meant to highlight local controversy. They're just a personal slant on life, which just add to the character of the paper... just something extra to give our readers," he said.

Mr Underwood's comments implied The Kyabram Free Press did not regard 'Local Controversy' highly as a news value. This perception was, however, partially reinforced by the previous content analysis finding that the paper did not cover local court. However, according to Mr Underwood, the previous content analysis's findings on the paper's court reports were not
entirely accurate. According to Mr Underwood, *The Kyabram Free Press* did cover courts, albeit minimally:

"We feel it's not fair to report on someone's court case if it's a first offence, " he said. "So we give them a chance, and leave the report out entirely. Because in this community everybody knows exactly what everyone else has done even before they get to court, so for us to print their names just holds them up to more public ridicule. It would be like a double dose of punishment. But if the same person keeps re-offending, then we might slide their cases into the paper."

But according to Mr Underwood, *The Kyabram Free Press*’s process of reporting on courts was not always like this:

'We when we ran court cases full-on, we used to get a lot of people - mothers in particular come into the office begging for us to leave the names of offenders out... there are a lot of issues involved with court reporting in a small town issues like is the paper prepared to take the blame for someone losing their job because we have splashed their misdemeanours all over the front page - these types of issues make reporting on court very difficult."

The same flexibility also applied to *The Kyabram Free Press*’s policy on potentially harmful information. And Mr Underwood admitted there may be circumstance when the paper decided against "alerting people" to known information

'I have with held things that I thought would be detrimental to the town, or detrimental to getting some sort of service here. " he said. 'We have a very good rapport with the local council and business community and sometimes they may come to us with some news, but ask us not to mention it until the deal was signed because it may affect it. And we agree to that for the community's good"

*The Colac Herald*
The Colac Herald is published tri-weekly and has a slightly larger circulation and advertising rate than other samples so far studied. In the previous content analysis, The Colac Herald's front-page leads included two 'Communal Rites' articles and one 'Community Expansion'. The remaining front-page lead was uncategorisable.

The above investigation of The Colac Herald's front-page leads substantiated the comments of Colac Herald editor, Steven O'Dowd. "People are our number one news value," says Mr O'Dowd. "That's what we are mostly interested in. Then probably we look at clubs and groups and their special events. We also go for outside events and decisions that influence locals, but even then we'll talk to a local housewife and get her opinion, rather than have the state or federal member of parliament telling us how outrageous it is."

Although Mr O'Dowd's idea of news values was similar to that of previous editors interviewed, an analysis of The Colac Herald showed a large jump, in percentage terms, of articles displaying current concepts of news values. About 17 percent of this paper's editorial content was categorised as either 'Conflict' or 'Sensation'. Out of The Colac Herald's four 'Conflict' articles, two were further defined as 'Community Against Metropolis' and one as 'Local Controversy'. The final 'Conflict' article was uncategorisable. Out of The Colac Herald's two 'Sensation' articles, one was subsequently categorised as 'Extreme Played Up', and the other as 'Extreme Played Down'.

However, Mr O'Dowd said The Colac Herald consciously avoided "chasing" 'Sensational' stories:

'When you're working on a rural paper, you're not after the sensational aspect. Readers want to see people in the street, their neighbours and so forth. People are very interested in day-to-day events of the town. It's not perhaps as exciting or as sensational, but it's something they can't get from other papers and that's our strength. When we stop reporting on local people is when we're in trouble."
Despite The Colac Herald's treatment of 'Sensation', Mr O'Dowd said this was not so easily done with 'Conflict':

'We try to go for positive stuff, but sometimes there is bad news, and it's often big news, and you just can't ignore it. You have to cover it, and sometimes you have to use an emotional report, as well as a straight news report, which may jog someone's conscience to come forward and give some detail which will help the police."

In keeping with Mr O'Dowd's comments, the previous content analysis found very few sources of 'Conflict' in The Colac Herald. The previous content analysis found there existed neither court reports, nor a specific opinion page on which to place an editorial. Letters-to-the-editor were, however, openly encouraged and often controversial.

The Colac Herald's six letters-to-the-editor included one 'Local Controversy', two 'Community Against Metropolis' and two 'Self-congratulations'. The remaining letter-to-the-editor was uncategorisable.

The Colac Herald's letters-to-the-editor did not appear on a regular page but, rather, they were interspersed throughout the paper's pages. The random nature of the paper's letters was compounded by its absence of a regular editorial with which to appear beside. However, Mr O'Dowd did not believe writing the paper's official position on an issue was part of the editor's function:

"Not doing editorial is my personal choice. I would rather have the straight news report than my own personal opinion appear in the paper." he said.

"But if I was required to do editorial, I think I would feel more comfortable writing an objective piece, and I would rather write positive stuff - like how great the town's Christmas lights look, rather than slagging someone or something down."

Despite The Colac Herald's reluctance to "slag people down", this was not the reason for its absence of court reports. According to Mr O'Dowd, The Colac
Herald's editorial staff were keen to publish the proceedings of local court. Management, however, did not agree.

"Not doing courts is a management decision, which was made about 15 or 20 years ago" Mr O'Dowd said. "After years of calls and threats, management just decided court reporting just wasn't worth the trouble.

"The staff on editorial though, believes both the paper and the town would benefit from us doing courts. And it would be better if we did do court reporting. Because people in the town have a false sense of security, and if we did courts, they would realise Colac is not the sheltered place they all think it is."

Mr O'Dowd conceded, however, court reporting posed risks to the paper's integrity.

"Colac's a small place, and if we did courts, there would always be someone appearing who was a friend or family member of one of the staff, so there's always personal pressures. Everyone knows everyone in this town, and you would see your family and friends being reported on in the courts, so it would be very hard to maintain a uniform policy on courts. There would always be ripple effects to court reporting. Everything is amplified in a small town.

"Besides, there is a lot of gossip value in courts, and we're not in the business of gossip."

The Colac Herald's policy of partial disclosure not only applied to court reporting. It also applied to its policy on publishing potentially harmful information. Mr O'Dowd held no qualms in conceding he paper has, in the past, held back information if it "felt it would endanger" the community. However, Mr O'Dowd also said this policy was not set in concrete:

"You have to look at these stories on a case-by-case basis," he said. "We do like to get a positive outcome and will hold a story until we get the whole facts or a comment from an official source.

"This does endanger another paper picking it up before us, but we would rather know more than three-quarters of the story and have key people commenting than
run something substantial just because we were worried about being out scooped."

The Wangaratta Chronicle

Similar to The Colac Herald, The Wangaratta Chronicle is a tri-weekly paper, with a comparable circulation and advertising rates. Despite their similarities, The Colac Herald and The Wangaratta Chronicle were differentiated by their approaches to stories on community groups and school events, and court reporting. While The Colac Herald placed stories on community groups and school events on odd pages, and as leads, The Wangaratta Chronicle placed these articles on even pages and as fillers.

However, according to Wangaratta Chronicle editor, Jeff Zeuschner, the paper did value stories arising from community groups and school events.

"Five to ten percent of the paper's editorial related to community groups and school events. School is something the whole community is related to in some way or other, and something the community really takes pride in. It's the same with community groups," he said.

Of equal significance, while The Colac Herald found no way around the problems of court reporting, The Wangaratta Chronicle embraced court reporting and, despite its complexities, the proceedings of local court often appeared as lead stories on odd pages.

The Wangaratta Chronicle's front page leads included one 'Deeds of Locals', two 'Sensation' and one 'Rites de Passage'. These findings concurred with Mr Zeuschner's comments. Mr Zeuschner said The Wangaratta Chronicle valued news that had "the most" impact on the community. However, he qualified this comment by saying The Wangaratta Chronicle favoured news that lent itself to a "positive slant".
"What dictates our news values is our readers," he said. "Because in a smaller town, you have a different type of reader. Everybody in the community knows each other, so there is a lot more feeling of community ownership, which impacts on what makes news. So, if we can give the community a boost in the arm, report on something people can be proud of, then we'll do it."

Despite Mr Zeuschner's favourable view of positive news stories, the previous content analysis found The Wangaratta Chronicle published a relatively high percentage of the current concept of news values - 18 percent. Furthermore, 43 percent of 'Conflict' articles were subsequently categorised as 'Local Controversy' and 53 percent as 'Community Against Metropolis'. Meanwhile, 100 percent of 'Sensation' articles were further defined as 'Extreme Played Up'.

