Journalism and Community: A Case Study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS)

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JOURNALISM AND COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE
MILWAUKEE NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS SERVICE (NNS)

by

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ABSTRACT
JOURNALISM AND COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY OF THE
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This is a case study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS) – a three-year-old, award-winning, online-only journalism source at www.milwaukeenns.org. A longtime journalist and communications professional leads a small team of part-time reporters, interns and volunteers as NNS seeks to provide professional and objective reporting about 17 low-income communities in America's 30th largest city.

This research examines the extent to which NNS has achieved its goals by analyzing and interpreting a significant sample of the 750-plus stories published on its website. It also focuses on the individual and shared experiences of the news service's staff as it uses journalism to help construct a sense of community. In addition to how other media and institutions have reacted to its work, the study also examines how NNS contributes to the ongoing discussion of journalism and community journalism – and how and why journalism matters to how a neighborhood is perceived – even as the news service's supporters consider its sustainability.

NNS is based at Marquette University, which is a short distance from the targeted communities. But unlike community journalism initiatives that are curricular highlights at academic institutions elsewhere, NNS stems from a unique partnership between a university and community-building operations. This study is mindful of prior consultant reports by two recognized media stalwarts as it also looks at how the news service views itself and its work in hopes of better understanding its overall purpose.

This research reviews the vast critical thinking concerning the concepts of community and sense of community as well as journalism, community journalism, public (or civic) journalism and online journalism. The social construction of reality is used as a theoretical framework from which to create four guiding questions: 1) How does NNS imagine its work? 2) What defines its work? 3) How have others in the community and elsewhere described or presented its work? 4) Who has done the work and what have they learned about journalism and community?

This study ends by discussing the implications that the news service has for journalism education as well as for journalism and community.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Herbert J. Lowe Jr.

I had not planned on doing a thesis to finish my graduate school education in pursuit of a M.A. from where I had earned my bachelor of arts degree 30 years earlier. My goal was to do a three-credit professional project in which the outcome would be a eBook focused on how to make learning Associated Press Style fun. It seemed a good way to demonstrate my digital storytelling skills using a relatively new platform; a useful tool for myself and my faculty colleagues to offer students struggling to adapt to the rigors of writing with clarity, consistency, accuracy and authority; and maybe a way to earn extra money if the eBook found a significant audience within Apple's iBookstore.

John Pauly, Ph.D., changed all of that in an instant. *You should do something more intellectually robust.* This was the provost of Marquette University talking to me, not to mention arguably the most intellectual man I know. He was serious. Did he have something in mind? *You should do a case study of the Neighborhood News Service.* What? Do a thesis about the nascent news organization working out of a classroom-turned-newsroom across the hall from my fourth-floor office in Johnston Hall? Didn't he know that my digital journalism classes had repeatedly created content for NNS and that I am among its biggest advocates within the Diederich College of Communication?

Apparently, none of that mattered to him. All I could say was, "Would you lead my committee?" *Yes!* And so began a four-semester sojourn – or as my students would call it, a never-ending staircase – into the depths of research and scholarship.

It began with Dr. Pauly teaming with Ana Garner, Ph.D., to initiate me into the vast scholarly literature about community during the advanced qualitative research course she taught in fall 2012. I remember being as proud of my 30-page research paper, "Knowing When You Have It: Interviewing Milwaukee Residents About Community and Sense of Community," as any front-page newspaper byline earned during my journalism career.

That sentiment is magnified many times over with this thesis. It is more than I ever thought it could be. Hopefully, it is close to what Dr. Pauly believes it should be. I enjoyed our countless meetings about the project, many of which were sidetracked as we inevitably discussed various matters coming across my desk as a faculty member. It has been an honor and privilege to learn about research and interpretation from a master.

Many thanks also to the other members of my thesis committee, Dr. Garner ("*Scribble! Scribble! Scribble!*") and Erik Ugland, Ph.D., who made my year by calling this case study of NNS a "rich portrait of this undertaking." Their guidance, support, patience and understanding during this long process means a lot to me. Meeting their expectations consistently motivated me. They are both magnificent people.

Meanwhile, this undertaking would not have been successful without the support and patience of Sharon McGowan, the news service's editor-in-chief. She provided me with as much information about its origins and aspirations as well as its warts and worries

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

My 22-year reporting career included a gamut of assignments ranging from the

Miss America Pageant to political campaigns, from small-town festivals to senseless

murders, from economic development to high-profile criminal trials. However, much of

my work at seven newspapers involved chronicling the efforts of people and

organizations to improve the quality of life in their mostly black and Latino communities.

As a former president of the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ), I

also have spent many years advocating for greater diversity not only among newsroom

staff, but in the types of stories the media tell about inner city neighborhoods. Count me

among those striving for credible journalism that comprehensively portrays the voices

and experiences of people of color for a society and world that values them.

Hence my interest in the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS), a three-

year-old, award-winning, online-only journalism source at www.milwaukeenns.org. The

news service's stated mission is to provide objective and professional reporting about 17

low-income communities centered in our nation's 30th largest city. NNS aims to offset

what it considers the media's limited coverage of quality-of-life efforts by residents and

organizations in these neighborhoods, to debunk stereotypes by informing Greater

Milwaukee about revitalization initiatives in the central city, and to motivate more

residents in these neighborhoods to become involved in civic affairs.

This is a case study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service. It examines the

extent to which NNS has achieved its goals by analyzing many of the more than 750

reports published on its website. The case study focuses on the individual and shared experiences of the NNS staff as it uses journalism to help construct a sense of community. In addition to how media and institutions have reacted to its work, the study also examines how NNS is contributing to the ongoing discussion of journalism and community journalism – and how and why journalism matters to how a neighborhood is perceived – even as the news service's supporters consider its sustainability.

<u>Connecting Journalism and Community</u>

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service presents itself as a means of connecting journalism and community. It wants to give a greater voice to the voiceless, to better enable them to share their stories of hope and progress, in ways that let them stand a little taller and feel more respected – all the while learning from one another's successes and failures, and conveying to the region that all is not lost in their neighborhoods. NNS argues that the mainstream media's incomplete picture of people's lives in these communities can weaken efforts to attract investment. It believes that spotlighting people who are making a difference both energizes them and can inspire others.

NNS is a small operation with limited resources. It originally focused on three communities – Lindsay Heights, Clarke Square and Layton Boulevard West – when it launched in March 2011, but added 14 more in mid-2012. Its paid part-time staff is led by editor-in-chief Sharon McGowan, a longtime news and communications professional from Illinois, whom *Milwaukee Magazine* media critic Erik Gunn praised as bringing "an impressive resume to the assignment." McGowan, four reporters and two Web coordinators produce, publish and promote at least one new article each weekday on

topics such as education, public safety, economic development, health and wellness, arts and recreation, employment, housing and the environment. Unpaid college interns and volunteer reporters, videographers and photographers assist. NNS operates from a classroom transformed into a newsroom in Johnston Hall, home of the J. William and Mary Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University. The college's dean, Lori Bergen, Ph.D., was an early NNS supporter – she offered the space as well as computers, software, audio and video equipment and training for multimedia reporting.

The news service has earned awards and acclaim. Editorially independent of its funders and in-kind contributors, NNS has received regional and statewide awards for reporting from journalism-related organizations, and gained acceptance as a credible news source by other local newsrooms. Indeed, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*; the local NPR station, WUWM-FM; the local FOX affiliate, WITI-TV; and online sites such as urbanmilwaukee.com have all helped to broaden the news service's reach by republishing its work. Community-focused bloggers and neighborhood group leaders alike have also applauded NNS for its reporting. And NNS interns have used their experience to secure opportunities in legacy newsrooms elsewhere.

An Experiment Becomes Validated

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service is in many ways an experiment. It not only exists within a relatively new realm of journalism – that is, one entirely distributed on the Internet – but also operates within forms that have long consumed news organizations, large and small, and particularly community journalism and public (or civic) journalism. NNS resembles similar efforts nationally that are focused on training

the next generation of journalists to care more deeply about communities and the people living in them – and to perform that work in a digital environment. But unlike community journalism initiatives that are curricular highlights at academic institutions elsewhere, NNS stems from a partnership between a university and community-building operations.

NNS traces its origins to the Zilber Neighborhood Initiative, a 10-year, $50 million effort started by Joseph Zilber, the late real estate tycoon, philanthropist and Marquette alumnus, to improve Milwaukee's poor neighborhoods. The news service's publisher is Tony Shields, executive director of the United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee, which comprises eight nonprofit agencies and is an operating partner in the initiative. The Zilber Family Foundation awarded NNS a grant of $108,000 to begin functioning.

Significant validation came 16 months after NNS launched: The Greater Milwaukee Foundation and Zilber Family Foundation joined to match a $192,000, two-year grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, a leading funder of journalism and media innovation. McGowan (2012) wrote that the Knight Foundation's grant, provided through its Knight Community Information Challenge, "engages community and place-based foundations to support news and information projects." In the same news article, Knight, noting that entities such as itself are "uniquely positioned" to help, said that "as traditional media organizations have struggled … close to 80 local foundations nationwide have launched projects that meet local information needs."

In its Knight application, the Zilber Foundation noted that communication had been "an underdeveloped component" of its initiative (Community Information Challenge, 2012b). It described NNS as a "multimedia, interactive website created through a place-

based foundation, university and nonprofit partnership" (Community Information

Challenge, 2012a) and said the news service provides "an important vehicle" for telling

stories of inner-city areas and engaging residents (2012b). Zilber's application stressed

wanting to inform residents of "underreported" central city neighborhoods and Greater

Milwaukee about "successes and challenges in addressing urban issues," and to create

"more balanced perceptions" that would attract residents and investment and inspire

community organizations to duplicate successful quality-of-life improvements (2012a).

NNS said it would use the grant to do more enterprise and in-depth reporting,

expand beyond its three pilot neighborhoods to 10 additional surrounding communities

and recruit part-time staff who live, work and volunteer in those areas – with the promise

of training and mentoring them in reporting, writing, multimedia and Web skills. NNS

also hoped to establish and grow relationships with local community groups and media,

encouraging them to link to, republish and or broadcast NNS content; "step up" and

"intensify" its social media and other promotion efforts; pursue digital innovation and

nurture its strong relationship with the Diederich College (2012b).

Zilber also said because mainstream media could not fully cover local communities

and online news entities such as Patch.com did not cover the inner city, NNS would fill

an important need: "Offering a more complete picture of people's lives, increasing their

ability to improve conditions and attract investment" (2012b). The news service would

help communities to learn from one another, and its coverage of residents who volunteer

their time to improve their neighborhoods would "energize them and motivate others to

join them" (2012b). When asked several months later about the recognition from the

Knight Foundation, McGowan said the funds enabled her to hire two more part-time reporters. She also noted that it was "relatively unusual for an organization that has already been running for a year to get Knight funds, because they like to start things up and we were already started. It was a tremendous validation of our journalism" (2012b).

Unpacking the Potential of NNS

The Knight grant will soon expire, however. So, too, will other smaller funding sources. Sustainability is the operative word and so in 2013 NNS enlisted two experienced media professionals to study its circumstances and propose means to keep the experiment alive: John Barron, a Marquette alumnus and former publisher of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and Paula Ellis, a former vice president for strategic initiatives at the Knight Foundation and a retired senior publishing executive and journalist.

Barron's report offered good and bad news. NNS is a "stable editorial operation" that has "accomplished many of its initial goals and continues to fulfill its mission," he wrote, with "the most obvious evidence" being its "hundreds of stories." Without NNS, Barron continued, most of those stories would never have been told and its "good, focused journalism ... has helped change and expand the conversation about Milwaukee neighborhoods." On the other hand, Barron said, "perhaps the greatest potential left largely untapped" was NNS' ability to serve as a "conduit for community" or perhaps "a destination for information, connection, opinion and utility?" Barron said two things held NNS back: 1) a lack of funding and steady business focus leading it to spend nearly all of its budget on editorial concerns and 2) visibility and awareness. NNS must "dramatically improve its reach" to "more robustly appeal" to advertisers, foundations, etc., he said.

Ellis submitted her report three months afterward. She agreed with Barron that NNS must increase its audience through more aggressive marketing and sales. However, she cautioned against depending on "a pretty traditional local news financial model similar to those employed by decades by the now-imploding industry." While most other "budding news outlets" are not "aimed at improving communities," Ellis said NNS' "social mission" is different because it focuses on "Milwaukee's most-resource starved communities" and "wants to foster engagement that leads to community betterment." However, she expressed concern that a traditional business model is "just not experimental enough" to meet NNS' social and financial goals. Arguing that engagement must be "at the center, not as an afterthought," Ellis said "this unique Milwaukee team can re-imagine 'news' in ways that benefit" local neighborhoods and inspire similar efforts nationally. She also called for "several mindset shifts," including that NNS must "feel and act more like it is *of* the community rather than *about* the community" – and become more digital and use the Web to "make news social" and foster engagement.

<u>What Is to Be Examined</u>

This case study will be mindful of the Barron and Ellis reports as it looks at how the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service views itself and its work in hopes of better understanding the organization's overall purpose. Does NNS' staff feel that its efforts more consistently and or more accurately represent what happens in the communities than those of mainstream media? Can the staff point to how its journalism has impacted the neighborhoods they cover? The study not only examines the news service's activity, staffing and reception by the public at large, but also, as noted, how it is contributing to

the ongoing discussion of journalism and community journalism. In doing so, it also

combines an analysis of some of the founding documents as well as those already noted

in this introduction, interviews with key NNS staff and a review of 229 of its more than

750 published reports – all in order to help draw informed conclusions.

Scholars have studied the nexus between journalism and community for decades.

All of this literature is relevant to understanding how NNS thinks about the communities

it serves and does its work. Chapter 2 of this study thus offers a review of the vast critical

thinking concerning the concepts of community and sense of community as well as

journalism, community journalism, public (or civic) journalism and online journalism.

Chapter 3 describes the theory that guides this thesis and the methodology

employed to study the news service. The social construction of reality is used as a

theoretical framework to create four guiding questions: 1) How does NNS imagine its

work? 2) What defines its work – for example, what kinds of stories is it publishing,

which individuals and organizations are the most common sources, what storytelling

forms are used and which are the most popular stories based on analytics? 3) How have

others in the community and elsewhere described or presented its work? 4) Who is doing

the work and what have they learned about journalism and community? The process of

determining relevant contexts and sources (for example, purposive sampling, interviews

with key NNS staff, textual analysis, reflexivity) from which to draw answers to these

questions – as well as how best to evaluate them – is also revealed.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the answers based on a textual analysis of

interviews with NNS' editor-in-chief, two of its part-time reporters, a former intern and a

journalism faculty member, as well as its bread and butter work and what can be considered its best and most popular efforts. Information shared with the news service's advisory board, and evidence that other media, significant organizations and individuals have taken stock of its work, are analyzed and interpreted related to NNS' role in the community. Chapter 5 offers some conclusions about NNS and its limits based on the literature, results and interpretation. The implications that the news service has for journalism education and areas of interest for future research are also discussed.

A final personal disclosure: My journalism career began as a reporter covering residents and organizations in the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service's targeted neighborhoods for the *Milwaukee Community Journal.* The weekly black newspaper hired me a few months after my graduation from Marquette University in 1984. Editor-in-Chief Sharon McGowan opened the NNS newsroom in the Diederich College of Communication only weeks after my return to my alma mater as the journalism professional in residence. Our offices are near one another in Johnston Hall. I have a NNS byline myself (Lowe, 2011a) and serve on the aforementioned advisory board.

NNS is one of many efforts nationally that provide community-based training for college journalism students. During four semesters, it initiated and published community journalism assignments by students in my classes. I believe that more students should engage with NNS. Yet as a board member, and Marquette's director of journalism for social change, I am concerned about the news service's operational viability as well as seeing its audience and relevance increase. Hopefully, this study shall offer insight with respect to the opportunities and challenges associated with an initiative such as NNS.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Before examining how the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service presents or

represents the communities it serves, or analyzing the work that it has done so far, it is

wise to review what other scholars have found and written about a major component of

NNS' goals and aspirations: the relationship between journalism and community.

Among the questions that scholars in sociology and journalism studies have posed

are the following: 1) What is a community and who decides whether it exists? 2) What is

journalism and to what extent should its practitioners focus on all that happens in a

community? 3) What does it mean to be a journalist and to what extent should he or she,

or any given news organization, seek to impact a community's future? 4) Does it matter

whether people get to share their stories and or read about their neighbors solely online?

This literature review begins with a brief discussion of the more general concept

of community, then tracks the discussion of journalism and its relationship to community

through several definitions and perspectives, including community journalism, public (or

civic) journalism and online journalism.

Community

To better understand the communities in which the Milwaukee Neighborhood News

Service (NNS) operates, we need to make sense of the scholarly literature concerning the

concepts of *community* and *sense of community*. Researchers have studied many different

types of communities and approached these concepts from many perspectives. For

example, Fuoss (1995) noted that performance studies scholars have investigated

communities as distinct and far apart as a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand, a public

housing area in Chicago, an inner-city street gang, African-American fraternities and

sororities, southern mill towns and Greek immigrants. Nisbet (1953) argued that the quest

for community is timeless and universal and is as relevant to human existence as family

and faith. He added that "the quest for community will not be denied, for it springs from

some of the powerful needs of human nature – needs for a clear sense of cultural purpose,

membership, status and continuity" (p. 73). This quest has been an important part of how

NNS has defined the purpose of its coverage of urban neighborhoods and its goal to help

those neighborhoods enjoy renewed vitality and respect.

