

Running Head: Local newspapers & editorials

Understanding readers of local newspapers and editorial journalism in small communities

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify demographic characteristics of people that read local newspapers and use editorial journalism in small communities whose population sizes were 25,000 or less in the United States. It also examines the relationship of media images to local news media use and comprehension. Analyses of a national survey data (n = 505) show that reading of local newspapers was positively associated with age, gender, and income, whereas reading of editorials or letters to the editor was explained by age, gender, ethnicity, and households with children younger than 18. The image of “perceived good local newspaper” was significantly associated with both use of local newspapers and readership of editorial journalism after controlling for demographic variables in small communities.

Understanding readers of local newspapers and editorial journalism in small communities

Recent technological advances have resulted in today's proliferation of sources of information. There is considerable evidence showing that a variety of personal, interpersonal, and social factors influence the way people process information from news media. Although newspapers, particularly the large metropolitan ones, have suffered slow but steady declines in readership over the past three decades, they remain in many ways the most important source of news and information of all news media. For example, in 2007, newspapers in the United States gave front-page coverage to issues and events often not found in other news genres (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008). Recently, newspapers have improved their websites with 24/7 news cycle or continuous news desk, enhanced overall coverage of breaking news and multimedia story telling, and enabled themselves to build and expand visitor traffic; combining online audience with print, newspapers are now reaching as many readers as ever (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008).

In media effects research, readership of newspapers has been mainly used as a predictor, measured in either exposure or attention, to study its effect on various outcome variables. As a result, we do not know very much about the demographic and individual characteristics of readers of local newspapers, particularly in small communities. Also, not many studies have examined the role of the editorial page (with its editorial rail, cartoonist's art, and letters to the editor) and the "Op-Ed" page (with its variable buffet of local, national and international opinion offerings) (e.g., Roth, 2007). Meanwhile, editorial journalism has been important to both readers and opinion writers and/or editors

for their informational and professional needs (e.g., Media Matters for America, 2008; Roth, 2007). The writings of some columnists reach tens of millions of readers (Media Matters for America, 2008)

Although previous research has repeatedly shown that commonly shared information from local newspapers was positively associated with community-building and could serve as an important underpinning of civic participation (e.g., McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Ray, 1999; Shah, McLoed, & Yoon, 2001), we feel it is important to examine the demographic and individual characteristics of local newspaper readers and editorial journalism users in small communities in the United States, and the factors that may further explain their reading behavior. We believe that understanding of the local newspaper readers in today's new media environment will shed light on the importance of local newspapers and possibly generate meaningful implications for the future of newspapers and editorial journalism, whether it will be online or still in print or both.

To build a theoretical framework for the present study, we will first review the importance of local newspapers and their links to community-building and civic engagement in American life. We will then examine the relationship of media images to news media use and comprehension. Altogether, we will raise three research questions from the literature review and address the questions using a national telephone survey data of 505 adults interviewed in 2007 in small communities in the United States.

Literature review

The importance of local newspaper in building community

First and foremost, local news media function as important sources of news and information and hence satisfy people's informational needs about their communities (e.g., Ray, 1999). For example, local newspapers distribute general information about happenings and civic life in a community that enables individuals to be aware of the important issues facing their communities. In essence, "[t]he newspaper bridges physical distances by enlarging the arena of public discourse and providing links that are necessary for collective behavior and thought" (Ray, 1999, p. 299). Area newspaper is one of the existing social infrastructures that facilitate individual and collective actions of many kinds (e.g., Foley & Edwards, 1999; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005). At the community level, newspapers are the most local medium (Jeffres et al., 2007), as they usually have the widest general coverage of community affairs and activities (e.g., Ray, 1999). Because of their local focus, in-depth, and analytical reporting, local newspapers have the resources and capacity to update citizens on the state of their community (e.g., Jeffres et al., 2007).

Second, local media contribute to public discourse by not only providing information but also serving to legitimate and perpetuate political and social communities (Wilkins, 2000). They also provide effective forums for citizens to meet and question public officials, and to present and discuss their views with others about important local issues (e.g., McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). From the perspective of uses and gratifications, citizens with stronger information and surveillance motives for local news media were more likely to be aware of and participate in civic activities than those who had less or no motivation at all (e.g., Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). Through coverage of community affairs, local newspapers disseminate civic values such as the importance

of being a good American, a sense of community, and taking part in community activities (e.g., Ray, 1999; Rothenbuhler et al., 1996).