Although The Colac Herald and The Wangaratta Chronicle had a similar percentage of articles displaying the current concept of news values, on closer inspection, the two papers treated the current concept of news values in very different fashions. The disparity between can be attributed to differences in policies regarding news values between the two papers. While The Colac Herald maintained a policy to avoid 'Conflict' and 'Sensation', The Wangaratta Chronicle actively sought these types of news values.

_We don't go out of our way to sensationalise a story, but if a story is sensational, it definitely takes precedence," said Mr Zeuschner. "And we will highlight conflict. Even if the conflict is internal, and potentially divisive, those groups still want to read about it._

_"We make sure both sides are represented, but that's because it makes more of an argument. In fact, we go out of our way to find conflict. We may be a small rural paper, but we are still a newspaper!"

The Wangaratta Chronicle's policy on 'Conflict' was found in the paper's editorials. Although not specifically signposted as opinion, the editorial appears under The Wangaratta Chronicle's logo, indicating the column is
the paper's official position on an issue. Two of the four editorials studied in *The Wangaratta Chronicle* are subsequently defined as 'Local Controversy' and one as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The remaining editorial was classified as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. In percentage terms, this means 50 percent of the paper's editorials outlined internal dissent, 25 percent rhetorically roused communal patriotism and loyalty, and another 25 percent emphasised angst against state or federal governments or big business.

The above findings concurred with Mr Zeuschner's comments on opinion. Mr Zeuschner said *The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s editorial matter involved "any issue" the community may be dealing with at the particular time.

"It is irrelevant whether the issue produces a positive or a negative editorial, Mr Zeuschner said. 'We are just as partial to bad news as we are to good news in the editorial.' However, Mr Zeuschner qualified this comment by saying *The Wangaratta Chronicle* does prefer to "reflect good news", but the "reality is there is bad news out there" and *The Wangaratta Chronicle* does not "shy away from it".

The subject matter of *The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s letters-to-the-editor suggested the paper held the same policy in its selection and rejection of letters. *The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s letters-to-the-editor page appeared similar to those with which readers are accustomed. Letters appeared regularly on page six and always in groups of four or five, and accompanying the paper's editorial. The previous content analysis found *The Wangaratta Chronicle*'s 19 letters-to-the-editor were made up of seven defined as 'Local Controversy', three as 'Selfcongratulations' and six as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The last three letters were deemed uncategorisable.
The Wangaratta Chronicle's policy on controversy was reflected in its treatment of court reporting. The previous content analysis found that not only did the paper report on courts, it also placed these articles on odd pages and as leads. As Mr Zeuschner said, the paper treated court reports as it would any other article.

"If it has news value, then it takes prominence. It doesn't matter if the news is good, bad or indifferent. If newsworthy information comes out of court, you can't ignore it just because it may make the community feel bad."

However, Mr Zeuschner conceded rural newspapers faced particular problems relating to court reporting. "Of course people don't want the misdemeanours of friends and family to appear in the paper, because it reminds them of their own, and their community's, failings. But I can't see how that is the paper's problem - they [offenders] should not have got themselves into the situation in the first place."

Despite Mr Zeuschner's belief in disclosure, he expressed some discomfort at the idea of publishing potentially harmful information. However, Mr Zeuschner continued to defend the paper's right to publish.

"If known information was likely to harm the community, we would still run it if it had news value," he said. "There would certainly have to be some extra decisions made, and additional considerations, but they would have to be pretty strong for us not to print. It would not be in our interest not to publish.

**The LaTrobe Valley Express**

Similar to The Wangaratta Chronicle, The LaTrobe Valley Express is a bi-weekly paper, serving a community of a comparable size. Despite these similarities, The LaTrobe Valley Express has a much higher circulation rate, which can be attributed to its 'Free Paper' status.
As a 'Free Paper', *The LaTrobe Valley Express* performs a slightly different function to paid-for papers. *The LaTrobe Valley Express* is posted routinely through the carefully selected doors of the advertiser's target publics. This results in both a higher circulation and advertising rate. As Franklin and Murphy state, 'Free Papers' quite openly market themselves as a means of advertising. (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 76). So while 'Free Papers' continue to strive to publish hard news (in order to attract readers) they will also have a much higher percentage of advertorial content as compared to editorial content. So while their readers consider 'Free Papers' a legitimate source of information, they are also approached with the knowledge that they will have a slightly different set of news values.

However, the previous content analysis found *The LaTrobe Valley Express* maintained all appearances of a paid-for newspaper. *The LaTrobe Valley Express's* articles were written in traditional pacy journalistic style and adhered to the inverted triangle convention. Although many of the paper's articles were derived from community events and school groups, these were generally used as fillers on even pages, rather than as odd page leads.

But according to *LaTrobe Valley Express* editor, Lynne Smith, the paper does value news from school events and community groups over many other stories;

'We have a community news section where we run school news and social news," she said. 'It is a very important part of a local newspaper, and very well read. Because groups rely on the paper for getting their message out and, in a way, this is one of our functions"

But the previous content analysis found not one of *The LaTrobe Valley Express's* front page leads involved school events or community groups. Front page leads did, however, include one 'Deeds of Locals', two 'Conflict' and two 'Community Expansion'. Even so, the above findings agreed with some of Ms Smith's other comments. Although Ms Smith was adamant rural newspapers "should not" select and reject information according to a different set of criteria than the current
concept of news values, she also conceded The LaTrobe Valley Express did favour positive stories:
"Journalists, and the newspaper, have a responsibility to report on a story in a balanced way... that's our job," she said. "The problems [of rural newspapers] are no different to any other newspaper. Except, as an editor or journalist, you do know more people personally. People also tend to have a feeling of ownership towards their local paper."

Despite Ms Smith's determination that reporting in a rural context was "no different" to any other, she also conceded The LaTrobe Valley Express did value positivity more highly than negativity:
"My philosophy is that if I have two stories of equal weight - one negative and one positive - I will attempt to run the positive one on the front page. However, this depends on the story - news is news, you can't sanitise it, nor should you sensationalise it."

Ms Smith's comments were reflected in the previous content analysis, which found 21 percent of The LaTrobe Valley Express's editorial matter was identified as holding the current concept of news values. The LaTrobe Valley Express evidenced nine 'Conflict' articles, seven of which were classified as 'Community Against Metropolis' and two as 'Local Controversy'. However, unlike other papers studied, The Latrobe Valley Express produced no 'Sensation' articles.

As Ms Smith said, there exists "different degrees of newsworthiness":
'An accident in which five young people are killed is news worthy, but so is the appointment of the new president of the CWA," she said. "Obviously the impact of the story determines its place in the paper, or to what degree it is deemed news worthy... and these decisions have to be made on a daily basis."

Although The LaTrobe Valley Express "makes decisions" on the types of articles that appear in its pages, Ms Smith was adamant she was "never" selective with
letters-to-the-editor. "The only reason for not publishing a letter would be if it were defamatory or racist," she said. "Though we do sometimes edit them for length reasons."

Ms Smith's comments concurred with the previous content analysis, which found *The Latrobe Valley Express* yielded 14 letters-to-the-editor, six of which were categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis', two as 'Self-congratulations' and five as 'Local Controversy'. The remaining letter was uncategorisable.

Although *The Latrobe Valley Express* devoted much space to letters-to-the-editor, the paper itself did not express its own opinion. Letters-to-the-editor appeared regularly in groups of 10 or more on the same page. But in the absence of an editorial, the letters page could not truly be described as an opinion page with which readers are accustomed.

According to Ms Smith, *The Latrobe Valley Express* has not published an editorial "for years". "We just don't see that it's necessary," she said. "People want to read what those in the community are concerned about, not what the paper is concerned about. We do, however, often run 'comment' articles when deemed as necessary."

Neither did the previous content analysis find *The Latrobe Valley Express* published the proceedings of local court. According to Ms Smith, however, the previous content analysis could be viewed as incorrect:

"We do cover court, and we always have. However this is not the case at the moment as we don't have a journalist qualified to cover courts. It is a sensitive, and highly specialised area, and you can't have just anyone writing [court reports]," she said. "There are no particular problems with covering courts - if the story is newsworthy, it runs. Like all newspapers, you get requests to withhold stories, but these are ALWAYS refused."
Similar to The LaTrobe Valley Express's support for the publication of the proceedings of local court, Ms Smith said the paper also had an "obligation" to publish potentially harmful information:
"There would have to be exceptional circumstances for us not to run a story, she said. "Luckily, I've never been asked to do so, but I would still run it if it was A) newsworthy and B) important to the community."