Scholars have also contended, however, that community is a misunderstood

concept, one as much about group sentiment or nostalgia as anything else. Bellah (2007)

wrote that "a good community is one in which there is argument, even conflict, about the

meaning of the shared values and goals, and certainly about how they will be actualized

in everyday life" (p. 38). Macfarlane (2009) observes that political, religious and business

leaders frequently invoke community to suit their purposes, especially when they wish to

position themselves as restoring it in some way – and that "community is a much-used

and (perhaps) abused word," or a "hurrah" word used as part of a "lazy rhetoric to

conjure up positive imagery," much like "other affirmative words, such as diversity," (p.

139). Others have noted that the work of building community can be difficult and make

leaders vulnerable to criticism. Harwood (2007) found that many group leaders complain

they are too busy – or unwilling to offend other groups or people – to effect meaningful

change in the community; they may also fear being in the spotlight.

<u>Creating a Sense of Community</u>

All of these theoretical perspectives bear upon the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service's goal of creating a greater sense of community within the 17 Milwaukee neighborhoods it serves. NNS primarily focuses on those neighborhoods as locations determined by geographical boundaries, which is one of the key elements that a number of scholars emphasize as defining a group's sense of community. Make no mistake, though, scholars focused on this concept are also far from consensus. Sarason (1974) defined sense of community as an "overarching value" (p. 156) and held that "you know when you have it and when you don't" (p. 157). Taylor, Lee and Davie (2000) found that social scientists defined community either as a population grouped by a geographical location, or a government that manages social and political relationships, or a named territory or settlement with an effective communication system that allows people to share facilities and services. Lowrey, Brozana and Mackay (2008), as part of their research on community journalism, found that many studies suggest that community is "fundamentally tied to physical location," that is, towns, cities, neighborhoods or political districts (p. 280), and that most of the articles posit community as a geographical location with political or legal boundaries. The scholars also found other geographical studies that noted the community's role as a place to meet or connect.

NNS also hopes to bring people from different neighborhoods together to learn from one another's successes and failures. Such is the sort of common purpose that Nisbet, Bellah and others attempt to describe. In "The Public and Its Problems," Dewey (1927) argues that "communication can alone create a Great Community," that the

technology and industrialization of his time provided "the physical tools of communication as never before" (p. 142), and that "communal life is moral, that is, emotionally, intellectually, consciously sustained" (p. 151). Dewey (1924) agrees with others that people strive for a community based on bonds, behaviors and belonging – and that "men live in a community in virtue of the things" common among them: typically shared "aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge" (pp. 5-6). Hansen and Hansen (2011) wrote that community and communication are "intrinsically linked" and that a "vibrant, healthy community" requires the latter if its members are to not only address their concerns, but also "identify with and develop ties to their community" (p. 98).

This seems to be the sort of work to which NNS aspires: enabling the communities it is covering – and the people living in them – to tell their own stories, to each other, the metropolitan area and even to anyone from the larger society that discovers its online offerings. A number of scholars have pointed to the role that media can play in such community building. Wotanis (2012) wrote that a sense of community is created and sustained by communicating face to face or through media, while Lowrey, et al. (2008) argue that media help communities to tell their own stories and remain distinctive. Friedland (2001) maintained that while place and "face-to-face conversation" still matter to creating it, community persists, "but under conditions that are radically different from those that existed as recently" as the 1960s, and thanks mostly to new technologies and global connectedness (p. 364).

Freedom From Territorial Limits

A key NNS component is that it distributes its work entirely on the Internet, and scholars have studied how technology shapes community connections. Riger and Lavrakas (1981) make the larger historical point that community once assumed attachment and social interaction occur in a fixed geographical space, and that modern communication and transportation have freed us from territorial limits. Macfarlane further suggested that modernity and industrialization have "irrevocably" moved society from human relationships to individualism (2009, p. 138). Not all scholars, however, credit technology or support individualism as being important when determining what makes a community. Mersey (2009) wrote that while early community research focused exclusively on geography, the Web has led many scholars to define the concept differently. Indeed, she wrote, particularly problematic for geographically based communities is the combination of demands on the media to serve audiences in print and on the Web and their overall reduced "knowledge of the community" (page 348). But how would this impact the connection between NNS' readers and their sense of community? Mersey (2009a) found that the Internet does not have the same impact on community as traditional print news.

NNS considers the local experience of its neighborhoods critical as it aims to show that those living, working and serving in its targeted areas aspire to better housing, economic development, education, youth development, public safety, health, housing and so on. A number of scholars have affirmed that sense of community is often very locally grounded. Denton, for example, contended that "local news is based on the reader's

relationships with his or her communities" and that readers appreciate 10 dimensions of

local news: proximity, safety, utility, government, education, spirituality, support, identity,

recognition and empowerment (Denton, 1999; Pauly, Eckert, 2002). Lowrey et al.,

pointed to shared symbols and common goals or interests as essential to community.

They also noted that modern "challenges and changes make it increasingly necessary that

individuals maintain community and its meaning through shared culture" (2008, p. 281) –

and agreed with Matei, Ball-Rokeach and Qiu (2001) in that communities must tell their

own stories in order to be distinct social entities. In talking with neighbors in Portland,

Oregon, Ritchie (2011) found they defined community in terms of access (walking

distance), familiarity (familiar faces) and residential character (detached bungalows with

small yards on tree-lined streets). Each homeowner appreciated that community can be

tenuous, but also essential for mutual accommodation and reinforced strength and

vitality, Ritchie concluded. Riger and Lavrakas (1981) defined sense of community using

two primary factors: social bonding (identifying neighbors and feeling part of the

neighborhood) and behavioral rootedness (years living there and how long planning to

stay, and whether owning or renting a home). Riger, LeBailly and Gordon (1981) also

found that while strong bondedness and residential ties helped reduce one's fear of crime,

local facilities and social interaction with neighbors did not appear to impact such fears.

In their seminal work, McMillan and Chavis (1986) wrote that these and other

studies "revealed that the experience of sense of community does exist and that it does

operate as a force in human life" (p. 8). They then identified four defining elements:

membership (a feeling of belonging), influence (a sense of mattering or making a

difference to the group), integration and fulfillment of needs (feeling that members' needs

will be met by resources gained via belonging to the group), and shared emotional

connection (belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time

together, etc.). They contended that members of a community believe their needs will be

met through their commitment to be together. McMillan (1996) later helped create a

major shift in defining community when he revised the four elements so that membership

became spirit (faith that one belongs), influence became trust (authority based on

principle), integration and need fulfillment became trade (freedom from shame) and

shared emotional connection became art (fluid and growing). Nip (2006) would later

summarize these sentiments by stating that a community features four primary aspects

among its membership: a sense of belonging, shared forms, interactions and social ties.

      These feelings of community come to be enacted in how people and organizations

relate to one another. In this spirit, NNS aims to help develop a greater sense of

community by reporting and presenting on its website what's working and not working in

the neighborhoods it serves. Based on interviews with people in Jackson Park, a working-

class neighborhood in Milwaukee, Doolittle and MacDonald (1978) championed six

communication behaviors and attitudes found within community organizations:

supportive climate (for example, knowing the names of most people in the local area),

family life cycle (having more children than elderly in a household), safety (a good place

for children under age 12), informal interaction (visited by neighbors frequently or

visiting other neighbors just the same), neighborly integration (strong identity among the

people who live there) and localism (desire for activity in such organizations).

Challenged by Social, Racial Differences

No discussion of community or sense of community is complete without a focus on

diversity. NNS seeks to serve communities within one of the most segregated cities in

America; Baird-Remba and Lubin (2013) found that blacks live in the north-central area,

Hispanics stay in the southern inner city, and whites live on the edges and in the suburbs.

Pauly and Eckert (2002) wrote that "the move to the suburbs has often been fueled by

social, especially racial, differences" (p. 313). But this is not just a Milwaukee

circumstance. While noting that sense of community is important in determining

involvement in such basic neighborhood activities as attending meetings and signing

petitions, Bernstein and Norwood (2008) noted that "cities and metropolitan regions

around the world are challenged by a growing ethnic diversity" (p. 119).

Meanwhile, Johnson (2011) focused as well on racial, ethnic and socioeconomic

diversity while analyzing the sense of community at an unidentified post-secondary

preparatory academy in the Northeast. Her study involved more than 100 students who

answered questions in focus groups or via a questionnaire. With yet another nod to shared

interaction, Johnson concluded that the revised elements that McMillan (1996) prescribed

for community – spirit, trust, trade and art – were evident in helping to foster a sense of

community there as the students pursued their dreams. Yet she also reported, "The

students themselves view this community as very diverse and have come to value this

diversity as an important component in their growth" (p. 164).

All of this prior research leads to important questions about how the Milwaukee

Neighborhood News Service thinks about itself and does its work in the communities it

serves. It is also important to consider how the news service situates itself in a city with so many communities that are both linked and distinctive? And how is the news service managing to connect people within these communities when today's global society creates so much of an appetite for social interaction any time, anywhere?

Journalism

The journalism produced by the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS) intentionally honors traditional norms but also incorporates new forms of technology. A number of scholars have explored journalism and its basic principles? Schudson (2003) provides an excellent place to start:

> Journalism is the business or practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest or importance. It is the business of a set of institutions that publicizes periodically (usually daily) information and commentary on contemporary affairs, normally presented as true and sincere, to a dispersed and anonymous audience so as to publicly include the audience in a discourse taken to be publicly important (p. 11).

NNS clearly aims to provide a public service to those living and working in the neighborhoods it targets, a notion central to the idea of journalism and the people – journalists, whether reporters or editors – who practice it. McCleneghan (2005) wrote that "journalists are still the people entrusted with the honor of informing the public" (p. 6). Goode (2009) argued that though "journalism is in no small measure a craft of re-telling stories rather than simply disclosing them," it really is about "uncovering and bringing to light events, issues and ideas that would otherwise remain hidden from public view" (p. 1290). Pavlik (2004) wrote that "a journalist maintains a fine balance between telling the public what it needs to know, even when the truth may cause hurt or pain, and being

responsible and ethical in reporting and respecting privacy" (p. 27). Deuze (2005) identifies journalism as having four traits (beyond its stated commitment to public service): objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics, all of which NNS embraces. He also declared that "one of the most fundamental truths in journalism" is that its practitioners determine what we see, hear and read about the world (p. 451).

An important part of the journalism literature focuses upon the decisions journalists make about what to cover and how. Indeed, the notion of deciding what's news about any given event, issue or idea has long been filtered by newsroom gatekeepers, that is, reporters and editors who choose which stories to cover and how to cover them (Goode, 2009, p. 1290; Lipinski, Neddenriep, 2004; Nip, 2006). Reader (2007) wrote that what is news is largely informed by journalists' own values and rituals, something that many working for NNS are learning and experiencing in significant ways. Hourly, daily and or weekly deadlines mean they need constant, reliable and easily digestible information – and it most often and all too willingly comes from omnipresent and not always unbiased "sources": elected officials and authorized representatives of government agencies, courts and law enforcement, colleges and universities, public relations departments and companies, even foreign countries (Schudson, 2003, pp. 134-136; Lipinski, Neddenriep, 2004, p. 11; Lipschultz, Hilt, 1999; Pauly, 2009). Most other people "have little chance of becoming news sources" (Nip, 2006, p. 216).

Given this literature on how journalists decide what to cover, it is valuable to consider how NNS trains its reporters to do its work. Pauly (2009) writes that reporters describe themselves as "eyewitnesses to history" or "observers on the sidelines" (p. 8),

and believe that talking to people allows them to "discover the truth and get to the real story" (p. 20). Unfortunately, however, too little of journalism is "enterprise," in which reporters actually get information "that did not come to them on a platter" (Schudson, 2003, p. 137). Scott (2005) wrote that "journalism has much more in common today with the elites it supposedly regulates than with the public on whose behalf it supposedly speaks" (p. 91). He allowed, however, that "good journalism still manages to appear thanks to conscientious reporters and editors" (p. 122).

Breaking news: Journalism often accentuates the negative. That can be a challenge for a news organization such as NNS that is devoted to building community. "There is a tendency for news to be bad news" (Schudson, 2003, p. 49) and "one of the things we can say about journalism ... is that its thirst for conflict is unquenchable" (Pauly, 2009, p. 7). Beyond that, "news tends to be detached," focusing on "strategy and tactics, political technique rather than policy outcome, the mechanical rather than the ideological" (Schudson, 2003, p. 51). When both sides of an issue cry foul, journalists feel "they must be doing something right" (Pauly, 2009, p. 13). (NNS insists that it aims for objective, professional reporting about outcomes and opportunities more so than conflict or intrigue. Whether having more staff and resources would lead it to tell more uncomfortable truths concerning its communities is an interesting question.)

All of this negativity may not be accidental. Researchers have often found that journalists know very little about their audiences, and in crafting the news place more emphasis on the interests of fellow journalists than of those they claim to serve (Reader, 2007, p. 652). When it comes to covering communities targeted by NNS, the problems of interpreting community may be even more challenging in diverse communities that are

less understood by white reporters. Certainly, not enough has changed since Rivenburgh (2000) noted that "journalists are 'disproportionally white, male, middle-class and middle-aged" (p. 306). We turn again to Schudson, who writes:

> An African-American reporter is more likely than a white reporter, other things being equal, to find issues in the African-American community newsworthy. ... But the person who writes the story matters. When minorities and women and people who have known poverty or misfortune firsthand are both authors of news and its readers, the social world represented in the news expands and changes (2003, p. 47).

The reasons newsroom diversity is so hard to achieve are plentiful. The American Society of News Editors (ASNE), the organization that institutionalized professional journalism standards, began dealing with its predominate whiteness and maleness in the 1950s, and later focused greatly on promoting newsroom diversity in the 1970s (Mellinger, 2013). Since then, competitive and corporate interests have homogenized the news rather than diversify it (Lipschultz, Hilt, 1999, p. 238), and the latest ASNE annual diversity census (2013) revealed "a lack of growth in the proportion of minorities in the newsroom" amid a "continued trend" of a loss of overall jobs.

Nonetheless, Deuze (2005) contended that both multiculturalism and multimedia could challenge long-held views in the profession. These days, the multimedia journalist must be able to create, edit and update story packages (p. 451), and doing so in an increasingly multicultural environment is even more essential than in the days of traditional print and broadcast mass media (p. 455). Finally, Deuze wrote: "The literature addressing multiculturalism calls for more community-based reporting, signals the need for journalists to become much more aware of entrenched inequalities in society, and expects media professionals to become active agents in reversing these" (pp. 456-457).

These are issues that NNS has had to address in hiring staff, particularly as it does so from among those who live in the communities it serves. In doing so, it confirms Geneva Overholser, former editor of *The Des Moines Register*, who wrote that "no amount of planning, no level of market research, can make up for 10 years of living in a town – not to mention growing up there ..." (1999, p. 64). My own experience, having worked at several regional newspapers, confirms Pauly and Eckert (2002) in that many journalists hail from elsewhere and – while they may in some ways adopt the communities in which they work and live – think of such employment as "one rung on a national career ladder" (p. 319). NNS, though, began its operation two years ago by betting on the notion that distinct local roots would lead to better local coverage.

Community Journalism

Given that the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS) does most of its journalism within 17 communities in the city, what does the literature state about how journalism serves a community? One of the most discussed related concepts is *community journalism*, which Reader (2012) defined "as a specific practice of gathering, packaging and distributing news in predominately small, distinct geographic markets, with an emphasis on local news and information about community life" (p. 4). Media have chronicled communities for 200 years, but the term "community journalism" stuck after newspaper publisher-turned-university professor Kenneth Byerly wrote a book, *Community Journalism,* in 1961, about the traits of what others had termed country, rural, weekly or hometown journalism (Reader, p. 4; Terry, 2011; Hume 2012).

Lowery, Brozana, Mackay (2008) defined community journalism as "intimate, caring and personal; it reflects the community and tells its stories" (p. 276), all of which are ideas that NNS is likely to support. But other definitions equate it with news media serving small towns, neighborhoods or even villages across the globe (Harvey et al, p. 282; Lewis, Kaufhold, Lasorsa, 2010; Wotanis, 2012). Gillis, Moore (2008) declared that it is important not to limit the term to a "very defined local group of people or target area," but to remember that community journalism involves "a way of doing journalism" of serving and involving the people in the community's important issues (p. 9).

Scholars agree, though, that community journalism is most prevalent when journalists communicate with people they – particularly those in traditional media – ordinarily overlook or ignore; consider themselves good neighbors who understand the community; seek readers truly interested in its everyday life, and hope to encourage solutions to problems (Killenberg, Dardenne, 1997; Kirkpatrick, 2001; Hansen, Hansen, 2011). Reader (2012) noted that audiences appreciating community journalism value the mundane coverage just as much, if not more so, than award-winning work produced by regional news organizations. Hatcher (2009) argued that community-focused reporting can lead to more relevant stories; Killenberg, Dardenne (1997) also contend that such stories often capture aspects of experience not typically found in the news:

> We know that by approaching people in their neighborhoods and gathering places and writing about what we find there we can provide interesting, provocative and valuable content that doesn't fit the forms of traditional news coverage. Our approach includes stories about good deeds by average folks and about institutions and organizations that seem to be working, and it brings more voices and perspectives to the news (p. 56).