Third, newspaper has been the medium where civic journalism has been actively practiced (Jeffres et al., 2007; Lambeth, Meyer, & Thorson, 1998). In an early content analysis aimed at evaluating civic journalism, newspapers that had adopted civic journalism were found to use more locally written stories and rely on fewer wire and syndicated stories than newspapers that had not adopted civic journalism (McMillan et al., 1998). Reading newspaper more frequently was found to be positively correlated with social network and social capital measures such as involvement in community, community attachment, community activities, and organizational ties when demographic variables were statistically controlled (Jeffres et al., 2007).

Jeffres and colleagues (1988) showed that readership of local daily and weekly newspapers was positively correlated with community characteristics, supporting the argument that “strong community ties are major forces leading to reading the local newspaper” (Tichenor et al., 1980, p. 57). Newspaper readership was also positively correlated with civic culture values, social network, community attachment and activities (Jeffres et al., 1988). McLeod and colleagues (1996) found that local newspaper was a strong predictor of one’s “psychological attachment to his or her residential area,” “interpersonal networks that discuss local issues,” “local vs. cosmopolitan happenings,” and “city vs. neighborhood events,” when demographic and structural anchoring variables were statistically controlled.

Although the aforementioned studies have repeatedly confirmed this positive role that local newspapers play in community-building, fewer studies have specifically

examined the role of editorial/opinion journalism as an important component of newspapers. It has been suggested that readership of letters to the editor can influence journalists' decisions on what to print, and promote civic engagement (Hendrickson, 2006; Reader, 2005; Song, 2004). Meanwhile, the increasing popularity of the Internet certainly has many implications to editorial/opinion journalism including letters to the editor, as it has made it easier for audience members to access the information as well as merely copy and paste letters to submit as their own words (e.g., Reader, 2005). The Internet, for example, has been identified by some journalists as the source of the practice of "astroturf," making ready-made letters to the editor available for supporters to submit as genuine grass-roots support (Reader, 2005). Previous research has shown that, without specifically measuring reading habits toward letters to the editor, writing letters was positively associated with age, education, income, and rural residents (Reader, Stempel, & Daniel, 2004).

For their research needs, reading newspaper has been mostly used as a predictor in the previous research (e.g., Jeffres et al., 1988; Jeffres et al., 2007; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). In addition, some previous research did not specify the kind of newspaper in their research design, whether they were measuring national, metropolitan, or community newspapers. For example, the Jeffres et al. 2007 study merely asked respondents the number of days in a week they would read a newspaper. Thus, we are left with less knowledge about the characteristics of those who read a local newspaper on a regular basis, and the factors that may explain their reading behavior. As a result, we propose the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the demographic and individual characteristics of people that read local newspapers in small communities?

RQ2: What are the demographic and individual characteristics of people that read editorials or letters to the editor in local newspapers in small communities?

Effects of media images on news comprehension

How media images affect attitude and news comprehension at the individual level has long been of interest to communication researchers (e.g., Fredin & Kosicki, 1989; Kosicki & McLeod, 1990; Kosicki, Becker, & Fredin, 1994). From the cognitive perspective, readers and viewers of mass communication develop and hold their own views or images about the nature of news media and their products in order to make sense of the information they receive (Kosicki & McLeod, 1990). To a large extent, media images are developed through specific experiences, and they can influence use of news media in terms of attitude and evaluation (Fredin, Kosicki, & Becker, 1996). Other factors that affect media images include, but are not limited to, socioeconomic variables (Kosicki & McLeod, 1990).

In brief, the construct of media image refers to “summaries of attitudes and cognitions based on facts and beliefs” (Kosicki, Becker, & Fredin, 1994, p. 77) or “implicit theories about how the news media operate” (Fredin & Kosicki, 1989, p. 578). Kosicki and McLeod (1990) identified five distinct dimensions or underlying factors of media image – “news information quality,” “patterning of news,” “negative aspects of content,” “dependency and control,” and “special interest” (p. 76). In general, media images are about attributes such as accuracy, completeness, comprehensiveness, and fairness, similar to the elements of journalism (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001). In addition,

media images include attitudes such as trust or credibility as well as cognitions based on facts and beliefs (Fredin & Kosicki, 1989).