The Kilmore Free Press

The Kilmore Free Press is a tri-weekly paper, with circulation and advertising rates similar to The LaTrobe Valley Express. Again, like The LaTrobe Valley Express, a large number of The Kilmore Free Press's stories related to community groups and school events. However, while school events and community groups made news, these stories were reserved as fillers, rather than lead articles.

But Kilmore Free Press senior journalist, Bill West claimed the paper relied heavily on articles derived from school events and community groups on production eve.
"They tend to bombard you with information, because each wants to get in the paper. But because country papers rely on the community to tell you things, we always prefer to have too much information than too little. So I'm not complaining about the bombardment."

According to Mr West, clever handling of school and community groups is the "trick" of country journalism.
"We rely on people for news. We don't have AAP or news lines, and we can't pick up news from our competitors like bigger papers can. If people don't let us know what's going on, then it doesn't get reported
"Sometimes people don't realise that we're in the business of journalism, not mind-reading. "

"News has got to be of interest to our readership," Mr West said. "So we try to focus on local content, involving local people. We don't indulge in the great economic or political issues of the world, but we do report on local people and local happenings, which is what is important to our readers."

However, although Mr West said The Kilmore Free Press's most valued stories involved local people, they were required to do "something extraordinary" to gain prominence in the paper. In accordance with Mr West's comments, the previous content analysis found The Kilmore Free Press's front page leads included one 'Conflict', three 'Community Expansion', one 'Sensation' and two 'Communal Rites'.

Despite The Kilmore Free Press's enthusiasm for stories involving the "extraordinary", Mr West claimed the paper consciously avoided 'Sensation'.

"We don't sensationalise. We deal in facts," he says. "We ask the authorities what happened, and we report on their information. If they tell us a fire is suspicious, then we report that the fire is suspicious."

Mr West's comments concurred with the previous content analysis, which found about 25 percent of the paper's editorial content was made up of either 'Conflict' or 'Sensation'. In a subsequent categorisation of 'Conflict' articles, all eight were identified as 'Community Against Metropolis'. About 35 percent of 'Sensation' articles were subsequently defined as 'Extreme Played Up', compared to 65 percent defined as 'Extreme Played Down'.

Mr West said the alteration of articles bearing the traditional concept of news values was the result of the complexities of country journalism.

"Reporting in a rural area, you are more accountable to the community," he said. "If you make a stuff up, you have to apologise to the parties involved. And that does happen. Even if you report in all good faith, you have to admit you are wrong and apologise. On larger papers, you can fob Off the mistake to the whole system of sub-editors and things."
The Kilmore Free Press's attitude towards the current concept of news values was further evident in its letters-to-the-editor. Out of the paper's 11 letters-to-the-editor, six were defined as 'Community Against Metropolis', four as 'Local Controversy' and one as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'.

Although The Kilmore Free Press allowed the opinion of its readers into its pages, it did not publish its own. According to Mr West, however, The Kilmore Free Press's lack of editorial was not a means of avoiding controversy.

"We do occasionally write an editorial, and we reserve the right to do an opinion," he said. "But we don't want to go into overkill. If it's an important subject, and people want to read about it, then we do one. But we want them to absorb our opinion, rather than ram it down their throats. Too much opinion makes the paper appear as if it thinks it superior to the people, and that's the last thing we want.

"We consider our job to be informing the people with accuracy, and opinion is necessarily, a biased view of the world."

The Kilmore Free Press's policy on court reporting was similar to that of its editorials. While the paper did not regularly publish the proceedings of local court, it continued to reserve its right to do so.

"We don't do court reporting in the traditional sense, but we will occasionally publish results if they are unusual cases," Mr West said. "For example, some speedsters were up in front of the judge, but the story wasn't about them, the story was about a new police helicopter that had caught them."

The reasons for The Kilmore Free Press's reluctance to report on local courts was again attributed to certain intricacies involved with country journalism.

"Court reporting is difficult... you don't know whether it's necessarily news, and if you be selective with court reporting, you leave yourself open for criticism. Country papers have to make a policy decision to report every court case, or not report any at all."
But, similar to the comments of other editors, Mr West said there existed a more practical reason behind the paper's reluctance to report on courts "... besides there's no court in the Kilmore area."

The Kilmore Free Press's policy to "reserve a right to print" spilled over into its treatment of potentially harmful information.

"The Kilmore Free Press prides itself on freedom," Mr West said. "So our treatment of all news is to maintain its freedom, and to be seen to maintain its freedom in the public's eye. So we would not withhold information that may harm the community if we got it from legitimate sources. We won't be gagged if the information is factual, the paper has an obligation to publish.

"An embargo is different. If information is briefed to us under embargo, we withhold it. However, if the embargoed information is leaked out through different channels, and the whole town is talking about it, then we reserve the right to print the story. If information is told in confidence, then we keep it in confidence, but we make it clear to the other party that we reserve the right to print.

"Because at the end of the day, we have a responsibility to let the community know what's going on. If we don't, people start to think what's going on with the paper, and we lose credibility."

According to Mr West, a veteran rural journalist with more than 30 years experience, rural reporting has changed in recent times. "With regionalism, a lot of little country towns have lost their local paper, which is a great pity," he said. "Because people no longer have a voice in those places.

The Portland Observer

Similar to The Kilmore Free Press, The Portland Observer is a tri-weekly paper. However, this paper has slightly smaller circulation and advertising rates.
The Portland Observer's front page leads included one 'Communal Rites', two 'Conflict' and two 'Community Expansion'. These findings, suggesting The Portland Observer rated current concepts of news values relatively highly, concurred with the comments of editor Ellen Linke. According to Ms Linke, The Portland Observer's most valued articles involved events that "affect most people in the town", stories about locals which lend themselves to a "good front page pic" and locals rallying against bureaucracy. But according to Ms Linke, The Portland Observers' most valued stories are those conveying a sense of optimism within the community.

However, Ms Linke, like all other editors interviewed in the course of this investigation, expressed difficulty in maintaining the rural newspaper's function. "We try to get good news stories in the paper, but it's very hard sometimes," she said. "Our readers prefer to read good news stories, but when bad things happen, we can't ignore them. But the positive story always outweighs the negative in our paper. Not that we would actually withhold information, or try to sweep it under the carpet. At the end of the day, I guess, our function is to cover as much local events as possible, whether good, bad or indifferent."

Ms Linke's comments concurred with the previous content analysis, which found about 25 percent of The Portland Observer's editorial matter was made up of current concepts of news values. Although The Portland Observer produced 10 'Conflict articles', it managed a mere one 'Sensation' entry. Six of the 10 'Conflict' articles were further defined as 'Local Controversy', while the remaining four were categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The one 'Sensation' article was subsequently identified as 'Extreme Played Up'.

Ms Linke said The Portland Observer consciously avoided 'playing up' extreme incidents and focussing on 'Local Controversy'. She also said, however, The Portland Observer regards 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' as news values.
We tend to take a softer line on issues. Because we are a small local newspaper, and in a place where everyone knows everybody virtually, we tend not to sensationalise to the same extent as what people believe newspapers to sensationalise.

We could probably still go front page with a sensational story though. For example, there was a siege not long ago. A person held two children hostage in a house and that made front-page headlines because it was such an unusual occurrence in these parts. And when he went to court, that also made front page.

Although the previous content analysis found The Portland Observer lacked an opinion page, Ms Linke (similar to other editors interviewed) said she was not averse to putting forward the paper’s official position on an issue - providing the issue warranted comment.

'Ve do have editorials in some editions, depending on what's happening around town,’ she said. 'We do editorials when there's an issue creating a lot of interest around the town. Our editorials are mainly on business proposals and things we think need some public backing. I do believe the rural newspaper’s role is to gather support for good projects, and editorials are a way of fulfilling that role. For example, there's a new industrial estate being proposed in the area, so we did a positive editorial on that to prompt our readers into supporting it.

But while Ms Linke said The Portland Observer published editorials, the previous content analysis found the paper’s very structure did not facilitate an opinion page. The previous content analysis found The Portland Observer’s letters-to-the-editor - a traditional feature of an opinion page - were scattered throughout the paper and appeared in an 'ad hoc' fashion.