This style of journalism comes with its own challenges, as a number of scholars have noted, and that NNS has already encountered. Harvey (2007) wrote of "maintaining readership and circulation and acquiring advertising revenue to keep the presses running and staff paid" (p. 26). Reader (p. 13) pointed out that "many community newspapers are really only one or two people (in many cases, the owners). Kirkpatrick noted that in his experience as a journalist and editor of such a newspaper, he was constantly faced with limitations of staff size and time, or the lack of it: "If you have two to four or even a dozen journalists, you are always counting heads" (p. 19).

The expansion of new digital media is also changing the definition of community journalism. Some scholars have noted that the Internet can virtually enhance what community journalism does best: to connect and be hyperlocal (Lowman 2008; Gilligan, 2012; Terry, 2011, p. 80; Garyantes, 2012, p. 48; Wotanis, 2012, p. 13). Others have stressed that community journalism is not about place alone but also about the importance of serving communities borne of special interests such as ethnicity, faith and ideas. They observe that journalists don't always report well on communities and perspectives different from their own (Hansen, Hansen, 2011, p. 99; Garyantes, 2012, pp. 47-48; Meyer, Daniels, 2012).

This divide between communities and journalists has led many universities to offer their students and faculty as bridges. The partnership between NNS and Marquette University's Diederich College of Communication is one of many efforts nationally in which educational institutions team with professional newsrooms and nonprofit organizations to provide training for aspiring journalists. In 2008, for example, the

American television network ABC joined with five major journalism schools – Arizona

State, Florida, North Carolina, Texas and Syracuse – to create multimedia bureaus for

students to "report on stories in their area and produce a wide array of content" for the

network's digital and broadcast entities (Oliver, 2008). Temple University in Philadelphia

and the University of California-Berkeley have also established programs for students to

pursue and disseminate community journalism via the Web. Roush (2009) reported that

dozens of newspapers nationwide had partnered with local journalism schools to create

programs that provide students "on-the-job training in community coverage and the latest

multimedia methods of newsgathering and delivery" (p. 44).

These partnerships did not just arise for the sake of training or for just college

students. Friedland (2004) noted that while some schools had begun teaching about

journalism focused in communities, their students had few places to do it after

graduation. He did, however, cite efforts in three states where high school students were

publishing news about both young people and their communities on a local website.

Killenberg and Dardenne (1997) urged journalism educators to ensure that their students

get as close as possible to their communities. Among several scholars who have shared

accounts of sending journalism students out of their classrooms, they developed a

"human affairs reporting" course that focused on acquiring perspective and context,

redefining news and reconsidering news conventions.

Calling it a "natural fit for community papers and journalism programs to work

together," Bechtel and Lauterer (2007) recalled how their advanced editing and

community journalism classes merged one term to create an online and print community

newspaper. Not only did their students report and edit copy borne out of a classroom, they also emerged from "the university bubble" while contributing to something in which their work was "published for the world to see." The authors wrote that "we have never seen students so energized and engaged in a class project" and that it was led by peer editors who had to deal with personal issues, journalistic ethics and crisis management.

Lowman (2008) detailed a pilot project in which a class created multimedia packages about small communities the local daily newspaper served marginally. The daily published the work posted on blogs the students also produced for the effort. The students initially struggled "to get out of their cars and initiate conversations with strangers" and balance other schoolwork with "the black hole of this project," but ended up doing "amazing work" and "giving voice to the voiceless," Lowman reported.

Hatcher (2009) told of journalism educators saying these projects challenge students to experience a "world beyond their own," connect with the community where they live as students and provide a new news source for it. Most of his students had to get past being in uncomfortable settings; depending on phones, email and the Web for getting information; and laziness. Inevitably, Hatcher's students stopped complaining about busy schedules and approaching people for interviews and enjoyed meeting residents "who shared common concerns, hopes and aspirations." The students agreed the best stories involved everyday people, he said, while adding that instructors must be "cheerleaders, drill sergeants and therapists" and allow for discussion about writing about diversity.

Public (or Civic) Journalism

Locating the work of journalism in the community matters. But the Milwaukee
Neighborhood News Service (NNS) also aims to inspire residents in its targeted areas to
become more involved in their communities. The scholarly literature on public (or civic)
journalism describes how journalists might make their work more meaningful and
compelling for the readers they serve. Jay Rosen of New York University, who helped
spawn the movement within journalism in the early 1990s, urged editors and reporters to
reconnect both their news organizations with their audiences and citizens and
communities with public life (Pauly, Eckert, 2002; Pauly, 2003, p. 22; Nip, 2006, p. 213).
Rosen (1999) argued that public journalism required five actions: argument (a way of
thinking about what media should be doing), experiment (a way of doing journalism),
movement (a loose network of those who wanted to improve the craft), debate (often
heated) and adventure (open-ended quest for another ethic in the press). Nip described
public journalism's purposes this way: to connect with the community, to engage
individuals as citizens and to help public deliberation in search of solutions (p. 214).

At least 320 newspapers had tried some kind of public journalism before its
momentum declined, including in Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Missouri,
Kansas and California. (Friedland, 2004; Ballard, 1996; Pauly, Eckert, 2002, p. 317;
Pauly, 2010). New rituals such as community forums, town hall meetings, citizen panels,
focus groups, polls and even invitation-only barbecues and pizza parties were typical
measures that news organizations undertook as part of a public journalism effort (Rosen,
1999, p. 29; Pauly, 2004, 252; Nip, 2006, p. 216). Voakes (2004) found that:

> Most newspaper journalists approve of four practices common in public journalism: using ordinary citizens as sources for stories on public issues, conducting polls to discover citizens' priorities on issues, holding public meetings to begin community discussion of issues, and reporting enterprise stories that look toward solutions to problems. Journalists in smaller communities tend to be even more receptive (p. 31).

Rosen wanted journalists to "care about the outcomes of their work" and to make "reconnecting journalists to their community a top priority" (Pauly, 2003, pp. 23-24; Pauly, 2004, p. 253). With respect to NNS, it is unlikely to soon host public meetings to begin such community discussions, as its size and resources are not at the level that could sustain this type of interaction. But its work and mission of reconnecting journalism and community raises a series of questions that even well-meaning or right-minded efforts such as NNS will likely have to confront as it continues to gain traction in its neighborhoods and the city.

By the mid-1990s, the profession, including editors and reporters in flagship newsrooms, had greeted public journalism with a "quick, angry and negative" reaction, with critics arguing that it merely renamed what journalism had always done, aimed to turn journalists into "do-gooders" and smacked of "boosterism" (Scott, 2005; Pauly, 2010, p. 17; Pauly, 2003, pp. 18-23; Voakes, 2004, p. 31). In the end, while advocates lauded public journalism for its "primacy on storytelling" and aim to make communities prosper, its critics found it "excessively nostalgic and politically unrealistic" or "simply too boring" and unsustainable in an industry increasingly focused on profits (Deuze, 2005, p. 456; Ballard, 1996, p. 31; Pauly, 2010, p. 17; Voakes, 2004, p. 28; Scott, 2005, p. 91). This debate reminds us that the discussion about journalism's role in the community remains unresolved even as NNS uses the former to serve the latter.

Online Journalism

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS) represents an effort not only to situate the work of journalism in particular neighborhoods – and to make that work count for more in the civic life of the communities it serves – but to disseminate that work entirely online. A number of scholars have described the ways in which online news changes the relationship of journalist, audience and community. Deuze (2003) wrote that online journalism is produced more or less just for the Internet and is now a fourth kind of journalism – joining print, radio and television – and how millions of people get their news. Nip (2006) noted that early on many traditional news organizations used their online sites to mostly repurpose content from their print or broadcast entities. Lewis, Kaufhold and Lasorsa (2010) added that "the digitization of the print newspaper has been an ongoing process" for some time now and that "in a digital environment ... information is no longer scarce, hard to produce, nor difficult to publish."

The literature also considers that online news delivery has in some respects changed and enhanced the relationship between journalists and the people taking in the news. Scholars have also found that the Internet changes the rhythm and activities of the community life on which the media report. Mersey (2010) offered that the Web allows journalists and anyone with a computer to publish stories and multimedia content as often as they choose. (NNS aims to publish at least one new story on its site each weekday.) Fanselow (2008) argued that the medium allows reporters to join with the community to ensure coverage that is "fair and balanced," and the Internet's unlimited space enables more complete coverage as stories evolve. He also found that "citizen leaders" use the

Internet to reach people who cannot attend town meetings, to recruit younger residents

for new programs and projects, and to "generate a lively multimedia record of progress

for supporters, officials and even funders." Moreover, online enables the public to display

excess photos and turn notes into blogs and briefs, and for Web-based news publications

to engage audiences with multimedia storytelling (Lowman, 2008; Chung 2009).

NNS also believes that its mandate is to provide balanced reporting about the

efforts to build community in the neighborhoods it serves. The literature relates, though,

that journalists do not always produce what their audiences want. After helping to study

news choices of journalists and consumers of four leading U.S.-based sites, Boczkowski

(2010) wrote of an interesting dilemma for online news, and also for society as a whole:

> In all cases, journalists selected more news about politics, economics,
> business and international matters than readers, who, in turn, were more
> interested in topics such as sports, weather, entertainment and crime. ...
> When the supply and demand of online news does not meet, it is not just
> elite media organizations that might suffer, but also all of us (pp. 25-26).

While NNS states that it focuses its coverage on that which is important to building

communities, other scholars extend the "pro-newspaper journalism argument" (Mersey

2009a, p. 117) that holds that the print product, much more so than its online

counterparts, provides greater access to well-trained reporters who provide balanced,

accurate, in-depth and timely reporting – all of which help readers decide how to vote and

what to buy, know more about their neighbors and feel closer to the community.

In any event, NNS operates within an increasingly mobile society, and online

formats offer journalists new ways of presenting their work to readers and viewers.

Gilligan (2011) reports, for example, that more and more readers under age 50 seek news

via the Internet and or portable devices such as smartphones. Pavlik (2004) pointed to new opportunities, if effectively and ethically employed, for reshaping the relationship between the media and their audiences and the potential for improved news coverage – for example, by offering news on-demand and instantaneously, or customized to their interests. But although the Internet offers new means for storytelling about the community – and NNS contends that its work resembles familiar, objective and professional reporting – some scholars worry whether too much reliance on the new platform will undermine traditional principles of effective journalism. Scott (2005), for example, decried newsroom convergence – bringing print, television, radio and online journalists into a single space – arguing that it limits the diversity of media voices and perspectives. He also noted that reporters complain that demands for multimedia and immediacy keep them from investigating, checking facts and writing good stories.

In summary, this literature review demonstrates that scholars have written a great deal about the tensions involved in doing community journalism. These tensions have been played out in the experience of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service. It seeks a relationship between the communities it serves and the journalism it produces. Indeed, NNS came into being, in part, because "issues of community life still engender feelings of allegiance to and ties to the community" and these ties "should generate closer attention" by local media (McLeod et al, 2006, p. 190). As for how NNS presents its work, the Internet, of course, is a "most notable home" for communities to experience – and learn from – one another (Mersey, 2010, p. 525). In the next chapter, we shall reveal the theory guiding this thesis and the methodology employed to study NNS.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

All of this literature serves to prepare us for a case study of how the Milwaukee

Neighborhood News Service (NSS) aims to construct a different way of thinking about

the communities it serves. In order to conduct such a study, we shall decide on a

theoretical framework from which to develop the key questions that will guide this

research. We shall then determine relevant contexts and sources from which to draw

answers to these questions as well as how best to evaluate them.

Why a case study as a research method? Brown (2008) argued that case studies can

contribute to scholars' knowledge of organizational culture by providing rich and

significant insights into events and behaviors as well as descriptive details about how a

workplace functions and increased understanding of particular phenomena. Meyer and

Daniels (2012) found that case study is among the most common methods use to study

community journalism. They also wrote that the method sufficiently enables a researcher

to go in depth to study a single journalistic website that incorporates the community as a

necessary component but, as is the case with NNS, does not use categorizing terms such

as *community journalism* or *public* (or *civic*) *journalism* or even *citizen journalism*.

Theoretical Framework

This study draws on the theory of the social construction of reality in order to

discover how journalism helps to construct community. A primary aim here is to

determine how the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service's editor-in-chief and staff

consider their individual and shared experiences in the pursuit of telling the stories of

people who are working to improve their communities – stories that might not otherwise get told by mainstream media – and thus help to create a greater sense of community while also developing better journalists.

Berger and Luckmann (1966), two of the most important theorists of social construction of reality theory, argue that our everyday reality is socially constructed, that common knowledge guides our conduct in it, that we share this reality with others and that we "cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating" with them (p. 23). Adoni and Mane (1984) wrote that "social construction of reality is a dialectical process in which human beings act both as the creators and as products of their social world" (p. 325); they added that how the media represents public opinion – for example, emphasizing certain points of view and falsely positioning them as dominant views in society – influences both an individual's construction of subjective reality and his or her voting behavior.

Scholars have tied social construction of reality to how the news makes sense of reality. Gamson et al. (1992) remind us that media-generated images help to construct meaning about political and social issues and may even be largely unconscious on the producer's part as well. For example, a photo opportunity creates a moment for news coverage, which in turn creates a reality for the viewers or readers who see it. Entman (1993) extended their argument by offering that media focus on four framing functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments and suggesting remedies.

Schudson (2003) called attention to how journalists go about constructing community. He argued that "journalists not only report reality but create it" and that by

"selecting, highlighting, framing, shading and shaping" their reporting – yes, based on

real people and real events – they create impressions that readers and viewers take to be

real and respond to (p. 2). Reporters' ethical beliefs, such as objectivity and accuracy,

may provide constraints – and ubiquitous, potentially manipulative sources may aid and

abet – but Schudson insisted that journalism helps to construct community sentiment. The

social construction of reality can prove especially challenging in a multicultural world.

Garyantes (2012) wrote that social groups and personal experiences influence reporters

and can be challenging when they view and report on culturally diverse communities.

  This study also draws on findings by Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1973) related

to the connection between community newspapers and local audiences and as examples

of the constraints under which journalists do their work. The team contended that "small

community media tend to refrain from reporting social and technological controversies,

concentrating instead on cohesion and consensus and publicizing after the fact" (p. 654).

This literature suggests the importance of understanding how journalists' stories

symbolically construct the communities they serve. How does NNS select what stories it

chooses to pursue? How does it go about constructing reality in the communities it

serves, particularly while striving for professionalism in the sense of looking for and

telling the truth as best as it knows it, without taking sides? Such is the tension associated

with doing community journalism, even as NNS positions itself both within and against

mainstream media: Do you or do you not belong to the community?

<u>Research Questions</u>

All of this leads to the following questions about the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service: How does it imagine its work? Given this conception of itself, what kinds of work has the news service produced and from what kinds of sources and places is its content most often drawn? How have others in the community and elsewhere discussed or endorsed its work? Who is doing the work and what have they learned about journalism and community?

These questions will guide my research. But they will also lead to more specific observations related to how NNS' work is done and appreciated. By way of foreshadowing, we shall see how transparent NNS, as an online-only medium determined to publish professional and objective reporting, is when it comes to correcting mistakes; what types of stories draw NNS its largest audience and whether it makes allowances for such given its desire to focus on hard-hitting concerns as opposed to entertainment; and, given the news service's quest to give voice to the voiceless, what do people quoted in stories posted on www.milwaukeenns.org say about community once given the chance.

<u>Public Layers and Five Steps</u>

An important related question to ask about the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service is what sources are typically used to determine what stories it publishes. For better or worse, journalists depend on finding people with the best perspective on the issues on which they wish or are assigned to report. Gillis and Moore (2003) are helpful in describing which sources journalists most often use to identify stories and report on

them. The scholars suggest that journalists may best serve the public by identifying the issues important to its agenda (pp. 5, 11). For example, journalists typically make choices about the sources they choose to interview or draw story ideas from. Gillis and Moore agree with the Pew Foundation that there are five basic types of sources (p. 12):

- Official – those people who are part of the political system or recognized leaders of institutions in society.
- Quasi-Official – organizations or people involved in the community, but not necessarily representatives of either national or local government. These people tend to be considered "leaders" by the community but not by the office held.
- Third Places – or people who congregate in those places where people gather informally, like churches, community events, schools, etc.
- Incidental Places – where people talk informally with one another, such as on the sidewalk, at the market, or at a coffee shop.
- Private Places – in the privacy of one's home; in people's own private lives.

The problem is, the critics say, that most often journalists venture to the first and last groups to get their story. Gillis and Moore suggest a five-step process that beginning journalists can use to identify what is important to a community: 1) specify a particular community, 2) hold newsroom conversations about contacts in the community, 3) determine what is that needs to be investigated for the story, 4) talk to everyday leaders in the community, and 5) "interview people, not just in those public places, but make this a public process for encountering and talking with the citizenry" (p. 13).