Media images can help readers and viewers to decide where to find the information they want and the extent to which they pay attention to the sources so that they will be able to reveal meaningful patterns and make sense of the information they receive (Fredin, Kosicki, & Becker, 1996). Kosicki and McLeod (1990) posited that media images would drive both the amount of attention and specific information-processing strategies in one's learning from the news. Others argued that media images would produce compensatory effects beyond what is explained by media use variables (the Compensatory Model of Media Images, Fredin & Kosicki, 1989). Those who not only use the media but also hold positive media images should be more influenced by the media messages than those who do not use the media and hold negative media images (Kosicki, Becker, & Fredin, 1994; Fredin & Kosicki, 1989).

In their conceptualization of media images, Fredin and colleagues (Fredin & Kosicki, 1989, Kosicki & McLeod, 1990) did not elaborate on factors other than the socioeconomic, political, and cultural variables that are related to formation of the five dimensions of media images. Triandis (1971) argued that cognitive similarities between a source and its audience, for example, favorable versus unfavorable thoughts or attitudes toward the media source, may play a role in determining how the source will be perceived in terms of credibility, accuracy, and affection. A media image may also be influenced by the interaction of one's existing attitudes with the ones he or she identifies with from the source. The role of source characteristics may be one of the psychological

processes or conditions that should be recognized when applying the compensatory model of media images into studies that examine media images and media use.

Previous research has shown that the image of “fragmentation” (the media present unconnected events) was negatively correlated with attention to television political news and political ads, whereas “intrusiveness” (the media pursue what they want to know) was positively correlated with attention to television news, and “popularization” (the media try to attract a large audience) was negatively correlated with attention to political ads (Fredin, Kosicki, & Becker, 1996). Further, when demographics were controlled, increased strength of “fragmentation” and “popularization” led to decreased attention to television news, whereas patterns of high salience of media images were related to increased attention to television news (Fredin, Kosicki, & Becker, 1996).

We therefore propose to extend the literature of media images by addressing the following research question:

RQ3: Will the image of “perceived good local newspaper” explain the reading behavior of local newspaper and editorial journalism in small communities besides their demographic and individual characteristics?

Method

Data and sample

The research questions were addressed using a telephone survey data of 505 adults aged 18 years or older that were interviewed using the random digit dialing (RDD) method in all fifty states of the United States in July through September 2007. The survey was sponsored by the National Newspaper Association (NNA), a not-for-profit trade association representing the owners, publishers and editors of America's community

newspapers. For its research needs, the sample was randomly drawn from all areas whose total population was 25,000 or less. The survey was administered by an academic survey research center in a Midwest university using its computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) system. At least fifteen attempts were made to complete an interview at every sampled telephone number. The response rate of the survey was 51.7%, calculated with the final codes and definitions for surveys provided by The American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR, 2000).

Measurement

Dependent variables

To address the research questions of the present study, two dependent variables were used. The first one was “use of local newspaper,” worded as “how many days in a week do you usually read a local newspaper?” Responses were coded on (0) none, and between one and seven days. Because one of the purposes of the study was to examine the characteristics of those who read a local newspaper in a small community, those who answered “none” were excluded from the data.

The second dependent variable, “reading of editorials or letters to the editor,” was one question item: “how often do you read editorials or letters to the editor in the local newspaper?” Responses were coded on a 7-point scale with (1) being “never” and (7) being “very often.”

Independent variables

The independent variable of the study was an average index derived from eleven question items to capture readers’ “perceived good local newspaper” ($\alpha = .95$): “(my newspaper) is a newspaper that I really trust,” (my newspaper) really understands the

things that are of special interest and importance to people who live in this area,” “(my newspaper) has stories for people with my particular interests,” “(my newspaper) really cares about people like me,” “(my newspaper) does a better job than any other news source of helping me understand the news,” “(my newspaper) provides more background and depth than any other news source,” “(my newspaper) is extremely useful to me personally,” “(my newspaper) is very well organized and easy to get through,” “(my newspaper) makes it very easy to find the information I want,” “(my newspaper) gives me the information I need to hold government, civic and business leaders to a high level of accountability,” and “(my newspaper) does an excellent job investigating claims and statements made by government, civic and business leaders.” Responses were coded on a 7-point scale from (1) “does not describe my newspaper at all” to (7) “describes my newspaper extremely well.”