Furthermore, The Portland Observer yielded only a small number of letters, compared to other papers studied. A total of 13 letters-to-the-editor were identified, six of which were defined as 'Local Controversy', two as
'Self-congratulations' and four as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The remaining letter was uncategorisable.

Despite this relatively small number of letters, Ms Linke said The Portland Observer did not reject those that imply internal divisiveness. "We publish most letters that come through," she says. "We do cut them, but not to alter the context. We only censor them completely if they pose legal ramifications."

Unlike previous publications studied, The Portland Observer gave extensive coverage to local courts. However, similar to other editors interviewed in the course of this investigation, Ms Linke said court reporting posed particular problems for the rural press.

"We frequently have people phoning or calling in, trying to have their name withdrawn from the court reporting section. The only times we've agreed not to report is when there's been a court order which poses legal repercussions on publishing that particular case," she said. "Even the court case of our own editor's son was published. So when we get requests to not put in a court report, we tell them that even the editor's own son is not exempt from court reporting. We've always been of the opinion that if one's in, all are in."

And it was not only communal concerns that make court reporting difficult in smaller communities. According to Ms Linke, there existed geographical issues as well. But despite the challenges, Ms Linke said The Portland Observer was determined to overcome such challenges in order to maintain the paper's policy of "one in, all in".

"We only have a magistrate's court here. Other cases go to Warrnambool and Hamilton. But even then, if a local is standing trial, we send a journalist to file a report," she said. "We really do try to cover every court case."
The Portland Observer's attitude towards court reporting implied the paper had a policy of full disclosure. This implication was again alluded to in the paper's policy on potentially harmful information.

"We have had instances where there's been a good story come from a reliable source, but other groups have tried to cover it up for whatever reason," Ms Linke said. "Even if it's information that's damaging to the community, it will still be published."

However, Ms Linke qualified her comments by saying a "reliable" source was "crucial" to the paper's decision to publish such information.

"But if we can't find a reliable source to confirm the information, even if we know it to be true, we would probably hold it," she said. "Because if publication would jeopardise funding or whatever, it could be a real problem for the paper."

The Wimmera Mail Times

The Wimmera Mail Times is a tri-weekly paper with the largest circulation and advertising rates of the ten that appeared in the previous content analysis (with the exception of the 'Free Paper', The LaTrobe Valley Express.)

Despite the paper's tendency to relegate articles on community groups and school events to filler status, Wimmera Mail Times editor, Paul Haynes, was determined these types of stories were "very important" to rural journalism:

"The CWA columns and those types of things are very, very popular. Not popular for all readers in the community, but clubs are very big in the country, they have a lot of members. It's a bit old fashioned, but that's what makes it appealing.

'This type of article, which usually appears regularly, is almost a gossip column, and that's the element that makes it so popular. Sometimes they also provide an opportunity for a bit of humour in the paper."
"These types of columns can give the paper a chance to publish the faces of ordinary people. And people like to see their faces, or the faces of people they know, in the paper. And that's the page's appeal in a nutshell.

"They're also a way of getting stories about outlaying communities into the paper. We try to cover as much as possible of what's happening in all parts of the region. "All the churches contribute on a roster basis. We would get a lot of flak if we didn't publish it. I don't think it shows country Australia is more religious than metropolitan Australia, but it does show that church is of big interest because it's one way rural Australians socialise."

Despite recognising rural newspapers favoured some themes different from the current concept of news values articles, Mr Haynes was adamant that, theoretically, there existed no major difference between the current concepts of news values and the ways in which rural news media select and reject information: "News is news... Of course 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' are news values. Because they are integral elements of life. Conflicts and resolutions are life and newspapers reflect that," he said. "The biggest news stories, as far as I'm concerned, involve something someone somewhere doesn't want to be published... you can't top that anywhere, and I don't think I could really rate them after that."

In accord with Mr Haynes' comments, The Wimmera Mail Times' front-page leads included three 'Communal Rites', one 'Sensation' and two 'Conflict'. Furthermore, with 35 percent of its editorial content defined as 'Sensation' or 'Conflict', The Wimmera Mail Times had by far the highest percentage of articles containing the current concept of news values. And out of the 16 articles defined as 'Conflict', six were further defined as 'Local Controversy', and 10 as 'Community Against Metropolis'. The one 'Sensation' entry was subsequently identified as 'Extreme Played Up'.

Data obtained from The Wimmera Mail Times' letters-to-the-editor reflected that obtained from its editorial content. The Wimmera Mail Times yielded 13
letters-to-the-editor, six of which were categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis', five as 'Self-congratulations' and two as 'Local Controversy'. Furthermore, The Wimmera Mail Times' letters-to-the-editor appeared regularly on the same page every edition and alongside an editorial. The Wimmera Mail Times was the sole paper to publish a recognisable editorial with which readers are familiar.

One of The Wimmera Mail Times' editorials was categorised as 'Community Against Metropolis' and two as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. The remaining editorial was defined as 'Local Controversy'.

According to Mr Haynes, The Wimmera Mail Times deliberately aimed for controversy in its editorials:

"Before I came here about a year ago, there was no editorial. There was a huge amount of consternation among the people because they wanted the paper to take a stand on issues and get the community thinking," he said.

"I reintroduced it about a year ago, and it doesn't matter what you say, the more controversial the better."

Mr Haynes said he received "about" three or four comments from the community regarding editorials every week. However, he said these comments were "rarely" bad. "People want the editor to give the newspaper's view on an issue," he said. "It generates letters-to-the-editor and is conducive to local debate, and that's very healthy. There is controversy out there, and we can't just ignore it."

Mr Haynes said court reporting presented "the same problem" as editorials.

"The information is going to get out anyway, so we might as well get it out accurately," he said. "I really think rural papers have a role in bringing power bodies to account. It's also an independent voice for the community. We're independent of other power lobbies. It's also a chronicle of what's happening. That's why we do court reporting - to put on the record people's misdemeanours."
Despite Mr Haynes' justification for court reporting, he also expressed the same concerns as other editors interviewed in the course of this investigation.

"I'm constantly getting calls asking me to not put in particular court reports, he said. "But I can't let that deter the paper. If I make one exception, then the paper's credibility is gone. I get at least one request per week, and they all get the same answer - a flat and very definite 'NO'. If the courts want to suppress it, then they can suppress it - it's not up to the paper to keep it suppressed."

The Wimmera Mail Times' policy on court reporting spilled over into its attitude towards the publication of harmful information.

"If known information was likely to harm the community, we would still run it if it had news value. There would certainly have to be some extra decisions made, and additional considerations, but they would have to be pretty strong for us not to print. It would not be in our interest not to publish."

However, as with other editors, Mr Haynes said the publication of such information was determined by the reliability of its sources.

"It would depend on if I knew the information for a fact," Mr Haynes said. "If I knew something was happening, I couldn't care what anyone else said or thought. If I had a reliable source, I would publish the information."

According to Mr Haynes, The Wimmera Mail Times' management structure allowed the paper freedom to determine its own news values. Unlike other papers studied during this investigation's course, The Wimmera Mail Times was managed offshore.

'We're NZ owned, so management is hundreds of miles away. Most regional papers are owned by local business people, so there are chances for editorial interference all over the place. Independently owned does not always mean more independence," he said.


**Discussion**

The above comments provide insight into the news values specific to rural journalism and clarify certain findings of the previous content analysis. However, the above comments also shed further light on rural journalism and identifies several new themes and consistencies regarding the selection and rejection of information.

When looking at what constitutes a 'good news story', according to the editors of rural newspapers, several themes emerged. These were:

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'Communal Rites'  
*The Kyabram Free Press*

'Communal Links'  
*The Colac Herald*  
*The Wimmera Mail Times*

'Conflict'  
*The Portland Observer*  
*The Wimmera Mail Times*

'Sensation'  
*The Kilmore Free Press*  
*The Wimmera Mail Times.*

In comparison to the previous content analyses, the above findings suggest perceptions of news values among rural editors are slightly different to reality. The above findings clearly indicate rural editors consider 'Deeds of Locals' and 'Community Expansion' to be among the most highly prized news values. While the previous content analyses found 'Community Expansion' to one of the most highly prized news values, they found 'Deeds of Locals' to rate as sixth.