As a faculty member of the Diederich College of Communication, I often observe weekly NNS staff meetings in its newsroom, and otherwise interact with its editor-in-chief and staff enough to know it aims to talk with people who are not necessarily *official*. But from which of the five groups does NNS most draw its reporting?

<u>Sampling</u>

Determining where and how the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service does most of its reporting required reviewing the articles and multimedia reports published on its website. These stories suggest 1) how NNS imagines its work, 2) how others have discussed and or endorsed the new service and 3) what those who have created content for it have learned about journalism and community. I also collected and interpreted other sources of information ranging from written and audio reports to grant proposals and consultant reports to petitions aimed at persuading funders and institutions that it was worthwhile and viable. Key staff also agreed to share their experiences with me.

Consequently, this study seeks to remain true to the principles of purposive sampling, informant interviews and textual analysis as prescribed by Given (2008), Lindlof and Taylor (2011) and Maykut and Morehouse (2001), respectively. My sample involves an analysis of 229 stories – or just under one third of the 757 NNS published between March 20, 2011, and March 7, 2014. The study focuses primarily on the news service's work in 2013 because by then it had developed a normal course of operation and one could glimpse the spectrum of work created; specifically, the sample of 229 reports included 195 of NNS' 260 produced in 2013, with my examples drawn from updates emailed to subscribers each weekday between April and December 2013.

Certain categories of NNS reports overlapped for the purposes of this study (Appendix B identifies the 229 articles analyzed by type). Among the work analyzed, for example, are a total of 70 reports, published before and during 2013, written by three NNS reporters interviewed for this study; so, too, are 20 postings (including one from

2014) that the news service counts as its most popular work based on total page views. Some of those articles are also among the 27 items marked as "special reports" – thus indicating what NNS considered its best work and most deserving of public attention. The same applies to NNS items that a local radio station (11) and the state's largest media operation (38) deemed worthy of broad community interest and so either created related broadcast segments or republished the articles on its website; articles NNS submitted to award contests (19); information shared with the NNS advisory board, and evidence that other media, significant organizations and individuals had taken stock of its work (news releases, website notices, articles, commentaries, blog posts, reports by consultants, etc.). Additionally, the 18 students in my Digital Journalism III (JOUR 2100) class created nine of the 2013 reports; it is a sample of work my classes have created for NNS as part of a collaboration spearheaded by its editor-in-chief and myself during four semesters.

These stories have been interpreted to determine whether NNS has achieved its mission – providing objective and professional reporting about 17 low-income communities in Milwaukee – and to understand the social, economic and professional complexities resulting from that work. Particular attention will be paid to topics covered, patterns developed, story treatment and sources, and to what all of the work says about the relationship between NNS' approach to journalism and the communities it covers.

Interviews

Interviews enable people to tell their own stories. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) state that an interview is well suited to understanding a person's experience, knowledge and worldview, and enables the interviewee not only to share stories, accounts and

explanations, but also to inquire about the past. Many people have produced content for the news service: editor-in-chief, interns, reporters, students, faculty, volunteers, etc. So how to select a representative group of participants who could best say how NNS imagines its work, what defines the work it has produced and what they have learned about community and journalism? This study employs purposive or judgmental sampling, a strategy in which a sample is deliberatively selected based on the knowledge of the population and the qualities the informant possesses (Babbie, 2001; Tongco, 2007). Tongco adds that "simply put, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience" (p. 147). Given (2008) would consider my method a form of stakeholder sampling inasmuch as the informants chosen for this research are people who helped to design or administer the initiative being evaluated and or are otherwise affected by it.

Furthermore, this research takes advantage of the informants' reflexivity about their work as well as my own reactions to not only their feedback, but additional information resulting from a preliminary analysis of the sample. Finlay (2002) described reflexivity as a tool to evaluate the research process and outcomes given an explicit self-awareness of the meta-analysis. It is also acknowledges the impossibility – and perhaps upside – of remaining unattached to the subject matter and or the people producing the work being analyzed. So as this study pursued the meta-categories by which NNS understands and organizes its own work (for example, tagging, most popular, nominated for awards, staff versus interns, corrections) – mostly through the reading of the 229 stories sampled – my interpretation benefitted from extraordinary access to the main

informants. Indeed, as my questions arose throughout the analysis, NNS' editor-in-chief and staff, working down the hall from my faculty office inside the Diederich College, readily provided me with additional feedback or documentation to augment the results.

My five main informants were editor-in-chief Sharon McGowan, part-time reporters Edgar Mendez and Andrea Waxman, former intern Heather Ronaldson and faculty member Karen Slattery. They were there at NNS' conception, have spent many hours developing its content and extending its reputation, and or witnessed how members of the community and student journalists have interacted with it. Standard interview queries were developed in order to determine, among other things, each informant's level of journalism experience prior to NNS, what led him or her to join it, how NNS imagines its work, from what types of public sources the new service typically draws its content, how the community has responded to NNS' coverage, how he or she understood the communities served, and what he or she has learned about them through their work with the news service. The initial interviews occurred in April and May 2013 and lasted between 33 minutes and 1 hour 22 minutes each, depending upon how elaborate the informants' answers were. The Marquette University Institutional Review Board had earlier granted exempt status for this protocol and, accordingly, each informant signed a consent form granting permission for his or her name, information and views to be included in this study. The initial interviews were recorded, transcribed and interpreted.

<u>Informants</u>

Before turning to the analysis, brief profiles of the informants are in order to help

provide some clues as to how and why they came to work at and or appreciate the news

service, their level of journalism experience and their passions or stake in the operation.

Sharon McGowan

Sharon McGowan, 63, grew up and lives in Skokie, Illinois, a northern suburb of

Chicago. Her father held elected office in local, county and state government and served

as chairman of the Illinois Democratic Party. McGowan remembers starting a newspaper

– "it was a mimeograph thing and it had little stories and little poems in it" – in third

grade; she went on to serve as editor of her high school yearbook. After graduating from

Washington University in St. Louis with a B.A. in English, she worked as a legal

secretary at a law firm and then produced a newsletter for Cook County's environmental

control department. The University of Chicago and Northwestern University accepted her

for graduate school, for social work and journalism, respectively. Her mother and sister

worked as social workers but, against her family's urgings, McGowan chose journalism;

a friend helped persuade her that she was a good writer and curious about the world.

By then married, McGowan did well enough at Medill to have two offers upon

earning a master's degree: a $12,000-a-year job from the community newspaper in

Skokie and a $3,000-a-year position with *The Chicago Reporter*, a new investigative

newsletter covering race relations in the city. While she was deciding, *The Reporter's*

publisher and her Medill mentor invited her to join the staff for a ride on a sailboat.

I thought it was the coolest thing. I loved everybody on the boat. I took the job. And that was *huge*. I can't even – there's no words to describe how important that was to my career. Because I did investigative journalism as a 25 year old right out of graduate school and about important issues that got me into the city, that got me on television and radio, because I did some really good stories as a young reporter. It shaped my career. I became the first full-time reporter, covering education, with a grant, at *The Chicago Reporter*, then I was assistant managing editor, then I was managing editor – and I was there for a total of five years. Prior to me, the longest tenure had been a year and a half.

McGowan went on to work at other media in Chicago, first as assistant news director and then managing editor during five years at WBBM-AM; then assignment manager responsible for breaking news and the planning desk for a year at WBBM-TV. Starting in 1980, she taught journalism for most quarters during the next 20 years at Medill while starting a consulting company with her husband, Jim – they have two children – that specialized in writing, editing and graphic design. In 2009, the Zilber Family Foundation hired her to help two Milwaukee neighborhoods – Clarke Square and Lindsey Heights – finalize quality-of-life plans. Though still commuting from Skokie, McGowan joined an operating committee, listened as its members bemoaned mainstream media's coverage of their mostly poor, black and Latino communities, and talked about what kind of journalistic enterprise could better serve their interests.

I had an intuition, and I knew from my work at *The Chicago Reporter*, that there are some amazing things going on in these neighborhoods, and some amazing people working in these neighborhoods – and no one who didn't happen to live there, in the city of Milwaukee, knew *anything* about it. So I wanted to tell the stories of the quality of life plans, is how it started. So they set certain goals, certain objectives; I wanted to report on are they meeting them. Are they not meeting them?

McGowan persuaded the foundation to fund her idea for an online news service. She quit the operating committee and spent three months explaining to its members that her job was not to do public relations for their communities or nonprofit organizations. She also helped secure in-kind support from the Diederich College in terms of space, equipment and access to faculty and students. Arriving in Johnston Hall in March 2010, McGowan spent the next year training two part-time reporters, recruiting volunteers and spreading word about the news service before its launch in March 2011.

Edgar Mendez

Edgar Mendez grew up on Milwaukee's South Side, near where he lives in Muskego Way, close to his longtime neighborhood, Clarke Square. He remembers that he always enjoyed writing as a child and that a teacher in high school would let him read the *Milwaukee Sentinel* when he finished his class work. But Mendez dropped out of high school and forgot about writing. However, after earning his GED diploma, he went on to earn, in 2009, at age 31, a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, majoring in journalism and sociology.

Before graduating, Mendez wrote several articles, sometimes for pay, for *El Conquistador*, a local newspaper serving southeastern Wisconsin, with his defining article for the publication featuring an interview with then-UWM Chancellor Carlos Santiago; he also wrote for *Front Page*, the campus' online newspaper. Unable to get into graduate school to pursue sociology, Mendez, single with no kids, found himself desperately looking for journalism jobs; he even moved temporarily to Minneapolis

trying to do so. He was doing unsatisfying work for a small paper in Racine, and "doing phones" for Wisconsin's QUEST Card program when his UWM mentor told him that a new neighborhood news service wanted a reporter for Clarke Square.

Sharon McGowan hired Mendez as one of NNS' first two part-time reporters because, as she put it, "he knew everybody in Clarke Square." He has produced 10 special reports for NNS, four of which a local radio station later invited him to speak about his reporting on its public affairs show. Fifteen hours a week is not enough to make ends meet, so for a time he also worked as a youth outreach and communications specialist at a nonprofit agency. In January 2013, after NNS and the Diederich College joined with the Public Policy Forum to create graduate fellowships, Mendez began pursuing a master's degree from Marquette in addition to his news service work. He recently landed a journalism internship with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*.

Heather Ronaldson

Heather Ronaldson, age 23, hails from Wheaton, Illinois. She chose to attend Marquette after a brother had done so before; she liked its urban environment, Jesuit values and potential for a good study abroad program related to journalism. She decided to major in journalism after thinking, in part, "I wanted to be the one they sent to foreign countries to report on different cultures and tell stories about different people." Ronaldson was introduced to NNS and Sharon McGowan as a sophomore in my Digital Journalism II course; I also taught her as a junior in a class focusing on campaigns and elections. She spent time with student media – first as a writer and editor for the

Marquette Journal, then as a features reporter for *The Marquette Tribune* – but said she tired of only reporting on campus events.

Ronaldson was interviewed for this study because, after having teamed with a classmate on two multimedia projects that the news service published, she served as an intern there during the spring 2012 semester. She also returned to NNS as a volunteer reporter before graduating in May 2013 – and credits that overall experience as crucial to landing two internships at the *Journal Sentinel*, one of which was extended several months until January 2014. She could also speak to being a young woman asked to do journalism in communities much different from the one in which she grew up, and being a novice journalist expected by a nascent news organization to do multimedia reporting using complicated equipment at unfamiliar locations. Ronaldson also contributes to the discussions of McGowan as an editor and role model, the news service and its impact on the neighborhoods it aims to serve, and what one can learn about the concept of community by doing the type of work done by an organization such as NNS.

Karen Slattery, Ph.D.

Karen Slattery is an associate professor and directs the journalism and media studies department at Marquette. A native of upper Michigan, she earned a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay in 1971 and a M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1978 and 1983, respectively. Her professional journalism experience spans a total of about 10 years: in Green Bay as a reporter and producer at WBAY-TV and as a reporter at WFRV-TV, as well as a reporter in Milwaukee for Wisconsin Public Radio and the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service.

Slattery taught journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and St. Norbert

College in De Pere, Wis., before joining the broadcasting and electronic communication

faculty at Marquette in 1989. She has taught, among other things, courses in broadcast

news writing and editing; ethics; television reporting and now digital journalism. She

joined the journalism department in summer 2010, soon after the news service began

operating in Johnston Hall. In addition to being a faculty colleague, Slattery also

supervised my graduate-level independent study, which focused on digital branding.

Besides her professional and academic background, Slattery was interviewed for

this case study because she was keenly aware of NNS on many levels. As the

department's leader, she wants journalism students to have the best out-of-classroom

experiences as possible and has supported having my journalism classes do assignments

ultimately published by NNS. She also sat in on staff meetings as a guest and volunteered

to do assignments herself (along with her husband) for the news service in 2011,

affording her the chance to witness and experience McGowan as an editor.

Andrea Waxman

Andrea Waxman, 64, was born and raised as an Army brat in Germany. Her family

moved each year before she was 10, then lived mostly in Japan through her first year of

college. She earned a B.A. in American studies from Wheaton College in Massachusetts,

and stopped short of earning a master's degree at the UW-Madison after having a child 24

years ago. Her husband is a law professor at Marquette. They lived on Milwaukee's East

Side before moving to Whitefish Bay when their daughter was 2 years old. Waxman was

teaching English in middle school and high school when, in 2004, "I wanted to find a

way to write more." Her background in English, grammar and writing; residency in the

Milwaukee area since 1981 and deep familiarity with the Jewish community helped her

land a reporting job with *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*. She worked there for four

years, becoming assistant editor after the first two. Her time there ended, though, when

the community eliminated all but the editor-in-chief's position.

Waxman and I began in Marquette's graduate digital storytelling certificate

program in fall 2010 and worked together on assignments in a class taught by Linda

Menck. Waxman said she pursued the certificate because "otherwise I was never going to

be able to do journalism again." She first heard of NNS when Menck announced to the

class that a new journalism project at the college was sponsoring a bus tour of city

neighborhoods. That is when she met McGowan. Impressed and intrigued by the fledging

operation, Waxman answered the editor-in-chief's call for volunteers, figuring it would

be a perfect way to practice the digital storytelling skills taught in Menck's class. She

started at NNS in January 2011 and was also an intern before McGowan hired her as a

part-time reporter in December 2012. Waxman is essentially the No. 2 staffer, in charge

of the operation when the editor-in-chief is away on vacation or because of an emergency.

In the next chapter, we shall pursue answers to our research questions while

examining NNS' work and how it represents the life of the communities it serves.

CHAPTER 4
RESULTS & INTERPRETATION

Milwaukee has as many distinct communities as any large American city.

Pinpointing the primary sections of Wisconsin's largest municipality is easy: Downtown,

East Side, North Side, South Side and West Side. Within those areas are scores of

neighborhoods, many with storied identities and clear-cut focal points. But not every

Milwaukee community is easily identified, either on a map or in conversations with

lifelong residents. As an alumnus of and now faculty member at Marquette University,

located just west of downtown, it always interests me when native friends cannot readily

tell me what neighborhood they live in when asked for driving directions. Students in my

digital journalism courses have reported the same thing when they leave campus on

assignment for the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS).

Before digging deeper into the work NNS has produced, let us again consider a

term that our informants and their supporters all use often while discussing its mission

and actions: *community*. Editor-in-Chief Sharon McGowan, for example, describes it as

"a somewhat artificial boundary created by the city that has a name and has borders and

that has people who live, work, worship, serve there, who care about it." Karen Slattery,

chair of Marquette's journalism and media studies department and who studies the

concept as a researcher, said it "means people living in relation to one another."

So what led to choosing the 17 communities in which the news service focuses its

efforts, particularly since other related terms used often are *central city* or *minority* or

low-income or *poor* or even *black* and *Latino*? The initial three – Lindsay Heights on the

city's North Side and Clarke Square and Layton Boulevard West on its South Side – were part of the 10-year, $50 million neighborhood revitalization initiative funded by the Zilber Family Foundation, which is also one of NNS' primary funding sources. It is notable that the foundation's executive director, Susan Lloyd, seemed to agree with my earlier point when she told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* – in October 2010 and five months before NNS published its first story – that "Milwaukee, unlike Chicago, is not neighborhood centric." That is why the Zilber Initiative decided to "drill down on south and north side neighborhoods and expand the footprint to adjacent areas," Lloyd said.

All of which explains why NNS, according to its website, now also covers Amani, Harambee, Metcalfe Park and Sherman Park to the north; Havenwoods and Thurston Woods to the northwest; Lincoln Village, Menomonee Valley and Walker's Point to the south; and Capitol Heights, Concordia, Enderis Park, Martin Drive and Washington Park to the west. McGowan said these neighborhoods all have an "organized effort of some sort" to improve the community's quality of life and "some resources to do that."

This chapter reviews how NNS declared its intentions to the communities and public at large as well as the resulting media coverage and what my informants and others say of its mission, standards, leadership and staff. It then looks at NNS' work based on topic areas; special reports; page views and efforts to increase audience and correct mistakes; student assignments; and awards. It also reviews from who and where NNS draws its coverage, what is said about *community* and *neighborhoods* in that coverage, and what the informants have learned about journalism and community because of NNS.

