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SUPERMARKET TABLOID INFLUENCE ON
MAINSTREAM DAILY NEWSPAPER
EDITORIAL CONTENT

by

William Glenn Cook
Bachelor of Arts
University of Arizona
1992

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

Supermarket Tabloid Influence on Mainstream Daily Newspaper Editorial Content

by

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Daily newspapers’ content is influenced by the tabloid press in two ways. First, the dailies serve as a watchdog by criticizing tabloids’ sensational news, covering litigation against tabloids, and allowing the subjects of tabloid reports to rebut or criticize allegations tabloids make against them. Second, the dailies occasionally follow up on or repeat stories first reported by tabloids. This study compared the content of three weekly supermarket tabloids — the National Enquirer, Globe, and Star — against the content of six daily newspapers — the Las Vegas Review-Journal, Las Vegas Sun, Reno Gazette-Journal, Los Angeles Times, New York Times, and USA Today — over a 26-week period. The content of each daily newspaper was influenced by the tabloids to differing degrees, but the influence amounted to a few paragraphs per week, and the majority of tabloid-influenced reports were published in sections dedicated to news of entertainment, celebrities, and recognizable figures.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the 1990s, many sensational issues covered by both the tabloid press and mainstream media have seen the tabloids set the pace. From allegations of sexual misconduct by President William Jefferson Clinton, through rape charges against William Kennedy Smith, accusations of child molestation by singer Michael Jackson, and the sensational murder trial of O.J. Simpson, the tabloid press has chased scandalous stories relentlessly, committing more resources than their mainstream competitors. As the mainstream media increasingly follow this lead and try to work through the perceptions of sleaziness that accompany these stories, they still find that sometimes they cannot measure up to the tabloids (Gleick, 1995). Los Angeles Times media critic David Shaw says this trend — the tabloid press setting the news agenda for the mainstream media — may be the single greatest ethical problem confronting newspaper editors today. Stories that have been reported by the tabloid press sometimes are deemed acceptable for publication in the mainstream media because the information already is part of public discourse. The credibility of the story’s source or the publication that reported it becomes irrelevant. “Once on the air or in print . . . [the stories] take on a life of their own. Editors and
producers at mainstream news organizations seem terrified of ignoring them. So they abandon their decision-making responsibility to the titans of the tabs” (Shaw, 1994, p. 4).

This problem facing the mainstream media became evident in 1996, when a weekly supermarket tabloid, the Star, reported that Dick Morris, an adviser to Clinton, frequently divulged White House information to a prostitute. A group of photojournalists from the Star spent eight days and nights at a room in the Jefferson Hotel in Washington, D.C., waiting for Morris to appear in his favorite room at the resort. The Star dedicates most of its editorial content to celebrities and the sensational, and normally would not pursue a publicly unrecognizable political figure like Morris, but it was August 1996, and the Democratic National Convention would begin in Chicago in a matter of days. A month earlier, the prostitute, Sherrie Rowlands, had offered the Star details of her relationship with Morris in exchange for payment. Star editors investigated her claims and were satisfied with their accuracy, but they felt they needed a photograph of Morris with Rowlands to be able to break the story. On August 22, Morris called Rowlands and requested a rendezvous. Still and video photographers captured images of Morris and Rowlands sitting on the room’s balcony in bathrobes by daylight and embracing in the dark. The Star found Rowlands’ relationship with Morris newsworthy because Morris helped plan Clinton’s campaign emphasis on family values, and because Rowlands said she was allowed to secretly listen in on telephone conversations between the two men, alleging a serious breach of confidentiality. The Star gave Rowlands a five-figure check for the exclusive rights to her story (Garneau, 1996).

The story broke the morning of Clinton’s address to the convention, not in the Star, but in the New York Post. The Star offered the story to the Chicago Tribune and
the Wall Street Journal first. Both newspapers refused to publish it because the Star would not let editors talk to Rowlands. The New York Post accepted the Star’s offer and gave it front-page placement, with the teaser, “Top Clinton aide leaked White House secrets to hooker.” The Boston Herald also ran a shorter version of the story that day in its gossip column. Morris promptly resigned his position in the Clinton campaign without responding directly to Rowlands’ allegations. The story put the tabloid press in the national spotlight because they reported a story that forced the country’s mainstream media to follow.

The Problem

With aggressive reporting, sensational publicity, surprising cooperation from two major metropolitan daily newspapers, and checkbook journalism, the Star had broken and spread the Morris story. Checkbook journalism is the practice of paying sources for publishable information. The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center tracked coverage of the story in 14 major daily newspapers. It found that 10 newspapers, including the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune, presented the story as a second lead or a sidebar to Clinton’s address (Garneau, 1996), meaning the Morris story received either the second-best play on the front page or appeared as a separate article within the front page’s main story. Four other newspapers, including the Washington Post and USA Today, linked the two stories with a single headline (Bennet, 1996). None of the stories could mention the Morris resignation without reporting on Rowlands’ confessions to the Star.

The Miami Herald, however, chose to report on the story by running a front-page editorial attacking its credibility. “The shame of it is, the story stinks,” political editor

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Tom Fiedler wrote in that column. "It stinks because of its tawdry subject: it stinks because of its source; it stinks, because even if true in the slightest aspect, it is irrelevant to the business of the Democratic Party and the national election" (Bennet, 1996, p. 8).

New York Post editor Ken Chandler disagreed with Fiedler. "When you have a story where a senior adviser to the president is allowing a hooker to eavesdrop on phone conversations with the president, that's a valid news story," Chandler said. "Those who don't think it's a valid news story may be in the wrong business" (Gameau, 1996, p. 24).

Jim O'Shea, deputy managing editor of the Chicago Tribune, said his newspaper debated running the story even after the New York Post broke it, and that if Morris had not resigned, they might not have reported on it at all (Gameau, 1996). While the mainstream media debated the story's significance and credibility, the Star rolled more than five million copies of its edition off the press, selling about half those at the cover price of $1.39 (Gameau, 1996).

Members of the mainstream media always have been among the harshest critics of the tabloids and the practice of checkbook journalism because editors fear most sources are willing to fabricate or exaggerate stories if they are paid enough. "I regard it [credibility] as the crown jewel of journalism. And when you pay for stories, you tarnish that credibility," said Sig Gissler, a professor at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University and a former editor of the Milwaukee Journal (Sullivan, 1997, p. 14).

But the tabloids continue to sell their product, both in print and on television. Intense competition in the coverage of national events often has forced the mainstream media to play at the tabloid level — and the mainstream media often finds it is not nearly as good at it (Peder, 1996). Because of the competitive media marketplace, news can be seen as a
product, and readers as consumers. Editorial content today is based partially on the values of these consumers, not solely on the values of editorial gatekeepers. Newspapers cannot depend exclusively on journalistic integrity in determining which news events and issues are newsworthy. It is a deliberate change from the journalists-decide-the-news mentality that used to prevail in newsrooms (McManus, 1994).

The tabloids almost never cover domestic and international issues, but take the lead on news that involves celebrity, the sensational, and sleaziness. Although many tabloid stories may not be verifiable and quote paid sources, the impact of some stories forces the mainstream media into a chase that causes them to abandon traditional protocol and policy. This was demonstrated most clearly during the trial of William Kennedy Smith, a nephew of Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy who was charged with raping a woman on the Kennedy estate in Palm Beach, Florida. News outlets generally do not release the names of victims in sexual assault cases to protect their privacy. However, the New York Times broke tradition and standard policy and reported the woman's name: Patricia Bowman. Their justification was that NBC News had released Bowman's name the night before. And the reason for NBC News' disclosure? The network reported Bowman's name because a supermarket tabloid already had published it (Shaw, 1994).

Gennifer Flowers' allegations of a 12-year affair with Clinton also sent the mainstream media scurrying, some not exactly sure what to do with the story, but deciding to publish it anyway. On January 23, 1992, as the presidential campaign was warming up, the Star faxed advanced copies of Flowers' story to major news organizations and to Clinton's campaign. The Star edition would not arrive in supermarkets until January 27, but its fax put the story on ABC News and NBC News that night, and in the New York
Times, the Washington Post and almost every other major daily newspaper in the country the next day. Newspaper editorials and television panels mourned their association with a supermarket tabloid, even as their other pages and programs were filled with details of the story (Winch, 1997). ABC News anchor Peter Jennings said he opposed coverage of Flowers’ allegations, but he believed “every affiliate in the country would say, ‘What the hell's going on? Don’t they know a story when they see it?’” (Shaw, 1994, p. 4).

This recent trend in media coverage warrants inquiry. Many questions about the frequency and effects of tabloid influence have not been investigated or answered. Does the content of tabloids set the news agenda for the mainstream media? How often do mainstream daily newspapers follow stories first reported by tabloids? How much of the editorial content of mainstream daily newspapers is influenced by the tabloid press? Do the mainstream media damage the sinking reputation of journalism by following tabloid stories or by publishing information attributed to tabloid sources? Do the mainstream media blur the line between themselves and the tabloid press by following or reporting on tabloid stories?

Thesis Structure

Chapter I of this thesis will define who make up the tabloid press and the mainstream media, and how their methods of journalism have evolved. It will examine whether tabloid press influence on the mainstream media is significant, why it should be studied, and pose a research question. Chapter II will document previous research on issues and topics related to the tabloid press and theories on editorial gatekeeping, content, and content selection, and in doing so, demonstrate a lack of research on tabloid
influence. Chapter III will outline the study's method and procedure. Chapter IV will present the study's results. It will break down six major stories the tabloids covered during the 26-week research period, and how six mainstream daily newspapers responded to them: Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky, the report from independent counsel Kenneth Starr, and the effect the affair and report had on Clinton and his family; Paula Jones' cosmetic surgery on her nose; "Ally McBeal" star Calista Flockhart's weight; the murder investigation of slain child beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey; the life and death of Britain's Princess Diana; and the personal lives of television personalities Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford. Chapter V will offer discussion on the results, observations and conclusions on the study, discuss the study's limitations, and present opportunities for further research.

Definition of Terms

The term tabloid refers to the size of a printed publication, but also represents a sensational style of journalism. Most daily newspapers in North America are published in a broadsheet format, 13½ inches wide by 22½ inches long. Some daily newspapers, however, are printed in a tabloid format. Newspapers like the New York Post, the New York Daily News, the Philadelphia News, the Boston Herald, the Chicago Sun-Times, and the Rocky Mountain News of Denver are considered tabloids because their periodicals are about half the size of a broadsheet, 9½ inches wide by 11½ inches deep, 11 inches wide by 17 inches deep, or some other variation. These publications incorporate big, bold headlines and large photographs with coverage of news (Stephens, 1988). Weekly publications like the National Enquirer, the Globe, and the Star also conform to the size requirements of tabloids, but because of their preference for sensational, scandalous
stories, usually about celebrities, and their dedication to aggressive reporting and checkbook journalism, they have helped define the term beyond the size of a publication to a classification of media. Daily newspapers and weekly newsmagazines such as Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News & World Report are considered members of the mainstream media, or highbrow media (Bessie, 1969), because they vastly outnumber tabloid publications, have millions more readers, shun the reporting methods of the tabloid press, and are perceived as more credible (Winch, 1997). Some daily tabloid newspapers such as the New York Post, the New York Daily News, and the Boston Herald exist in both realms because they sensationalize stories with brash, colloquial headlines, but avoid checkbook journalism and cover local and national issues like crime, politics, economics, and sports. Some television media, including programs like “Hard Copy” and “American Journal,” have earned the designation as tabloid press because their sensational storytelling methods and journalistic practices mirror those of tabloids like the National Enquirer, the Star, and the Globe. Their mainstream counterparts are major network news divisions such as NBC News, and cable networks such as CNN. For the purposes of this study, publications including the National Enquirer, the Globe, and the Star are considered the tabloid press, and publications like the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, and other daily newspapers and network television news divisions are considered the mainstream media.

The Evolution of the Tabloid Press

The appeal of the tabloid press dates back well before the advent of the printing press. For centuries, peoples around the world have been fascinated by the lurid and
scandalous, and have reveled in the opportunity to criticize or cast out those who failed in important endeavors or demonstrated behavior that strayed from moral standards. Marvin Harris, a professor of anthropology at the University of Florida, says traditions of gossip can be traced to many primitive and early cultures (Getlin, 1998). Members of primitive tribes gleefully seized the chance to throw mud at the elite or those who brought shame to the village. A tradition in the Roman Saturnalia had masters and servants switch roles, with the servants happily insulting their keepers while they had the chance. Eskimo suitors would tear into each other in the form of wickedly cynical songs, with the winner claiming the woman and the loser going home. Haitian villagers sang songs of a scandalous nature that insulted local leaders (Getlin, 1998).

Early in this millennium, European monarchies and churches were the primary sources of information for the masses. Their books and communications, however, often were too sophisticated for their largely uneducated constituencies and congregations. The publication of newsbooks in the 16th and 17th centuries gave the public an alternative, more appealing source of information. These newsbooks were highly sensational, telling stories of graphic crimes and sex scandals in a level of detail contrary to normal standards of the times. Killers were “butchers,” slaying victims were not just stabbed but “unboweled and quartered,” and prostitutes were “filthy whores.” Sex and violence remained the preferred topics through the 18th century in underground pamphlets. French publications were particularly unafraid of the ruling elite, at times describing Queen Marie Antoinette masturbating and accusing King Louis XVI of impotence. Although their content was considered disparaging, unlearned, and sensational by society’s elites, these publications helped dissolve distinctions between social classes and spawned an appetite for
information in a group of people who long had gone without it (Stephens, 1988). All of these examples allowed common people to live vicariously and believe that whatever shortcomings their existence had, their lives were not nearly as bad as they could be (Getlin, 1998).

Pamphleteers soon took to criticizing governments in addition to relaying tales of crime and sex. They helped give rise to the movement for American independence from Britain through aggressive denunciation of the motherland and calls for mobilization of forces. The Founding Fathers of the United States, however, soon found that criticism of the government did not end with independence. A newly free press took advantage of its right to aggressively attack officials and their decisions, society figures, and even other members of the media. Federalist President John Adams attempted to cut off the sharp tongue of the press in 1798 by signing the Sedition Act, which made printed or spoken criticism of the U.S. government a crime. Although the phrasing of the act allowed truth as a defense against sedition, the sweeping control of the Federalist Party in Congress and judicial offices made partisan criticism and opinion almost impossible to prove accurate. France's Napoleon Bonaparte briefly experimented with a free press in 1789, but found newspapers much too effective in rallying and strengthening opposition factions, so he returned the country to a state-controlled press. For a time, the United States appeared headed in that same direction, but Republican President Thomas Jefferson won election partially on the voters' disgust with the Sedition Act, and Congress allowed it to lapse (Stephens, 1988).

The start of the 1800s brought booming growth to the newspaper industry in the United States; liberated from government interference, it was the freest, most prosperous
press in the world, with publications serving almost every settlement in the country. As
the post-revolutionary period calmed, newspapers turned to the business of making a
profit. But by gearing their periodicals to affluent readers and advertisers, some
newspapers alienated poor urban citizens and rural residents, who could not afford to pay
more than a penny per day for their news. With some newspapers selling for as much as
six cents per copy, circulations flattened. A new era in popular journalism dawned in 1833
when Benjamin Day introduced the Sun in New York. Its format presented strong
coverage of crime issues, but introduced light, emotional human interest stories to attract
a mass audience. The Sun sold for a penny per copy, and with the introduction of the
steam-powered printing press, Day could roll off thousands of copies of his newspapers
every hour. This led to a new wave of penny newspapers that preferred the crime and
human interest format to political news. While these newspapers included enough political
and economic news to involve poorer readers in the political process, coverage was
dominated by its original format. Other penny papers were introduced, included the New
York Tribune, which debuted in 1841, and the New York Times, which began publishing
in 1851 (Stephens, 1988.) The Police Gazette debuted in New York in 1845, although no
one at the time considered it a true newspaper. Its missions were to expose the
underworld, unmask the horrors of crime, and demonize crooks. Details of sex crimes and
murders were so lurid they sometimes led to violent opposition from police and criminals

The years immediately following the Civil War brought profound changes to the
United States. People by the millions left farms, plantations, and rural life in favor of
bustling urban environments. They were joined by millions of international immigrants in
spawning the rush to industrialization. Financial empires were built, railroad and postage route mileage leaped geometrically, and factories and offices sprang up everywhere. In a span of 30 years, the physical characteristics of human living had undergone radical changes, and the newspaper industry enjoyed those transformations. Faster linotypes and printing presses were available, typewriters were highly efficient, and wires made news almost instantaneous. The growth of public education made the United States more literate than ever, expanding the newspaper industry's customer base. Periodicals' circulations expanded beyond the thousands into the tens of thousands and the hundreds of thousands (Bessie, 1969).

Newspapers occasionally flirted with the idea of luring a more respected, affluent, wealthy readership, but frequently returned to a more popular model of journalism. The New York Times, the New York Evening Post, and other newspapers successfully built readership on coverage of politics, economics, science, and national and world events. Crime coverage was limited, and the newspapers tried to avoid sensationalism. During coverage of the 1893 stock crisis, an Evening Post reporter had to remove details of a financier openly weeping because it was judged too sensational by editors (Bessie, 1969).

Many European weekly and monthly publications experimented with wood-engraved illustrations on an irregular basis through the 1840s, and U.S. weeklies and monthlies did the same in the 1850s (Becker, 1992). The Daily Graphic, which began publishing in New York in 1872, became the first illustrated daily newspaper in the United States. The front page always was covered with drawings, and the inside pages included only brief, colorful, sensational articles. The Daily Graphic pioneered the process of granulating photography, a primitive photoengraving method that allowed publication of
actual photos. Pictures widely were viewed by the public as proof of a story's accuracy and brought life to normally dull, text-dominated pages. The process revolutionized the industry. The Police Gazette was taken over in 1876 by Richard Fox, who established a new mandate: fill pages with pictures. Illustrators complemented the melodramatic coverage of crime and expanded coverage of sports and theater with dominating drawings (Bessie, 1969). Although the photographic process was available to the newspaper industry by the 1880s, it took much too long to convert photographs into half-tone images, which were needed to reproduce clearly on printing presses. The deadline requirements of daily newspapers, some of which produced multiple editions every day, kept most periodicals free of pictures. By the late 1890s, photographs still only appeared on an irregular basis (Becker, 1992).

The exception to that trend, however, was the inception of yellow journalism. Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, who had built successful newspaper empires that stretched from coast to coast, oversaw a fierce competition between their New York dailies. Pulitzer's World and Hearst's Morning Journal emphasized pictures in sensational coverage (Becker, 1992). The concept of hell-raising journalism was nothing new, but yellow journalism proved to be a skillful adaptation of all that was scandalous and sensational, dramatizing all conflicts and crimes. And it proved to be highly lucrative, too. New York was crawling with millions of semi-literate workers who struggled too much day to day to worry about the highbrow news of politics and economics. Pulitzer believed the only way to attract the common reader was to sensationalize everything in the news (Bessie, 1969).