And while a mere two out of ten editors nominated 'Conflict' as a news value, the previous content analyses found it to rate almost as highly as 'Community Expansion'. However, the majority of comments of editors and the previous content analyses agreed 'Conflict' was malleable to suit the needs of the paper and the community.

The previous content analyses bore out the malleability of the current concept of news values in their sub-categorisation of 'Conflict' into 'Appeals to Community Sentiment', 'Community Against Metropolis', 'Self Congratulations' and 'Local Controversy'. This was also shown in the
subcategorisation of 'Sensation' into 'Extreme Played Up' and 'Extreme Played Down'.

Interestingly, those papers that served smaller communities appeared more likely to have an editor who consciously avoided the current concept of news values. In comparison, those who selected and rejected information for papers serving larger communities were more likely to consciously embrace the current concept of news values.

There were, however, some aberrations in this pattern. Latrobe Valley Express editor, Lynne Smith said her "philosophy" was to run positive stories in more prominent positions than negative stories. However, she qualified this by saying positive stories would take precedence on the condition that they were of "equal weight" in terms of news values.

Interestingly, the editor of the paper that evidenced the highest percentage of the current concept of news values, Paul Haynes of The Wimmera Mail Times, was adamant that "of course" 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' were key criteria by which news is selected and rejected.

Also of note was the difference in approaches to editorials between the smaller and larger communities. The comments suggest editors of papers serving smaller communities are more reluctant to publish editorials than those who serve a larger community.

Meanwhile those papers which served more populated communities were more likely to have an editor who embraced the concept of editorial. The main aberration in this pattern was The Latrobe Valley Express, the editor of which did not see the editorial convention as "necessary" to a rural newspaper.
Similar to editorials, the comments of editors suggested newspapers serving less populated communities have a different attitude towards court reporting than those serving more populated communities. However although attitudes differed, all professed the same problems in reporting local courts in a rural community social networks (as described by Wild 3 ) and the 'tyranny of distance' (as described by Ian Hamilton 4).

In comparison, editors of papers serving more populated communities tended to defend their right to publish the proceedings of local court. Mr Zeuschner from The Wangaratta Chronicle said he was not perturbed by the fact that some court cases "get a run" while others don't. Latrobe Valley Express editor, Lynne Smith, had a similar attitude towards court reporting, saying that requests to withhold publication are "always" refused.

The main aberration in the pattern was The Kilmore Free Press. Similar to the editors of papers serving less populated communities, Kilmore Free Press senior journalist, Bill West said there existed both geographical and social problems inherent in rural court reporting.

The above observation on differences and similarities in attitudes towards court reporting can also be made on the publication of potentially harmful information. Editors of papers serving smaller communities expressed reluctance at publishing potentially harmful information. Meanwhile, editors of papers serving a more populated community were more receptive to the idea. However, editors were unanimous in nominating source reliability as a condition under which they would publish potentially harmful information.

Despite differences in some attitudes between papers, there existed one main similarity - an (almost) across-the-board desire to publish a 'good news story' in the paper's most prominent positions. The outstanding aberration in this
pattern was Paul Haynes from The Wimmera Mail Times, who categorically stated the most highly valued news concepts were 'Conflict', 'Sensation' and 'Secrecy'.

Although comments demonstrated several themes and consistencies, they also revealed several holes in the body of knowledge regarding the rural media and influences on rural journalism journalism.

The most important of these - in relation to this thesis's concern with news values - was the implication for the previous content analysis's findings on 'Law and Order'. Although no respondent specified 'Law and Order' as a news value, many implied they considered law enforcement as their publication's responsibility. This was particularly evident in comments on court reporting:

Gus Underwood from The Kyabram Free Press suggested the paper had a role in bringing offenders to account:

"We feel it's not fair to report on someone's court case if it's a first offence," he said. "So we give them a chance, and leave the report out entirely... for us to print their names just holds them up to more public ridicule. It would be like a double dose of punishment. But if the same person keeps re-offending, then we might slide their cases into the paper."

Jeff Zeuschner from The Wangaratta Chronicle made a similar suggestion:

"Of course people don't want the misdemeanours of friends and family to appear in the paper, because it reminds them of their own, and their community's, failings. But I can't see how that is the paper's problem - they [offenders] should not have got themselves into the situation in the first place."
Steven O'Dowd from The Colac Herald implied the paper had a role in assisting police with investigations:

"... sometimes you have to use an emotional report, as well as a straight news report, which may jog someone's conscious to come forward and give some detail which will help the police."

Although The North West Express did not cover the proceedings of local court, editor Bernie Clohesy, mentioned the paper had a role in "working hand-in-hand with the police in keeping the community in check".

While this study is not specifically concerned with the rural newspaper's role as a law enforcement agency, the above comments suggest such a subject would be a useful contribution to the current body of knowledge on rural media. An exercise involving specific questions relating to a paper's role as a law enforcer lends itself to future analysis of the rural media.

Comments on management also suggests there exists a hole in the body of knowledge on rural newspapers. Interestingly, a mere two of the 10 editors interviewed referred to management's role in determining news values:

Steven O'Dowd from The Colac Herald claimed the paper's absence of court reports was due to managerial influence on editorial content. Conversely, Paul Haynes from The Wimmera Mail Times claimed management had "no" influence on editorial content.

Again, these comments suggest there is a need for further investigation, specifically focussing on the role of the management of rural newspapers, and its potential influence on editorial content.
Also of note was the gender of editors and senior journalists. Wild hypothesised that the small number of female journalists in decision-making positions was "a further example of how country newspapers help maintain the status quo, rather than pursuing change to help produce a more equal society".

Although this investigation, in no way, attempts to either support or negate Wild's claim, it would be remiss to allow the fact that only two of the ten editors and senior journalists were female go unnoticed. Whether or not this fact supports or negates Wild's theory is beyond the scope of the current investigation, but may lend itself as a hypothesis for future media analysis.

Also to note was the fact that competition from other papers did not seem a concern to the majority of the editors. A mere one out of the ten rural editors interviewed mentioned competition as an influencing factor on news values. While Steven O'Dowd from *The Colac Herald* held no qualms about withholding potentially harmful information, he also conceded that this could "endanger" another paper "picking" up the same story. However, he would rather know that the story was safe, rather than "running something substandard just because" he was "worried about being out scooped".

Again, competition and its impact on news values in isolated rural areas is yet another under-investigated area. However, Mr O'Dowd's comments suggest competition is a concern, despite *The Colac Herald*'s virtual monopoly on the area, which should suggests competition could lend itself to a future investigation on the influences on rural news values.

Although the above comments from editors and senior journalists pose many new questions on the impacts on rural journalism, they do confirm many of
the previous content analyses' findings on rural news values. The above comments suggest the most valued news theme in rural areas is 'Deeds of Locals', closely followed by 'Community Expansion'. Although 'Conflict' was not considered highly, the majority of editors claimed it had a place in rural reporting provided it was treated with the community's needs in mind. Although the above comments present slightly different findings than the previous content analyses, between the two types of research, we can conclude that 'Deeds of Locals', 'Community Expansion' and 'Conflict' (in all its alterable forms) are considered as the three most highly prized news values in Australian country journalism.
Conclusion

As this thesis has suggested, country newspapers do have a criteria by which to select and reject information different from the current concept of news values. As encouraged in tertiary journalism courses, the current concept of news values is based on theories such as those outlined by Masterson, Galtung and Ruge and Henningham. However, this thesis has investigated, and indicated, the possibility that those who work within the country news media industry deal with a different set of news values every day.

Masterson, Galtung and Ruge and Henningham argue concepts such as 'Sensation', 'Conflict' and 'Negativity' are among the top "internationally valid" criteria which "determine whether or not a story is news worthy". However, this thesis found other concepts, such as 'Community Expansion', 'Deeds of Locals' and 'Communal Rites' are among the top criteria by which country Australian newspapers select and reject information.

News value percentages

![Graph showing news value percentages]

The first content analysis found 'Community Expansion' to be the top news story among country Australian newspapers. Defined as any article outlining the growth of community services or resources, 'Community Expansion'
made up more than one quarter of entries, the majority of which appeared on odd pages and as leads.