Part I: Who Is Doing the Work?

This section reviews and interprets how the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service declared its intentions to the communities it hoped to serve and the public at large. It also analyzes the resulting media coverage and what the five main informants and others said of its mission, standards, leadership and staff. It is all an attempt to answer three of this study's four research questions: 1) How does NNS imagine its work? 2) How have others discussed its work? 3) Who is doing the work on its behalf?

Beginning: "News From the Neighborhoods"

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service began operating at Marquette University, inside the J. William and Mary Diederich College of Communication in Johnston Hall, in March 2010 – a year before launching www.milwaukeenns.org and at the time reporting on two communities: Clarke Square and Lindsay Heights. *Milwaukee Magazine* media writer Erik Gunn first introduced the public at large to NNS via "News From the Neighborhoods" on his "Pressroom Buzz" blog in September 2010. Sharon McGowan, the project coordinator and editor-in-chief, told Gunn that "the broader Milwaukee community" did not accurately perceive the neighborhoods due to limited and "often negative" coverage. While focusing on neighborhood revitalization efforts so nonprofits would learn from each other's successes and failures, NNS' work would meet professional standards and that other media could republish or rebroadcast it, she said.

In December 2010, NNS released a one-page Q-and-A worksheet declaring its intentions. The document described "an online source for objective, professional

reporting about revitalization efforts in central city communities." It also echoed Gunn's

report, looking ahead to interactive community sites – initially for Lindsay Heights and

Clarke Square – that would provide residents information about community events and

activities, and a forum on local issues. "Professionally trained" NNS "beat reporters"

would fill the void left by "limited media coverage of the comprehensive and systematic

efforts" of groups and people to improve the neighborhoods' quality of life. The reporters

would "cover the successes and failures of revitalization initiatives, regularly assessing

progress toward achieving" the communities' goals in economic development, education,

employment, health and wellness, housing, neighborhood beautification, public safety,

recreation and youth development. Moreover, the document said, NNS would allow local

and statewide newspapers, radio and TV stations to "publish, broadcast or post" its work

on their websites "at no cost" – so long as it received appropriate credit. NNS also

intended to provide news tips and a calendar of community events. These posts would

include "polished enterprise pieces" featuring text, video and images. Marquette faculty

and "highly experienced journalists skilled in print and multimedia storytelling" would

help McGowan with editing; website coordinators would help to gather, design and

disseminate content, and to drive traffic to www.milwaukeenns.org.

In March 2011, NNS announced itself in a one-page news release: "Online News

Service to Cover Community Issues." Naming McGowan as "editor and project director,"

and unveiling a new logo, the release described NNS as a "new multimedia website that

provides objective, professional reporting on urban issues" in the "pilot communities" of

Lindsay Heights, Clarke Square and, now, the Layton Boulevard West neighborhoods of

Burnham Park, Layton Park and Silver City. It added "articles" and "audio reports" to the

types of journalism other media could use for free if crediting NNS.

The news release said NNS had "garnered significant community support." Tony

Shields, executive director of the United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee and the

news service's publisher, stated that the coverage would allow the "wider Milwaukee

community" to learn more about the neighborhoods and their leaders to learn from their

shared experiences. The Diederich College would provide training, equipment and a

multimedia editor, a home for a newsroom and students for internships. Dean Lori

Bergen would serve on the NNS advisory board. "Our purpose is to tell a balanced story

about successes and challenges in bringing new vitality to these historic neighborhoods,"

McGowan said. The release ended with a call to action from John Gurda, noted local

author and historian and another advisory board member: "People who care about the city

and understand its importance to the region will want to bookmark this site."

Media Coverage: "Really a Great Opportunity"

The launch quickly garnered media coverage as well. McGowan told the *Journal

Sentinel* that NNS would provide objective and professional reporting on urban issues in

neighborhoods. It would focus on education, public safety, economic development, health

and wellness, recreation, employment and housing rather than on crime and fires, she

said. The *Journal Sentinel* also said the website would be updated each Monday and

Wednesday and that McGowan hoped NNS could expand to other areas in the city. She

told *The Marquette Tribune* that media should better serve "their whole readership" but

are unable to consistently focus on issues important to "these communities" and that NNS

provides "real-world experience" for journalism students. McGowan and Shields told

NNS' story in a 10-minute segment on the WUWM-FM public affairs show "Lake

Effect." She again stressed the importance of telling and disseminating balanced stories

that emphasize successes as much as challenges in the inner city. Shields described NNS'

work as "really a great opportunity" for community residents to know more about

"what's going on and what's of interest."

In May 2011, Gunn weighed in again for *Milwaukee Magazine*, writing that NNS

aimed to "remedy Milwaukee mass media's habit of ignoring the city's neighborhoods

except for stories about crime and decay." McGowan told him that "we're pleased so far"

with the "very positive reaction to the site" and "our reporters are developing sources and

turning out high quality work." In June 2012, *Urban Life*, a blog produced by high school

students participating in a Diederich College program, wrote that NNS covers

"neighborhoods that no one else cares about." Four months later, by which time the news

service had expanded its coverage to 15 communities, Michael Horne began a post on

UrbanMilwaukee.com by asking if NNS was an outreach project or an academic project.

"No, and no. It is a professional journalism project," McGowan said. The editor added

that "we work on deadlines like a news organization" about stories, events or issues that

"directly affect our communities," "tend to go uncovered" and are "relevant to our users."

She told RadioMilwaukee.org, "I have been astounded by how many stories there are to

tell about people who are spending their lives trying to make their communities better."

Two publications based at the university where NNS has its newsroom took stock in

early 2013. *Marquette,* a magazine for 110,000 alumni, said the "team of roving reporters

covers territory that is often low priority" for other media, and quoted McGowan saying they tell a "balanced story" about efforts to bring "new vitality to these historic neighborhoods." *Marquette Matters*, a monthly newsletter for faculty and staff, wrote that NNS is "giving an electrifying jolt" to its targeted areas. Kenya Evans – one of the two initial part-time reporters and who hails from Lindsay Heights but has since moved to South Korea – told the publication that NNS tells "the hard stories" and "the good things" about the communities and that "the work we're doing is really important." Writing about it for the third time, in *Milwaukee Magazine* in March 2013, Gunn noted that NNS had introduced several students from Marquette and other schools to community journalism, and that other media outlets were using its content on their websites. He also focused on the new service's sustainability before ending with McGowan acknowledging that changing perceptions about central city communities is a long process.

Altogether, it was a significant amount of positive media coverage for a modest community experiment created to do what leaders of this new newsroom told anyone who would listen that the ones now writing about it were not doing. The coverage also served notice that novice journalists could gain as much from NNS as the neighborhoods.

Identity: "Doing Professional, Objective Reporting"

In the interviews, the five informants, of course, agreed with Evans' assessment that NNS tells "hard stories" and reports on good things happening in the communities. The staff draws its identity from doing work that it considers different from that of mainstream media. Indeed, 25 months after the launch, McGowan's mantra remained consistent: "We're doing professional, objective reporting" and "hoping to create a more

balanced portrait of the neighborhoods and the people in them." She said NNS was committed to accuracy, "telling stories that are not typically told," "giving a voice to sources who are not typically interviewed" and "understanding that there are more than two sides to a story." Part-time reporters Andrea Waxman and Edgar Mendez concurred. "I quote our mission statement," Waxman said, "which includes professional and objective … it's a very, very important part of it." Mendez described NNS as an "online, objective, professional news service dedicated to reporting on central city neighborhoods" and that covers stories that mainstream media "might not care about." Waxman and Mendez stressed that NNS strives to capture local voices and give visibility to little-known but worthwhile community-based programs and services.

Slattery, the Marquette faculty member and former broadcast journalist, also emphasized that NNS uses traditional journalistic standards and practices to report on community issues not covered by legacy media. Waxman said: "We're about the people who live in the community. They are the first priority. What their goals and aspirations and challenges are. What they have to say to about anything. That's our focus." Former intern Heather Ronaldson said NNS often covers social justice issues and human interest stories that other media would not pick up. Mendez said that even when other news agencies cover the same events, the news service tends to report on them differently.

Ensuring that NNS produces professional and objective journalism is challenging. Its reporters, interns and volunteers are culturally sensitive yet mostly novice journalists. McGowan recruits and trains them to tell the balanced stories NNS believes must be told. All of the informants praised her as one who never settles, yet cares for their professional

and personal development as much as the news service itself. Waxman described her former editor at *The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle* as talented, but from a creative writing background. McGowan is "a much more professional journalist" with a "career full of newspaper and television journalism" focused on urban affairs and race relations. Waxman said "the journalism went up several notches for me" after joining NNS, mostly because "Sharon has very high standards" and "clearly enjoys teaching journalists how to be better journalists, which I think is one of the best things about working here."

Mendez agreed. He, too, had worked with editors elsewhere before NNS. Their critiques, however, amounted to "Oh, I got a typo in here" and the stories otherwise being published as submitted. McGowan, he said, "basically molded me … really put me through all the motions, all the functions of a professional reporter." Grammar was particularly a struggle at first. McGowan hammered home the basics. "Before it would be 10 grammatical errors," he said. "Now it's down to one or two." Then again, McGowan's true measure is with the hardest assignments. Mendez said she "helps a lot – because what I do is over-report." Besides helping him to see "what I'm missing," he said, she teaches how to "tell the story" so it is "more entertaining – in a way that makes sense" – and how to explain the data" compiled for the more complicated reports.

Slattery said what happens at weekly NNS staff meetings is "exactly the same sorts of things you do in a newsroom anywhere." Reflecting on her few assignments as a volunteer, Slattery said McGowan is "a tough, tough editor" with "a lot of muscle" when it comes to improving stories. Ronaldson first met McGowan as a student in a journalism class that produced content for NNS in fall 2011. She had only been edited by college

instructors and peers in campus media, so "I thought it would be wise" and a "good

networking opportunity" to interact with McGowan – "a very scrupulous editor who was

not from Marquette" – outside of class. While also describing McGowan as "a very

confident and self-assured woman" with a "very high standard," Ronaldson said she

knew she could not "get by producing a subpar project" as an NNS intern – and that

pleasing McGowan would be a "huge vote of confidence."

Staff: "These Are Talented People"

McGowan deflects all this praise while rejecting the premise that the Milwaukee

Neighborhood News Service started with inexperienced reporters. Indeed, she said,

"these are talented people" who, perhaps more importantly, given her Chicago roots,

could relate to NNS' initial communities "in a way that I never will." Mendez came with

the "highest recommendation" from his UWM teacher and mentor, was "totally dedicated

to journalism" and "knew everybody in Clarke Square," McGowan said. Evans had done

a fair amount of writing, mostly about the arts and fashion; had written a regular

community-focused column in the *Journal Sentinel's* op-ed section, and had "deep

connections to the community" in Lindsay Heights, the editor said.

McGowan concedes, though, that she shoulders "a lot of responsibility" having no

other editors to help protect NNS' credibility. Yet she flatly said "I'm an editor" more so

than a teacher, then added:

> I want everything that I publish on the site to be good enough to have my
> own name on it. And so, therefore, I have to teach people to do it the way I
> do it, which may or may not be perfect – but at least it's professional.

Is she giving more than she is getting? "No, I'm giving a ton, but I'm also getting a ton." In lieu of a huge salary, "the satisfaction of working with young journalists" and influencing how they view covering a city is "important to me." McGowan added, "What makes me feel the best is working one on one with a reporter to make their story better."

Nonetheless, the NNS experiment relies heavily on recruiting and coaching reporters who may remain on staff for relatively short periods of time. A total of 32 people have bylines on at least one of the 229 news service reports reviewed for this study. Not surprisingly, Waxman and Mendez have the most, with 32 and 30 stories, respectively. After Evans (eight stories) left for South Korea, McGowan hired Brendan O'Brien, a full-time journalist for Reuters with a M.A. in public policy, as a part-time reporter; soon after she hired recent UWM graduate Shakara Robinson for a similar position. O'Brien and Robinson wrote 19 and 17 of the stories, respectively.

NNS interns account for the next highest totals. All earning experience but no pay, they include Maggie Quick, a student attending Northeastern University in Boston who wrote 15 stories while home for summer break in Wisconsin; UWM students Maria Corpus (13) and Tom Momberg (10) – and six journalism students from Marquette, including Ronaldson (8) and Eric Oliver (9). The sample also includes work by five other interns who signed on after learning about NNS by word of mouth.

As noted earlier, a partnership between the Diederich College, the Public Policy Forum and NNS enabled Mendez to pursue a master's degree while also still reporting. The next graduate students to join the news service as part of the joint program, Scottie Lee Meyers and Rick Brown, each have 10 stories within the sample. Several other

people produced reports as volunteers, including Alex Perry (5) and Slattery's husband, Mark Doremus (4). Finally, 18 students in my digital journalism class created nine of the stories during spring 2013 – the fourth consecutive term that McGowan teamed with such a class to produce content for NNS. Several of them, including Ronaldson and Oliver, have become interns or created content as volunteers.

Part II: The Work So Far

This section reviews and interprets the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service's work based on topic areas (idealistically and in reality); special reports; page views and efforts to increase audience and correct mistakes; and student assignments. It attempts to answer the research question concerning what kinds of work NNS has produced.

Topic Areas: "Stories That Are Important"

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service states on its website's About Us page that it covers "stories that are important to the people who live, work and serve in city neighborhoods." The Web page also lists nine topic areas as examples of the kind of reports it focuses on: education, public safety, economic development, health and wellness, environment, recreation, employment, youth development and housing. However, the drop-down menu below the "news" tab in the site's main navigation lists arts and recreation, community, economic development, education, environment, health, housing and special reports as content sections. A keyword analysis of this case study's sample of 229 stories reveals that NNS focuses on some types more than others.

Given the importance of the concept of community – to the primary funding sources, the news service's staff and the community leaders who cited the need for more coverage of their quality-of-life efforts – it is not surprising that 75 reports among the sample NNS had itself tagged as "community." I keyworded 109, or nearly half, as having a story source speaking directly about his or her community or neighborhood.

Forty-four stories were tagged as arts and recreation, followed by health (31), special reports (27), education (25), housing (15), economic development (12), environment (8) and public safety (3). My keywording, though, peeled some layers. Fifty stories not marked education nonetheless focused on matters related to the Milwaukee Public Schools system and its students. Thirty-nine stories not tagged as health-related dealt with concerns ranging from the federal Affordable Health Care Act to counseling for domestic or sexual abuse victims. Twenty-three reports not tagged as economic development nonetheless addressed matters related to the economy, employment and job training, while an equal number of stories not tagged public safety focused on crime and or the Milwaukee Public Department's efforts to fight it, quantify crime statistics and improve its community relations. Many other stories not specifically tagged focused on matters ranging from families and children (39) to teens and youth (20) to parks, gardens and food markets (18) to government agencies (15) to housing and homelessness (13), immigration (10), the environment (8), exhibits and galleries (8), charities, ministries or shelters (8) and street or housing beautification (7).

NNS emphatically focuses on low-income and minority communities, but few of its articles refer specifically to race or ethnicity: 17 about African Americans per se, 15

about Latinos (including six about Mexican concerns) and four about Native Americans. Likewise, few stories related specifically to gender – seven each for men and women.

The sample included six stories tagged as "neighborhoods." Peeling that back as well, more than 25 neighborhoods received coverage by name, with the two most frequently mentioned – Lindsay Heights (13) and Clarke Square (11) – being the two pilot communities that NNS targeted upon arriving at Marquette in March 2010. The third neighborhood included by the launch a year later – Layton Boulevard West and its linked communities of Burnham Park, Layton Park and Silver City – had eight stories. Other neighborhoods covered often: Sherman Park (9) and Metcalfe Park (8). Given that Milwaukee residents most readily identify themselves as living on the city's North Side or South Side, it is not surprising that the former garnered 13 mentions, while the latter received 12. Surprisingly, though, 58 stories did not identify a neighborhood. In nearly all of these instances, a street address was given, as if to invite the reader to knock on the door. Mainstream media typically identifies neighborhoods or street intersections, but almost never an actual street address. McGowan told me that "we are making a concerted effort" to identify the neighborhood within stories going forward. In doing so, NNS would further its bid to create a greater sense of community in its coverage area; remember, as noted in the literature review, that Lowrey, Brozana and Mackay (2008) suggested that community is "fundamentally tied to physical location."

I am loath to say NNS should cover more stories about a particular topic or another, preferring to trust its judgment on what's news and what's not. But the news service could benefit from more systematically tagging its stories topically. All of its stories by

mission or definition are about community or neighborhoods, so tagging them as community seems redundant. Better tagging could afford NNS and its supporters, not to mention the public at large and potential funders, a truer sense of the breadth and emphasis of its work – and whether the organization is meeting its coverage goals.