The birth of yellow journalism is attributed to the overdramatization of Spanish
atrocities in Cuba, subsequent coverage of the Spanish-American War, and the popular, off-color comic, “The Yellow Kid.” The World took up other popular causes like exposing bribery, demonizing crooked cops, and campaigning for funds for the Statue of Liberty. Its human interest features were flowery and sentimental. Its exaggerated writing was entertaining. And it made enormous profits by incessantly manipulating the primal wonders of love, sin, death, money, and violence. Pulitzer "taught the daily newspaper to be a melange of fact and fancy drawing upon every source of human curiosity and playing the full stream of its excitement over an ever-increasing multitude. . . . Daily journalism dropped the passivity of one who merely records and took up the more exciting task of fashioning its own raw materials" (Bessie, 1969, p. 67). Hearst was the most successful copycat of Pulitzer’s World, starting with his acquisition of the San Francisco Examiner and leading to his purchase of the Morning Journal. He spared no expense to lure World employees to come work for him, hiring away most of Pulitzer’s editors in the process. Hearst was more liberal than Pulitzer, making him unafraid of misinformation and half-truths. Hearst’s original contributions to the paper were a comics section and grossly inflammatory editorials. The World and the Morning Journal competed viciously for stories and readers, wiping out competition and driving their combined circulations above 3 million at one point in the early 20th century (Bessie, 1969).

The growth of London’s press paralleled New York’s newspaper wars during the period. The industry standard in Britain and the United States was a large newspaper, six to eight columns across and deep enough to fold in half. Publications that emphasized brief, colorful, sensational stories were quite popular in Britain, too. British publisher Alfred Harmsworth introduced a new format in 1903, when the Daily Mirror began
publishing. It was sensational, illustrated, amusing, geared toward women readers, cost only a half-penny, and was much, much smaller than its competitors. It was called a **tabloid**, a term coined by the British pharmaceutical industry in the 1880s for a smaller version of the tablet, because it was much easier to swallow and digest (Stephens, 1988). By 1909 the **Daily Mirror** was being published on mainland Europe, had a circulation of more than 1 million, and had inspired several copycats (Bessie, 1969). The first U.S. tabloid was launched in 1919, when the **Daily News** began publishing in New York. Readers loved its bold headlines, amusing style, and pictures. Because of its size, readers found it easy to carry and read on trains and trolleys (Stephens, 1988).

The highbrow newspapers, their loyal readers, and most of the officials ridiculed by the sensational press and the tabloids frequently criticized this form of newspaper for decades, even equating the newspapers to the black plague (Bessie, 1969). By 1937, New York had only four newspapers. The highbrow broadsheet **New York Times** and **Herald Tribune** had a combined circulation of almost 900,000. The tabloid **Daily News** and **Mirror** had a combined circulation of almost 2.5 million. Tabloids forced mainstream, broadsheet newspapers to incorporate more photography and graphic images in their periodicals to successfully compete (Becker, 1992; Bessie, 1969). The tabloids, some of which became known as scandal sheets, stayed true to their methods, sensationalizing everything from executions to pregnancies, and exposing celebrities’ marital problems and personal vices. The murder trial of actor Fatty Arbuckle and the kidnapping and murder trial in the death of aviator Charles Lindbergh’s son were boons to media profits (Getlin, 1998).

*Sensational stories of crime, sin, and corruption did much more than titillate*
readers: They helped fortify the moral standards and values of the public. The tabloid press helped continue centuries-old traditions of exposing the faults of the elite, the shortcomings of those in leadership positions, and the lurid details of crimes unimaginable to most people. James Lull, a communication professor at San Jose State University, says that while such scandals can create emotional responses and partisan attitudes, they help bring issues to an honorable end and reinstate a feeling of order in society. Readers have no problem delineating the good from the bad, and in most cases justice is served, according to Lull (Getlin, 1998).

The yellow journalism model continued to work for tabloids in following decades as, once again, the nation drastically changed around the newspapers. The entertainment industry mushroomed. Motion pictures and music became staples in American culture, and the growth of television programming in the 1950s and 1960s introduced even more celebrities to audiences. The power of popularity and celebrity, along with further improvements in technology and transportation, helped give birth to a national tabloid press. What began as the New York Enquirer in 1925 was purchased by Generoso Pope in 1952 and became the National Enquirer. The Globe began publishing in 1955. The Star began publishing in 1974. These weekly publications followed models of success from decades earlier, winning readers through illustrated sensationalism, celebrity, human interest, crime, and sex. Like many of their predecessors, business was highly lucrative. A 1977 National Enquirer cover of Elvis Presley's body lying in a coffin sold 6.6 million copies (Turner, 1998).

These national tabloids and the mainstream print media, for the most part, existed in their separate realms for decades, but many critics and observers agree the line between
the two has begun to blur in recent years (Garneau, 1994; Kurtz, 1993; Shaw, 1994). Many mainstream daily newspapers began dedicating entire pages to news involving celebrities, gossip, and lighter fare in an effort to combat flat and declining circulations (McManus, 1994). President Clinton’s escapades increasingly brought the tabloid press and the Washington press corps together, and O.J. Simpson’s sensational trial had the two sides openly competing against one another for stories. With the growth of the Internet and cable and satellite television, consumers have more and more media outlets to choose from in receiving information, but because of commitments to work and family, no additional time to dedicate to reading or watching news. “We have too much media bombardment now, and you simply can’t expect people to watch the same story over and over,” University of California, San Diego political science professor Michael Schudson said. “The public begins to screen things out on its own” (Getlin, 1998, p. A10). As a result, the tabloids and the mainstream media became rivals. “We compete with everybody,” boasted one tabloid reporter. “The gap has closed” (Turner, 1998, p. 70).

National Enquirer editor Steve Coz, named one of Time magazine’s 25 most influential people in 1997 for extending the reach of tabloids, seems intent on closing the gap between the National Enquirer and the mainstream media even further. He has hired some of his staff members from mainstream dailies like the Washington Post, the Miami Herald, the Philadelphia Enquirer, and the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel. Coz says he wants to attract an even broader base of readers to his publication and include more advertising by toning down the publication’s sensationalism (Ackerman, Noah, & Vest, 1997). “We are more upbeat, we have tried to be less antagonistic toward Hollywood, we have tried to get away from the kinds of stinging, supercharged adjectives that are traditional tabloid
words — we have simply tried to go to a broader-based approach. . . . The bottom line is that there have been ample opportunities for us to publish pictures that would have sold through the roof. If we were interested in making money at any cost, we could have published the autopsy photos of Ron (Goldman) and Nicole (Brown-Simpson). We could have published JonBenet Ramsey's murder pictures, but we didn't" (Peterson, 1997b, p. C9). Coz has even put the publication through focus groups and hired quality consultants to draw more readership (Pogrebin, 1997). The Globe, meanwhile, is unafraid of its heritage. Its coverage of the killing of Ramsey, a 6-year-old beauty queen from Boulder, Colorado, included crime scene photos of her body and autopsy pictures, causing a public backlash reminiscent of those seen by the 1840s Police Gazette (Jones, 1997a). Still, by publishing those photos, the Globe raised its circulation by more than 10 percent, showing that despite all the criticism, sleaziness, violence, sex, and scandal still sell very well (Peterson, 1997b).

The Study's Significance

A 1974 U.S. Supreme Court decision, Miami Herald Publishing Co. v. Torinillo, rejected a Florida law that required newspapers to provide reply space to political candidates whom they had criticized editorially. The ramifications of this decision extended well beyond the coverage of political campaigns. Chief Justice Warren Burger, writing for the unanimous court, said the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees a free press, but does not guarantee a responsible press (Gordon, Kittross, & Reuss, 1996). Because of the press's protection under the First Amendment, civil lawsuits are the greatest potential punishment against the U.S. media, not government interference.
or imposed shutdowns. This freedom of the press is envied by other nations. In England, the Conservative Party ordered the tabloid *Scallywag* closed because politicians found the publication's content objectionable ("Off the shelf," 1995). In 1994, the Indonesian government banned three weeklies for candidly reporting on controversial national matters ("No news is bad news," 1994). Freedom from Draconian punishments gives both the tabloid press and the mainstream media in the United States the liberty to cover all stories as fairly or unfairly as they want, adhering to any code of professional responsibility — or none at all.

Intense competition throughout the O.J. Simpson trial produced many exclusive stories and some journalism that served public interest, as opposed to public curiosity. But many reporters rushed into print with stories based on rumors and hearsay, much of which proved to be false. Reporters rarely took the time to verify allegations by prospective witnesses or individuals seeking publicity. Stories and news tips were not investigated properly (Stone, 1994). Reporters in the pursuit of exclusive reports also were manipulated easily by prosecution and defense attorneys (Sharkey, 1994b).

These journalistic shortcomings do not include the checkbook journalism spending spree unleashed by the tabloids during the Simpson trial. Jose Camacho told the *National Enquirer* that Simpson had bought a knife from the store he worked at. Camacho was paid $12,500 for exclusive rights to his story. But he spoke with *National Enquirer* reporters and signed a contract for payment before appearing as a prosecution witness in court. He testified in court that he sold his story to the *National Enquirer*, severely damaging his credibility (Sharkey, 1994a). The *National Enquirer* also paid a former maid to slaying victim Nicole Brown Simpson $18,000 for her recollections of the Simpsons'
relationship (Gleick, 1995). Even though it already had affected the course of the trial and created news with its payments to Camacho and the former maid, the National Enquirer offered $250,000 to Simpson houseguest Kato Kaelin for his story. And during an appearance on CNN’s “Larry King Live,” National Enquirer General Editor Mike Walker displayed a check for $1 million, payable to Simpson friend Al Cowlings if Cowlings would give the publication exclusive rights to his story (Sharkey, 1994a).

The Simpson trial was a money-maker for the National Enquirer, but the growth of daily celebrity-oriented tabloid television programs and format changes by mainstream daily newspapers have led to declining circulations for the tabloids (Pogrebin, 1997; Ackerman et al., 1997). The Star, the National Enquirer, and the Globe lost about 30 percent of their circulation between 1991 and 1996 (Peterson, 1996). The beginning of 1998 was no kinder: In the first six months of the year, the Star’s circulation fell 14.4 percent, the National Enquirer’s dipped 18.8 percent, and the Globe’s dropped 18.9 percent. Each publication’s circulation is about half what it was in 1982 (Turner, 1998). Despite format changes, mainstream daily newspapers also have had to fight the instantaneous news of television and the Internet and the appeal of tabloids to keep readers. Many newsroom layoffs, consolidations, and closures have scarred the newspaper industry in recent years. Among the newspapers that have cut staffing in the 1990s are the New York Times, the Miami Herald, the San Diego Union-Tribune, the Los Angeles Times, the Rocky Mountain News, and Knight Ridder Newspapers. The Houston Post, the Norfolk Ledger-Star, the Baltimore Evening Sun, and the Phoenix Gazette folded operations and published their final editions this decade ("Staff reductions," 1996). Daily newspapers nationwide have not been able to shake a decades-
old circulation slump. While some of the largest daily newspapers in the country have posted small gains in the past few years, more than half of newspapers with circulations below 200,000 have shown losses (Fitzgerald, 1997).

As a result of these declining numbers, tabloids seek out and play up the sensational, and the mainstream daily newspapers sometimes join them. Michael Boylan, a former vice chairman of American Media Inc., the former publisher of the Star and the National Enquirer, reflected on the 1989 trial of actress Zsa Zsa Gabor in the assault of a police officer to illustrate the industry's demands. "When Zsa Zsa slapped that cop, in the old days, the only people that would have been at the trial would have been us and maybe the local Beverly Hills paper," Boylan said. "The last time Zsa Zsa showed up, there were [100] reporters and television crews. . . . That's competition" (Peterson, 1996, p. C5).

These competitors, chasing the same stories, have to figure out different ways to package this information to draw an audience. This pursuit of audiences turns journalism into entertainment. Even entertainment takes priority over information, journalism departs from its proper function, which is to report accurately on issues that demand public concern and influence economic and political decisions (Bogart, 1995). "The ideals of journalism are challenged in many ways, from highly adversarial reporting techniques that compromise balance and fairness to wanton raids on individual privacy that market sensation under the mask of public service. But the greatest challenge of all, the most serious threat to a free press, is the progressive corruption of news and information by entertainment, fiction, and moral indifference" (O'Neill, 1994, p. 14). Marvin Kalb, director of the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University, said, "I see a world of competitive values struggling against a world of
enduring professionalism. Are we here only to make money? Are we here only because we’re in competitive wars?” (Sharkey, 1994b, p. 21).

The competition between the tabloids never was more evident — and never more criticized — than when the Globe broke a story in 1997 about television sports announcer Frank Gifford, husband of television variety show hostess Kathie Lee Gifford, for having an affair with a female acquaintance. Their New York City rendezvous was captured on audiotape and videotape, and images of it were put on the front page of the Globe under the headline, “Frank’s sex tape!” (Jones, 1997b). The Globe’s primary competitor, the National Enquirer, and all of the mainstream media condemned the story and accused the Globe of setting up a sting to catch Frank Gifford with the woman, essentially staging the news. Globe editor Tony Frost rebutted the criticism, saying the tabloid paid a source for the tapes, not for the production of the tapes, and not for setting up Frank Gifford. The criticism kept coming anyway. “When you do what the Globe has done, you violate the whole journalistic process. It’s not just a question of the tabloid press, it’s a question of the press,” said Steve Coz, the National Enquirer editor (Jones, 1997b, p. 15). Regardless of how the Globe acquired the tapes, there were no legal repercussions. In New York only one party needs to consent to the recording of a conversation or action. Frank Gifford’s acquaintance obviously knew she was being recorded, so the Globe simply reported the truth. The Globe’s actions were newsworthy enough for many other major daily newspapers to put the story on their front pages. Once again, the tabloid press found its way into the pages of the mainstream daily newspapers, and debate raged over the free press’s role in society.

The press has earned its First Amendment protection to serve as a messenger
between a democratic government and the citizens it serves. Through a free press, the public should have access to information it needs to make knowledgeable decisions on all issues that require government action, from military spending to taxes. A free press, therefore, helps ensure Americans’ right to self-government. With these First Amendment privileges comes a responsibility to create an informed and educated public. However, news effects are limited because most U.S. media consumers do not seem to have a great desire for national news, and only a minority pay attention to it regularly (Gans, 1993).

Americans have the lowest voter turnout of any major democracy — about half the eligible voting public casts ballots in presidential elections, although almost all are exposed to some form of campaign advertisements. “Americans display a naive reluctance to draw connections between what they perceive as compelling social necessity and what they consider to be in their immediate self-interest. . . . A low rate of political participation accompanies ignorance of basic facts and issues of public debate, and the persistence of abysmal superstition” (Bogart, 1995, p. 175). Scores of polls show a majority of Americans find news, especially political news, very boring (Bogart, 1995).

Mainstream journalists are trying to bridge the gap between their social responsibilities and the demands of their readers. However, creating a product that sells seems to be taking priority, and that product sells at the expense of stories on governmental and social issues. Carl Bernstein, who won the Pulitzer Prize with Bob Woodward for exposing the Watergate scandal, despises the journalistic hybrid he says was born from the tabloid influence. He believes today’s journalism fails the public and ignores the truth. “Over the last 20 years we have been abdicating our primary function — the best obtainable version of the truth — and allowed our agenda and priorities to
become bastardized and dominated by . . . the triumph of Idiot Culture.” Bernstein said (Garneau, 1994, p. 8).

Howard Kurtz, media critic for the Washington Post, addresses this trend in his book, Media circus: The trouble with America’s newspapers. “The cumulative effect of these changes is to de-emphasize news and replace it with a feel-good product that is more frivolous, less demanding, more like television. And television already does it better” (1993, p. 340). “The problem with dumbing down newspapers is that we’re talking down to people, and they know it. Instead of capturing their attention the hard way — with well-written stories about schools and taxes and crime and culture and other things that matter in their lives — we take the easier (and cheaper) way out. We move away from our greatest strength — depth and texture — and assume that everyone in the video generation has an attention span of ninety seconds” (1993, p. 341).

Even when the mainstream media cover politics and other domestic issues, the tabloid tint sometimes tags along. There now is a sense of resentment among politicians. For all the good elected officials might do on behalf of their constituents, many fear they would receive more headlines for getting a speeding ticket than for winning funding for a community park (Seigenthaler, 1994). And in the coverage of health care, the media dedicates more space to doomsday viruses and highly technical procedures that serve very few than to solvable health problems and major discoveries. “There are some stories that really need to be told,” said David Satcher of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “They’re not high-tech, for the most part. They’re not exotic. But they make a difference in the lives of people” (Case, 1994, p. 15).

With the birth of CNN and the Internet, media consumers have more access to
information than ever before. The demand for instant information plays a direct role in the
competition to break stories first and the resulting sacrifice of journalistic integrity.
Newspapers used to have days to make up their minds about whether to publish a story.
The amount of time to decide whether to publish or not publish is much shorter for
today’s editor (Shaw, 1994). The temptation for a worldwide exclusive sent journalist
Pierre Salinger down a dismal trail in November 1996. Salinger said sources in French
security had told him the U.S. Navy was responsible for shooting down TWA Flight 800
off the coast of New York in July 1996. As it turned out, his only source was a long-
discredited document pulled off the Internet. “America is awash in a growing and often
disruptive avalanche of false information that takes on a life of its own in the electronic
ether of the Internet . . . until it becomes impervious to denial and debunking” (“Flight
800,” 1996).

This flood of information, and the frenzied chase to produce it, has influenced the
judicial system outside of the Simpson trial. When Michael Jackson was accused of
molesting a boy in 1993, aggressive media coverage convinced him he would be unable to
pursue vindication through the justice system. Tabloid journalists chased down current
and former Jackson employees and associates, offering cash for their stories. Jackson
settled a civil lawsuit filed by the boy’s family that paid several million dollars and killed
possible criminal prosecution. The boy’s attorney, Larry Feldman, said intense coverage
by tabloid media helped push the agreement through. “The tabloid press contaminates
witnesses,” Feldman said. “They pay witnesses to go on television and as soon as a
witness takes a dollar, it allows the other side to argue that they are doing this for the
money. And the more vivid the testimony, the more details they offer, the more it’s
worth” (“Media coverage,” 1994, p. 29). The tabloid press’s influence on the judicial system again became evident in the 1998 murder trial of Mikhail Markhasev, who was convicted of killing entertainer Bill Cosby’s son, Ennis. Convicted felon Christopher So took police to the site where the murder weapon, a gun, was found, then negotiated with the National Enquirer to receive a $100,000 reward the publication offered for information leading to the conviction of Ennis Cosby’s killer. Markhasev’s attorneys based their defense on the credibility of the witnesses against their client. Because So stood to gain a six-figure paycheck if Markhasev was found guilty, he was an easy target. Markhasev attorney Harriet Hawkins told jurors So’s testimony was based on “a foundation of greed and deceit” (“Cosby slaying,” 1998, p. B5). The tabloids’ lack of remorse was articulated by Jerry Nachman, vice president of news at WCBS-TV. “The press, constitutionally and procedurally, has no requirement to guarantee anyone his Sixth Amendment rights [to a fair trial]. That’s up to the courts” (Case, 1995, p. 15).