After respondents indicated the number of days in a week in which they would read a local newspaper, they were asked about the names of the newspapers. Through CATI programming, the names were used to replace “my newspaper” in the parenthesis in all the eleven question items during the data collection.

Demographic and control variables

The demographic variables were typical measures of age, gender, education, income, and ethnicity. Four structural anchoring variables such as length of residence, home ownership, and having children younger than 18 at home were included because of their influences on use of local newspapers as identified in previous research (e.g., Fleming, Thorson, & Peng, 2005; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Shah, Kwak, & Holbert, 2001; Shah, McLeod, Yoon, 2001).

Analytical procedures

Two hierarchical regression equations were computed to examine the factors associated with readership of local newspapers and editorials or letters to the editor. For example, in Table 3, the demographic and control variables were entered first. This was followed by the measure of “perceived good local newspaper.” The significance of the regression models was assessed by examining the standard incremental *F*-tests (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Alpha was set at 0.05 for the incremental *F*- and *t*-tests.

Results

Descriptive statistics

As shown in Table 1, the average age of the 505 respondents was 53.9 years (*SD* = 17.5). On average, they have lived at their present addresses for 15.7 years (*SD* = 15). Fifty-seven percent (57%) of the sample were female, and 43% male. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of the respondents were White, and nine percent were minorities (e.g., Black, Latino/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, and etc.). Eighty-three percent (83%) of them owned their homes. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the sample had children younger than 18 living in their households.

On average, the respondents had an education between “vocational/community college” and “some university but no degree” (*M* = 14.6, *SD* = 2.2). The average annual household income was between “\$25,000 but less than \$50,000” and “\$50,000 but less than \$75,000” (*M* = 3.7, *SD* = 1.4). Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the respondents had access to the Internet at home.

Readership of local newspapers and editorials or letters to the editor

In small communities whose population sizes were 25,000 or less, 83% of the 505 respondents reported that they read a local newspaper ranging from one day to seven days a week. On average, the 419 local newspaper readers read 4.2 days in a week ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 2.6$). On a 7-point scale where 1 was “never” and 7 was “very often,” the readers gave an average score of 4.7 ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 2.2$). Pearson Correlation analysis (2-tailed) showed that readership of local newspapers was moderately correlated with that of editorials or letters to the editor ($r = .17$, $p < .000$).

RQ1 attempted to identify the demographic and individual characteristics of local newspaper readers in small communities. (As a result, those who did not read local newspapers were excluded from the analysis.) As shown in Table 2, age was positively and significantly related to readership of local newspapers ($\beta = .39$, $p \leq .000$), suggesting that older adults read local newspapers more than younger adults. Gender was negatively and significantly related to reading of local newspapers ($\beta = -.12$, $p \leq .05$), showing that women read local newspapers more than men. Income was positively associated with the dependent variable ($\beta = .15$, $p \leq .01$). Other demographic and control variables such as education, ethnicity, length of residence, home ownership, having children under 18, and access to the Internet did not reach the level of statistical significance. Altogether, these variables accounted for 16.4% of the variance of readership of local newspapers (Table 2).

In RQ2, we wanted to learn about the demographic and individual characteristics of those who read editorials or letters to the editor in local newspapers in small communities. Table 3 displays the result of hierarchical regression analysis. Again, age was a significant predictor of readership of editorials or letters to the editor ($\beta = .37$, $p \leq .000$). This suggests that in small communities older adults read editorials or letters to

the editor more than younger adults. Gender was negatively associated with readership of editorials or letters to the editor ($\beta = -.11, p \leq .05$), indicating that women used editorial journalism more than men did. Also significantly and positively related to the dependent variable were Caucasians ($\beta = .11, p \leq .05$) and households with children younger than 18 ($\beta = .11, p \leq .05$). The rest of the demographic and control variables were not significant factors. Combined, all the demographic and control variables contributed 15.4% in variance to that of reading editorials or letters to the editor (Table 3).