Special Reports: "We Ought to Look Into This"

Twenty-seven times between March 20, 2011, and Dec. 2, 2013, the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service published an article under the heading of "Special Report" or with those words as part of the headline. Special reports reflect news coverage that NNS believes merits extra attention – and the best of its capacities and ambitions. McGowan said a special report "usually it takes longer to report" and "often relies on data or tries to rely on data." While initial special reports often included a small photo or multiple photos beside text, they typically now have multiple elements that might include graphics or video or an audio slideshow in addition to a more in-depth text story. Beyond that, McGowan said, special reports are "enterprise stories" that "we think we *ought* to look into this." Asked to elaborate, McGowan quickly spoke of one published on April 11, 2013 (and one of two by Ronaldson): "We ought to look at how black contractors are doing in light of a new law that went into effect a year ago that was intended to give more business to black contractors." McGowan also said a special report could aim to hold public officials and community organizations accountable, or show that an issue affecting low-income communities may not just be "black and white – it has subtleties."

The largest subset among the special reports – five – focused on matters of health and wellness, including the need for Spanish-speaking medical interpreters at area

hospitals, support groups for black women battling breast cancer, and the Affordable Care Act's impact on domestic violence screenings and counseling services. There were four special reports each related to education (declining enrollment in charter schools, the tension between extending tourism and standardized testing preparation, Latino English language learners outperforming native-speaking students, and the pitfalls associated with getting a GED) and public safety (incarcerated juveniles and at-risk youth, miscalculated city crime statistics, a new law allowing those with permits to carry concealed weapons, and the deportation of county residents who lack criminal records).

Twelve NNS reporters and interns have had their bylines atop special reports. Mendez had 10 such reports – including those focusing on a unique collaboration between a community organization and a public school, the positive effect streetscape improvements had upon on a South Side business district, and residents' concerns about contamination in the Kinnickinnic River. Evans, Waxman and intern Matthew Bin Han Ong each had two special reports, while six others all had one each.

There is no question that much of NNS' best or most important work is within its collection of special reports. The equal number of such reports about health and wellness, education and public safety does not amount to a discernible pattern, but it does suggest that maybe the topics chosen reflect opportunities as they arise rather than a larger plan. One wonders whether the amount of effort or time put into what ends up getting stamped as such matters as much as the content published. If so, that would not be unlike what happens in legacy newsrooms where high-profile reporters earn added rank because of their reputation and past success. In any case, NNS is right to challenge itself to tackle in-

depth stories that stretch its use of words, images, video, audio and data visualization.

Doing so from the community's perspective is a bonus for the audience.

Media Extension: "We Wanted It to Be Organic"

As with any media organization, the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service

strives to have its work reach as wide an audience as possible. NNS particularly hoped

that local mainstream media would republish its work on their websites, so long as it

received proper credit. Hence its name includes the words *news service.* McGowan said

the local FOX affiliate, WITI-TV, accepted NNS' offer even before it launched in 2011.

But she also understood that not every news company would quickly follow suit. "It's

come gradually," she said, adding that "we wanted it to be organic" and not, "Hey! ...

We're doing great work. You should publish our stuff."

NPR's Milwaukee affiliate, WUWM-FM, has given great exposure to the news

service's work after McGowan and NNS publisher Tony Shields appeared on the station's

local public affairs show on April 18, 2011, to promote the launching. The show's host,

Mitch Teich, invited NNS reporters into the "Lake Effect" studio 11 times between

September 2012 and December 2013 to discuss their stories for its audience, which is

more than 25,000 radio listeners a week and many more via online (live streaming or

podcasts). The first time was for Ong's special report, "Family Day Care Providers

Squeezed by Low Ratings, New Rules." Other news service stories featured on "Lake

Effect" ranged from a new program to keep incarcerated juveniles close to home to city

nonprofit organizations shying away from the ongoing residency debate to motorcyclists

calling for awareness about an increase in crashes.

Teich wrote to me in an email that having NNS reporters share their work on "Lake

Effect" is "an ideal situation for us" because "as a daily newsmagazine, our aim is to

open a window on things happening across the community to our listeners." With

WUWM also having a small staff, "relationships like this are really vital" for the station

to feature "news happening at the neighborhood level." He added:

> It quickly became evident that NNS reporters were doing admirable work
> in bringing issues to the fore that may not have been on the radar screen
> for many of our listeners. Almost to a person, the reporters had authentic,
> interested voices that helped make the stories come alive in a "reporter's
> notebook" fashion. The stories we featured were typically pitched to us
> through NNS' editorial staff – a situation that worked well.

Teich said more NNS-related "Lake Effect" segments could occur on a "regular,

predictable basis," so long as "they're timely and strong," and not just to fill 10 minutes.

The *Journal Sentinel*, the state's largest newsroom and winner of three Pulitzer

Prizes since 2008, has republished NNS' work more sporadically. McGowan said its top

editors told her that "they don't have time or staff to cover individual neighborhoods" and

"they're more concerned about the city, the county and the region." She said the editors

agreed to consider NNS' offer, but had done so only once when Ron Smith, an assistant

managing editor and a Marquette alumnus, sent an email in April 2013 to Managing

Editor George Stanley suggesting that a collaboration would benefit both organizations:

> It would allow the J-S to get things online and into print that we don't
> have the resources to cover and it would give NNS great exposure. For
> example, we often have trouble filling the local section of the Monday
> paper as well as generating local copy to post online throughout the days
> on Sundays. ... NNS would greatly improve our connections to
> underserved communities and help us to live up to our motto as
> "Wisconsin's newsroom." … Let's not wait any longer for something that
> sounds like a slam dunk for both organizations' readership.

On May 23, 2013, the *Journal Sentinel* republished NNS intern Amalia Oulahan's

article, "'Community-Oriented Community' Unites to Build a Garden." Thirty-six more

reports made their way onto www.jsonline.com after first on www.milwaukeenns.org

between that month and January 2014. It happened infrequently enough that McGowan

believes Smith was physically in his newsroom whenever it did happen. In any event,

when it does wish to republish an NNS article on its site, the *Journal Sentinel* typically

creates a new headline, offers one or two paragraphs introducing the story, and links to it

on the new service's website using words like "the Milwaukee Neighborhood News

Service is reporting." McGowan told the NNS advisory board in early March that she had

a meeting soon with Smith and other editors at the *Journal Sentinel* in hopes of getting

her staff's stories republished on www.jsonline.com more regularly. "It would

exponentially increase the people who read our stories," she told me.

No argument here. It seems plausible that the NPR affiliate could be more

accepting of regenerating work by NNS for its radio audience because the host can agree

to do so on his own, is always looking for interesting content and what matters most is

what reporter says on air (less worry about mistakes). It may be more difficult for a larger

newsroom with more ambition and areas of routine coverage and oversight to incorporate

work done by reporters who it otherwise would not hire because of inexperience.

Audience: "It's All About the Community"

My other informants also spoke about the extent to which NNS stories are read by

people who do not see them first on www.milwaukeenns.org. Noting that the entire staff

promote readership for the website, Waxman mentions it to "every single person I talk

to," particularly her friends and acquaintances in the suburbs. She also has "quite a few of my friends on Facebook following it." Waxman said "they find it really interesting" because "these are not stories they're reading, for the most part, anywhere else." She also said "most of the people in the suburbs have no idea what's going on in Milwaukee," even people who work in various kinds of "community and social justice things."

Mendez noted that "a lot of the work" is republished in *El Conquistador,* southeastern Wisconsin's most-read Spanish-speaking newspaper. At first, Mendez said, the weekly community paper just took on his work because he had written for it before. But he met with the paper's editor and urged him to republish more NNS content because "it's all free and it's all about the community." Mendez said "everyone's gotten stories in *El Conquistador*" – including those that are of citywide interest, not just focusing on the South Side, where much of Milwaukee's Latino population lives.

Ronaldson has a different take on the matter. "If I don't tell people about it, force my friends to read it, email it to my family, I don't know if people would read it," she said. Having the word *neighborhood* in its name connotes that NNS is "just like a neighborhood newsletter" that does not explore as "hard-hitting of stuff," Ronaldson said, adding that there is too much "adorable" content – such as "Oh! This lady turned 100 today!" – that "feels and looks soft, and so when you are Edgar, pulling out these awesome public policy articles, I think they get slighted."

McGowan would counter that NNS is taken seriously by the nonprofit and other organizations whose community-building efforts it covers. Many such groups link to its stories on their websites, refer to them in membership emails, reprint them in newsletters

and speak of them at their meetings. McGowan provided me with several such examples:

ArtWorks Milwaukee's website links to a profile about its new executive director; a

Layton Boulevard West Neighbors e-newsletter points to a story about a bus tour for

homebuyers; an ancillary Milwaukee Police Department website invites people to read

about "the great work by officers" in a NNS article; and LISC Milwaukee uses e-alerts to

promote that the news service has videos about its annual awards competition.

McGowan believes that all of this promotion of NNS' work proves that she and

her staff are enabling community groups to better connect and learn from each other's

successes and misfires – "that says, 'Hey look at this. We're interested in this. Maybe it

works.'" McGowan also said NNS continues to work to increase its audience. But while

its Google analytics and Facebook "likes" are "steadily growing," she said, "they

represent a fraction of who is actually reading our stories because we are a news service,"

that is, there may be newsrooms elsewhere republishing NNS' work without it knowing.

Most Popular: "Something That's Working"

Recently, at a Milwaukee Press Club event focusing on *saving journalism,*

McGowan told the featured speaker, Kevin Merida, managing editor of *The Washington

Post*, that Dwayne Burtin, the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service's staff member

most attentive to the analytics, keeps pressing her to give more coverage to those issues

or organizations in which prior stories have gained a huge number of page views. While

acknowledging McGowan's desire to cover as many deserving concerns as possible,

Merida sided with Burtin, saying "when you see something that's working – try it again."

In any case, a review of the Top 20 posts on www.milwaukeenns.org through March 5 revealed no clear-cut answers in terms of what draws it the biggest audience. McGowan and Burtin have told the NNS advisory committee that any number of things beyond their control – much like for any other news or information website – could help increase page views for a particular story. Burtin told me recently that having an NNS story on the first page of a related Google search definitely draws added page views.

Such is the case still for NNS' most accessed story to date, Brendan O'Brien's "La Luz del Mundo Opens Violence Prevention Center on South Side." Published on Aug. 29, 2013, it had 2,303 page views after benefitting from the focus on a popular church engaged in a matter relevant to people nationwide. "It was definitely being shared pretty heavily," Burtin told me. (It cannot be overlooked that the primary accompanying photo includes Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett as one of three people cutting a ribbon.)

Only two other stories earned more than 2,000 page views: A special report, "Family Day Care Providers Squeezed By Low Ratings, New Rules," by Ong, on May 21, 2012; and "New Test Could Force Thousands to Start Over on GED Exams," by Mendez, on June 18, 2013. Burtin said Ong's story was a "popular topic" because of a *Journal Sentinel* investigation concerning child-care centers. "Our angle was the other side of it," about the impact on providers, he said. Mendez' story was also "shared heavily," had a "direct impact on the daily lives of a lot of our readers" and was "very real, very relevant, very timely and very useful," Burtin said.

These two reports also appeared on WUWM's "Lake Effect" show, but there's no indication that having significant mainstream media exposure necessarily increases page

views; only one other story among the Top 20 became a segment on the radio station and

just five of them were among the 37 articles republished in the *Journal Sentinel.*

Meanwhile, only two others of NNS' 27 special reports made into the Top 20 list: "New

Program to Keep Incarcerated Juveniles Close to Home," on Oct. 3, 2012; and "Growing

Hispanic Population Triggers Need for Trained Medical Interpreters," on Aug. 6, 2012.

That is somewhat surprising – or disappointing – given that NNS considers these types of

reports to be among its best work. Other patterns include having community or

neighborhood as a key factor in 13 of the most popular reports; projects, programs,

partnerships and collaboration in nine, and Lindsay Heights being the top neighborhood

mentioned (four out of 20). Fourteen stories on the list were published in 2013, but only

one, "TRUE Skool Prepares for Grand Opening at Grand Avenue Mall," in 2014.

Finally, the post with the fourth most page views, with 1,573, is the only one among

the Top 20 not produced by NNS' staff. It is titled "2013 Earn & Learn Summer Youth

Internship Program (SYIP)," dated Feb. 2, 2013, and has "by the City of Milwaukee" as a

byline. The post – a news release offering details for teenagers seeking an eight-week

internship in one of 11 city departments – emerged from the "community tools section"

of NNS' site. The section allows readers to "share and submit" calendar items about

neighborhood events, and stories and posts about "things going on in the community,"

according to an NNS Web page. Burtin said "people are still hitting" that Web link on

Google because they want information about internships for this summer.

Surprise: "I Don't Do Tons of Profiles"

The profile, an in-depth look at a person or organization in the news or community,

has long been a staple of both journalism and community journalism. So it is interesting

that only about 20 of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service stories included in this

study's sample – including nine produced by students in my third-level, digital-

journalism class during spring 2013 – could be considered profiles. "I don't do tons of

profiles of organizations," McGowan said. That surprised me because in every time we

have teamed to give my digital journalism students an NNS assignment, it meant two

students doing a joint profile about a person or organization. That's 37 profiles during

four consecutive semesters dating to fall 2011. The former longtime journalism educator

at Northwestern University said it was "an appropriate thing to do for classes – for young

journalists – and because it's easier than some of the other kinds of stories we cover. It's

less likely to get me in trouble because they don't know what the heck they're doing."

And my students call me harsh! The implications associated with NNS and

journalism education will be revisited in the conclusions. For now, though, McGowan

wrote in an earlier email that my students have impressed her as motivated to do their

best work. (Disclosure: Their final grade was tied to being published.) She added that

they "provided valuable content on some of the many organizations and people in

Milwaukee's central city who work every day to make a difference in their

communities. ... I learned a lot."

My students' profiles featured two nonprofit executive directors; an entrepreneur

and community developer; a director of youth activities and a football program; a

development director for a community center; an elementary school principal, a kindergarten teacher who owns a bed and breakfast and presides over a neighborhood improvement group; the founder of a cultural research organization; and a motivational speaker, poet and facilitator of a program focused on keeping black boys out of trouble. NNS tagged five of the nine stories as community, with two others as arts and recreation and one each as economic development and education. Each pair of students was required to turn in a 650-word story and a two-minute audio slideshow that had the profile subject talking about his or her background and mission with accompanying photographs.

Other Marquette students created three of the other profiles, including Ronaldson's "YouthBuild Program Offers Young Father a Second Chance." Waxman did five, including two in which she teamed with NNS Web producer Adam Carr for special reports about a Borchert Field block club's efforts to improve the area around 14th Street. The others focused on a former city official now raising chickens in Sherman Park, two brothers working to help children in Riverwest, and the "Young Moms Organize to Strengthen Their Community" profile about Lakima Moore and Jessica Wilson. Waxman said that story and its accompanying three-minute video, "these women are just speaking from their hearts and telling their own stories" about being "extremely poor and living in extremely stressful circumstances" and yet "doing community service and fundraising and all kinds of work to help their community despite their challenges." She adds:

> This is Sharon's favorite story that any of us have ever done – and it's because it's not (about) an organization. It's not that the stories about organizations aren't great, because they are. But to hear the voices of the people who are really living in the communities, I think, is a high priority for us and it's a little bit hard to find them sometimes.

Waxman told me that she "happened to stumble" upon the story after meeting

Moore while working on another one about improving access to immunizations for poor

children. One wonders if NNS' newsgathering routines enable its reporters to find such

human-interest stories more frequently. It is hard to imagine that the news service thinks

of itself as more issue-oriented than people-oriented. It seems this is another instance in

which NNS could manage or aim to do more profiles of individuals.

Transparency: "Everyone Makes Mistakes"

As noted throughout this study, the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service

presents itself as doing professional and objective reporting, despite nearly all of its

reporters having relatively little experience in other newsrooms or being college students.

So it begs the question: How often does NNS have to correct or clarify its reporting?

Before we get to that, it is fair to say that corrections and clarifications have long

bedeviled even the world's greatest news agencies. It is alarming that Maier (2009) found

that although news sources identified 1,200 factually flawed stories in a cross-market

audit of 10 U.S. newspapers, fewer than 2 percent resulted in published corrections.

"Of course, everyone makes mistakes," McGowan wrote in an email replying to my

inquiry about fixes to published NNS stories. The editor-in-chief also said that interns

have had their challenges, including an article in February in which a woman's last name

was misspelled and her job title and company's name misidentified. But readers will not

see a correction on that NNS Web page, even as Maier also wrote that "a clear standard

for handling online errors is lacking" (p. 48). McGowan insisted that "all online news

outlets" should get to quickly correct small errors – typos, punctuation, forgot to put a

photo credit, etc. – without noting the correction. "It's different for print publications, which could lay around for indefinite periods of time with the error in them," said.

All that said, only two stories within the study's sample of 229 had a correction posted at the bottom of the page – both were special reports: "Supporters of North Side Pool Sing Moody Blues," on Dec. 3, 2012, and "Fewer MPS Charters, Declining Enrollment Add Up to Lost Revenue," on Oct. 28, 2013; they each "fit the protocol in that they were substantive errors," McGowan said. For the former, the correction posted the next day states that "the original version of this article misstated the number of county swimming pools on the South Side of the city. There are five, not six." The latter notes that "this article has been revised to reflect the following correction: State aid per pupil in MPS charter schools is $6,642, not $7775 as originally reported."