The tabloid press’s appeal to the opportunistic — and the greedy — has created other legal problems. The National Enquirer, the Star, and the Globe all routinely pay sources for information, and frequently advertise their practice in the pages of their publications to solicit story tips. This temptation lured a woman named Autumn Jackson, who negotiated a $25,000 contract with the Globe for an exclusive story in which she would claim she was Bill Cosby’s illegitimate daughter. But Jackson was working on another deal, one in which she attempted to extort Cosby of about $40 million by threatening to embarrass him in the tabloids. Cosby had financially supported Jackson previously, after he had a brief affair with Jackson’s mother, but he denied Jackson was his daughter. Jackson and two others were convicted in the attempted extortion, fined, and
sent to prison in 1997. Globe reporter Christopher Doherty defended acting as a mediator in negotiating a payment to Jackson. “We do pay for stories, but only for when they’re truthful and that we can satisfy ourselves that they are truthful,” he said. “It’s a fallacy to think that we throw money at people for stories that they’ve dreamt up” (Sullivan, 1997, p. 15).

As demonstrated in the cases of Richard Jewell and the Dallas Cowboys’ Michael Irvin and Erik Williams, the press also has no requirement to fairness when reporting on law enforcement investigations. Jewell, Irvin, and Williams were investigated as suspects in high-profile crimes: Jewell for the fatal bombing of Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta during the 1996 Summer Games, and Irvin and Williams for the alleged rape of a young woman, a crime that, in fact, never took place. Federal Bureau of Investigation sources told the media they considered Jewell, a security guard who helped lead authorities to the backpack that contained an explosive device, a suspect in the Olympic bombing. The media responded by splashing Jewell’s picture across their pages, aggressively reporting on Jewell’s background and trying to dig up information that could tie him to the crime. The FBI eventually cleared Jewell as a suspect, but that took several months, leaving his name tied to the terrorist act the whole time. In late 1996, a U.S. Senate subcommittee heard testimony about the media’s treatment of Jewell. Paul K. McMasters, a former newspaper editor and current member of the Freedom Forum, a journalism advocacy organization and research center, spoke to the panel. “When people ask me if the media have learned any lessons, I say, absolutely — until the next time” (Peterson, 1997a, p. C5).

Intense competition from so many outlets forced journalists from around the world
to chase the Jewell story with all available resources, regardless of whether the FBI had its case dead wrong from the start. McMasters’ assumption about lessons learned proved correct — Irvin and Williams became “the next time” in January 1997, a few weeks after McMasters’ testimony. Dallas police held a news conference to announce that a young woman had given a statement saying Williams raped her while Irvin held a gun to her head. Police told the media that Williams and Irvin, two of the biggest stars on a nationally popular professional football team, were suspects and likely would be arrested. Instead of checking the accuser’s background and credibility, the media ran with the story, chasing Irvin and Williams, leading national newscasts and front pages with the allegations. Irvin had been convicted of a drug-related charge less than a year earlier. Williams was charged with raping a 17-year-old girl two years earlier, but reached an out-of-court settlement with his alleged victim. A few other Cowboys recently had been given drug-related suspensions by the National Football League. All of these circumstances helped create sensational media coverage that judged Irvin and Williams guilty until proven innocent (Verhovek, 1997). Dave Anderson, a sports columnist for the New York Times, urged the Cowboys to throw Irvin off the team immediately, regardless of the outcome of the police investigation, saying “Irvin’s stupidity flows from his arrogance. . . . So much for Irvin even conning the Cowboys’ owner, Jerry Jones himself, about his repentance” from his drug charge (Anderson, 1997, p. 55).

Irvin and Williams, like Jewell, maintained their innocence. Some members of the press eventually examined the credibility of the Cowboys’ accuser, Nina Shahravan. Shahravan eventually admitted she made up the accusation, and the police investigation into Irvin and Williams was closed. The press did nothing illegal in covering these stories,
particularly because law enforcement officials were so candid in announcing or leaking their investigations. In both cases there was tremendous public interest. Because so many reporters competed for details in both stories, law enforcement agencies felt compelled to respond. It created a sensational, pre-judgmental, tabloid-like atmosphere around Jewell, Irvin, and Williams — three men who were never even arrested or charged with a crime. The argument has been made that the tremendous publicity surrounding the investigations helped exonerate Jewell, Irvin, and Williams more quickly. but the press’s competition for stories and their prominent play in newspapers and on television significantly damaged the men’s reputations (Verhovek, 1997).

When a magazine survey asked the public to describe the media in pursuit of a story, 57 percent said they were “like vultures circling for the kill” (O’Neill, 1994, p. 11). Larry J. Sabato wrote about the media’s pack mentality in Feeding frenzy: How attack journalism has transformed American politics. “What is becoming more common, and more disturbing, is the domino effect of a kind of ‘lowest-common-denominator’ journalism: If one newspaper or one broadcaster airs a story, however questionable or poorly documented it may be, other media outlets will then publish or broadcast the news without independently verifying it,” he wrote. “This abdication of journalistic responsibility encourages the purveyors of... smut to search out the weak media link” (1991, p. 58).

“Trust in American journalism is low and sinking fast,” Jerry Berger wrote. “More and more people take what they see with the proverbial grain of salt. Journalism, which long has attracted idealists to its ranks, increasingly is seen as a business of hucksters and character assassins. In the end, the ultimate losers are the American people. If we can no
longer depend on the fairness and accuracy of what we see and read, is our information worth anything?" (1994, p. 46).

The consequences of increased, more intense coverage of scandal and sensational stories may have profound sociological effects as well. Topics like the Simpson trial and Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky pervaded all kinds of media, leaving consumers who wanted to escape the stories no choice but to abstain from television and print news altogether. “These stories go on forever and they have a numbing effect. . . . They invade your life and you can’t really get away from them,” said columnist Molly Ivins. “This is the same blockbuster mentality that you see in publishing, in Hollywood and other entertainment arenas” (Getlin, 1998, p. A10). Instead of bringing people together to sort out the rights and wrongs of the story to affirm their communities’ standards, the issues are so overplayed that no one wants to talk about them, polarizing those who take sides. “We all want a grand narrative, a lesson underneath these stories, but America is a fractured society, with so many divisions, and it’s hard to tell one tale that everyone can agree with,” University of California, Santa Cruz sociologist Herman Gray said. “When you lose that consensus, the storyline can provoke anger because no one agrees” (Getlin, 1998, p. A10). The constant deluge of the sensational and the scandalous effectively shuts down the lines of communication and creates a population that is scandal-proof — not only does nothing shock them, they become unwilling to discuss the issues that drive them. Gail Collins, author of Scorpion tongues, said, “You surf channels on TV and hear about Monica, so you go to the next channel and it’s Monica again, then there’s a talk show about someone with a senior citizen diaper fetish, so you keep switching channels, and finally you give up” (Getlin, 1998, p. A10).
In a New York magazine poll, 71 percent of those surveyed believe the mainstream media are sinking to the level of tabloids by reporting gossip, the sensational, and unsubstantiated allegations. This belief is just one part of an increasingly negative public perception of the news media. The same poll found 48 percent of people believe the media play a negative role in society, and 46 percent trust the media less than they did five years ago (Wolff, 1998). The American Society of Newspaper Editors, in the midst of a three-year project to find out why people are losing confidence in newspapers, obtained discouraging results from its own poll. About 80 percent of those surveyed said sensational stories receive more prominent play in newspapers because they are exciting, not because they are informative or important ("Editors group," 1998).

This study aims to quantify the tabloid press's influence on mainstream daily newspapers. The study is significant for a number of reasons. The tabloid press and the mainstream media have the freedom to present the news in any fashion they see fit, no matter how serious or sensational, and this freedom allows basic journalistic tenants to be abused. Despite the tabloids' propensity for paying sources, mainstream newspapers sometimes must compete openly for the same stories because, just like the tabloids, the dailies are fighting to retain readers and build circulation. Daily newspapers are being forced to decide between publishing news that serves the public interest and news that helps sell their product. The public's growing demand for instantaneous information can force journalists into ethical and professional compromises. And the tabloid and mainstream media's dogged pursuit of some stories has led to a more negative public perception of the press and decreased public trust in its work. An examination of the
relationship between the tabloids and daily newspapers could determine the magnitude of some of these problems.

Research Question

The issue of how tabloids affect mainstream media content was important enough for the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication to dedicate a panel to its discussion at the group’s 1996 annual meeting. Jane Meredith Adams, a reporter at the Boston Globe, was part of that panel. She told of having to sort through a garbage bin in pursuit of a story against tabloid competition. “We can’t compete,” Adams said of the mainstream media. “We can’t beat the tabloids at their own game, and I found it depressing trying to do so” (Paterno, 1996, p. 18). Yet, the mainstream media have to find a way to compete because they believe most of their consumers demand it. How they will meet this demand and continue to cover political, scientific, social, and cultural issues will play a large part in determining how Americans get their information in the future.

Reporting a story first is a goal of every journalist. Breaking a story of interest to audiences — and getting it right — can help a media outlet build credibility and a following. Some media outlets regularly label exclusive stories to remind audiences that no other forums have that information — yet. When a media outlet is beaten to a story, having to follow it is an acknowledged defeat; the information is judged important to its audience as well, and the longer it goes unreported, the greater the chance the audience will go elsewhere to learn about it. The mainstream media of the United States consider themselves more credible and more essential to a democratic society than the tabloid press (Welch, 1997). Mainstream journalists’ concerns — and occasional agony — over having
to follow a tabloid's lead, like the Dick Morris and Gennifer Flowers stories, are indicative of the competitive relationship between the two media: The mainstream media are unhappy that they occasionally follow stories first reported by supermarket tabloids. Although the stories could turn out to be viewed by consumers and critics as legitimate news, the mainstream media would rather not report the information because the tabloids might have paid for it, and the publications generally are considered sleazy and less credible. Yet it keeps happening. McMasters, the Freedom Forum member, seems correct in his assessment that the mainstream media always learn their lesson until the next time (Peterson, 1997a, ). An investigation of how much editorial content in the mainstream media is influenced by the tabloid press could indicate the extent of the mainstream media's acceptance of tabloid content. The primary research question addressed by this study is: How much editorial content in mainstream daily newspapers is influenced by the tabloid press?
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Previous Research on the Tabloid Press

Previous research on the tabloid press has included readership profiles, analysis of science and crime coverage, overall content analysis, a study of how the tabloids report and write stories, and several studies related to tabloid television newsmagazines. While some of this research can be applied to the present study, research that attempts to characterize the competitive relationship between the tabloid press and the mainstream media and gauge the level of tabloid influence on the mainstream media was not located in a search of periodicals, dissertation databases, and abstracts.

Maria Elizabeth Grabe studied the presentation of crime in tabloid and highbrow news programs. Her results showed that tabloids presented crime as a lethal act, and criminals as evil in a struggle against good. The myth that crime does not pay was a dominant theme in tabloid programming. Tabloid programs were more likely to report on crime than highbrow programs, although crime frequently received the same play in each format’s lineup. The formats differed, however, in presenting the social class of criminals. Criminals on tabloid programs were more likely to belong to the middle or upper class,
while criminals on highbrow programs were more likely to belong to the working class (1996).

Kelly Teenor researched claims that the public no longer is able to tell the difference between tabloid television news and network news. Teenor formed focus groups who watched broadcast stories that were not identified by source or network, then judged whether each story came from a tabloid or network program by filling out a questionnaire. The reader-response theory formed the basis for analyzing participants’ perceptions. Teenor also performed a narrative analysis of program content, and neither approach supported the notion that the line between tabloid television and network news has blurred beyond distinction to audiences. Participants successfully identified tabloid stories and network reports in most cases (1996).

Steven A. Esposito’s study of pretrial television coverage of the O.J. Simpson trial addresses the differences between tabloid television news, prime-time network newsmagazines and nightly network news broadcasts. Esposito developed quantitative data through a 20-item coding instrument. The data then were analyzed using the narrative approach. Esposito’s study suggests that pretrial television coverage of the Simpson case was shaped by entertainment value, not ideal objective reporting in the public’s interest, and that by emphasizing individuals and the dramatic over larger trial issues, the coverage created a presumption of Simpson’s guilt. Esposito analyzed almost 83 hours of coverage and found that coverage of the first month of the trial was the most intense and contained the most alluring elements of the case, and that in content and presentation, network coverage was almost indistinguishable from tabloid programs. He argued that the programs’ focus on ratings, not editorial or ethical judgment, determines which stories
make each broadcast and which stories do not. Broadcast stories included music, zoom images, mood lighting, and other production instruments designed to create emotional response, instruments normally reserved for entertainment (1996). This study has legal ramifications in addition to journalistic applications, as little research has been done on televised justice and its effect on Sixth Amendment rights.

Kevin Thomas Glynn conducted a contemporary cultural study of tabloid television. He analyzed the relationships among politics, popular culture, the social functions of information sources, the role of cultural taste in determining social hierarchy, and the media’s importance in society. The development and growth of tabloid television in the 1980s and 1990s, Glynn asserted, must be placed in context with social and cultural struggles of the times to be properly evaluated and criticized within the history of American journalism and television (1995).

Walter Charles Rauch performed a content analysis of the ABC News program “PrimeTime Live.” He found that the program contained sensational elements and was biased in its 1991 investigation of three television ministries. He used this analysis to classify the program as tabloid news, even though it was reported by a network television news division (1993).

Alison Jane Head conducted a survey analysis of supermarket tabloid readers. She used a group of incoming community college students as her sample group. Respondents released their standardized test scores in math, reading, and writing to measure their information-seeking skills. Head found that tabloid readers qualify as information poor because they have active levels of information-seeking behavior and low levels of information-seeking skills. She also found that gender and race influence tabloid
readership. White women are more likely to read supermarket tabloid publications than any other demographic, the research found. This study also showed that people with less-developed educational skills are more likely to read supermarket tabloids (1990).

Head's study was different from another survey of tabloid readers, conducted by Eileen Lehnert and Mary J. Perpich. Their study focused primarily on the attitudes of tabloid readers and aimed to find out why different groups of people read tabloids. They found tabloid readers fall into one of three categories. The first group was classified as Intent Diversion Seekers: women who read tabloids just for fun. The second group was classified as Distracted Information Collectors: men who are interested primarily in reading while doing something else, like watching television. The third group was classified as Selfish Believers: older women who relate information in stories to themselves. This study is significant because it indicates that supermarket tabloid readers do not fit into one narrow demographic with few specific needs or wants from a newspaper, and, according to Lehnert and Perpich, supermarket tabloids have a much broader appeal than Head's study revealed (1982).

James Cameron Paty evaluated three U.S. metropolitan tabloid newspapers owned by international media mogul Rupert Murdoch while specifically looking for sensational content. Paty collected 10-edition samples from the New York Post, the Boston Herald, and the Chicago Sun-Times. Paty compared their use of headline space, text, and photographs, and tracked different classifications of stories within each publication. Paty found that his predicted formula of sensationalism only is supported for light news and government news in limited categories of overall space used and proportion of space used for graphics to text. No exact formula was discovered for the newspapers, but a
consistent pattern was found supporting Paty's hypothesis. Paty also addressed models for comparing newspapers and methods for tracking and analyzing sensational content (1988).

S. Elizabeth Bird studied how supermarket tabloid reporters research and write their stories. She found that tabloids report on real people and real events, and their staff members are well-trained journalists. Bird revealed that while the emphases of tabloid and mainstream writers differ, newspapers and tabloids are located along the same storytelling continuum, a revelation that some mainstream journalists might find troubling. Bird found that tabloid publications did not use anonymous sources more often than the New York Times, and that the line between human interest writing and sensationalism is very difficult to pinpoint. She concluded that experienced journalists can adapt to a tabloid setting quickly (1990). Her research is significant to this study because it indicates similarities in the practices of tabloid and mainstream journalists.

Bird followed that project with the book, For enquiring minds: A cultural study of supermarket tabloids. She asserts that "stereotypes of tabloids and their readers are elitist, based largely on a perception of what people 'should' be interested in and the correct style in which such media should be presented" (1992, p. 208). She intended to reassess everything about the tabloids: their editorial content, their reporters, their readers, and their place in culture and society. This study was not concerned with the tabloids' relationship to and competition with the mainstream media. Bird says tabloids are popular for the same reasons they are criticized. They are sensational yet predictable, familiar yet unique, laughed at and at the same time taken quite seriously. It is much less daunting to malign the supermarket tabloid than to determine why they have millions of loyal readers. Bird says readers, as consumers of culture, read the tabloids for many different reasons.
and do not believe everything they read. Some may read them as a rejection of dominant values — simply because they know they should be reading something better. Some read tabloids because the periodicals make them feel empowered by knowing of things they should not know and can not control, such as a celebrity's relationships. Tabloids can take the shape of folklore by consistently dramatizing values and offering escape and validation. Bird rejects the notion that tabloid readers are stupid or culturally bankrupt. Today’s culture, she argues, is based heavily on obtaining information, and tabloids are merely one source of information for their readers. Bird reaches a conclusion familiar to other scholars: There is no one specific profile of a supermarket tabloid reader (1992).

William R. Elliott and Gerald Hinkle compared science coverage in three daily newspapers to science coverage in three supermarket tabloids. Surprisingly, Elliott and Hinkle found supermarket tabloids were more likely to cover stories about medicine and health and somewhat more likely to devote a greater percentage of editorial space to science stories than the mainstream media (1989). However, this study does not break down the subjects of health, medicine, or science stories covered by the supermarket tabloids. It is likely that the vast majority of the health and medicine stories relate to diets or weight loss (Case, 1994).

Deborah M. MacDonald conducted a survey to determine the public’s perception of supermarket tabloids and to what extent readership is a function of perception and low-taste orientation. The majority of those surveyed held tabloid readers in low regard and said the tabloids have little credibility and serve little purpose. The only positive perceptions of tabloids were their low prices and their usefulness in passing time quickly. Those who had never or rarely read tabloids were most likely to have negative perceptions
of tabloids, while those who occasionally or regularly read tabloids were more likely to prefer low-taste or sleazy media content. The survey found occasional and regular tabloid readers do not fall into a specific demographic (1984).

Previous Research on News Content

and News Selection

For the tabloid press to influence the content of the mainstream media, editors and producers within the mainstream media must make conscious decisions to dedicate editorial space to stories first reported by tabloids. Because information must pass through editors to appear on the pages of a newspaper, this decision-making process often is called gatekeeping. Many factors influence journalists' deliberative processes when selecting the kinds of stories that make the next day's news: some are personal biases or tastes, some are long-held ideologies; and some are based on readership surveys or determinations that particular stories have such wide appeal that they may help sell more newspapers. Editors at every supermarket tabloid and every mainstream daily newspaper must make those decisions every day. For the purposes of this thesis it must be recognized that there has been some research into the process of selecting news and creating editorial content. Research on tabloid influence could determine whether mainstream editors and tabloid editors consider each other's decisions before determining what their readers will see.

One of the earliest studies on gatekeeping was conducted by David Manning White in 1949. He evaluated a wire services editor at a mid-sized, Midwest daily newspaper and broke down each of the factors the editor considered in using a story. This single editor
had dozens of reasons to include or exclude a story from the next day’s edition, and almost as many personal biases and tastes. The study, while not including a comprehensive sample, illustrated for the first time how many factors can influence decisions on news content and selection (1950).

Herbert J. Gans released a more comprehensive study on the selection of news content: *Deciding what’s news: A study of “CBS Evening News,” “NBC Nightly News,” Newsweek, and Time.* Gans concluded that many, many considerations create one person’s news judgment, but only a few are relevant to each story; if an editor had to evaluate every possible reason to include or exclude a story from the next day’s newspaper or news broadcast, there would not be enough hours in the day to put together a product. There is no one definition of news, but stories that involve sources with any kind of power over others probably are newsworthy, he says. Editors always must be aware that any leeway in their judgment can reduce their audience and thereby increase pressure on the media outlet, raise costs, and significantly challenge the organization of the news team. Gans says journalists serve many roles to the public: they test elected leadership through questioning and criticizing; they are agents of social control that build social values; and they create myths, among other functions (1979).