RQ3 asked whether the image of “perceived good local newspaper” would explain the readership of local newspapers and use of editorial journalism in small communities beyond demographic and individual characteristics. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Beyond the demographic and control variables, “perceived good local newspaper” did play an important role in explaining readership of local newspapers ($\beta = .12, p \leq .01$) as well as use of editorials or letters to the editor ($\beta = .21, p \leq .000$). The media image measure alone contributed 1.3% and 4.1% in variances, respectively, to those of the two dependent variables.

Discussion

In this study, we raised three research questions to identify demographic and individual characteristics of those who read local newspapers and editorials or letters to the editor in small communities. We also wanted to see if the image of “perceived good local newspaper” would further explain the reading behavior beyond the readers’ demographic and individual differences. The results of the study demonstrate that demographic measures of age, gender, income, ethnicity, and having children younger than 18 played an important role in explaining the reading behavior of local newspapers

and use of editorial journalism in small communities. It also shows that how people perceived local newspapers was an important factor in how they used local newspapers and read editorials or letters to the editor.

Concerning RQ1, three important demographic variables, age, gender, and income, emerged as important characteristics of local newspaper readers from the analysis. The finding that age was positively associated with readership of local newspapers (Table 2) suggests that older adults in small communities use local newspapers to satisfy their information needs about the communities in which they live more than their younger counterparts. Local newspapers also seem to be more attractive to women and households with higher incomes in small communities, as the present data showed. These findings suggest that local newspapers have a viable readership in small communities. They also offer meaningful implications to the business model of local newspapers, as older adults, women, and households with higher incomes are usually targeted audience members of both national and local advertisers.

Local newspapers were continuing to serve as an important source of information about community affairs and activities in small communities whose population sizes were 25,000 or less, as 83% of the 505 respondents read a local newspaper between one and seven days a week. In addition, majority of the readers often read editorials or letters to the editor. These descriptive results are consistent with previous research (e.g., Fleming, Thorson, & Peng, 2005; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999). Although national and metropolitan newspapers have suffered from continuing decline in readership over the last three decades, local newspapers remain in many ways the most important of all local news media, and one of the existing social infrastructures that facilitate individual and

collective actions (e.g., Foley & Edwards, 1999; Media Matters for America, 2008; Moy, Xenos, & Hess, 2005). As more newspapers and audience members now move online for news (e.g., Media Matters for America, 2008; Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008), the strengths of local newspapers and the demographic characteristics of local newspapers readers as evident in the present study should be adequately heeded when local news content is presented online.

In addressing RQ2, age, gender, ethnicity, and having children younger than 18 were identified to play an important role in explaining readership of editorials or letters to the editor in local newspapers (Table 3). Although we only asked about editorials and letters to the editor, these findings suggest that editorial journalism (a broader definition includes editorial rail, cartoonist's art, letters to the editor, and the "Op-Ed" page), as a key component of local newspapers (e.g., Media Matters for America, 2008), also has a solid readership in small communities in America. If readership of editorial journalism including letters to the editor can promote civic engagement as suggested in previous research (Hendrickson, 2006; Reader, 2005; Song, 2004), then we may see the impact more salient on older adults, women, Caucasians, and those with children younger than 18, because they read editorials or letters to the editor more often than other segments of the population. These findings provide meaningful implications for future editorial and opinion journalism, as the National Conference of Editorial Writers (NCEW), along with the Kettering Foundation and other researcher partners, is now planning to build opinion page models online (Roth, 2007).

The present study also provided adequate support for the Compensatory Model of Media Images (Fredin & Kosicki, 1989), as the media image measure of "perceived good

local newspaper” displayed compensatory effects (contributed 4.1% and 1.3% in variances, respectively) on readership of editorials or letters to the editor and of local newspapers, when the demographic variables were statistically controlled (Tables 2 & 3). These findings suggest that media image is a useful construct in explaining use of local news media (Fredin, Kosicki, & Becker, 1996). The fact that perceived good local newspaper was significantly associated with readership of local newspapers and use of editorial journalism implies that readers form their perceptions of the local newspapers they read through cognitive and other experiences, and their perceptions, if favorable, are likely to reinforce their continuing reading behavior (Kosicki, Becker, & Fredin, 1994; Triandis, 1971).