Meanwhile, NNS disclosed on two stories that it knew of a potential conflict of interest, something all media claiming to be professional and objective aim to avoid in their reporting. Below the "Viewers Say Burnham Park Public Art 'Looks Like Life'" article on Nov. 11, 2013, an "editor's note" reveals that Carr, the part-time NNS employee, is among the featured artists. Another editor's note appears below the next day's "Historic 'Settlement House' Model Serves City's Immigrants and the Poor" article, stating that NNS is published by UNCOM – that is, United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee, which along with its executive director, Tony Shields, is mentioned prominently. (A photo of Shields answering a question during a workshop is on the Web page.) Capping off an interesting week for NNS, another editor's note appeared the day after that, this time stating that "a previous version" of the "Local Fair Housing Council

Grantees to Reinvest in Home Ownership, Rehab" story "failed to mention" an organization as a "key player" to the spotlighted neighborhood initiative. The note ends with "NNS regrets the error." This is notable, to say the least, given the option of adding the name to the story afterward and not drawing attention to the omission forever.

McGowan confirmed my suspicion that government agencies, particularly a public school system, and larger nonprofits and institutions are more likely to complain – "if they don't like something, whether it's an error or not" – than community residents or smaller nonprofits excited to get even the slightest news coverage. But lest anyone think that she is soft on accuracy or even clarity, McGowan is emphatic with interns and reporters alike that there is "no such thing as a minor error" when it comes to doing journalism. She stresses to her staff and anyone who will listen that NNS' credibility – in the eyes of the community, its funders and the profession at large – depends on fair and accurate reporting. In her eyes, NNS cannot afford to miss the mark.

Part III: What Is Said of the Work?

This section reviews and interprets the work done by the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service that others have particularly validated by way of awards or sharing with others, what residents and others have said in its coverage about *community* and *neighborhoods*, and what the informants have gained from their NNS experience. All this attempts to provide answers to three of this study's research questions: 1) How does NNS imagine its work (in this case, when applying for award recognition)? 3) How have others in the community and elsewhere discussed or endorsed its work? 4) Who is doing the work and what have they learned about journalism and community?

Validation: "An Award-Winning Online Source"

Human nature holds that people and individuals who strive to do their best work –

and do it better than anyone else – also seek validation from others who matter. This is

particularly true for journalists anywhere and small news organizations such as the

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service that are striving for additional audience and

funding. So it is not surprising that the first sentence of the first of five paragraphs on the

"About Us" page of NNS' website notes that it is "an award-winning online source."

Indeed, the news service has earned awards from two professional journalism

organizations. In March 2012, it received a prestigious regional Edward R. Murrow

Award for excellence from the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA).

According to the RTDNA website, NNS' work and those by other awardees represented

"exceptional news coverage and journalistic skill," and the judges also considered

"creativity, clarity, storytelling techniques and use of audio, video or other Internet

technologies." In April 2013, the Milwaukee Press Club awarded "Sharon McGowan and

Staff" a silver medal for "best local news or feature website." The Press Club recently

announced they are finalists in the same category this year – after McGowan nominated

five stories, including Waxman's story about a nonprofit that helps men with criminal

backgrounds to overcome their violent and traumatic histories; O'Brien's report about

how proposed changes to a state Medicaid program could adversely affect domestic

abuse victims who are poor; and Brown's article about how mounting fines for minor

infractions hit low-income drivers hardest.

NNS has entered 19 of its hundreds of articles into awards contests. McGowan told me that "we hit the minimum on every story," but these reports match her aspirations for NNS. Her nominating letters reveal what she thinks of the work and her staff's efforts. For example, in nominating four related stories by Mendez and Meyers for a contest sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), she wrote "there is no question that NNS' reporting put a spotlight" on the struggles many people in low-income communities face in securing a GED certificate. Referring to another article by Waxman, she told SPJ that "Milwaukee residents can now get accurate information about the crime in their neighborhoods." And of Ronaldson's report, "Law Fails to Help Black-Owned Contractors Get 'Foot in the Door,'" McGowan told the Hearst Journalism Awards Program, arguably the most prestigious competition for college students, that it "received no more than the standard editing" for any other NNS story.

Eleven of the nominated stories are also special reports, which means NNS does not always give its best work that stamp. Just two nominated stories – the before-mentioned ones about family day care providers and thousands having to retake GED exams – rank among the 20 most popular based on page views; remember, news agencies must accept that their best or most important work is not the most read. Still, winning awards is inspiring. "We are delighted and honored," McGowan said in an NNS article announcing the RTDNA citation, about the "tribute to the hard work" of the staff, interns and volunteers, and the "people and organizations whose stories we tell." In a March 31 story by Mendez about being one of three finalists for the Press Club's 2013 honor, she said, "We are proud to be in the company of these fine news organizations."

Sources: "I Deal With the Organizations"

Turning to from whom and where the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service most often draws its content, it is necessary to return quickly to Gillis and Moore and the Pew Foundation, and the five basic categories of sources: official, quasi-official, third places, incidental places and private places. Remember, the problem is, the critics say, that most often journalists get their stories from the first and last groups.

But not the journalists working for NNS – as this study's sample showed that about 40 of the 229 articles, or fewer than 20 percent, involved those people who are part of the political system or recognized leaders of institutions in society. Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett was mentioned in a story and or seen in a related photo 26 times, including one about a middle school becoming a senior living center; the grand opening of a park in the Menomonee Valley; and a debate about whether to redevelop the Forest Home library on its current site. City aldermen and alderwomen were mentioned in 15 stories. Given the propensity and need for elected officials to attend community events and tend to neighborhood concerns, NNS might be forgiven if these numbers were not higher.

Mendez told me in his interview that "most of the stories I do I deal with the organizations," or as the researchers call them, quasi-official sources, which also include people involved in the community who are not necessarily government representatives. Besides telling him "what's going on" in the neighborhoods and providing "context for a broader story" he is reporting, Mendez said organizations "really hold the key" to helping NNS expand its audience and reach the people who "really need this information."

Mendez is not alone among his colleagues as quasi-official is the dominant source category for NNS overall. One hundred and one stories involved a neighborhood organization or institution led by someone residents trust, respect or otherwise depend on. They would include, for example, articles about educators and nonprofits working to raise academic achievement, the opening of a medical clinic for the underserved, and a block club finding that buiding community takes patience and hard work. Within those 101 stories is another subset of 74 about a program or project that one or more of these quasi-official organizations are sheperding in their communities. Another subset of 30 involved groups or organizations collaborating to make one of the programs or projects happen. (Remember the aforementioned editor's note about NNS regretting that it had failed to name an organization that had helped to bring about an initiative.)

Another significant subset of stories – 85 – involved reporting done at events, forums, meetings or rallies held at third places, or where people congregate or gather informally, such as churches, community events, schools, etc. These include articles about churches checking IDs to ensure that parishioners can vote, 200 people combining their art and energy at an anti-violence parade, and volunteers cleaning a river in advance of a trail's grand opening. In many ways, it appears that the news service would struggle to publish stories if not for quasi-official groups partnering on programs and projects and bringing people together at events, meetings or rallies. To be fair, all newsrooms depend upon such groups doing such things, to help "fill the paper" as print journalists used to say. NNS aims to be different, though, by purposely spending more time covering neighborhood activities than do mainstream media.

There seemed to be few examples of NNS reporting from incidental places, or where people talk informally with one another, such as on the sidewalk, at the market or at a coffee shop; or from private places, that is, in the privacy of one's home, or in someone's own private lives. Examples of the former could include Mendez' special report about new streetscaping altering a business district's look and feel, and Evans' story about a popular deli opening a second location; while the latter could include the aforementioned profiles of community residents and leaders produced by my students and the video and story of the Team Dun Dit Dat mothers by Waxman. One imagines that a typical community newspaper would have many such stories, or that NNS' staff could better mine incidental and private places for stories. Then again, there is the matter of its limited resources (particularly reporters) – and the notion of journalists spending hours shooting the breeze with patrons at barber shops and diners seemed outdated even during my early career as a reporter. People are just too busy. Part-time journalists, too.

Besides, NNS aspires to a more ambitious brand of community journalism. Which could explain an additional subset from the study sample, one unanticipated and perhaps uncommon among most community journalism initiatives. Thirty-five stories seemed borne of a study or research by a reputable national or local nonprofit about a vital issue or concern – or otherwise have statistics from such work embedded to help substantiate the reporting. Story examples range from "Study Analyzes Quality of Milwaukee After-School Programs" to "Two-Thirds of Recreational Facilities at County Public Schools Sub-Par, Study Finds" to "Candy-Flavored Tobacco Products Lure Underage Smokers, Report Warns." The study results are sufficiently translated for NNS' audience and, while

it may seem a slighty different version of official sourcing, quoting well-established professional researchers, the quality of journalism presented is certainly enhanced.

Community Voices: "Everyone Wants a Better Life"[1]

Given that the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service and its supporters wish to create a greater sense of community among those living and working in the 17 targeted areas – and to present their efforts toward a better quality of life to a wider audience – it is appropriate to determine what the people and groups chronicled get to say about community in NNS' articles. Harkening to Tichenor, Donahue and Olien, the evidence indicates an effort to present a reality that is upbeat and positive, stressing opportunities for improvement much more so than focusing on the problems and conflicts that, according to NNS and its supporters, dominate mainstream media coverage.

From the beginning, there was talk of "optimism and resilience" and not letting others "water down the vision," as a public school principal said in "Long Journey Culminates in New Center for Longfellow, Journey House," published the day NNS launched; rewarding patience, as in "Hopkins Lloyd Community School Moving Forward One Year After Merger," more than a year later; and enabling teenagers to "stay in Milwaukee and become positive contributors to our communities" instead of faraway jails, as in "Healing Families Key to Saving At-Risk Youth" the day after that.

"Everyone wants a better life" and "something tangible for the community" and a "sense of empowerment that they can actually make a difference" as they work to "change the community and change the culture," according to organization and program

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[1] Quoted material in this section is taken from a variety of NNS stories included the sample as outlined in the methodology chapter – and all of which are listed in Appendix 5.

leaders quoted in two other stories. Keeping with the quality of life theme, an executive director talks of having "good-working, salt-of-the-earth people in this community" and "that's the message we would like to get out." Though an organization leader says that "neighborhood work can be isolating," bringing people together is another common theme. "We believe in giving back," one mother says, while a city aldermen adds that "people here don't mind coming out to help each other" and a member of a resident-led organization states that "we want to come together as a community and take it back."

Public safety also is a key concern. "We start with community, because that is our purpose, to create strong communities," Police Chief Edward Flynn said, while a block watch coordinator counters that "if you don't report a crime, as far as the city's concerned, it never happened" and a mother watching a parade in honor of children who have died because of violence says "we need to really look at what's happening." Another focal point is housing. "We deserve something better than this," a wife recalls telling her husband about living at the mercy of a slum landlord. Another woman, speaking to community leaders, policy makers and politicians during a bus tour in Harambee, said "I wish I didn't have to move, but safety [comes] first."

Other NNS stories account for what "we can accomplish as a community when we speak with one voice" and, despite daunting but "not insurmountable" hurdles, wanting "our community to be healthy and vibrant and strong and economomically stable." In the end, the stories unquestionably are giving a voice to residents and advocates who, when all is said and done, mostly desire encouragement and opportunities, from each other and from those charged with helping them.

Lessons: "They Deserve to Have It"

Finally, given that apprentices generally hold dear to the lessons learned early in their careers, what have our five informants learned about journalism and community because of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service? McGowan, of course, has had years of experience with both concepts dating to her time at *The Chicago Reporter*. But she enjoys teaching college students from Marquette and elsewhere – many of whom come from comfortable backgrounds – that "there's more than one way" to define a community, and no matter one's economic situation or race, people have the "same basic desires for a certain quality of life and that they deserve to have it."

He has traveled the South Side more than most students, but Mendez has learned that not only are "a lot of people ... proud of their work" in their neighborhoods – they "*want* their stories told." Many programs and services are "underutilized," he said, because "people don't know about" them and organizations and institutions "really want people to know what they're doing in these neighborhoods." Mendez regrets not having more time or experience to tell more or better stories; sometimes, he said, after not doing one that then appears in the *Journal Sentinel,* "I think, 'Oh, I should have brought it to Sharon,' but I didn't because I thought it was too complicated."

Waxman said "I have thought a lot" – as a reporter at *The Jewish Chronicle* and at NNS – about how community journalism not only informs people about what happens in a neighborhood, but also "reflects their image back to themselves of who they are." With media coverage otherwise "overwhelmingly about crime," it must have a "debilitating effect to never see your community portrayed in any other light," she said. "You know

there are all kinds of other things going on." Thus, Waxman said, "I think about that when I'm doing stories and choosing stories" for the news service.

Slattery, the former broadcast journalist turned journalism educator, had an awakening of sorts while doing a story for NNS about a man and his family from the near-North Side after he lost his job as a local radio talk-show host. They moved into the neighborhood in the 1960s, but left when poverty descended on it after the A.O. Smith Co. factory closed in 2006. Slattery also talked with the "family that lives in the house now" and is trying to make it "in the face of this desolation and impoverished neighborhood." She learned that people of varied means have "different ideas about community," that it is important to find such stories, that people "make assumptions" about one another, and that "I have had to negotiate those in these neighborhoods."

Hailing from suburban Chicago, Ronaldson said her NNS experience helped cause her to stay in Milwaukee after graduating from Marquette in May 2013. "These burrowed neighborhoods ... care a lot about themselves" and there is "a lot of community development happening" because many organizations are working together to improve "disenfranchised areas," she said. So it "excites the community" and people are "a lot more forthcoming" when, for example, "someone's taking" photos at a neighborhood clean-up. Ronaldson added:

> People want to talk to journalists in that way. I think people feel very heard
> and validated, and even though maybe not everyone read about my article
> on breast cancer, but for that moment I was able to be in Cynthia Hooker's
> apartment and she was crying, saying "No one's asked me these kinds of
> questions before" – and that was a real moment for me. In the same way,
> though, the community has to inform the journalism, so if no one's doing
> anything, if no one cares, there's nothing for us to write about.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

This case study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS) has

examined the extent to which it has achieved its mission of providing professional and

objective reporting about 17 low-income communities in the city. The study also has

focused on the individual and shared experiences of the news service's staff as it uses

journalism to help construct a sense of community. In addition to how media and

institutions have reacted to its work, the study has examined how NNS is contributing to

the ongoing discussion of journalism and community journalism – and how and why

journalism matters to how a neighborhood, particularly in the inner city, is perceived.

The study analyzes some of the news service's founding documents as well as

grant applications and consultant reports, interviews with key staff and a review of nearly

a third of the 750-plus articles published its first three years – all in order to help draw

informed conclusions. It reviews the vast critical thinking concerning the concepts of

community and sense of community as well as journalism, community journalism, public

(or civic) journalism and online journalism – all in hopes of better understanding how

NNS does its work and thinks about the communities it serves.

The social construction of reality is used as a theoretical framework from which to

create four guiding research questions: 1) How does the news service imagine its work?

2) What kinds of work has it produced and from what kinds of sources and places is its

content most often drawn? 3) How have others in the community and elsewhere

discussed or endorsed its work? 4) Who is doing the work and what have they learned about journalism and community?

NNS aims to increase the amount of news coverage of quality-of-life efforts by residents and organizations in its targeted neighborhoods, to present a case for further revitalization efforts in the inner city, and to motivate more residents in these neighborhoods to become involved in civic affairs. The news service has consistently produced quality journalism that goes beyond what is typically done by community-based and -focused news outlets, especially one with its staff's size and relative inexperience as journalists, not to mention very limited financial resources.

Led by its experienced and nurturing editor-in-chief, Sharon McGowan, the staff has produced special reports and award-winning work about topics vital to central city neighborhoods, including education, public safety, health, economic-development and arts and recreation. The work continues to become enhanced as its staff gains confidence and experience and generates more ambition. Its relatively limited demand for corrections and clarifications is a testament to McGowan's high bar for professionalism.

NNS seems to depend mightily on community-based organizations and institutions for its story ideas, as it mostly publishes work about their programs and projects and ventures to events, meetings and rallies to connect with its sources. Make no mistake, though, the news service has increased coverage of the multitude of quality-of-life efforts of people living and working in its targeted neighborhoods exponentially.

The news service has earned a significant amount of positive media attention for its efforts and, to a lesser extent, can show that community groups are endorsing its work

by sharing it via their newsletters, websites, email alerts and word of mouth. Mainstream

media – whom NNS and its supporters decry for having long presented news about

neighborhoods that is mostly about crime and despair – have republished the news

service's work, notably the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* and NPR affiliate WUWM-FM.

This added media exposure helps NNS to extend its coverage of otherwise ignored

residents and smaller nonprofits, who are eager to tell their stories of resiliency and

optimism. The new service has also enabled its staff to learn a great deal themselves

about journalism and community, particularly as it relates to how people think about their

neighborhoods and themselves based on what someone else reports.

Implications

The Zilber Family Foundation, Greater Milwaukee Foundation, United

Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee (UNCOM), John S. and James L. Knight

Foundation and Marquette University have joined to fund the Milwaukee Neighborhood

News Service as a means of constructing a new reality of the city's inner city – perhaps in

the eyes of people who are hesitant or unwilling to invest there, and certainly on behalf of

those who are striving to improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods.