Glen L. Bleske updated White’s study and recommended studying a specific group of editors instead of a random sampling of individuals. He reported that almost all editorial gatekeepers are trained on the job and must deal with a great deal of exposure to media messages; an average newspaper wire editor must read and assess about 1,000 stories per week. Bleske found that most U.S. newspapers classify news in predictable
ways, and that while each gatekeeper has uniquely subjective methods, all are fairly consistent in broad categories of content (1991).

Pamela J. Shoemaker also conducted a study of gatekeeping, but reached much different conclusions. She theorized that gatekeeping is not just about selecting news, but also about withholding, shaping, and displaying every aspect of message selection and control. She said gatekeeping is about reshaping related facts from an event or an issue and turning them into news. Some of Shoemaker's ideas are highly complex. She evaluated nearly every communications professional as a gatekeeper and found media sources, advertisers, market researchers, interest groups, public relations practitioners, and government officials all have some stake in determining what becomes news (1991).

John H. McManus investigated the commercial influence over journalism in the book, *Market-driven journalism: Let the citizen beware?* Market-driven journalism gathers an audience to sell it to advertisers, not inform it, and McManus says this practice is becoming a growing problem in the industry, both in print and broadcast media. McManus acknowledges that journalism is a business, and that unprofitable businesses eventually die, but he asserts that a balance can be struck by informing audiences in addition to selling to them. McManus found that market-driven journalism has four major social effects: media consumers are likely to learn less from the news; consumers may be misled; news sources may become more manipulative; and the audience becomes more apathetic about politics. He compared media consumption to food consumption. He hypothesized that as more junk journalism replaced good journalism in a person's media diet, the interesting and important would be replaced with the interesting and entertaining (1994). McManus' book relates to this thesis very well because the literature review
revealed that the mainstream media’s alleged regression is directly attributable to the competition for an audience.

Samuel P. Winch authored Mapping the cultural space of journalism: How journalists distinguish news from entertainment. Winch says the cultural space of journalism is defined socially, and that when journalists act as gatekeepers they are not just producing a newspaper, they are making decisions as cultural authorities. His research found that when members of the mainstream media make news judgments, they want stories that are true and important, but members of the tabloid press want stories that will sell newspapers and not result in a lawsuit. He says tabloid and mainstream media investigate deviant behavior in public figures and public officials, and both degrade deviants until they are expelled from a group or position. Tabloids willingly have relinquished coverage of political issues and embraced celebrity and scandal because the titillating nature of such stories has entertainment value. The mainstream media report on both issues and scandal and actually want the tabloid press to cover issues as well so all media consumers are better informed. The mainstream media are interested in criticizing other media, but the tabloid media do not really care what everyone else in the journalism industry does. Winch concludes that members of the media believe news informs and entertainment amuses, and that these distinctions are understood when journalists function as gatekeepers (1997).

Arthur Charity’s book, Doing public journalism, maintains that today’s journalism is failing its own industry and its consumers by publishing so much irrelevant news. Charity takes a very idealistic approach to reforming media content. He says new public journalism encourages people to participate in public life and make intelligent decisions
about public affairs. He says newspapers and television can expand readership and serve communities better by helping the public set an agenda for itself, reorient its concerns, and help it overcome hurdles to active self-government. Journalists must play an active role in evaluating their communities and focus their coverage of issues on solutions, not grievances. Charity believes newspapers can abolish tabloid content in favor of more investigative, interpretive reporting and regain lost circulation and readership (1995).

The body of research on news content and news selection reflects how many variables influence the selection of some stories for publication and the rejection of others. Mainstream daily newspaper editors must confront numerous factors and biases in determining what to offer their readers. McManus (1994) and Gans (1979) both address the significance of stories that appeal to a broad audience and help sell newspapers. Winch (1997) stipulates that editors recognize when a story has more entertainment value than news value. The judgment of these editors shapes editorial content. These studies demonstrate that while a newspaper editor may not be aware that a story was first reported by supermarket tabloids, the editor more than likely can recognize sensational or sleazy elements that have tabloid appeal. If editors questioned the origin of more of these stories, rather than immediately deciding to publish them, it could reduce tabloid influence on mainstream daily newspapers.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

This research systematically tracked stories in mainstream daily newspapers that initially were reported or created by the tabloid press. This content analysis was carried out over a 26-week period, from July 6, 1998, to January 3, 1999. Six daily newspapers were tracked in the analysis: the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Las Vegas Sun, and the Reno Gazette-Journal. The editorial content of these newspapers was compared against the editorial content of three supermarket tabloids: the Star, the Globe and the National Enquirer. This study focuses exclusively on the print tabloid press and mainstream daily newspapers. Although tabloid television is a growing industry, and television and print journalists compete against each other for information and audiences (Getlin, 1998), television programming is produced and absorbed by audiences much differently when compared with printed media (Postman, 1985; Levy, 1992). Because such different values guide television journalists and audiences, it is difficult to accurately compare television content with print content. Therefore, tabloid television programs and mainstream television news programs were not included in this research.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Las Vegas Sun and the Reno Gazette-Journal were selected for this study because they are the three largest daily newspapers in Nevada.
The Review-Journal's weekday circulation is about 159,000, the Gazette-Journal's is about 67,000, and the Sun's is about 38,000 (Editor & Publisher International Yearbook, 1998). This study aims to serve the Nevada journalism community and improve the quality of journalism and journalism education in the state — objectives consistent with the missions of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, a public institution. The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times were selected for this study because these two newspapers are available nationally and are recognized within the journalism industry as models of excellence in writing and reporting. USA Today was selected for this study because it has the second-largest circulation of any daily newspaper in the United States — behind the Wall Street Journal — and because it has different editorial values than the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times and other daily newspapers. USA Today favors shorter stories, graphic elements and more extensive use of color on section covers. The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times have weekday circulations of about 1 million, while USA Today has a daily circulation of about 1.6 million (Editor & Publisher International Yearbook, 1998). The Star, the Globe and the National Enquirer were selected for the study because they have the three largest circulations in the weekly supermarket tabloid press: the National Enquirer's circulation is about 2.2 million, the Star's is about 1.9 million, and the Globe's is about 800,000 (Turner, 1998).

Each Sunday or Monday, new editions of the Star, the Globe, and the National Enquirer are put out for sale on newsstands, racks, and at checkout lines in supermarkets and convenience store and at retail counters. For this study, the tabloids were purchased each week and read from cover to cover. Each story was summarized in a sentence or two and entered in a journal. Then, in a weekly cycle beginning each Monday, the New
York Times, the Los Angeles Times, USA Today, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Las Vegas Sun, and the Reno Gazette-Journal were read from beginning to end with an eye for stories influenced by the tabloid press. Some stories identified in the mainstream daily newspapers were follow-ups to reports originally published by the tabloids. For example, a tabloid story about a celebrity couple’s marital problems that appeared days later in a mainstream daily newspaper was considered a mark of tabloid influence. The tabloids, however, find their way onto the pages of daily newspapers in other ways. Tabloids occasionally are sued by the subjects of their reports. Hospitality personality Martha Stewart, for example, filed a libel lawsuit against the National Enquirer in 1997 after the tabloid quoted a psychiatrist who had never met Stewart as saying she had a personality disorder and was mentally ill (Stein, 1997). The mainstream media widely covered the lawsuit filing, but could not do so without mentioning the National Enquirer or the sensational allegations of its story. Celebrities occasionally dispute or criticize tabloid reports by responding through the mainstream media. Celebrities sometimes attack tabloid photographers, which results in police reports, news stories, and, occasionally, criminal and civil trials. The mainstream media sometimes dedicates editorial space for criticism of tabloid coverage or the business dealings of the publications, such as making payments to sources. As Winch found, the mainstream media are interested in criticizing other media (1997). The mainstream media often serve as watchdogs over the tabloid press, covering these lawsuits, disputes, and payments extensively. In scouring the mainstream daily newspapers for this study, stories were compared against the tabloid article summaries entered in the journal, but also read for watchdog qualities.
Procedure

When a follow-up story or a watchdog story was found in a daily newspaper, it was documented in the journal, along with the page the story appeared on, its length in paragraphs, and, if it was a follow-up story, the tabloid the story first appeared in. If it was applicable, the tabloid report that spurred a watchdog story also was documented. For example, if an actor criticized the tabloid press in general, it was considered a watchdog story. But if there was no specific tabloid report to credit for the story's publication, no specific edition was credited. However, if a celebrity denied allegations made in a specific tabloid report, that tabloid edition was documented, when possible.

The Los Angeles Times, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Las Vegas Sun, the Reno Gazette-Journal, and USA Today all dedicate areas in their newspapers to lighter stories and news of entertainment personalities, and it was noted when a story with tabloid influence was carried on these pages. The Los Angeles Times' area is called "Morning Report," and it appears Monday through Saturday in the left column of page 2D, inside the "California Style" features section. Columnist Liz Smith, whose content is dedicated to entertainers and recognizable personalities, appears just below "Morning Report" Monday through Friday. Although the Los Angeles Times introduced a national edition on October 5, 1998, changes to the format of newspapers distributed outside the Los Angeles metropolitan area did not affect the location or content of the "Morning Report" or Liz Smith features. The Las Vegas Review-Journal's area is called "People in the News," and its page changes location from day to day. The Las Vegas Sun's area was called "People in the News," and it appeared with other features on page 2A in the front news section. However, the Las Vegas Sun redesigned the newspaper's appearance, and
beginning on October 5, 1998, the area was renamed “Personality Parade” and moved to a page called “Flip Side” on the back of its local news section, section B. The Reno Gazette-Journal has two areas where these stories occasionally appear. One is in a daily briefs section at the top of page 2A, called “Newsmakers,” and the other is in a sporadically appearing package called “Etc. News & Notes” on the cover of the Sierra features section, which changes position in the newspaper from day to day. Neither the “Newsmakers” package nor the “Etc. News and Notes” briefs are dedicated exclusively to news about celebrities and entertainers. Political, economic, and cultural news from around the world frequently appears in “Newsmakers,” and Reno-area news often is covered in the “Etc. News & Notes” briefs package. USA Today has several stories and columns dedicated to entertainers and celebrities at the top of page 2D or 3D in its Life section from Monday through Thursday, under a heading called “People.” USA Today’s Friday edition is slightly different, with similar stories and columns appearing under a header called “This Just In” on page 3E in its Life Weekend section. Larry King writes a column that appears under the “People” header on Monday, and Jeannie Williams authors a column about celebrities that runs Tuesday through Thursday under the “People” header and on Friday under the “This Just In” header. The New York Times has no such packages or features dedicated to the coverage of entertainers or personalities. The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Las Vegas Review-Journal, and the Reno Gazette-Journal publish every day. The Las Vegas Sun and USA Today publish Monday through Friday, but do not publish on holidays.

It should be noted that, like most weekly magazines, the date on the cover of each supermarket tabloid is one week ahead of the date it is released for sale. For example, the
December 29, 1998, editions of the National Enquirer, the Globe, and the Star actually were released for sale on December 21 or December 22, 1998. Therefore, it is possible for a story from a December 29, 1998, edition of a supermarket tabloid to have had an influence on a daily newspaper's December 24, 1998, edition.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study found varying degrees of tabloid influence in the six mainstream daily newspapers surveyed. In each daily newspaper, tabloid follow-up and watchdog stories were tracked separately, then the data were combined to measure total editorial content influenced. The Las Vegas Review Journal published 16 watchdog reports during the research period. Of these reports, 15 were stories, and one was a stand-alone photograph with an extended caption. Stand-alone photos with extended captions sometimes are used by daily newspapers instead of stories to condense news and provide visual elements to otherwise text-dominated pages. The 15 stories had a combined 108 paragraphs, for an average of 7.2 paragraphs per watchdog story. Of the 16 watchdog reports, 12 appeared on the newspaper’s “People in the News” page, three appeared in news pages, and one appeared in the features section below the television program listings. The Las Vegas Review Journal also published 21 follow-up reports. Of these reports, 19 were stories and two were stand-alone photographs. The 19 stories had a combined 136 paragraphs, for an average of 7.2 paragraphs per follow-up story. Of the 21 follow-up reports, 10 appeared on the newspaper’s “People in the News” page, nine appeared in news pages, and two appeared in the features section below the television program listings. The Las Vegas Review Journal published a total of 37 tabloid-influenced reports during the research
period, with three stand-alone photographs and 34 stories averaging 7.2 paragraphs in length. Of the 37 reports, 22, or 59 percent, appeared on the newspaper’s “People in the News” page, which is geared toward reports on celebrities and recognizable figures. Twelve of the stories appeared on news pages, and three appeared below the television program listings, a page that features news of television stars and shows. The Las Vegas Review-Journal published 182 editions during the research period, meaning one tabloid-influenced report appeared every 4.9 issues.

The Las Vegas Sun published 14 watchdog stories during the research period. The 14 stories had a combined 41 paragraphs, for an average of 2.9 paragraphs per watchdog story. Of the 14 watchdog stories, 13 appeared on the newspaper’s “People in the News” or “Flip Side” pages, and one appeared on a news page. The Las Vegas Sun also published six follow-up stories. The six stories had a combined 26 paragraphs, for an average of 4.3 paragraphs per follow-up story. Of the six follow-up stories, five appeared on the newspaper’s “People in the News” or “Flip Side” pages, and one appeared in the features/entertainment section. The Las Vegas Sun published a total of 20 tabloid-influenced stories during the research period, each averaging 3.4 paragraphs in length. Of the 20 stories, 18, or 90 percent, appeared on pages geared toward reports on celebrities and recognizable figures. One story appeared on a news page and one story appeared in the features/entertainment section. The Las Vegas Sun published 126 editions during the research period, meaning one tabloid-influenced report appeared every 6.3 issues.

The Los Angeles Times published 16 watchdog stories during the research period. The 16 stories had a combined 203 paragraphs, for an average of 12.7 paragraphs per watchdog story. Of the 16 watchdog items, eight appeared in the “Morning Report” or
Liz Smith column, five appeared on news pages, and three appeared in features sections. The *Los Angeles Times* also published eight follow-up stories. The eight had a combined 162 paragraphs, for an average of 20.3 paragraphs per follow-up story. Of the eight follow-up stories, one appeared in the Liz Smith column, six appeared in news pages, and one appeared in a features section. The *Los Angeles Times* published a total of 24

Table 1

Tabloid-Influenced Reports Appearing in Mainstream Daily Newspapers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Watchdog reports</th>
<th>Follow-up reports</th>
<th>Total reports</th>
<th>Editions per report</th>
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<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>4.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reno Gazette-Journal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

tabloid-influenced stories during the research period, averaging 15.2 paragraphs in length.

Of the 24 stories, nine, or nearly 38 percent, appeared in the “Morning Report” feature or the Liz Smith column. Eleven of the stories, nearly 46 percent, appeared on news pages, and four appeared in a features section. The *Los Angeles Times* published 182 editions during the research period, meaning one tabloid-influenced report appeared every 7.6 issues.

*USA Today* published 17 watchdog stories during the research period. The 17
stories had a combined 71 paragraphs, for an average of 4.2 paragraphs per watchdog story. Of the 17 watchdog stories, 14, or more than 82 percent, appeared on the newspaper's "People" or "This Just In" pages, and three appeared in other parts of the Life features section. USA Today also published 24 follow-up reports. Of these reports, 22 were stories, one was a standalone photograph, and one was a photograph previously published by a tabloid. The 22 stories had a combined 147 paragraphs, for an average of 6.7 paragraphs per follow-up story. Of the 24 follow-up reports, 18, or 75 percent, appeared on the newspaper's "People" or "This Just In" pages, two appeared on news pages, and four appeared in other parts of the Life features section. USA Today published a total of 41 tabloid-influenced reports during the research period, with one standalone photograph, one photograph previously published by a supermarket tabloid, and 39 stories averaging 5.6 paragraphs in length. Of the 41 reports, 32, or 78 percent, appeared on the newspaper's "People" or "This Just In" pages, which are geared toward reports on celebrities and recognizable figures. Seven of the stories appeared in other parts of the Life features section, and two appeared on news pages. USA Today published 126 editions during the research period, meaning one tabloid-influenced report appeared every 3.1 issues.

The Reno Gazette-Journal published three watchdog stories during the research period. The three stories had a combined seven paragraphs, for an average of 2.3 paragraphs per watchdog story. Of the three watchdog stories, two appeared in the newspaper's "Etc. News & Notes" feature, and one appeared in the "Newsmakers" briefs package on page 2A. Both of these features are geared toward news of recognizable figures. The Reno Gazette-Journal also published five follow-up stories. The five stories
had a combined 32 paragraphs, for an average of 6.4 paragraphs per follow-up story. Of the five follow-up stories, three appeared on news pages, one appeared in the “Newsmakers” briefs on page 2A, and one appeared in the “Etc. News & Notes” feature. The Reno Gazette-Journal published a total of eight tabloid-influenced reports during the research period, averaging 4.9 paragraphs in length. Of the eight stories, three appeared on news pages, three appeared in the “Etc. News & Notes” feature, and two appeared in the “Newsmakers” briefs on page 2A. The Reno Gazette-Journal published 182 editions during the research period, meaning one tabloid-influenced report appeared every 22.8 issues.

The New York Times published two watchdog reports during the research period. The two stories had a combined 45 paragraphs, for an average of 22.5 paragraphs per watchdog story. Both stories appeared on news pages. The New York Times also

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>News sections</th>
<th>Features sections</th>
<th>Celebrity, variety columns</th>
<th>Total reports</th>
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<td>USA Today</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>New York Times</td>
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published five follow-up stories. The five reports had a combined five paragraphs, for an average of one paragraph per follow-up story. All five appeared on news pages. The New York Times published a total of seven tabloid-influenced reports during the research period, averaging 7.1 paragraphs in length. All seven stories appeared on news pages. The New York Times published 182 editions during the research period, meaning one tabloid-influenced report appeared every 26 issues.

While dozens of stories first reported in the Star, the Globe, and the National Enquirer found their way into the pages of the six mainstream daily newspapers surveyed during the research period, examining specific subjects reveals different degrees of tabloid influence. The mainstream daily newspapers followed some smaller tabloid stories while completely ignoring many of the larger stories that dominated tabloid covers over several weeks. In some cases, mainstream daily newspapers pursued tabloid stories with both follow-up reports and watchdog stories.

The Tabloid Presidency

In early 1998, as the media tornado surrounding President Clinton’s sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky began to swell, Robert Bennett, one of Clinton’s many attorneys, lashed out at journalists for covering the sordid allegations with such intensity. “I’m very disappointed that the Washington Post, one of the preeminent newspapers in the country, is becoming a tabloid paper,” Bennett said (Kurtz, 1998, p. 295). But with so many stories of womanizing preceding the Lewinsky affair, including Gennifer Flowers’ tabloid exposé, “the sad truth was that this had become a tabloid presidency” (Kurtz, 1998, p. 295). By the time research for this study commenced, independent counsel
Kenneth Starr already had a wide-reaching grand jury investigation into the Clinton-Lewinsky affair under way. The stories of Clinton’s imperiled presidency; of the nature of his relationship with Lewinsky; of his denials of an improper relationship; of all the people involved in the grand jury inquiry, from the president, Lewinsky, and Starr, to Vernon Jordan Jr., Linda Tripp, and Betty Currie; and of his subsequent impeachment and Senate trial dominated all forms of media in 1998. In cable and broadcast television news, in newspapers and newsmagazines, in radio and the Internet, the story was inescapable (Getlin, 1998). The supermarket tabloids were no exception. Some aspect of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and its aftermath appeared on 18 of the 26 Star covers during the research period, on 15 National Enquirer covers, and on eight Globe covers.