Odd and Even Page Entries

Odd Page Leads and Odd Page Fillers

In the study of each publication on a case-by-case basis, higher incidences of 'Community Expansion', in general, tended to occur in smaller papers. ('Small', in this sense, is defined in terms of advertising and circulation rates, and number of editions published per week.) Almost needless to say, those with higher percentages of 'Community Expansion' also tended to have lower percentages of articles identified as having current concepts of news values. Even so, in the qualitative analysis of the comments of country editors, there was an across-the-board agreement that 'Community Expansion' was highly news-worthy.
Community Expansion compared to Conflict and Sensation

Such attitude was epitomised in the comments of *Kyabram Free Press* editor, Gus Underwood: "If there was a factory opening and creating 20 jobs, we'd go the whole hog. But, conversely, if there was a factory closing and 20 jobs would be lost, we wouldn't give it much prominence, or we'd try to report its positive aspects."

Comments such as those of Mr Underwood supported the initial content analysis' findings that 'Community Expansion' was among the most highly valued news concepts in country journalism.

The initial content analysis found 'Community Expansion' to be closely followed by 'Communal Rites'. Defined as any article outlining regularly occurring events that involved the community as a whole, 'Communal Rites' made up 16 percent of entries, the majority of which appeared on an odd page and as a lead.

The subsequent study of each paper on a case-by-case basis found those with higher incidences of 'Communal Rites' were, in general, also small in terms of advertising and circulation rates, and number of editions published per week. Again, those with higher percentages of articles identified as conveying current concepts of news values tended to have a lower yield of 'Communal Rites'.
Communal Rites

However, in the qualitative section of the research, a mere one out of the sample nominated 'Communal Rites' as a news value. Even so, almost all editors implied 'Communal Rites' was considered highly news worthy. Brain Hennessy from The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard put the value of 'Communal Rites' succinctly when he said: "They [country newspapers] do have a different set of news values. Country papers have to have a more community outlook - report on things that mean something to all levels of the community."

Although both the initial content analysis and the qualitative research found the top two criteria by which country Australian newspapers select and reject information to be different from the current concept of news values, they also found 'Conflict' (one of the top news values according to Masterson and Henningham) to be high on the list of criteria. Defined as the reportage of change or the pressure for change, 'Conflict' made up 18 percent of articles in the initial content analysis. The majority of these appeared on odd pages, and almost half as lead articles.

This finding does not concur with Janowitz's comments that the "overwhelming bulk" of non-advertising space avoids "change or controversy". However, a closer investigation of 'Conflict' articles in a subsequent content analysis revealed this news value was often altered to
accord with a small community's ideology. Supporting Janowitz's comments, a subsequent content analysis of 'Conflict' articles themselves revealed this news value was not concerned with controversy within the community, as much as it was concerned with controversy between the community and external agencies, particularly state or federal governments, or non-local commercial organisations.

Janowitz claims the "most popular" controversies in the pages of small papers are "those of the local community against the outside urban metropolis". (Janowitz, 1967: 77). In support of his comment, the subsequent content analysis of 'Conflict' articles found the vast majority of entries were identifiable as 'Community Against Metropolis'. Defined as any article in contention with state or federal governments, or the activities of nonlocal organisations, 'Community Against Metropolis' made up 65 percent of entries, the majority of which appeared on odd pages and as leads. This finding can be related to Walker's idea of "bush ideology" which, according to Walker, "exalts country virtues and values against the greed and selfishness of the big cities." (Walker, 1976: 176).

**Subcategorisation of Conflict Entries**

![Subcategorisation of Conflict Entries](image)

However, the comments of media historians and analysts do not concur with the subsequent content analysis when it found 'Local Controversy' to be the next largest category among 'Conflict' articles. Defined as any article
indicating internal dissent, 'Local Controversy' made up about 30 percent of 'Conflict' articles, the majority of which appeared on odd pages and as leads. This finding does not concord with Janowitz when he says there are "very few" internal dissenters published in small newspapers. (Janowitz, 1967: 77).

Subcategorisation of Conflict: Comparison Between Lead and Filler Entries

![Bar chart showing comparison between lead and filler entries for different categories.]

Subcategorisation of Conflict Entries: Comparison Between Lead Odd and Even Page Entries

![Bar chart showing comparison between lead odd and even page entries for different categories.]

Janowitz's comments are again denied in the final two categories of 'Conflict' articles. Janowitz notes small newspapers feel under "journalistic pressure" to have editorials and other sources of 'Conflict' within their pages. He says "thus" a "portion" of "so called" editorials and other sources of 'Conflict' are "merely appeals to community sentiment" or self-congratulatory messages. (Janowitz, 1967: 77).
However, the subsequent content analysis of 'Conflict' articles found a mere three percent of entries was identifiable as 'Self-congratulations'. Defined as any article praising either individual locals or the community as a whole, 'Self-congratulations' entries were mainly fillers on even pages.

Furthermore, an even smaller two percent of 'Conflict' articles were definable as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. Defined as any article praising individual locals or the community as a whole, the 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' scored one entry. Although this one entry appeared on an odd page and as a lead, it must be kept in mind that this entry was an editorial.

However, the concept of altering 'Conflict' so it is consistent with the ideology of country communities was implicit in the qualitative analysis of editors' comments: Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard editor, Geoff Hayes said: "Conflict is open slator, but I try to avoid focussing on it... although I will publish internal conflict because the community has a right to know."

Snowy River Mail editor, Kevin Hennessy, went a step further, saying he would consciously choose to avoid internal conflict: "Country newspapers always try to give a happy outlook on the front page, but sometimes you can't avoid it. You don't always choose something bad or good... you just want to present something good for the community."

However, marrying the results of the quantitative and qualitative methods of research, papers with higher percentages of 'Conflict' articles were more inclined to speak favourably of the concept as a news value: "Of course
'Conflict' and 'Sensation' are news values. Because they are integral elements of life and newspapers reflect that.

And from Kilmore Free Press senior journalist, Bill West: "The Kilmore Free Press prides itself on its freedom. So our treatment of all news is to maintain its freedom, and to be seen to maintain its freedom in the public's eye... we won't be gagged"

When looking at current sources of 'Conflict' - letters-to-the-editor and editorials much the same conclusion was achieved. The content analysis of letters-to-the-editor and editorials found about 30 percent were definable as 'Community Against Metropolis'. However, the majority of these were letters-to-the-editor, suggesting country editors regard the paper's job to facilitate members of the community to express anger towards governments or non-local commercial organisations. The results, however, can also be attributed to the fact that only four out of the 10-paper sample published editorials.

Letters to the Editor and Editorial Categorisation

![Graph showing percentage of letters to the editor and editorials]

Editorial Categorisation
Although a minority of the ten-paper sample published editorials, according to editors, this was not because they wished to avoid 'Conflict'. *Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard* editor, Geoff Hayes explained he believed readers "wanted to make up their own minds" rather than "listen" to the editor's views on an issue. *Snowy River Mail* editor, Kevin Hennessy said he did not publish an editorial because he did not want to be publishing "bad news all the time", and Bernie Clohesy from *The North West Express* did not want readers to get "blase" and think "oh, what's he crapping on about now!" And Steven O'Dowd from *The Colac Herald* said if he were to write editorials, he would be "more comfortable" with writing about positive "stuff", such as "how great the local Christmas lights are", rather than " slagging something or someone down".

However, papers with higher percentages of 'Conflict' articles were more inclined to publish 'negative' issues within editorials. From *Wangaratta Chronicle* editor, Jeff Zeuschner: "It is irrelevant whether the issue produces a positive or negative editorial." *And* from Wimmera Mail Times editor, Paul Haynes: "... it doesn't matter what you say, the more controversial the better... There is controversy out there and you just can't ignore it."

'Local Controversy' made up 29 percent of letters-to-the-editor and editorials. However, again, these were mainly made up of letters-to-the-editor, suggesting editors are more likely to allow the community to express 'internal dissent' before they, themselves do. But
again, this can also be attributed to the fact that only four of the ten-paper sample published editorials.

A mere 23 percent of letters-to-the-editor and editorials were identifiable as 'Self-congratulations', and 12 percent as 'Appeals to Community Sentiment'. Again, the majority of these were letters-to-the-editor.

From these results, it can be concluded that country newspapers do indeed favour 'Community Against Metropolis' in letters-to-the-editor. However, these results also suggest that country editors allow "internal dissent" to enter letters-to-the-editor and editorials far more than 'Self-congratulations' and 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' in current sources of 'Conflict'.

Although 'Conflict' made up a relatively large percent of entries, a subsequent categorisation of these articles demonstrated the majority of these were 'Community Against Metropolis'. Although this concurs with Janowitz's comments, the high percentage of 'Local Controversy' and the low percentage of 'Appeals to Community Sentiment' do not.