Although it is usually the editor’s decision to determine what community affairs and activities to cover and what editorials or columns or letters to the editor to run in a local newspaper, it is necessary that editors understand the importance of various images readers are likely to develop about their products. As evident in the present study, if readers perceive local newspapers to be trustworthy, understanding their communities, caring about people like themselves, providing more background and depth than other news sources, and useful to themselves personally, it is likely that local newspapers will continue to have a viable readership. As people in small communities continue to rely on local newspapers for news and opinion, it makes great sense for journalists and their news organizations to include readers in their day-to-day decision making on what local content and editorial or opinion pages to print.

Although this study adds to the knowledge of who read local newspapers and editorials or letters to the editor, in-depth analyses of why local newspapers were more

attractive to older adults, women, and households with higher incomes in small community will be necessary not only for better understanding of the readers but for continuing success of local newspapers, either still in print or online, in the future.

Limitations

Because the sample was drawn from areas whose total population sizes were 25,000 or less in all fifty states of the United States, the average age of the respondents ($M = 53.9$ years, $SD = 17.5$. Table 1) was higher than in a typical national sample. Meanwhile, the average level of education was lower than in other general public surveys. These differences may have affected the results of the study. For example, surprisingly, education was not a significant factor in explaining either readership of local newspapers (Table 2) or use of editorial journalism (Table 3).

Although the study provided support to the relationship between perceived good local newspaper and use of local newspapers, causality of directions is not clear. For example, given the correlational nature of the study design, one may well argue that the use of editorial journalism in local newspapers was responsible for development of the media image. Certainly, a longitudinal design that permits time-lagged analyses would enable future researchers to better examine the relationship.

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TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables Used in the Analysis

Variables	Mean	s.d.	Range
Demographics			
Age	53.93	17.52	18-98
Length of residence ^a	15.66	15.02	0-70
Own or rent home ^b	.84	.37	0-1
Having children under 18 ^c	.26	.44	0-1
Education	14.65	2.23	1-19
Ethnicity ^d	.89	.26	0-1
Income	3.67	1.42	1-6
Gender ^e	.43	.49	0-1
Control variables			
Access to the Internet ^f at home	.67	.47	0-1
Use of local newspaper			
Days in a week to read local newspaper	4.19	2.58	1-7
Readership of editorials or letters to the editor	4.74	2.15	1-7
Perceived good local newspaper			
Perceived good local newspaper (average index)	4.86	1.43	1-7

Note. a. 0 = less than one year
b, c, e, f. yes = 1, no = 0.
d. Caucasian = 1, minorities = 0.

TABLE 2
Hierarchical Regression Predicting Readership of Local Newspapers

<i>Readership of local newspapers</i> (<i>n</i> = 398)	
Step 1	
Age	0.39***
Gender ^a	-0.12*
Education	-0.01
Income	0.15**
Ethnicity ^b	0.05
Length of residence	0.03
Home ownership ^c	-0.02
Having children under 18 ^d	0.03
Access to the Internet at home	0.03
Incremental R ² (%)	16.4***
Step 2	
Perceived good local newspaper	0.12**
Incremental R ² (%)	1.3*
Total R ² (%)	17.7

Note. a. male = 1, female = 0. b. White = 1, African American = 0.
c. own = 1, rent = 0. d. Yes = 1, No = 0.
Entries are standardized beta coefficients. They were derived from the final model.
$p \leq .10$. * $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

TABLE 3
Hierarchical Regression Predicting Readership of Editorials/Letters to the Editor

<i>Readership of editorials/letters to the editor</i> (<i>n</i> = 398)	
Step 1	
Age	0.37***
Gender ^a	-0.11*
Education	0.08
Income	-0.08
Ethnicity ^b	0.11*
Length of residence	0.04
Home ownership ^c	0.04
Having children under 18 ^d	0.11*
Access to the Internet at home	0.09
Incremental R ² (%)	15.4***
Step 2	
Perceived good local newspaper	0.21***
Incremental R ² (%)	4.1***
Total R ² (%)	19.5

Note. a. male = 1, female = 0. b. White = 1, African American = 0.
c. own = 1, rent = 0. d. Yes = 1, No = 0.
Entries are standardized beta coefficients. They were derived from the final model.
#*p* ≤ .10. **p* ≤ .05. ***p* ≤ .01. ****p* ≤ .001.