However, the focus of supermarket tabloid coverage and of mainstream daily newspaper coverage differed greatly. At the start of the research period, mainstream daily newspapers were concerned with issues that affected the security of Clinton’s presidency. Their stories, based on anonymous sources close to the grand jury proceedings, aimed to find out whether Starr and the grand jury would come upon enough evidence to warrant impeachment proceedings. Stories focused on the truthfulness of Clinton’s deposition in Paula Jones’ sexual harassment lawsuit, on the truthfulness of his testimony before Starr’s grand jury, on his and Jordan’s efforts to find Lewinsky a job in New York, on gifts the president and Lewinsky exchanged and later returned, and other such details that could have led to the president’s removal from office. The tabloids, on the other hand, were interested in the whats, whens, wheres, whys and hows of Clinton’s sexual relationship with Lewinsky, and the personal devastation and damaged relationships that resulted from the discovery of the affair. The intense tabloid coverage of the scandal influenced many
stories in the mainstream daily newspapers, and created both follow-up reports and watchdog stories.

The mainstream daily newspapers first reported that Lewinsky had a dress stained with the president's semen — important physical evidence in Starr's case against Clinton — but the tabloids had far more lurid subjects early in the research period. The August 18 Star reported that Lewinsky often did stripteases for Clinton, that her blue dress from the Gap was on the floor when Clinton ejaculated on it, and that no physical contact occurred after Lewinsky's clothes were off. The August 25 Globe reported that Lewinsky plotted to become impregnated by Clinton because she believed a child would validate their relationship, and that Lewinsky had threatened to tell Clinton's wife, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, of their affair. The August 25 National Enquirer included a story about how Lewinsky and the first lady seethed about each other in private, with Lewinsky calling the first lady a "cold bitch," and the first lady referring to Lewinsky as a "little tramp."

The September 1 Star reported Lewinsky said the president told her that his wife could not fulfill his sexual needs, and that Lewinsky thought a friendship ring the president gave her was, in fact, an engagement ring. The September 15 National Enquirer reported that Clinton and Lewinsky had used the Lincoln bedroom in the White House and a presidential limousine for sexual liaisons.

The tabloid stories and the mainstream daily newspapers converged upon the release of Starr's report on September 11, 1998. Of the countless points provided in the report, supermarket tabloids first reported five details that the mainstream daily newspapers followed up on: the September 8 National Enquirer told of a personal classified ad Lewinsky placed in the Washington Post for Clinton on Valentine's Day.
1997; the September 8 *Star* reported that Lewinsky used a cigar as a sexual prop in front of Clinton before he put the cigar in his mouth; the September 1 *Star* told of Lewinsky being in love with Clinton and that she thought Clinton loved her as well; the September 1 *Star* also reported that Clinton led Lewinsky to believe that he would leave his wife at the end of his second term in office to be with Lewinsky; and the August 18 *Star* told of how Clinton administration staff member Harold Ickes and a Secret Service agent interrupted a sexual liaison between Clinton and Lewinsky in a White House room.

In its September 12 edition, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* published several stories and a six-page, pullout section of Starr report excerpts. The special section included paragraphs on all five details the tabloids reported first. On page 3A, the newspaper ran a 19-paragraph story with a photo of Lewinsky that told of Lewinsky being in love with the president, of how she thought Clinton loved her, and also of the *Washington Post* personal ad.

In its September 12 edition, the *Los Angeles Times* ran several in-depth stories about the release of the Starr report on its cover, page 1A. One story, 142 paragraphs in length, detailed the sexual relationships between Lewinsky and Clinton, as reported by Starr. Three findings first reported by the tabloids were included in the story: that Lewinsky was in love with the president; that Lewinsky was led to believe there was a possibility of them being together at the end of Clinton’s term; and that Ickes and a Secret Service agent interrupted a sexual episode between the two. In its September 13 edition, the *Los Angeles Times* published a 16-page special section of Starr report excerpts. The section included details of Lewinsky using a cigar as a sexual prop; of Lewinsky being in love with Clinton; that Lewinsky was led to believe Clinton might leave his wife at the end
of his term to be with Lewinsky; and that Ickes and a Secret Service agent interrupted an
encounter between Clinton and Lewinsky.

In its September 12 edition, the New York Times published a 24-page special
section that included the full text of Starr’s findings sent to Congress. That special section
contained paragraphs that followed all five stories first reported by the tabloids.

In its September 12 edition, the Reno Gazette-Journal dedicated five pages in its A
section to excerpts from the Starr report and stories on its findings. The excerpts included
details of two of the stories first reported by the tabloids: Lewinsky’s use of a cigar as a
sexual prop and Lewinsky being led to believe that Clinton would leave his wife at the end
of his term to be with Lewinsky. In its September 22 edition, the Reno Gazette-Journal
ran a 20-paragraph story on page 7A, in its news section, about Lewinsky testifying that
she was in love with the president.

In its September 14 edition, USA Today published an eight-page special section of
excerpts from the Starr report. The section made reference to Lewinsky’s use of a cigar as
a sexual prop.

The Las Vegas Sun never published a special section of excerpts from the Starr
report, and, during the research period, never reported on any of the five details first
published by the tabloids.

Once Starr’s report was released, the focus of the mainstream daily newspapers
changed from seeking out the findings of Starr’s grand jury investigation to reporting how
Congress would deal with the findings and whether Clinton could be removed from office.
House Judiciary Committee impeachment hearings, House debates on articles of
impeachment, the impeachment of Clinton, and the subsequent Senate trial of the president
dominated mainstream coverage. The tabloids, however, focused on the Starr investigation's effects on the president's marriage and family life, on Lewinsky's personal life, and on the efforts of both Clinton and Lewinsky to recover from the pain and embarrassment their affair brought upon themselves and others.

In its September 29 edition, the Star reported that the president and his wife had not had sex in 14 years, and that the first lady, humiliated by the details of her husband's relationship with Lewinsky, planned to divorce her husband as soon as his term ended. The Star published excerpts of love letters Lewinsky wrote to Clinton, including a note in which Lewinsky begged Clinton for a more fulfilling sexual relationship, in its October 6 edition. The October 20 edition of the Star reported that Lewinsky said she only cooperated with Starr's investigation because she believed wealth would result from her subsequent fame, and that she hated being perceived as a "fat, cheesy slut." The November 10 edition of the Star published photos of a portly Lewinsky exercising and eating, and a story about the Clintons' daughter, Chelsea, suffering stress-related stomach pains and needing medical attention as a result of anxiety over her father's affair. The November 17 edition of the Star reported that a former Arkansas trooper testified to Starr that before Clinton was elected president, Hillary Clinton and former White House lawyer Vince Foster once kissed and fondled each other in a restaurant just a few feet away from Bill Clinton. The Star reported in its December 22 edition that the first lady took out her frustrations over the scandal on Secret Service agents, verbally abusing those who got in her way around the White House.

In its September 22 edition, the National Enquirer reported Lewinsky's family and friends feared she would kill herself, and that Lewinsky's anguish over the revelations of
her affair with Clinton had driven her to eating binges and deep depression. The September 29 edition of the National Enquirer reported that the first lady had banished her husband from the White House bedroom as a result of the pain she felt from the lurid details of Starr’s report. In its October 13 edition, the National Enquirer reported the first lady had ordered her husband to undergo therapy to cure a sex addiction. In its November 24 and December 15 editions, the National Enquirer reported that Chelsea Clinton was suffering from severe stress and anxiety as a result of her father’s troubles. And in its January 5, 1999, edition, the National Enquirer reported that Secret Service agents had to pull the first lady off the president when she attacked him in rage over the stress and embarrassment of the scandal. “Keep that bitch away from me!” Clinton was reported as saying to an agent after the attack. The same report said the Clintons frequently engaged in screaming matches when in private, and that both were so tense they frequently lost their temper with others. Meanwhile, the January 5 edition of the Globe reported that the first lady had touched the president deeply with reassurances of her loyalty and her commitment to their marriage.

While none of these allegations were acknowledged, confirmed, or denied by the White House, Lewinsky, or anyone else, it should be noted that at least one tabloid report was contradicted completely by Starr’s report. In the August 18 edition of the National Enquirer, an unnamed source said Lewinsky bragged that she had sexual intercourse with Clinton in the Oval Office. Both Clinton and Lewinsky denied ever having sexual relations beyond oral sex. No testimony or depositions alleged Clinton and Lewinsky ever had sexual intercourse.

The mainstream daily newspapers did not follow up on a single tabloid story that
first appeared between the release of Starr’s report to the conclusion of the research period, and the tabloids never reported on Clinton’s impeachment hearings or Senate trial.

The scandal also created six watchdog stories in the mainstream daily newspapers during the research period. In the August 31 edition of the Las Vegas Sun, a one-paragraph report on page 2A, in the “People in the News” column, said the Star offered Lewinsky $1 million for exclusive rights to her story about her affair with Clinton. The story said publisher Harper Collins offered Lewinsky $2 million for a book deal. National Enquirer editor Steve Coz said his tabloid also made an offer to Lewinsky, but he said it was not worth as much because most details of the affair already had been leaked to the press.

The next day, in the September 1 edition of USA Today, a 12-paragraph story from personality columnist Jeannie Williams appeared on page 2D under the “People” header. Her report said Lewinsky was fielding lucrative offers for the rights to her story about her affair with Clinton. A $1 million offer from the Star and separate book deals were worth the most, Williams reported.

In its September 10 edition, the Los Angeles Times published a 17-paragraph story on page 5E, in a publishing column in the Calendar section, about declining circulations among the weekly supermarket tabloids despite intense, sensational coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal. The column addressed the tabloids’ lack of coverage during the initial stages of Starr’s investigation and more intense coverage dealing with specific details of the sexual relationship between Clinton and Lewinsky. The Globe was not pursuing the story as aggressively as the Star and the National Enquirer, the column said.

In its November 12 edition, USA Today included a one-paragraph story about
Lewinsky's problems with a public life in its "Lifeline" briefs, which appear in the left column of page 1D, the cover of the Life features section. The brief said Lewinsky and her family were having confrontations with the tabloid media and the public while dining out in New York City. The story ran with a color photograph credited to Globe Photos Inc.

In its November 19 edition, USA Today's Jeannie Williams dedicated three paragraphs of her column, on page 2D under the "People" banner, to the National Enquirer's declining circulation and its handling of stories about Chelsea Clinton. In the brief report, editor Steve Coz said the periodical's circulation was down, but he maintained that he had a recovery plan. Coz defended coverage of Chelsea Clinton's reaction to the Starr investigation of her father, President Clinton, saying Chelsea is no longer a little girl and is a legitimate public figure.

Finally, in the December 7 edition of USA Today, on page 3D in the "Inside TV with Peter Johnson" column, a nine-paragraph story addressed a report in the Star that insinuated a producer with ABC News' "20/20" was having a romantic relationship with Lewinsky. In the column, the producer denied that his relationship with Lewinsky was anything but professional as his network prepared for an exclusive interview with her.

Paula Jones' Cosmetic Surgery

Unlike Gennifer Flowers, who alleged a consensual sexual relationship with Clinton, Paula Jones alleged Clinton made an unwanted sexual advance toward her in a Little Rock, Arkansas, hotel room while Clinton was Arkansas' governor and Jones was a state employee. Jones took the step of filing a sexual harassment lawsuit against Clinton.
after he was elected president. During court proceedings in the case, Jones' attorneys sought to unveil Clinton's sexual history as an elected official and establish a pattern of sexual transgressions and solicitations. Clinton denied a sexual relationship with Lewinsky during proceedings in this lawsuit, which gave Starr the ammunition he needed to expand his investigation of Clinton. The president subsequently was impeached.

Jones became recognizable to the public for much more than her lawsuit, however. She had a distinguishable nose that became the target of political cartoonists and comedians alike. So, in 1998, Jones had cosmetic surgery on her nose to reduce its size. The National Enquirer gained exclusive rights to interview Jones about the procedure and publish the first photographs of Jones' new nose. Much like the Star's handling of the Dick Morris story, the National Enquirer sought advance publicity for their story through other media. They found a willing partner in ABC News' "PrimeTime Live" newsmagazine. In its Wednesday, August 12 broadcast, "PrimeTime Live" aired clips of an interview videotaped by the National Enquirer and showed photographs of Jones before and after her surgery. Throughout the segment, the words National Enquirer appeared in small type in the top-right corner of the screen, while ABC's logo appeared in the bottom-right corner. "PrimeTime Live" anchor Sam Donaldson made reference to the National Enquirer in introducing the segment (Rosenberg, 1998).

The Associated Press took a photograph of the televised image of Jones' new face and made it available on its wire service with a file photograph of Jones before the surgery. The post-surgery photograph of Jones had a clearly visible ABC logo in the bottom-right corner and the words National Enquirer legible in the top-right corner. A story about Jones' surgery, the "PrimeTime Live" segment, and the National Enquirer's
role in obtaining the footage and photographs also was made available by the news service. The result was widespread publication of the photographs and a watchdog story criticizing the entire report.

In the August 14 edition of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, in its “People in the News” section, the two photos were published with a 19-paragraph story about the surgery, the “PrimeTime Live” segment, and the National Enquirer’s role in the story. The photo of Jones after the surgery included the National Enquirer label in the top-right corner and the ABC logo in the bottom-right corner. The *Las Vegas Review-Journal* also put a 2-inch-by-2-inch color pre-surgery photo of Jones on its cover, page 1A, in the top-left corner of the page under a “People” header. This is a regular feature in the newspaper’s design, allowing it to refer to a story on a recognizable person.

In its August 14 edition, the *Las Vegas Sun* published the photos and a one-paragraph story in its “People in the News” feature. The photo of Jones after the surgery included the National Enquirer label in the top-right corner and the ABC logo in the bottom-right corner, but the story made no mention of the National Enquirer’s role in the story.

In its August 14 edition, the *Los Angeles Times* published a five-paragraph story on the surgery with the two photos moved by the Associated Press on page 9A, in its front news section, but the National Enquirer label and the ABC logo were cut out of the post-surgery picture of Jones. The story made no mention of the National Enquirer’s role in obtaining the post-surgery picture or the story.

In the August 14 edition of *USA Today*, the two Associated Press photos of Jones were published on page 2D, under its “People” header. There was no story to accompany
the photographs. Only a short caption ran below the photographs. The caption did not explain the National Enquirer's role in obtaining the story or the post-surgery photo, although the National Enquirer label and ABC logo were visible in the post-surgery photo.

The August 25 edition of the National Enquirer was available for sale on August 17. Page 16 was dedicated to its exclusive interview with Jones, and included a picture of Jones before the surgery, a picture of Jones recovering from the procedure, and two photos of Jones after the recovery. The story reported an anonymous donor paid $9,000 for Jones' surgery. The story also addressed the transformation of Jones since the beginning of her litigation, which included makeovers, a new wardrobe, the cutting, straightening, and lightening of her curly brown hair, and the cosmetic surgery. "I can get back to the business of being a mom instead of a caricature," Jones said in the interview. "Cartoonists won't ridicule my nose and comics will have to find someone else to pick on" (Cetner & Shipp, 1998, p. 16).

Los Angeles Times columnist Howard Rosenberg demonstrated the watchdog function of the mainstream daily newspapers when he criticized the partnership between ABC and the National Enquirer and the subsequent coverage of Jones' surgery in the August 17 edition of the newspaper. Rosenberg's column was the top story in the Calendar section that day, starting at the top of page 1F under the banner headline "A nose for news, from tabs to TV," and jumping inside to page 11F. The column, 34 paragraphs in length, also included the Associated Press photos at the top of page 1F in color, with the post-surgery image of Jones retaining the National Enquirer label in the top-right corner. "With so much of mainstream media lasering in on celebrities, the bizarre and the tawdry, they are increasingly merging their news interests with the
tabloids," Rosenberg wrote (1998, p. F11). Rosenberg asked the Los Angeles Times staffer who edited the August 14 article on Jones why the National Enquirer label was cropped out of the picture. The editor said it was necessary to make the photo fit in the available space. Rosenberg also interviewed Steve Coz, the National Enquirer editor, for the column. Coz neither confirmed nor denied paying Jones for the exclusive rights to the story, but did say the tabloid was not the anonymous donor who paid for Jones' surgery. Rosenberg asked ABC producer Phyllis McGrady if giving the National Enquirer advance publicity for the Jones story and photos might have indirectly violated network policy that forbids paying for interviews. "Would I prefer AP owned them? Yes," she said. "But I'm not going to sit here and dis National Enquirer" (Rosenberg, 1998, p. F11).

The final follow-up to the story of Jones' new nose appeared in the October 8 edition of USA Today on its cover, page 1A. The newspaper, without its own post-surgery photo of Jones, ran a small color photo of Jones' profile that appeared in the August 25 National Enquirer. While the photo ran with a short reference to an inside story about Jones' lawsuit, USA Today in small type credited the image to the National Enquirer.

The National Enquirer was able to generate substantial advance publicity for its story on Jones' surgery with willing cooperation from a network television program and several daily newspapers. Not only did the daily newspapers follow up on the story broadcast by "PrimeTime Live," but one newspaper, the Los Angeles Times, also ran a watchdog story to criticize how the story filtered through the mainstream media.
Calista Flockhart's Weight

In just two seasons on broadcast television, "Ally McBeal" has won two Golden Globe Awards as best comedy series. Actress Calista Flockhart plays the title character, an intelligent, independent, yet emotionally unstable Boston attorney approaching her 30th birthday. The program’s unconventional humor and portrayal of women attorneys has won loyal audiences, as well as criticism from feminists, who consider the “Ally McBeal” character a slave to her sexuality, and believe her desperate longing for a rewarding relationship with a man makes her an inappropriate role model for young women (Shalit, 1998). In addition to the attention Flockhart has gained through her portrayal of McBeal, she also has found a great deal of attention paid to her skinny figure. In its September 29

Table 3

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<th>Tabloid Cover Appearances, July 14, 1998, to January 5, 1999</th>
<th>National Enquirer</th>
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<td>Calista Flockhart</td>
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<td>1</td>
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dition, the Globe reported that the already-frail Flockhart had lost even more weight, and that her “Ally McBeal” co-workers and friends feared she was anorexic. The Globe showed pictures of Flockhart from that month’s Emmy awards to a counselor at an eating disorder clinic. The counselor said Flockhart exhibited the physical features and
characteristics of an anorexic. The *Globe* also reported that Flockhart maintained a strict diet and a daily workout schedule despite her thinness. The story said Flockhart denied having an eating disorder or any problems with her weight. This report led to more tabloid stories on Flockhart’s health and created a small wave of follow-up and watchdog mainstream coverage.