The initial content analysis found 'Conflict' followed by 'Dominant Groups'. Defined as any article outlining the activities of groups that would not be of interest to the mass readership, 'Dominant Groups' made up eight percent of entries, the majority of which appeared as fillers and on even pages. These findings do not agree with the comments of Wild, who says country news values "represent the values and attitudes of dominant groups and have become institutionalised".

In a subsequent analysis of papers studied on a case-by-case basis, it was startlingly clear that smaller newspapers, in terms of circulation and
advertising rates, and the number of editions published per week, had a much higher percentage of articles defined as 'Dominant Groups'. Furthermore, those with lower percentages of articles identified as portraying current concepts of news values clearly had higher percentages of 'Dominant Group' entries.

**Dominant Groups**

![Graph showing distribution of 'Dominant Groups']

In the qualitative analysis of country editors' comments, not one nominated 'Dominant Groups' as their most highly prized news values. However, almost all implied 'Dominant Groups' was considered highly as a news value. "We look at clubs and groups, and their events a lot," Colac Herald editor, Steven O'Dowd said. "Five to ten percent of the paper's editorial is related to community groups like the RSI. and CWA," Wangaratta Chronicle editor Jeff Zeauschner said. And LaTrobe Valley Express editor, Lynne Smith said community groups made up a "very important section" of the paper. "These groups rely on the paper for getting their message across and, in a way, it is one of our functions."

Comments such as these support the initial content analysis' finding that 'Dominant Groups' is considered an important part of country newspaper content, but not enough to place it on the paper's most prized positions.
Following 'Dominant Groups' was 'Law and Order'. Defined as any article portraying local authorities as in control, 'Law and Order' made up seven percent of entries, the majority of which appeared on odd pages, but none as leads.

In a subsequent analysis of papers on a case-by-case basis, there appeared very little relation between the size of a publication and its percentage of 'Law and Order' entries. The same can be said for the relationship between levels of 'Law and Order' and percentages of articles displaying current concepts of news values.

**Law and Order**

Although no respondent specified 'Law and Order' as a news value in the qualitative analysis on editors' comments, many implied they considered law enforcement as their publication's responsibility. This was particularly evident in comments on court reporting:

Gus Underwood from *The Kyabram Free Press* suggested the paper has a role in bringing offenders to account:

"We feel it's not fair to report on someone's court case if it's a first offence," he said. "So we give them a chance, and leave the report out entirely ... But if the same person keeps re-offending, then we might slide their cases into the paper."

Jeff Zeuschner from *The Wangaratta Chronicle* made a similar suggestion: "Of course people don't want the misdemeanours of friends and family to appear in the paper. But I can't see how that is the paper's problem - they [offenders] should not have got themselves into the situation in the first place."

Steven O'Dowd from *The Colac Herald* implied the paper has a role in assisting police with investigations: "... sometimes you have to use an emotional report, as well as a straight news report, which may jog someone's conscious to come forward and give some detail which will help the police."

Comments such as these support the initial content analysis' findings that country newspapers do value 'Law and Order' enough to place it on a prominent page, but not enough to publish it as a lead article.

The initial content analysis found 'Law and Order' was followed by 'Media Releases'. The 'Media Release' definition followed the observations of Zawawi, who claims media releases are clearly identifiable in the print news media. 'Media Releases' made up six percent of entries, the majority of which appeared on an odd page, but very few as leads.

In a subsequent content analysis of papers on a case-by-case basis, there appeared very little relationship between a newspaper's size and its percentage of articles defined as 'Media Releases'. The same can be said for a paper's percentage of articles identified as having current concepts of news values and its percentage of 'Media Releases'.

**Media Releases**
Although 'Media Releases' appeared regularly throughout the ten-paper sample, not one editor nominated them as a news value. However, several suggested 'Media Releases' were used, provided they lent themselves to a local slant. As *Colac Herald* editor, Stvcen O'Dowd said, 'Media Releases' were considered "useful tools" if the paper can obtain "local comment" on the topic under discussion.

Comments such as those of Mr O'Dowd support the initial content analysis' findings that country editors value 'Media Releases' enough to place them on a prominent page, but not enough to publish them as a lead article.

Interestingly, the initial content analysis found the number of 'Media Release' entries exceeded that of 'Deeds of Locals'. Yet editors clearly considered 'Deeds of Locals' to be among the most valuable news concepts. Defined as any article outlining the stories of ordinary townsfolk undertaking seemingly extra-ordinary activities, 'Deeds of Locals' made up just under six percent of entries, the majority of which appeared on odd pages, but very few as leads. These findings suggest editors value 'Deeds of Locals', but not enough to place them as lead stories.

In a subsequent content analysis of papers on a case-by-case basis, those with lower percentages of 'Deeds of Locals' entries tended to be smaller papers in terms of advertising and circulation rates, and number of editions.
published per week. Furthermore, papers which tended to have a higher the percentage of 'Deeds of Locals' entries also tended to have higher percentages of articles identified as having current concepts of news values.

**Deeds of Locals**

![Graph showing data]

Although 'Deeds of Locals' rated sixth in the quantitative content analysis, it came a resounding first in the qualitative comments of editors. Colac Herald editor, Steven O'Dowd, epitomised the attitude of country newspaper editors towards 'Deeds of Locals' when he said: *"Readers want to see people in the street, their neighbours and so forth... It's not perhaps as exciting or as sensational, but it's something they can't get from other papers and that's our strength. When we stop reporting on local people is when we're in trouble."*

Maybe for the same reasons as outlined above by Mr O'Dowd, 'Rites de Passage' received almost equal attention as 'Deeds of Locals' in the initial content analysis. Defined as any article documenting the life events of ordinary people, *Rites de Passage* made up about six percent of the total number of articles analysed in the initial content analysis. The majority of these articles appeared on odd pages, but a mere few as leads. These findings suggest editors value *'Rites de Passage'* but rarely enough to place it as a lead.
The subsequent analysis of papers on a case-by-case basis suggested smaller paper generally had higher percentages of 'Rites de Passage'. Furthermore, those that had a higher percentage of articles defined as having current concepts of news values tended to have higher percentages of 'Rites de Passage' entries.

**Rites de Passage**

The category following 'Rites de Passage' was created to encompass the large number of articles that appear to serve as a drawing mechanism of outlying town into the main community. For the purpose of the initial content analysis, this category was titled 'Communal Links'. Defined as any article integrating isolated townships into the main community, 'Communal Links' made up three percent of the total number of entries, the majority of which appeared on even pages, and as fillers.

However, the analysis of papers on a case-by-case basis revealed a mere four out of the ten-paper sample placed any value on 'Communal Links' at all. The larger papers appeared just as likely to publish 'Communal Links' as the smaller papers.

**Communal Links**
This conclusion is backed up by the qualitative analysis of editors' comments. Although not one actually nominated 'Communal Links' as a news value, almost all implied it was considered when selecting and rejecting information. As *Wimmera Mail Times* editor, Paul Haynes, said when explaining the importance of regular columns: "Often they're a means of telling stories about your readers in small communities. Just because they're not living in the town, doesn't mean their stories aren't as important or as interesting. We try to cover as much as possible in all parts of our region - the main part as well as the smaller parts."

Comments such as those of Mr Haynes support the initial content analysis' findings that 'Communal Links' is not considered highly as a news value, but does have a regular and important place in the country press in order to assimilate outlaying townships into the country community.

Just as 'Communal Links' appeared in a regular column, so too did 'Local History'. Defined as any article describing the founding or development of the local community, 'Local History' made up three percent of entries in the initial content analysis, the majority of which appeared on even pages and as filler articles.

In the analysis of papers on a case-by-case basis, there did not appear to be a link between the size of a paper and its percentage of 'Local History' entries.
Neither did there appear to be a relationship between the percentage of a paper's current concept of news values and its percentage of 'Local History. However, almost every paper did have some sort of 'Local History' within its pages.

**Local History**

These findings are consistent with the comments of editors, almost all of which mentioned the community's past as a news worthy concept. "In a small community, people like to read and hear about their forefathers, many of who they remember personally," said Kilmore Free Press senior journalist Bill West. And "there's something fascinating about the past - especially when it's the past of a community which you belong to," said LaTrobe Valley Express editor, Lynne Smith. "But I wouldn't say these stories made the front page unless there was something else outstanding."