In the October 7 edition of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, on page 9E, in the newspaper’s features section under the television listings, a seven-paragraph story addressed rumors that Flockhart was in poor health. The story cited a WCBS-TV report that Flockhart was in treatment for anorexia and that “Ally McBeal” production had been shut down. Flockhart denied being in treatment or having an eating disorder, and the Fox network, home of “Ally McBeal,” denied that production had ceased.

In its October 27 edition, the *National Enquirer* published a story that said Flockhart had lost 20 pounds in the past year, largely because of a demanding work schedule for “Ally McBeal,” and that the stress of fame had contributed to her inability to put the weight back on. The story said Flockhart, 5-feet-6-inches tall, weighed just 102 pounds. In the same edition, the *National Enquirer* reported that a growing number of female entertainers were starving themselves to remain thin, and that Hollywood’s obsession with thinness was causing a health crisis among actresses and singers. The article cited actresses Lara Flynn Boyle, Farrah Fawcett, Courteney Cox, Winona Ryder, Tori Spelling, Claire Danes, and Lea Thompson as women who were too thin. The October 27 edition of the *Star* published a story that said Flockhart was down to an unhealthy 95 pounds and that she had gone on a fast-food diet to try to gain weight. The same issue of the *Star* also included an article about Hollywood’s obsession with losing
weight, and named many of the same entertainers as the National Enquirer article as women who were too skinny. The Star story included quotes from a recovered anorexic/bulimic who said entertainers who are too thin are dangerous to the self-esteem and the health of the girls and young women who look up to them.

In its October 20 edition, the Las Vegas Review-Journal ran a watchdog response, a two-paragraph article about Flockhart on its “People in the News” section on page 12A. The story said Flockhart had hired a new publicist to debunk reports that she had an eating disorder.

On October 21, on the cover of USA Today’s Life section, page 1D, the “Television News and Views by Robert Blanco” column at the bottom of the page addressed the expanding rumors about Flockhart’s weight, and included a color photo of a frail-looking Flockhart. The column was critical of Hollywood’s expectations of thinness for its actresses, and it addressed the negative image Flockhart’s weight sends to women. The column also addressed the “nastiest speculation” of the tabloids.

In the October 29 edition of the Las Vegas Sun, at the top of page 6E in the features section, a 15-paragraph story addressed Flockhart’s weight and Hollywood’s demand for thin female entertainers. The story included a photo of Flockhart and reported that women who lost too much weight were poor role models for girls and young women. The report named Lara Flynn Boyle, Courteney Cox, and Helen Hunt as actresses who appeared to be too thin, and the story specifically mentioned the related articles in the October 27 editions of the Star and the National Enquirer.

In the October 29 edition of the Los Angeles Times, in the “Morning Report” on
page 2D, a one-paragraph watchdog story detailed how *People* magazine would publish an interview with Flockhart in which she says she is not too thin.

In that same day's *USA Today*, on page 2D under the "People” header, a nine-paragraph article with a photo of Flockhart appeared. The article told of the upcoming *People* article, in which Flockhart says she is not too thin and she criticizes the "societal obsession with my physical appearance."

Finally, in the October 30 edition of the *Las Vegas Sun*, a six-paragraph article about Flockhart appeared on the “Flip Side” page. The story publicized the upcoming *People* magazine story, in which Flockhart denied she had an eating disorder and called the media attention and gossip about her figure “hurtful.”

The November 17 editions of the *Star* and the *National Enquirer* offered more stories on Flockhart’s weight. The *Star* reported Flockhart still participated in strenuous workouts and a regimented diet, a combination a certified trainer quoted in the article called dangerous. The *National Enquirer* article quoted a physician and an eating-disorder expert as saying Flockhart demonstrated the classic symptoms of an eating disorder. No follow-up or watchdog coverage in mainstream daily newspapers resulted from these tabloid articles for the remainder of the research period.

The tabloid reports on Flockhart’s weight and the skinny appearance of other entertainers spawned follow-up coverage in the mainstream media. In the tabloids Flockhart denied the allegations that she had an eating disorder, but the mainstream media helped her tell her side of the story. The mainstream daily newspapers were willing to serve as a watchdog of the tabloids in this capacity, publishing Flockhart’s denials and
offering advance publicity for the People magazine article that let Flockhart respond extensively to questions about her eating habits and her weight.

The Investigation of JonBenet Ramsey’s Slaying

The investigation of the Boulder, Colorado, slaying of 6-year-old JonBenet Ramsey was one of the tabloids’ most widely covered stories during the research period. The girl, who had participated in child beauty pageants most of her short life, was found beaten and strangled in the basement of her home on December 26, 1996 ("Grand jury," 1998). Even though the killing occurred more than 18 months before the start of the research period, it consistently received significant play in the tabloids. Some part of the investigation into her death appeared on nine Globe covers, nine National Enquirer covers, and one Star cover. Yet, for all the coverage this story received in the tabloids, the mainstream daily newspapers never followed up on any of the stories reported by the tabloids during the research period. The tabloids focused on the family of JonBenet Ramsey and whether any or all of them played a role in her death. While the daily newspapers dedicated some space to police and grand jury investigations, they appeared infrequently at best and never included details first reported by any of the three tabloids.

Very little watchdog coverage of the tabloids resulted as well.

The July 14 edition of the National Enquirer reported that John and Patsy Ramsey, JonBenet’s parents, were offered plea bargains by prosecutors if they admitted roles in the slaying. Prosecutors were seeking first-degree murder indictments, the story said. The September 15 edition of the Star reported that investigators believed a strand of animal fur found on the duct tape used to cover JonBenet’s mouth came from a pair of boots Patsy
Ramsey was wearing the day the girl was killed. The September 15 edition of the *Globe* reported that police were investigating a tip that John Ramsey removed evidence from his home with the help of his pilot hours before JonBenet’s body was found. The September 22 *National Enquirer* reported that the grand jury investigating the killing heard evidence that JonBenet suffered immensely during her last living moments. Another story quoted a language professor who believes John Ramsey could have dictated to his wife the ransom note found in their home. The cover of the November 24 *Globe* had the headline, “Brother, 11, is the killer” in large type with “say crime investigators” in smaller type. “And Burke will never stand trial!” also appeared on the cover, relating to a story that quoted investigators as saying JonBenet’s brother Burke had become a suspect in the slaying, but because he was only 9 years old at the time of her death he could never be charged. The December 29 edition of the *National Enquirer* reported that Patsy Ramsey

### Table 4

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<th>Newspaper</th>
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was on anti-suicide medication and that both parents had talked of killing themselves. None of these stories were pursued by the daily newspapers.

On September 28, the *Los Angeles Times'* Rosenberg contributed another watchdog story, this time relating to media coverage of the JonBenet Ramsey slaying investigation. This critical essay, 28 paragraphs long and running in the right column of page 1F of the features section, criticized both tabloid print and television reports on the slaying, specifically citing a *Globe* report that JonBenet’s bed-wetting caused Patsy Ramsey to go berserk. Rosenberg called all tabloid coverage of the investigation into the girl’s death “vile,” but said it has managed to penetrate the mainstream media anyway.

In its October 9 edition, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* published an eight-paragraph story about a Boulder photographer’s libel lawsuit against John Ramsey that claims Ramsey told the *National Enquirer* in 1997 that the photographer, Stephen Miles, killed JonBenet. John Ramsey’s attorneys said he never spoke with the *National Enquirer*. This watchdog story had nothing to do with any of the stories about the investigation into the killing.

In the December 16 edition of the *New York Times*, on page 18A, the first page of its section dedicated to national news, featured a 20-paragraph story about the slow progression of the investigation. One paragraph of the story contained a watchdog element, describing how tabloid coverage of the investigation, a frequent cover story, actually had slipped as the Clinton-Lewinsky story developed.

**The Investigation of Princess Diana’s Life and Death**

The tabloid coverage of Princess Diana of Wales, who died on August 31, 1997, in
a Paris car accident, paralleled the tabloid coverage of JonBenet Ramsey. Both died well before the research for this project began, yet the investigations into their shortened lives and unexpected deaths remained newsworthy to the tabloid press. Tabloid coverage of Princess Diana was almost as omnipresent as President Clinton. Princess Diana appeared on 18 Star covers, 11 National Enquirer covers and five Globe covers during the research period. And much like their reaction to the tabloids' coverage of JonBenet Ramsey, the mainstream media largely ignored tabloid reports on Princess Diana during the research period.

In its August 30 edition, as part of a larger package of stories on the first anniversary of Diana's death, the Las Vegas Review-Journal published a 17-paragraph story about the flaws of the French investigation into the accident that killed Diana. That story addressed allegations that the Mercedes Diana was traveling in had faulty brakes, which contributed to the crash. That allegation was first reported in the August 25 edition of the Star. This story was the only tabloid-influenced report on Princess Diana found in the mainstream daily newspapers during the research period.

Among the dozens of tabloid stories that did not find their way into the mainstream daily newspapers: the August 4 National Enquirer reported that while some of Diana's dresses were auctioned and raised $5 million for charities, one dress was used as a draw for a horse show and another is on display at a bar and restaurant; the August 11 National Enquirer published interviews with a former maid and a former butler to Dodi Al Fayed, Diana's boyfriend, who also was killed in the Paris car accident; the September 8 National Enquirer profiled a fashion designer who created many of the dresses that helped make Diana a fashion icon; the September 15 Star published an interview with a former British
spy who said the driver of Diana’s car was on the spy agency’s payroll, and that the agent had seen a top-secret plan to assassinate Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic that was almost identical to the circumstances of Diana’s car accident; the October 13 Star dedicated eight pages to some of Diana’s favorite outfits; the December 1 National Enquirer published excerpts from Diana’s diary, including statements about her love for Al Fayed, her hatred for Camilla Parker Bowles — the new companion of her former husband, Prince Charles — and her moments of deep depression; the December 8 National Enquirer reported the driver of Diana’s car thought he was driving a manual transmission instead of an automatic and attempted to slow the vehicle by downshifting, and never stepped on the brakes before the accident; the same edition also reported that before Diana fell in love with Al Fayed, she wanted to marry a Pakistani surgeon named Hasnat Khan, but Khan broke off their relationship; and the December 22 Star reported that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency spied on Diana for years and amassed a 1,056-page file detailing all aspects of her life, including her sexual history and her relationships with Khan and Al Fayed.

The Personal Lives of Frank and Kathie Lee Gifford

The marriage of television broadcaster Frank Gifford and his wife, Kathie Lee, a syndicated variety show co-host and commercial spokeswoman, became quite public when in 1997 the Globe published images of Frank Gifford in the arms of another woman. While the evidence of an affair did not destroy the Giffords’ marriage, the tabloids kept a close watch on the couple for problems. During the research period, either one or both of the Giffords appeared on seven Globe covers, five National Enquirer covers, and three
Star covers. One report, in the October 20 Globe, said Kathie Lee Gifford had written a letter to Hillary Rodham Clinton to urge the first lady to forgive the president for his sexual relationship with Lewinsky.

More than a year after the Globe's publication of the pictures of Frank Gifford in the arms of another woman, he had never publicly acknowledged the report or commented on how he felt about his wife or how his behavior had affected their marriage. That silence ended on October 27, when Gifford appeared on CNN's "Larry King Live" to publicly apologize to his family for his behavior. "As difficult as it has been for me, it has been much more difficult for Kathie. It was about the most stupid thing I ever got involved in," Gifford said on the program. "I know it was a setup, but that doesn't matter. I could have avoided the setup. I didn't. I did a very stupid thing," he said of the Globe's involvement in helping to orchestrate Gifford's encounter with Suzen Johnson (Sigall, 1998, p. 37).

Just as the mainstream daily newspapers picked up on Flockhart's interview with People magazine to deny allegations that she had an eating disorder, the newspapers acted as tabloid watchdogs again by publishing stories about Frank Gifford's public apology on CNN. The October 29 editions of the Las Vegas Review-Journal and USA Today published short articles about Gifford's appearance on the show. The Las Vegas Review-Journal's article was four paragraphs long and appeared in its "People in the News" feature on page 16A. USA Today's article was five paragraphs long and appeared in the "Jeanne Williams' News & Views" column under the "People" banner on page 2D. These stories never would have appeared in the daily newspapers if Gifford had not gone on...
“Larry King Live,” and Gifford never would have had to make a public apology if the Globe had not published the photos of Gifford and Johnson in 1997.

However, Frank Gifford’s appearance on CNN did not stop tabloid reports about him and his wife. In its November 10 edition, the Globe included Kathie Lee Gifford in a feature on “Hollywood homewreckers,” about celebrities who have wooed companions from their partners. Frank Gifford’s former wife, Astrid, alleged in the article that Kathie Lee stole her husband. The November 17 National Enquirer reported that Kathie Lee Gifford forced her husband to appear on “Larry King Live” to make the scandal of his affair go away. The December 1 National Enquirer reported Frank Gifford was extremely jealous that his wife persisted in proclaiming her affection for her first boyfriend, surfer Yancy Spencer. The December 29 Globe published an interview with Kathie Lee Gifford about how she avoided divorcing her husband and worked to mend their marriage. And the January 5 Star, in its celebrity predictions for 1999, said Kathie Lee Gifford would succumb to temptation and have her own extramarital affair before the end of the millennium. The mainstream daily newspapers did not follow up on any of these reports, and offered no further watchdog coverage of the tabloids relating to the Giffords.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The examination of specific subjects covered by the tabloid press and how mainstream daily newspapers responded to them reveals a great deal about the relationship between the two kinds of media. In covering the Clinton-Lewinsky affair and the investigation of the slaying of JonBenet Ramsey, the tabloid press and the mainstream daily newspapers pursued similar subjects but took drastically different approaches in reporting. Although Princess Diana died a year before this study commenced, the sensational elements of her life and death made her a popular subject for the tabloid press. The mainstream daily newspapers, for the most part, considered her yesterday’s news. Paula Jones’ cosmetic surgery was deemed newsworthy by most of the daily newspapers surveyed, and the National Enquirer’s ties to the story largely were swept aside. And press coverage of Calista Flockhart’s weight and health showed how the mainstream media can both follow the tabloids and play watchdog over them at the same time.

Examining how often mainstream daily newspapers follow up on stories first reported by the tabloid press is important for three reasons. First, the tabloid press freely admits to paying sources for information and interviews, and mainstream daily newspapers
vehemently are opposed to compensating anyone involved in any story in any fashion (Sullivan, 1997). When mainstream daily newspapers publish stories first reported by the tabloid press, there is a possibility that someone was compensated for furnishing the tabloids with information that led to the report’s creation, thus possibly violating newspaper policy in an indirect fashion. Second, the tabloid press is viewed as having much less credibility than mainstream daily newspapers (MacDonald, 1984; Winch, 1997). When mainstream newspapers report on subjects introduced by the tabloid press, the daily newspapers risk compromising their credibility and relinquishing control of their content to their less-respected peers. Third, because the tabloid press focus on coverage of celebrities, sleaziness, and the sensational, mainstream daily newspapers spurn stories on issues that demand public concern when they follow up on tabloid reports. A less-informed, apathetic public is a potential consequence of too much titillating text and not enough news of social value (Bogart, 1995).

Independent counsel Kenneth Starr’s investigation of President Clinton brought lurid details of sex and deceit to the forefront of news. Details of semen-stained dresses, oral sex, unkept promises, and potential perjury charges were enough to attract the tabloid press and the mainstream media in droves. It is important to note that the mainstream media did not follow up on tabloid stories related to Clinton and Lewinsky until Starr released his report and recommendations to Congress. Some of the more licentious details of Starr’s report, first reported by the tabloid press, went untouched for weeks by the mainstream daily newspapers. As lascivious as these stories might have been, however, they were deemed important enough by an independent counsel to include them in a report that recommended the impeachment of the nation’s highest elected official. In the end, the
mainstream daily newspapers concluded that fact made the scandalous details legitimate news, even if the tabloids beat them to it.

The treatment of the story of Paula Jones’ cosmetic surgery is another matter entirely. The story belonged to the National Enquirer, which received advance publicity for the report by going through a network television newsmagazine. The mainstream media could have waited for Jones’ next public appearance to take a photograph of her new nose. Since Jones was suing the president of the United States, newspapers and television stations likely would not have had to wait long for a photo opportunity. But the Associated Press photographed a televised image of Jones and released it to its members, along with a picture of Jones before the surgery. Credit to the National Enquirer was plainly visible in the post-surgery image. Compounding the daily newspapers’ dilemma of whether to publish or ignore the pictures was the source of the images: ABC’s “PrimeTime Live,” a program classified by one study as tabloid television for its reliance on sensational elements, hidden cameras, and blatant bias in storytelling (Rauch, 1993). Although there was no way to be certain the National Enquirer did not pay Jones for the photograph — or the surgery — four of the daily newspapers surveyed in the study published the pictures. Of the Los Angeles Times, the Las Vegas Sun, USA Today, and the Las Vegas Review-Journal, only the Las Vegas Review-Journal included the photo credit to the National Enquirer and explained the roles of the weekly tabloid and “PrimeTime Live” in an accompanying story. That three of the newspapers surveyed did not explain the photograph’s origin is indicative of the relationship between the mainstream daily newspapers and the tabloid press: The mainstream media occasionally
think enough of a tabloid story to publish it, but they would rather not acknowledge how it came to their attention.

Watchdog stories, on the other hand, carry none of the stigmas associated with follow-up reports. The mainstream media see it as part of their job to clarify allegations and issues within the public domain and promote fair, accurate reporting — and that often leads to criticism of other media (Winch, 1997). The coverage of Calista Flockhart’s weight is a good example of the importance of the watchdog function. In its September 29, 1998, edition, the *Globe* reported that Flockhart’s friends and co-workers were concerned she might have an eating disorder. The story, blazoned across the cover of the *Globe*, had the potential to damage Flockhart’s career, and it was based on anonymous speculation and a few photographs of a frail Flockhart. The actress repeatedly denied that she had an eating disorder, and the mainstream daily newspapers published several stories saying as much. Although the Flockhart story created some follow-up coverage — a report in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* made allegations that she had an eating disorder, and subsequent tabloid stories on the thinness of other actresses led to a story in the *Las Vegas Sun* — the watchdog coverage afforded Flockhart the opportunity to criticize the credibility of the tabloid report and provided some balance in the information given to media consumers. Similarly, when Frank Gifford finally spoke of his infidelity, which the *Globe* might have helped to create, the mainstream daily newspapers’ reports balanced the sensational nature of the tabloid story from a year earlier. Mainstream daily newspaper stories on litigation against tabloids, despite the role of the tabloid press in the story, are viewed as legitimate news because they are formal complaints against the accuracy of
media reports. And stories dedicated to the pursuit of balanced, accurate news coverage serve the public interest.

Follow-up and watchdog stories were spread throughout the pages of the daily newspapers surveyed in this study. Tabloid-influenced reports appeared on the front page, on inside news pages, in feature and entertainment sections, and on pages and in columns dedicated to lighter, celebrity-oriented stories. Space in news sections generally is dedicated to social, political, economic, scientific, or environmental news that is of public interest. Features and entertainment sections offer a wide variety of cultural and social news. And features like USA Today's "People" page, and the Las Vegas Review-Journal's "People in the News" page report on celebrities and recognizable figures in the news. Despite section divisions, every inch of available space in a daily newspaper has the potential to be filled with meaningful news that better informs readers. Yet, when newspapers are willing to set aside specific space for celebrity news, readers become familiar with the format and expect to see stories on recognizable personalities in the same place every day. If a five-paragraph story on a movie star's marital problems is first reported by a tabloid and finds its way onto a celebrity news page in a daily newspaper, it is doubtful any reader will call the newspaper's credibility into question. However, if biased, sensational news becomes a fixture in the news pages, where readers expect to see stories on governmental, medical, or educational issues, or in features pages, where reviews of movies or music or stories on community figures or public services should be found, then daily newspapers may find the growing public dissatisfaction with the media will get even worse.
Conclusions

This study aimed to quantify the amount of editorial content in mainstream daily newspapers that is influenced by supermarket tabloids, and in doing so, perhaps better define the relationship between these two kinds of periodicals. In tracking the content of three supermarket tabloids and six daily newspapers for 26 weeks, more than 100 reports in the mainstream daily newspapers were determined to have some sort of tabloid influence. Whether the stories dealt with actors assaulting celebrity photographers or filing lawsuits against the tabloids, rumors of actresses having eating disorders, or the unveiling of surgically altered noses, tabloid reports found their way into the mainstream daily newspapers time and again. The supermarket tabloids definitely have some influence on the content of mainstream daily newspapers.

Yet, notably, this study reveals that this influence is remarkably small, and usually is contained in pages the daily newspapers set aside specifically for news of celebrities and recognizable personalities. The tabloid influence amounts to mere paragraphs per week. The Las Vegas Review-Journal, on average, had one tabloid-influenced report every 4.9 issues; the stories had an average of 7.2 paragraphs. Nearly two-thirds of those reports appeared on the newspaper’s “People in the News” page. USA Today averaged one tabloid-influenced report every 3.1 issues; the stories had an average of 5.6 paragraphs. Almost 80 percent of those reports appeared on pages dedicated to lighter, celebrity-oriented coverage. The Reno Gazette-Journal published only eight tabloid-influenced reports during the research period, about one every three weeks, and those stories averaged less than five paragraphs in length. Considering the typical daily newspaper has
dozens of pages of reports every day, a few paragraphs per week are not a significant portion of total content.

Overall, the content of supermarket tabloids and mainstream daily newspapers proved quite different. The coverage of the President Clinton-Monica Lewinsky affair and the investigation into the slaying of JonBenet Ramsey are indicative of how the tabloids and the mainstream daily newspapers can report on identical subjects, yet pursue completely different aspects of the story. The tabloids, although interested in the personal lives of prominent elected officials, never reported on the decisions they made on behalf of constituents. Stories of the worldwide economic crisis of 1998, of the devastation of Hurricane Mitch, of the terrorist bombings at U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, and of the historic peace negotiations between Palestinians and Israel never appeared in the tabloids, either. Movie and theater reviews, weather forecasts, election results, previews of sporting events, and stock reports were nowhere to be found in the tabloids. Similarly, photographs of actresses' stomachs and accompanying speculation of pregnancies were not reported in the mainstream media. Neither were pictures documenting a celebrity's recent weight gain, nor weekly critiques of dazzling or hideous celebrity fashion statements. Those who talk or write of the blurring line between tabloids and the mainstream media probably have not taken the time to read a supermarket tabloid from cover to cover. If they did, they would find the line is still quite distinguishable — the mainstream media just step over it every once in a while, then quickly retreat.

It should be noted that while many mainstream daily newspapers dedicate a small amount of editorial space to reports on celebrities and recognizable personalities, tabloid editors have yet to devote any amount of space to more serious news of politics,
economics, or world affairs. Nor do the tabloids appear to have any interest in creating “Serious News” pages within their periodicals.

The daily newspapers clearly are interested in providing a more diverse product, one that informs, educates, and occasionally entertains or offers a slight escape for readers. In their attempt to appeal to a wider readership, daily newspaper editors must ask themselves if it is worth it to dedicate resources to put these lighter stories into print. Each story, no matter how short, has to be reported or copied off a wire service, and then edited. A headline must be written, and then the story must be reread for potential mistakes. As with entire columns, features, or pages dedicated to fluffy stories about recognizable personalities and celebrities, newspapers must determine if these stories serve their business interests and their readership better than stories about social, political, or economic issues.

Nevada’s three largest daily newspapers were not immune to tabloid influence. The Las Vegas Review-Journal and the Las Vegas Sun have specific pages dedicated to lighter stories and celebrity news. The Reno Gazette-Journal has two columns that are not solely devoted to news of celebrities, but have the flexibility to include such stories if an editor chooses. All three newspapers published a number of follow-up and watchdog stories during the research period, but the tabloid influence amounted to just a few paragraphs per week, and almost all of the reports came from wire services. Tabloid-influenced reports appeared in the Las Vegas Review-Journal and the Las Vegas Sun with similar frequency, averaging one every 4.9 and 6.3 editions, respectively. The Reno Gazette-Journal had significantly fewer tabloid-influenced reports than its southern brethren, at one every 22.8 editions, but that figure may be attributable to the newspaper.
typically having fewer pages than the Las Vegas Review-Journal and the Las Vegas Sun. Supermarket tabloid influence on Nevada daily newspapers is not at all a journalistic crisis. By raising awareness of tabloid influence at the state’s largest newspapers, it is hoped that this study will improve the quality of journalism in Nevada and increase attention to the significance of the issue in journalism education in the University and Community College System of Nevada.

Do these lighter stories help create a better-informed public? Probably not. Do they play a crucial role in the decisions readers make during their daily lives? Probably not. Do these celebrity-oriented reports contribute to self-government or fulfill the free press’s responsibility as the Fourth Estate? Definitely not. But if these reports offer readers enough reason to keep reading a newspaper, and not abandon it in favor of another publication or some other medium, then those readers invariably will be exposed to other parts of the newspaper that offer stories of more substantial social value. And that serves the public better than a newspaper that loses readers, loses its profitability, and eventually closes its doors and shuts down its presses. Flowery human interest content and sensational stories have proven to be quite effective in drawing audiences — and increasing profits — for news organizations, dating back to Benjamin Day’s Sun in the 1830s (Stephens, 1988); to William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer and the advent of yellow journalism at the turn of the century (Bessie, 1969); to the introduction of the tabloid in the early 1900s (Stephens, 1988); all the way through to the 1990s and the growth of a national tabloid press (Garneau, 1996; Turner, 1998). The occasional mainstream daily newspaper story with tabloid influence appears to be a necessary evil in the competitive media marketplace.
Limitations of the Study

There are hundreds of daily newspapers across the United States, and this study surveyed but six of them. While analyzing the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Las Vegas Sun, and the Reno Gazette-Journal provides a good journalistic sample from the state of Nevada, and studying three national newspapers like USA Today, the New York Times, and the Los Angeles Times evaluates editorial content available to the entire country, this study is not representative of media markets outside Nevada. Additional tabloid influence might have been discovered if more daily newspapers were considered in the research.

This study evaluated the content of only three weekly supermarket tabloids: the National Enquirer, the Star, and the Globe. Although these tabloids have the highest circulations in their genre, other weekly tabloids, such as the National Examiner, the Sun, and the fiction-based Weekly World News, were not accounted for in this study. Additional tabloid influence might have been discovered if more tabloid publications were considered in the research.

This study documented the content of three supermarket tabloids at the start of each week, and compared the content of the six daily newspapers against it. For the purposes of gauging tabloid influence, the study assumed that each tabloid story was not reported previously in any other form of media. It is possible that a story credited to the tabloids, such as Monica Lewinsky's use of a cigar as a sexual prop, was first reported on a television program, on the Internet, in a magazine, or in a mainstream daily newspaper not surveyed in this study.

Tabloid reports sometimes took weeks to find their way into the content of the mainstream daily newspapers. It is possible that some stories in the mainstream daily
newspapers were influenced by tabloids but not documented as such in this study. Because the survey of daily newspapers began on July 6, 1998, and no tabloids were surveyed prior to the July 14, 1998, editions, some stories from tabloid editions dated July 7 and earlier might have influenced daily newspaper reports unbeknownst to the researcher.

This study also makes the assumption that follow-up reports in mainstream daily newspapers are a measure of tabloid influence. It can be argued that some of the mainstream daily newspaper reports that were judged to have tabloid influence would have appeared in those newspapers regardless of whether they were first reported by tabloids. For example, the five details of independent counsel Kenneth Starr’s report first published by the tabloids were the only five follow-up reports found in the pages of the New York Times during the research period. The New York Times, along with the Las Vegas Review-Journal, the Los Angeles Times, the Reno Gazette-Journal, and USA Today, published extensive excerpts of Starr’s report coinciding with the report’s release to the public, not in response to the tabloids’ reports. These reports might not be a mark of tabloid influence, despite their sensational qualities. Wire service and daily newspaper editors also may not be aware that a story that comes to their attention was reported previously by the tabloid press. A story might have been taken from a news release already sent to a tabloid publication, or a publicist pitching a story idea already might have made the same suggestion to a tabloid.

Recommendations for Future Research

For all the comment and concerns about tabloid press influence on the mainstream
media, surprisingly little research has been conducted on the subject. This study used but one method of attempting to quantify this influence, focusing on how weekly supermarket tabloids affect the editorial content of mainstream daily newspapers. Many other methods could be used to expand on this research or evaluate different aspects of the issue.

Identical methods could be used to evaluate tabloid influence in other states or more specific media markets. A new study also could focus on one mainstream daily newspaper but incorporate more tabloids, such as the National Examiner and the Sun, into the research to more thoroughly gauge tabloid influence. Further analysis could be evaluated for statistical significance.

The mere presence of sensational celebrity news in mainstream daily newspapers could be a measure of tabloid influence. As stated earlier in this thesis, many celebrity reports appear in daily newspaper pages set aside specifically for that kind of news, like USA Today's "People" page. Although many of the reports on these pages have not appeared in tabloids, research that documents the creation and growth of these daily newspaper features could indicate a rise in tabloid influence. By sifting through newspaper archives from decades earlier, a study could track the amount of celebrity-oriented news and how it has been presented over the years. The research could focus on whether these sections have grown in size and frequency in recent years or remained largely unchanged over time.

Media critics' and scholars' concerns about a blurring line between the tabloid press and the mainstream media could be evaluated in a study that compares the content of both genres against each other. This study focused exclusively on mainstream daily newspaper reports that first appeared in or were influenced by supermarket tabloids. It
ignored stories that first appeared in daily newspapers and later were reported by weekly tabloids. Because the supermarket tabloids publish every week, as opposed to every day, they cannot offer timely coverage on many stories. The conviction of Mikael Markasev in the shooting death of Ennis Cosby, for example, was first reported by the mainstream daily newspapers and followed by the tabloids. A more thorough examination of the content crossover between both kinds of periodicals would better define the relationship between the two types of media.

Additional research could focus on the perceptions tabloid and mainstream journalists have of each other. Many tabloid reporters believe they are in competition with the mainstream media, and many journalists within the mainstream media want to distance themselves and their work from tabloids as much as possible. This research has documented crossover in the content of supermarket tabloids and mainstream daily newspapers, and it has documented a small level of tabloid influence on the editorial content of six daily newspapers. Some of this influence is acknowledged by mainstream journalists, such as Los Angeles Times columnist Howard Rosenberg. Some of it, however, is swept under the rug. The Los Angeles Times' August 14, 1998, story about Paula Jones' cosmetic surgery printed pictures of Jones before and after the procedure, but the newspaper removed credit to the National Enquirer from one of the images and failed to mention the National Enquirer's role in creating the story. It appeared the newspaper was embarrassed to acknowledge a supermarket tabloid played a role in the report. Surveying reporters' and editors' attitudes about tabloid influence and comparing them against the findings of this study and future research could indicate unfounded
perceptions and ignorance of the relationship between weekly tabloids and daily newspapers.

A thorough examination of the ethical issues of tabloid influence would be beneficial to the body of journalism research. Many media outlets and journalism organizations have specific codes of conduct they expect their employees or members to obey. Investigating whether tabloid reporters operate under any codes of conduct and defining rules of professional responsibility followed by mainstream journalists would better define potential differences between the two types of media. Defining codes of conduct and journalists' expected behavior could help determine which conduct is truly unethical and whether some negative perceptions of tabloid journalists are rooted in bias or documented criteria.

Finally, an analysis comparing language used by the tabloid press and the mainstream media, and defining sensational content, could determine whether one genre is more lurid than the other.
APPENDIX I

WATCHDOG STORIES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/7/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Mikael Markhasev murder trial goes to jurors. During closing arguments defense attorneys address credibility of witness Christopher So, who stood to gain $100,000 from the National Enquirer if Markhasev was convicted of murdering Ennis Cosby, the son of entertainer Bill Cosby.</td>
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<td>7/8/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Actor Antonio Banderas describes his hatred for tabloids, saying gossip “hurts.”</td>
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<td>7/8/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Trial opens in celebrity photographer’s civil lawsuit against actor Alec Baldwin for Baldwin’s alleged assault on the man. On the witness stand, Baldwin refers to the photographer as a “stalker.”</td>
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<td>7/10/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Christopher So, a witness in the Mikael Markhasev murder trial, collects $100,000 check from the National Enquirer after Markhasev was convicted of murdering Ennis Cosby, Bill Cosby’s son. So led police to the murder weapon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/10/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>At actor Alec Baldwin’s trial, celebrity photographer’s attorney claims the photographer had finished taking pictures of Baldwin and was leaving scene of alleged assault when Baldwin attacked him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/10/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Christopher So, a witness in the Mikael Markhasev murder trial, collects $100,000 check from the National Enquirer after Markhasev was convicted of murdering Ennis Cosby, the son of Bill Cosby. So led police to the murder weapon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/10/98</td>
<td><strong>Los Angeles Times</strong></td>
<td>Christopher So, a witness in the Mikael Markhasev murder trial, collects $100,000 check from the National Enquirer after Markhasev was convicted of murdering Ennis Cosby. So led police to the murder weapon. The story dominated the page layout and included a photograph of So wearing a National Enquirer T-shirt and baseball cap.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/10/98</td>
<td><strong>Los Angeles Times</strong></td>
<td>Trial progresses in a celebrity photographer’s lawsuit against actor Alec Baldwin on allegations Baldwin assaulted against the man. The story dominated the page layout and included a photograph of the photographer.</td>
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<td>7/13/98</td>
<td><strong>Los Angeles Times</strong></td>
<td>Columnist Liz Smith addresses July 21, 1998, National Enquirer article that insinuates actress Liv Tyler destroyed the marriage of actress Demi Moore and actor Bruce Willis and that Tyler and Willis, co-stars in the summer movie “Armageddon,” were having an affair. Tyler’s mother denies her daughter and Willis are anything more than friends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/21/98</td>
<td><strong>L.V. Review-Journal</strong></td>
<td>Actor Alec Baldwin is ordered to pay $4,500 in damages to a celebrity photographer for assault.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/21/98</td>
<td><strong>Las Vegas Sun</strong></td>
<td>Actor Alec Baldwin is ordered to pay $4,500 in damages to a celebrity photographer for assault.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/21/98</td>
<td><strong>Los Angeles Times</strong></td>
<td>Actor Alec Baldwin ordered to pay $4,500 in damages to a celebrity photographer for assault. The story dominated the page layout and ran with two photographs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7/21/98</td>
<td><strong>Reno Gazette-Journal</strong></td>
<td>Actor Alec Baldwin is ordered to pay $4,500 in damages to a celebrity photographer for assault. A photo of Alec Baldwin ran with the story.</td>
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<td>Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/17/98</td>
<td><strong>Los Angeles Times</strong></td>
<td>Television columnist Howard Rosenberg criticizes mainstream television news and mainstream daily newspapers for allowing the <em>National Enquirer</em> to infiltrate their editorial content with the first pictures of Paula Jones' surgically altered nose. The story, appearing across the top of the section cover, included two color photographs of Jones, who was suing President Clinton for sexual harassment. One photograph showed Jones before the cosmetic surgery, and one showed her face after the procedure. The post-surgery photo credited the <em>National Enquirer</em> in the top right corner of the image.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8/18/98</td>
<td><strong>L. V. Review-Journal</strong></td>
<td>Actor Sean Penn is accused of attacking a celebrity video photographer.</td>
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<td>8/18/98</td>
<td><strong>Las Vegas Sun</strong></td>
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<td>8/18/98</td>
<td><strong>Los Angeles Times</strong></td>
<td>Actor Sean Penn is accused of attacking a celebrity video photographer.</td>
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<td>8/19/98</td>
<td><strong>USA Today</strong></td>
<td>Actor Sean Penn is accused of attacking a celebrity video photographer.</td>
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<td>8/31/98</td>
<td><strong>Las Vegas Sun</strong></td>
<td>The tabloid <em>Star</em> offers Monica Lewinsky $1 million for exclusive rights to her story about her affair with President Clinton. Publisher Harper Collins offers Lewinsky $2 million for a book deal. <em>National Enquirer</em> editor Steve Coz says his tabloid made an offer to Lewinsky, but Coz said it wasn't worth as much because most details of the affair already had been leaked to the press.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
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<td>9/1/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Monica Lewinsky fields lucrative offers for the rights to her story about her affair with President Clinton. A $1 million offer from the Star and separate book deals are worth the most.</td>
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<td>9/3/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger files a libel lawsuit against the tabloid Globe seeking damages of $50 million. An August 4, 1998, report in the Globe said Schwarzenegger was a “ticking time bomb” because of heart problems. The tabloid story had large headline on cover: “Arnie’s heart crisis.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/3/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger files a libel lawsuit against the tabloid Globe seeking damages of $50 million. An August 4, 1998, report in the Globe said Schwarzenegger was a “ticking time bomb” because of heart problems. The tabloid story had large headline on cover: “Arnie’s heart crisis.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/10/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Circulations of supermarket tabloids are declining despite intense coverage of Monica Lewinsky’s affair with President Clinton. The column addresses the tabloids’ lack of coverage during the initial stages of independent counsel Kenneth Starr’s investigation and more intense coverage dealing with specific details of the sexual relationship between Clinton and Lewinsky. The Globe is not pursuing the story as aggressively as the Star and the National Enquirer, the column says.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/24/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>“Charmed” co-star Alyssa Milano says she and co-star Shannen Doherty have a special bond because of the visibility they share in the media and tabloids. Milano believes the tabloids have pursued her more aggressively than Doherty.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/28/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Television columnist Howard Rosenberg criticizes television and print tabloid media coverage of the JonBenet Ramsey slaying. Rosenberg cites a Globe report that JonBenet’s bed-wetting caused her mother, Patsy, to go berserk. Rosenberg calls the tabloid coverage “vile,” but says it has managed to penetrate the mainstream media anyway. The story appears vertically in the right column of the section cover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/3/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Photograph of actor Liam Neeson and actress Natasha Richardson. The caption says the married couple collected an $85,000 libel settlement from a British tabloid that reported their marriage was a sham and that Richardson had filed for divorce from Neeson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/3/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Actor Liam Neeson and actress Natasha Richardson collect an $85,000 libel settlement from a British tabloid that reported their marriage was a sham and that Richardson had filed for divorce from Neeson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/6/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Liam Neeson and actress Natasha Richardson collect an $85,000 libel settlement from a British tabloid that reported their marriage was a sham and that Richardson had filed for divorce from Neeson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/6/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Actor Ron Silver denies he and actress Kirstie Alley are feuding on the set of the NBC-TV situation comedy “Veronica’s Closet.” Stories of a volatile relationship between the two were reported in the October 6, 1998, editions of the Star and the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/9/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>A Boulder, Colorado, photographer’s libel lawsuit against John Ramsey, the father of slain 6-year-old JonBenet Ramsey, claims John Ramsey told the National Enquirer in 1997 that he believed the photographer, Stephen Miles, killed JonBenet. Stories in the National Enquirer also portrayed Miles as a pedophile. John Ramsey’s attorneys said Ramsey never spoke to the National Enquirer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/9/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>A publicist for the late actress Mary Frann denies reports in the October 13, 1998, editions of the Globe and the National Enquirer that extreme dieting and diet pills caused Frann’s death. Frann’s autopsy results had not been released yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/14/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>ABC News interviewer Barbara Walters tells the television program “The View” that she is not engaged to U.S. Sen. John Warner. The October 6, 1998, edition of the Star reported the two planned to marry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Actress Calista Flockhart hires a new publicist to debunk reports of rumors that she has an eating disorder and is in poor health. The September 29, 1998, edition of the Globe first reported that Flockhart’s friends were concerned she suffered from an eating disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>In-depth report says intense media coverage of scandals polarizes Americans, discourages thoughtful discourse, and erodes culture. The story includes photograph of four mainstream daily newspapers with front-page coverage of President Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky, contrasted with four tabloids and their front-page coverage of the scandal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Commentary on issues surrounding actress Calista Flockhart’s weight and her image to other women. The column addresses the “nastiest speculation” of supermarket tabloid reports. The story appears across bottom of the cover of the Life features section with a color photograph of Flockhart.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/28/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actress Nicole Kidman and actor Tom Cruise say they will sue the next tabloid that reports rumors that Cruise is gay.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/29/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>ABC Sports announcer Frank Gifford makes his first public comments about his infidelity on CNN's “Larry King Live.” The details of Gifford's infidelity were first reported by the Globe in 1997.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>A forthcoming edition of People magazine will publish an interview with actress Calista Flockhart in which she says she is not too thin. The September 29, 1998, edition of the Globe first reported that Flockhart’s friends think she is too thin and that she may suffer from an eating disorder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>A forthcoming edition of People magazine will publish an interview with actress Calista Flockhart in which she says she is not too thin. Flockhart also criticizes “societal obsession about my physical appearance.” The September 29, 1998, edition of the Globe first reported that Flockhart’s friends were afraid she suffered from an eating disorder. The story, which includes a photograph of Flockhart, also reports that actress Kristen Johnson of NBC-TV’s “3rd Rock from the Sun” is unhappy with tabloid reports that call her fat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/29/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>ABC Sports announcer Frank Gifford makes his first public comments about his infidelity on CNN’s “Larry King Live.” The story of his infidelity was reported by the Globe in 1997. Gifford called the Globe report a “setup.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Actor Tom Cruise and actress Nicole Kidman accept a financial settlement and an apology from a British tabloid for its report that Cruise is gay, impotent, sterile, and that the couple’s marriage is a sham. A small photo of Cruise was included in the story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/30/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>A forthcoming edition of People magazine will publish interview with actress Calista Flockhart in which she says she is not too thin. Flockhart also denies having an eating disorder and says media attention and gossip about her physical appearance is “hurtful.” The September 29, 1998, edition of the Globe first reported that Flockhart’s friends worried that she suffered from an eating disorder. The story included a small color photograph of Flockhart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/30/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Nancy Sinatra insists she and her family support Frank Sinatra Jr.’s marriage and says she is planning a reception for her brother and his new bride. The November 3, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer reported the Sinatra family was angry that the couple eloped, and that Nancy Sinatra boycotted a reception as a result.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>The California Supreme Court upholds a $1.175 million libel judgment against the Globe for defaming a Bakersfield, California, farmer. The Globe was accused of repeating a book’s false claim that the farmer was the real assassin of New York Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. The original Globe story was published in 1989.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Criticizing reports in the November 10, 1998, Globe and Star, a friend of actress Sophia Loren denies the stories that say Loren is dying.</td>
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<td>11/10/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Singer Michael Jackson settles a lawsuit with the London tabloid The Mirror regarding 1992 reports that cosmetic surgery disfigured his face.</td>
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<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Singer Michael Jackson settles a lawsuit with the London tabloid The Mirror regarding 1992 reports that cosmetic surgery disfigured his face.</td>
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<td>11/10/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Singer Michael Jackson settles a lawsuit with the London tabloid The Mirror regarding 1992 reports that cosmetic surgery disfigured his face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/98</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>Tabloids and sensational media are outing homosexuals in British government. The story ran with a photograph of four British tabloids.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/12/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Monica Lewinsky and her family are having run-ins with the tabloid media and the public while dining out in New York. The story ran with a color photograph credited to Globe Photos Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/19/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>National Enquirer editor Steve Coz reports the periodical’s circulation is down, but he maintains he has a recovery plan. Coz defends coverage of Chelsea Clinton’s reaction to the Starr investigation of her father, President Clinton, saying Chelsea is no longer a little girl and is a legitimate public figure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/20/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Prince Charles is angry that the London tabloid The Mirror printed a story about Prince Harry sustaining an injury while playing youth sports.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/27/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Singer Celine Dion sues a French tabloid for invasion of privacy over a story that suggested she is unable to have a child.</td>
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<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
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<td>11/28/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>California Republican Rep. Mary Bono, widow of singer and former Rep. Sonny Bono, expresses regrets over telling reporters about her deceased husband’s problems with prescription drugs. After TV Guide published the story, Mary Bono relates that she has been called by all media outlets, including the National Enquirer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/1/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Singer Mick Jagger and his wife, model Jerry Hall, reportedly spend the weekend together despite tabloid reports that Jagger had an extramarital relationship with a Brazilian model and that his marriage to Hall was over.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/7/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>During an appearance on the ABC News program “20/20,” actor Michael J. Fox thanks tabloids for not publishing a story about his battle to overcome Parkinson’s disease. National Enquirer editor Steve Coz states that the tabloid did not run the story as a favor to Fox and his family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/7/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>A producer of ABC newsmagazine “20/20” denies a report and photograph in the Star that insinuated he has a romantic relationship with Monica Lewinsky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/11/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>A photographer is arrested for intercepting a telephone conversation between actor Tom Cruise and his wife, actress Nicole Kidman. The photographer sold the story to a London tabloid, then the story was published in the June 30, 1998, edition of the Globe. The Globe denies doing anything illegal in running the story.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/11/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
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<td>12/16/98</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
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<td>12/31/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
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<td>1/1/99</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
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APPENDIX II