Comments such as those above support the initial content analysis' finding that editors consider 'Local History' as a news value, but only as a regular column to fill less prized spaces.

Interestingly, the initial content analysis found 'Scnsation' (a news value Masterson claims to be one of the most prized among journalists) had the least number of entries. Defined as any article focussing on the 'extreme' of
an incident, 'Sensation' made up less than three percent of entries. However, 100 percent of these appeared on a front page, and 71 percent as lead articles.

However, the subsequent analysis of 'Sensation' entries themselves found almost 60 percent of these articles were definable as 'Extreme Played Down'. In other words, 'Sensation' articles in the country press more often than not appear without a photograph, large headline and are written in toned-down rhetoric. The majority of 'Extreme Played Down' articles appeared on an odd page and as a lead.

Subcategorisation Of 'Sensation' entries

Subcategorisation of 'Sensation': Odd and Even Page Entries

Subcategorisation of 'Sensation': Lead and Filler Entries
Conversely, 'Sensation' articles defined as 'Extreme Played Up' made up about 42 percent of entries. These articles appeared with photographs, large headlines and "sensational" rhetoric. However, again, the majority of 'Extreme Played Up' articles appeared on an odd page and as a lead.

The analysis of papers on a case-by-case basis found those which are smaller tended to have lower percentages of 'Sensation'. Furthermore, the smaller papers tended to have higher percentages of 'Extreme Played Down'. Quite obviously, those with higher percentages of articles displaying current concepts of news values tended to have higher percentages of 'Sensation'.

**Percentage of Current Concepts of News Values in Each Sample**

The suggestion that country newspapers find themselves in a quandary when it comes to 'Sensation' is supported in the comments of editors:
"In a small local community you've got to avoid sensationalism, because you might hurt people who you have to live with every day," said Geoff Hayes from The Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard.

Kevin Hennessy from The Snowy River Mail said the paper 'sensationalises' positive news stories, but was reluctant when it came to more negative articles:

"... if sensationalism means it's better for the story, then we W do it, But if it's a bad news story, then you don't want to go overboard. But if the story is good for the community, there's nothing wrong with adding a bit of colour to flavour it up.

These findings suggest country editors consider 'Sensation' as a highly newsworthy concept, but the opportunity for a 'sensational' story rarely occurs in their communities. When it does, however, it usually makes front page headlines.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods infers country newspapers do, indeed, select and reject information according to a different set of criteria than the current concept of news values. While the quantitative analysis was reliable for making statistical generalisations, the qualitative ensured individual characteristics were taken into account. Because this methodological approach ensured the limitations of one research method was mitigated by the other, the conclusion that country newspapers have their own set of news values can be considered as valid.
With this in mind, the top five country news criteria can be summarised as 'Community Expansion', 'Communal Rites', 'Deeds of Locals', 'Conflict' (Community Against Metropolis) and 'Conflict' (Local Controversy).

Although the methodological process answered many questions relating to the ways in which country newspapers select and reject information, it also posed several new ones. These include the country newspaper's role in 'Law and Order', managerial influence over editorial content, promotional opportunities for women and competitive influences on news values.

Despite the research posing many new questions, it did, fundamentally, reveal the criteria by which country editors select and reject information is different from the current concept of news values. As encouraged in tertiary institutions, current concepts of news values are based on the theories of Masterson, Galtung and Ruge and Henningham, and include concepts such as 'Conflict', 'Sensation', 'Secrecy' and 'Negativity'.

The suggestion that country news values will be different from others is logical when considering that news values vary according to the specific community's ideology in which they operate. This theory was tested using a sound methodological framework, which found that although concepts such as 'Conflict' and 'Sensation' are evident among country newspapers, the majority of news values function to support "optimism", and "invariable optimistic" outlook on life and a "common belief in the ability of the individual or small community to overcome adversity". Country news values strive to dispel "sectorial fragmentation" and "political disunity" in an effort to overcome the "tyranny of distance".
As the report on the 1965 Australian Country Press Seminar says: "This sometimes means the inclusion of items which are not necessarily newsworthy, but are essential as a service to the public... In this sense we are not competing with bigger newspapers, we are doing a different job."
List of Appendices

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Legend

Appeals  ‘Appeals to Community Sentiment’
CAM  ‘Community Against Metropolis’
LC  ‘Local Controversy’
SC  ‘Self-congratulations’
EPU  ‘Extreme Played Up’
EPD  ‘Extreme Played Down’
AEMS  Alexandra, Eildon and Marysville Standard
SRM  Snowy River Mail
NEW  North West Express
KyabFP  Kyabram Free Press
CH  Colac Herald
WC  Wangaratta Chronicle
LVE  LaTrobe Valley Express
PO  Portland Observer
KilFP  Kilmore Free Press
WMT  Wimmera Mail Times
Appendix I

*The Alexandra and Eildon Standard*
*The Snowy River Mail*
*The North West Express*
*The Kyabram Free Press*
*The Colac Herald*
*The Wangaratta Chronicle*
*The LaTrobe Valley Express*
*The Kilmore Free Press*
*The Portland Observer and Guardian*
*The Wimmera Mail Times*
Appendix II

North West Express

The Wimmera Mail Times

The Kyneton Free Press

The Wanganella Chronicle

The Kilmore Free Press

The Alexandra, Elton & Marysville Standard

The Colac Herald

The Linton Valley Express

The Snowy River Mail

The Portland Observer
Appendix III: News value percentages

- Community Expansion
- Communal Links
- Sensation
- Rites de Passage
- Media Releases
- Local History
- Law & Order
- Dominant Groups
- Deeds of Locals
- Conflict
- Communal Rites
Appendix IV: Odd and even pages entries
Appendix V: Odd page lead and odd page filler entries
Appendix VII: Front page lead and front page filler entries

- Community Expansion
- Communal Links
- Sensation de Passage
- Media Releases
- Local History
- Law & Order
- Dominant Groups
- Deeds of Locals
- Conflict
- Communal Rites

Graph showing percentage distribution of front page fillers and leads.
Appendix VIII: Lead article entries

- Community Expansion
- Communal Links
- Sensation
- Rites de Passage
- Media Releases
- Local History
- Law & Order
- Dominant Groups
- Deeds of Locals
- Conflict
- Communal Rites
Appendix IX: Current concept of news value entries compared to 'rural' news value entries
Appendix X: Subcategorisation of letters-to-the editor and editorial entries
Appendix XI: Total number of letters to the editor and editorial entries
Appendix XII: Editorial entries for each category

Appeals

100% 80% 60% 40% 20% 0%

SC
LC
CAM
Appendix XIII: Letters-to-the-editor entries for each category

- Appeals
- CAM
- LC
- SC
Appendix XIV: Subcategorisation of 'Conflict' entries

- CAM: 70%
- LC: 30%
- SC: 5%
- Appeals: 5%
Appendix XV: Subcategorisation of 'Conflict' entries - leads and filler entries
Appendix XVI: Subcategorisation of 'Conflict' entries - odd page and even page entries
Appendix XVII: Subcategorisation of 'Conflict' entries - front page leads
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![Bar graph showing the subcategorisation of 'Sensation' entries. The graph compares EPU and EPD categories, with EPD having a higher percentage.]
Appendix XXII: Percentage of current concepts of news values in each sample

The chart illustrates the percentage of conflict and sensation in news values across different samples. The y-axis represents the percentage ranging from 0% to 35%, while the x-axis lists the following samples: AEMS, SRM, NWE, KyabFP, CH, WC, LVE, KIIFP, PO, and WMT. Each sample is represented by a bar divided into two sections: the darker section represents conflict, and the lighter section represents sensation.
Appendix XXIII: Subcategorisation of conflict entries in each sample
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![Bar chart showing the subcategorisation of 'Sensation' entries in each sample with categories AEMS, SRM, NWE, KyabFP, CH, WC, LVE, KiFP, PO, WMT. The chart illustrates the percentage distribution of EPD and EPU values across these categories.]
Appendix XXV: Categories of letters-to-the-editor in each sample
Appendix XXVI - Categorisation of front page leads in each sample
Appendix XXVII: Percentages of each category in each sample
Appendix XXVIII: Categorisation of editorials

- Uncategorisable
- Community Against Metropolis
- Self Congratulations
- Local Controversy
- Appeals

NWE | KyabFP | WC | WMT
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