FOLLOW-UP STORIES
A color photograph of Paula Jones, about 2 inches by 2 inches, appears in the top-left corner of the front page to refer readers to a story on Page 12C about cosmetic surgery on Jones' nose.

Paula Jones has cosmetic surgery to reduce the size of her nose. The story includes two color photographs: one of Jones before the surgery and one of Jones after the procedure. The story describes how the National Enquirer reached an agreement with ABC News' "PrimeTime Live" to broadcast images of Jones' new nose as advance publicity for more pictures and an interview with Jones in the August 25, 1998, edition of the tabloid. The pictures that appeared in the Review-Journal were taken by the Associated Press from a television screen during the "PrimeTime Live" broadcast. In the top-right corner of the post-surgery picture, the National Enquirer is given credit by ABC, and the credit is clearly visible in the newspaper photo.

Paula Jones has cosmetic surgery to reduce the size of her nose. The story includes two photographs: one of Jones before the surgery and one of Jones after the procedure. The story makes no mention of the roles of the National Enquirer or "PrimeTime Live," but ABC's National Enquirer credit is clearly visible in the post-surgery image.

Paula Jones has cosmetic surgery to reduce the size of her nose. The story includes two photographs: one of Jones before the surgery and one of Jones after the procedure. The story makes no mention of roles of the roles of the National Enquirer or "PrimeTime Live," and ABC’s National Enquirer credit is cut out of the post-surgery image.
<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
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<tr>
<td>8/14/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Two photographs of Paula Jones are published with a caption that describes her cosmetic surgery to reduce the size of her nose. One picture is of Jones before the surgery and one is a post-surgery image. The story makes no mention of the roles of the National Enquirer or “PrimeTime Live,” but ABC’s National Enquirer credit is clearly visible in the post-surgery image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/21/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Dean Cain and country music singer Mindy McCready have broken up. The story includes a small photo of Cain. The story was first reported in the August 25, 1998, edition of the Globe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/26/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actress Camryn Manheim, a star in ABC’s legal drama “The Practice,” discusses the importance of her role as an overweight woman who has self-esteem and has romantic relationships with men. The feature included a photo of Manheim. The story was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Globe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/27/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Don Johnson delays his wedding. The story was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Globe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/30/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>As part of a package of stories on the first anniversary of Princess Diana’s death, this story focuses on the flaws of the French investigation into the car accident that killed her. The report addresses rumors that the Mercedes she was riding in had faulty brakes. The story included a photo of the mangled Mercedes. A story about rumors of faulty brakes was first reported in the August 25, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/1/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Country music singer Alan Jackson overcomes struggles with depression after nearly losing his marriage. The story emphasizes the significance of the song “I’ll Go On Loving You” as a gesture of reconciliation to his wife. The story was first reported in the September 8, 1998, edition of the Globe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/8/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>Actress Elizabeth Taylor is suffering from a variety of ailments as she attempts to regain a public life, but her friendship with actor Rod Steiger is a strength for her. The story was first reported in the September 15, 1998, edition of the Globe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/10/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Leonardo DiCaprio has knee surgery. The story was first reported in the September 15, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/12/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Report from independent counsel Kenneth Starr reveals Monica Lewinsky was in love with President Clinton and that she thought Clinton loved her. This detail was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Star. The report also mentions a personal classified ad Lewinsky placed in the Washington Post as a Valentine’s Day gift in 1997. This detail was first reported in the September 8, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer.</td>
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<td>9/12/98</td>
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<td>Excerpts from special section detailing Starr's report to the U.S. House of Representatives show Lewinsky thought the president would leave his wife at the end of his second term to be with Lewinsky. This detail was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<td>9/12/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Excerpts from special section detailing Starr's report to the U.S. House of Representatives show Clinton staff member Harold Ickes and a Secret Service agent once interrupted a sexual liaison between Lewinsky and the president. This detail was first reported in the August 18, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<td>9/12/98</td>
<td>New York Times</td>
<td>Excerpts from special section detailing Starr's report to the U.S. House of Representatives show Monica Lewinsky was in love with President Clinton and that she thought Clinton loved her as well. This detail was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/12/98</td>
<td>Los Angeles Times</td>
<td>This in-depth story recounted the romantic relationship between Monica Lewinsky and President Clinton, as reported by independent counsel Kenneth Starr. The story detailed most of the sexual encounters between the two. The story reported that Lewinsky was in love with Clinton and that she thought Clinton loved her as well. This detail was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Star. The story also recounts how Clinton staff member Harold Ickes and a Secret Service agent once interrupted a sexual liaison between Lewinsky and the president. This detail was first reported in the August 18, 1998, edition of the Star. Also, Lewinsky thought the president would leave his wife at the end of his second term to be with Lewinsky. This detail was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<td>9/12/98</td>
<td>Reno Gazette-Journal</td>
<td>Excerpts from special section detailing Starr's report to the U.S. House of Representatives show Lewinsky thought the president would leave his wife at the end of his second term to be with Lewinsky. This detail was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<td>Reno Gazette-Journal</td>
<td>Excerpts from special section detailing Starr's report to the U.S. House of Representatives show Lewinsky used a cigar as a sexual prop before Clinton put the cigar in his mouth. This detail was first reported in the September 8, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<td>9/14/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Excerpts from special section detailing Starr’s report to the U.S. House of Representatives show Lewinsky used a cigar as a sexual prop before</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 paragraph</td>
<td>Clinton put the cigar in his mouth. This detail was first reported in the September 8, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<td>Special section of</td>
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<td>Starr report excerpts</td>
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<td>9/15/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>In a preview of the October 1998 edition of Good Housekeeping, NBC News anchor Katie Couric discusses the January death of her husband, Jay</td>
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<td>7 paragraphs</td>
<td>Monohan, and how she hopes her five-part report on colon cancer will get people talking about the disease. The story was first reported in the</td>
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<td>People in the News</td>
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<td>In a preview of the October 1998 edition of Good Housekeeping, NBC News anchor Katie Couric discusses the January death of her husband, Jay</td>
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<td>6 paragraphs</td>
<td>Monohan, and how she hopes her five-part report on colon cancer will get people talking about the disease. The story was first reported in the</td>
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<td>Etc. News &amp; Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/17/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>In a preview of the October 1998 edition of Good Housekeeping, NBC News anchor Katie Couric discusses the January death of her husband, Jay</td>
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<td>10 paragraphs</td>
<td>Monohan, and how she hopes her five-part report on colon cancer will get people talking about the disease. The report does not mention the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Page 3D,</td>
<td>Good Housekeeping interview. The story was first reported in the September 22, 1998, editions of the Star and the Globe.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Life section features</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/22/98</td>
<td>Reno Gazette-Journal</td>
<td>Independent counsel Kenneth Starr’s report to the U.S. House of Representatives shows Monica Lewinsky was in love with President Clinton and that she thought Clinton loved her as well. This detail was first reported in the September 1, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Chastity Bono talks of her falling out with her father, former entertainer and U.S. Rep. Sonny Bono. Chastity Bono says they couldn’t heal their rift before he died in a skiing accident. The report is attributed to the October 13, 1998, edition of The Advocate, but it was first reported in the October 6, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Roddy McDowall receives support from many old friends in Hollywood since his brain cancer diagnosis. Actress Elizabeth Taylor, one of his closest friends, is always near his side. The story was first reported in the October 6, 1998, editions of the Star, the Globe, and the National Enquirer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/2/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actress Tea Leoni is pregnant by her husband, actor David Duchovny, and their baby is expected to arrive in the spring. The story was first reported in the October 6, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/2/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Kelsey Grammer talks about a 1970s-themed birthday party he threw for his wife, Camille. The story was first reported in the September 29, 1998, editions of the Star and the Globe.</td>
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<td>10/4/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Former televangelist Jim Bakker, divorced from Tammy Fae Bakker, remarries. The story was first reported in the September 22, 1998, editions of the Star, the Globe, and the National Enquirer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/7/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Rumors say actress Calista Flockhart is in poor health. The story cites a WCBS-TV report that Flockhart is in treatment for anorexia. Flockhart denies she is in poor health or undergoing treatment for any eating disorder, and the Fox network denies that production of her show. “Ally McBeal,” has stopped. Rumors of Flockhart’s poor health were first reported in the September 29, 1998, edition of the Globe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/8/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>In the Newsline section of the newspaper’s front page, a 1 paragraph summary referring to a story about Paula Jones on Page 6A includes a color photograph of Jones after plastic surgery reduced the size of her nose. The photograph originally appeared in the August 25, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer. In small type below the photograph, USA Today gives credit to the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>About four months ago, actor-comedian Jerry Seinfeld began dating Jessica Sklar immediately after the New York woman returned from her honeymoon with new husband Eric Nederlander. Nederlander condemns the behavior of Seinfeld and Sklar and says he plans to divorce Sklar. The story was attributed to reports by the New York Post and the New York Daily News, but it was first reported in the October 27, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer.</td>
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<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
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<td>10/21/98</td>
<td>Reno Gazette-Journal</td>
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<td>10/28/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Teen-ager Athina Roussel, the sole heir to the fortune of Aristotle Onassis, tells ABC News’ “20/20” that she just wants to be a normal girl. The report also will detail her father’s battles with the foundation that manages her wealth. The story was first reported in the November 3, 1998, edition of the Star.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/29/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>Actress Calista Flockhart’s skinny figure and the thin appearances of actresses including Lara Flynn Boyle, Courteney Cox, and Helen Hunt, have a potentially negative effect on young women. The story describes Hollywood’s obsession with losing weight and includes a photograph of Flockhart. A report saying Flockhart’s friends feared she was underweight was first reported in the September 29, 1998, edition of the Globe, and stories on Hollywood demanding thin actresses and the negative effect it has on young women was first reported in the October 27, 1998, editions of the Star and the National Enquirer. The Las Vegas Sun story specifically mentions the Star and National Enquirer reports.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Singer George Michael’s new music video, “Outside,” parodies his arrest for lewd conduct in a public restroom and depicts police officers engaging in homosexual behavior. The report includes a photograph of Michael. The story was first reported in the October 27, 1998, editions of the Globe and the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/5/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Following a report in the October 27, 1998, Globe, this article states that some historians and genealogists believe that Prince Charles is a distant relative of Count Dracula.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/13/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Roseanne decides to dedicate an episode of her talk show to finding husbands for her daughters. The story was first reported in the November 17, 1998, edition of the <em>National Enquirer</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actress Jeri Ryan files for divorce from her husband. The story was first reported in the November 24, 1998, edition of the <em>National Enquirer</em>. A color photo of Ryan accompanied the brief.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Ted Turner acknowledges that he and wife, actress Jane Fonda, are undergoing marriage counseling. The story was first reported in the November 3, 1998, edition of the <em>National Enquirer</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/23/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>A photo of singer Mick Jagger and his wife, model Jerry Hall, has a caption detailing British tabloids’ reports that the couple have separated again.</td>
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<td>11/23/98</td>
<td>Las Vegas Sun</td>
<td>British tabloids report that singer Mick Jagger and his wife, model Jerry Hall, have separated again.</td>
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<td>11/27/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>NBA stars Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen are reported by supermarket tabloids to be terrible tippers at casino tables. The report follows a November 17, 1998, story in the National Enquirer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/2/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Actress Shannen Doherty has matured and is no longer a Hollywood “brat.” A photograph of Doherty appears with the story. The story was first reported in the December 8, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16/98</td>
<td>L.V. Review-Journal</td>
<td>Convicted Hollywood madam Heidi Fleiss asks to leave the halfway house she was ordered to live in and return to prison because she found the prison better kept. The story was first reported in the December 22, 1998, edition of the Globe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Actor Kelsey Grammer has a new Web site to counter bad press, including stories of the existence of a videotape of Grammer and his former girlfriend having sex. The story was first reported in the December 22, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/18/98</td>
<td>USA Today</td>
<td>Dana Hall, the former wife of professional wrestler Scott Hall, launches a campaign against World Championship Wrestling to stop corruption and drug abuse within the organization. She says the organization is producing bad role models for children. The story was first reported in the December 22, 1998, edition of the National Enquirer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Berger, J. (1994, May 14). Damn the facts, roll the presses. Editor & Publisher, 127 (20), 56. 46.


*Editor & Publisher International Yearbook,* 1998.


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Media coverage played a role in settlement (1994, March 12). *Editor & Publisher*, 127 (11), 29.


VITA

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William Glenn Cook

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University of Arizona

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Outstanding Junior, University of Arizona Journalism Department, 1991
Outstanding Reporting, University of Arizona Journalism Department, 1992
Outstanding Professionalism, University of Arizona Journalism Department, 1993

Thesis Title: Supermarket Tabloid Influence on Mainstream Daily Newspaper Editorial Content

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Barbara Cloud, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Paul J. Traudt, Ph. D.
Committee Member, Dr. Erika Engstrom, Ph. D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Craig Walton, Ph.D.