Scholarly literature and McGowan, whose career started at *The Chicago Reporter*,

with its brand of hard-hitting, investigative journalism, remind us that news organizations

have been covering low-income, urban communities for many decades. Berger and

Luckmann and other scholars contend that reality is constructed rather than found.

Journalism does not merely reflect a reality that sits out there, but we understand reality –

our personal and shared experiences – through the work media create and disseminate.

NNS' mission may be to provide professional and objective reporting about low-income

neighborhoods, but it also strives to change the perception of them. Thus, it is socially

constructing the reality that is different from what's constructed by mainstream media.

For example, McGowan disagrees that NNS is constructing reality, just as any

journalist holds dear to the idea of reporting that is professional and objective. She adds:

> The reality is that the central city neighborhoods we cover are complex.
> There are amazing people who choose to live and work in these
> communities, and care about passionately about them. There are people
> living in poverty who struggle every day, but are not criminals. Much of
> the news coverage about the neighborhoods has been related to the many
> aspects of a criminal case, as we've discussed before. NNS is working to
> change the perception of both those who live in the neighborhoods, and
> the mostly white, more affluent neighborhoods that surround them, by
> painting a more balanced picture of "reality."

Evidently, McGowan and the scholars holding to the concept of social

construction of reality may need to agree to disagree. She would not describe her

efforts as socially constructing reality. But in her passage above, McGowan

recognizes that NNS aims to frame perceptions of the neighborhoods it covers

that are very much contrary to those created by mainstream media.

Interestingly, McGowan also objects to the term *community journalism* being

applied to NNS. "Again, it's about perception," she said, adding "community journalism

does not connote consistently high-quality journalism. There *is* high-quality community

journalism, but there is also terrible journalism – biased, inaccurate, poorly written,

unprofessional." She said "that's the opposite" of how NNS should be perceived. This

also calls attention to how culturally difficult it is to do the work to which McGowan and

NNS aspires. Just as she resists the term community journalism, I as a journalist have

long done so for terms such as *projects* instead of *housing developments*, *clinic* instead of *doctor's office, minorities* instead of people of color, and *activists* instead of *advocates*. The media too often uses pejorative terms to create a reality of haves and have-nots.

Again, as someone who began his journalism career at a small weekly newspaper focusing exclusively on the black community in Milwaukee, and then went on to work at several mid-size and major daily newspapers along the East Coast, I sympathize with the tensions McGowan articulates. I have long wondered why many community newspapers, particularly those focusing on ethnic communities, do not seem to strive for excellence. (Let me point out here, and I am sure McGowan would agree, that there is an amazing legacy of outstanding community journalism dating back to the days of Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, the Chicago Defender, Pittsburgh Courier, etc.) One wishes that every inner city could have a media outlet such as NNS, and led by an editor with the credentials and devotion to communities and neighborhoods that McGowan embodies.

What can be done, though, to ensure that McGowan and her staff's hard work achieves greater visibility and awareness? Doing community journalism differently – with novice reporters, many of whom will come and go as graduate students and interns, and depending on organizations and institutions with limited resources as sources – is admirable. But it remains unclear who else is reading the work (and why and how) beyond NNS' own means of analytics, including page views, Facebook "likes," etc.

So this must also be asked: Who most needs to read the news service's work and share its content with others in order for it to achieve its purposes? It is useful here to draw again on Gillis and Moore (2003), particularly as they relate the types of sources

and places where journalists encounter or affect the citizenry. Ideally, federal, state and local officials – as well as recognized leaders of institutions in society – would use NNS' reporting to help present the case to businesses and private developers that investing in Milwaukee's inner city is worthwhile, if not an imperative. The quasi-official organizations about which NNS writes so much should make more of an effort to circulate the coverage within the communities they serve, as it helps them all stand that much taller to know a legitimate news operation values who they are and what they do.

But what about the people and groups the news service may know the least about, the ones that perhaps may be the most important – those from outside of the 17 targeted neighborhoods? Debunking stereotypes can only happen if those who hold dear to them are confronted with different realities. In NNS' case, this means that its content must reach those – from Greater Milwaukee and elsewhere – who would otherwise not know about the quality-of-life and self-improvement efforts sprouting from churches, community events, schools, markets, coffee shops or private homes in the inner city.

Meanwhile, NNS could use some more personality. McGowan's professional standards and ambitions could work just as well with more human-interest stories as with those about larger community concerns. One imagines that an abundance of profiles about interesting individuals would help to make the community more visible to itself and lend stature to the lives of everyday people. NNS and the community alike would be well served, for example, if it hired at least one outstanding reporter and writer capable of weighing in as a columnist or blogger on important issues – and otherwise providing slice-of-life nuggets – about people living and working in the neighborhoods. Imagine

having the kind of work that Gregory Stanford and Eugene Kane did for many years at

the *Journal Sentinel* – and which James Causey does for it now – appear regularly on

milwaukeenns.org. Adding a *personality* capable of maintaining the standards McGowan

demands would help generate more audience for the news service.

Of course, doing more profiles or adding a columnist will not solve the news

service's most glaring concern: surviving after its current grant funding expires soon.

Both consultants hired last year to recommend strategies for NNS – John Barron, the

former *Chicago Sun-Times* publisher, and Paula Ellis, formerly of the Knight Foundation

– agreed that increasing its audience through more aggressive marketing and sales is

vital. In their 2013 reports, Barron also called for maximizing NNS' potential for serving

as a "conduit for community," while Ellis advocated for being *of* it rather than *about* it.

Interestingly, Barron wrote that he had not yet met anyone "not institutionally tied

to the site" who knew of milwaukeenns.org. He also called for more neighborhood

profiles and developing a columnist/blogger, and was right to recommend, among other

things: 1) a website overhaul to make it look and feel newsier and to add gravitas, 2)

doing more "how-to" stories aimed at providing "more utility" for readers, 3) soliciting

op-ed pieces from neighborhood leaders, businesses and politicians and 4) "adopting a

forum or soapbox for readers to air" their "opinions on just about anything."

Ellis smartly urged NNS to undergo several "mindset shifts" to help "unlock the

full potential of this pioneering news service and increase involvement." One shift is that

its work must be less about "reporting on static events" and more about "fostering a sense

of place and developing among residents a shared sense that we are all in this together."

Additionally – and my own view (Lowe, 2011b) is that this is vital given that people of color have higher usage rates compared with white owners across a wide range of mobile applications – Ellis said NNS should "adopt a mobile-first mantra" and devise a "high-tech, low-tech dissemination and creation strategy" for each neighborhood. Another idea, given that "everyone is content and creates content": enable residents and others to be the "eyes and ears" for journalists. In other words, Ellis said, crowdsourcing by means of posting pictures of potholes or blighted buildings that need attention. She also said NNS should employ available tools for "quickly processing and visualizing data" inasmuch as agreeing on what data to use and measure is "itself a community-building activity."

All of Barron and Ellis' suggestions should be enacted. I would add to them that the news service should increase its branding by hosting large community-focused events. Short of that, as a community leader noted at a recent retreat for some of NNS' stakeholders, promoting its website on billboards along local streets and highways would be nice. My sense is that McGowan and my fellow members of the news service's advisory board are seriously considering the advice. Indeed, the site is being redesigned.

Beyond all of that, this case study is not only important for the communities that NNS serves, but also for journalism education, particularly students at Marquette, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and elsewhere, more than a dozen of whom have gained valuable experience as interns under McGowan's tutelage. Lori Bergen, dean of the Diederich College of Communication, called the editor-in-chief a "rock star" in a NNS promotional video (Darmek) and said students have told her after graduation that the news service was "the most important and critical experience" they had in preparing

for a journalism career. Just as Heather Ronaldson and two other Marquette students who

interned at NNS did before him, part-time reporter Edgar Mendez will have an internship

at the *Journal Sentinel* this summer, thanks to his success with the news service.

As the literature pointed out, NNS is one of many efforts nationally to provide

community-based training for college journalism students. Even as my students have

produced content for the news service during each of four prior semesters, Marquette's

journalism and media studies faculty is working through how best to incorporate the

news service into its undergraduate and graduate programs. Nonetheless, this spring,

adjunct journalism instructor Daria Kempka's online design class is working with

McGowan, part-time NNS reporter Andrea Waxman and Lillian Thomas – an assistant

managing editor at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and spending the year at Marquette as

part of the O'Brien Fellowship in Public Service Journalism – on a weeks-long project

focusing on Type-II diabetes in the city, which the news service will publish.

And yet Bergen also said in the video that the collaboration between a university

such as Marquette and "all these other entities" provides the chance to "preserve the kind

of quality journalism we want to see in our communities" when mainstream media

struggles to find the resources or will to meet that need. The dean added:

> So this kind of partnership is critical: Our students learn from the
> experience, we contribute back to our community, and I really do believe
> that we're creating something new. It's a model that can be replicated in
> other cities. So we're pioneers – we're forging new ground.

I am reminded of what two of my students, Quinlan (2012) and Ramella (2012),

both then sophomores, wrote on their class blogs about reporting for NNS. Referring to

their joint multimedia project, "Cluster II Grow and Play Lot Pulls at Heartstrings,"

Ramella wrote: "This project was my biggest learning experience in my young

journalism career. I stepped out of my comfort zone to find fantastic stories about great

people." And how about this from Quinlan: "If I learned one thing from this project, it is

that a community is not created and nurtured by street signs or white picket fences. It is

the dedication and love of people ... that create a community." As an added bonus, the

local FOX affiliate republished their project on its local website, which extended NNS'

mission of connecting journalism and the community beyond *www.milwaukeenns.org*.

Future Research

There is much more to consider and research about the Milwaukee Neighborhood

News Service. This case study, for example, does not include an analysis of the

multimedia – images, videos, audio, data visualization, etc. – that is a prominent aspect of

NNS' storytelling, or its overall website design, which is being reconstructed. A review of

how the news service writes headlines for its reports would be interesting as well, given

the importance of search engine optimization toward increasing audience.

Much has been made in this study of how NNS aims to offset what it considers

mainstream media's limited coverage of quality-of-life efforts in the neighborhoods it

serves. It would be interesting to compare its work against the *Journal Sentinel's*

reporting on the same communities. Others might look at how the news service compares

to community journalism initiatives aligned with college and universities elsewhere, as

well as online journalism websites set up by traditional community newspapers.

It shall also be left to others to interact with the residents and organizations that

the news service has contacted and reported on, to learn what they all think of its work.

Finally, NNS' audience itself remains to be studied, to better understand the role the news service has come to have – or not have – in their imagination of their community.

This research has considered amid the scholarly echoes from decades past that the quest for community is an important part of how NNS defines its purpose. It wants the neighborhoods it covers to enjoy renewed vitality and respect as they learn from one another's successes and failures. It also strives to enable them to tell their own stories and to give voice to the voiceless, all by means of a different brand of journalism, in no small part by not accentuating the negative or focusing solely on conflict or intrigue.

What does it mean, however, to build community using a hyperlocal, multicultural, online-only news platform in a changing business climate for mainstream media – and in relation to them being unable or unwilling to provide the kind of coverage people in these neighborhoods want and deserve? Certainly, NNS should do more to use available technology to build the relationships and energy needed to further a sense of community among those living and working in its targeted neighborhoods.

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service must also find ways to make its quest for community sustainable. The news service is borne and supported by foundations, neighborhood organizations and a university – and yet it is unclear if this experiment in which journalism is used to socially construct community can continue long term. Let us hope that milwaukeenns.org is not merely a phenomenon.

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<u>Other Materials</u>

A. Consultant Reports

- "Sustainability plan and report: Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service," by John Barron, dated July 2013, and presented to NNS advisory board on Aug. 28, 2013.

- "Suggestions for the evolution of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service," by Paula Ellis for the Zilber Family Foundation, Nov. 5, 2013.

B. Grant Applications

- "John S. and James L. Knight Foundation: Community information challenge (Initial Application)," Feb. 20, 2012.

- "John S. and James L. Knight Foundation: Community information challenge (Narrative Questions Draft)," March 31, 2012.

C. Documents

- Q-and-A worksheet: "Online news service to cover community issues," Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service, Dec. 16, 2010

- News release: "Online news service to cover community issues," Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service, March 21, 2011

D. Email

- Ron Smith, personal communication to Sharon McGowan, April 22, 2013

- Mitch Teich, personal communication to Herbert Lowe, March 28, 2014

D. Informant Interviews

- Partial transcriptions of audio files available for taped interviews of:

    - Sharon McGowan, April 24, 2013, 1 hour, 22 minutes, 50 seconds

    - Andrea Waxman, April 30, 2013, 49 minutes, 41 seconds

    - Edgar Mendez, April 30, 2013, 37 minutes, 49 seconds

    - Heather Ronaldson, May 8, 2013, 37 minutes, 23 seconds

    - Karen Slattery, May 16, 2013, 33 minutes, 7 seconds

APPENDIX A:
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

On March 28, 2013, the Marquette University Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted exempt status for this protocol under Exemption Category No. 2: Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews or Observations – and thus essentially permitted me to interview up to 20 people as part of my research. Each of my five informants reviewed and signed a copy of my informed-consent form that IRB also approved and stamped.

MARQUETTE
UNIVERSITY
Be The Difference.

April 2, 2013

Herbert Lowe
Communication

Dear Dr. Lowe:

Thank you for submitting your protocol number HR-2589 titled, "*Journalism and Community: A Case Study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service.*" On March 28, 2013, the Marquette University Institutional Review Board granted exempt status for this protocol under Exemption Category #2: Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations. You have been approved for 20 subjects.

Your IRB approved informed consent form is enclosed with this letter. Use the stamped copies of this form when recruiting research participants. Each research participant should receive a copy of the stamped consent form for their records.

You may proceed with your research. Your protocol has been granted exempt status as submitted. Any changes to your protocol affecting participant risk must be requested in writing by submitting an IRB Protocol Amendment Form which can be found here: http://www.marquette.edu/researchcompliance/research/irbforms.shtml. These changes must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before being initiated, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the human subjects. If there are any adverse events, please notify the Marquette University IRB immediately.

Please submit an IRB Final Report Form once this research project is complete. Submitting this form allows the Office of Research Compliance to close your file.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Kennedy
Research Compliance Officer-Human Subjects & Radiation Safety

cc: Dr. Christopher Okunseri, IRB Chair
        Dr. Erik Ugland
        Ms. Sherri Lex, Graduate School
Enclosure
AA/ds

Herbert Lowe
IRB Narrative
January 30, 2013

This research project proposes to examine the intersection of journalism and community by way of a case study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS). Besides reviewing the scholarly literature, this research would include a textual analysis of documents, articles and other sources related to new service, such as:

- Initials written reports, grant proposals and or other petitions that helped persuade the Zilber Foundation and Marquette that NNS was worthwhile and viable.
- The applications that resulted in NNS earning a matching grant from the Knight Foundation, a leading funder of journalism and media innovation, and winning an Edward R. Murrow award from the Radio Television Digital News Association.
- Various coverage by area media such as Milwaukee Magazine, "Lake Effect," etc.
- Any accounting – for example, news releases, website notices, annual reports, etc., – of NNS and or its work by those organizations or individuals it has covered.
- Media outlets that have subscribed to NNS and or published its work.
- Actual news stories produced by NNS reporters and contributors.

In addition to examining these materials, I propose to use informant interviews to conduct my research. This will enable me to ensure sufficient feedback on the most important related questions and concerns, but still allow each respondent the freedom to offer material that might not have been considered or anticipated.

I would interview people who would have something essential to say about NNS or otherwise have insight about it, including, but not limited to, individuals from organizations featured in its published work; past and present NNS staff; Marquette faculty and students; groups with a special stake in the news service and or its coverage; and other media leaders. The students would be limited to those who have interned at NNS or contributed classwork.

Each interviewee would be asked series of questions shaped in large part based on the literature review, which would focus on the concepts of community, community journalism, public/civic journalism and citizen/social journalism. The questions are grouped into four categories. The first series of questions would be general and biographical, with the intent of understanding whom the participant is, where he or she comes from, his or her basic understanding of community, and his or her interaction or role with the news service.

The second set of questions would more pointedly aim to ascertain how the interviewee views the before-mentioned concepts and his or her relationship to journalism and media and understanding of its role in the community and America – other than the news service. I would take care to ask the question without leading the participant to specific answers.

The third category of questions would focus on the participant's interaction with the news service and his or her assessment of its contribution and impact to the community. The final set of questions would afford the interviewee the chance to offer any thoughts pertaining to the topic that weren't asked.

2

Marquette University
Agreement of Consent for Research Participants

Thesis Project:
Journalism and Community: A Case Study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service

INFORMED CONSENT

This research project proposes to examine the intersection of journalism and community by way of a case study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS). In addition to the news service, I understand that the researcher is interested in my story and my related experiences and points of view about the concepts of community, community journalism, etc.

I expect the interview to take up to 60 minutes. I will be asked a series of questions. I understand that there are no right or wrong answers. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I do not have to answer any questions if I so choose. I am free to stop the interview at any time. I understand that all data prior to my terminating participation will be destroyed and not used in any form.

I understand that an audio and or video recorder will be used to preserve the interview and that the recording will be transcribed. I understand that the audio- and or videotape(s) and transcript of my story, including my name, could be archived indefinitely and made available for others to review and research. I understand that portions of this interview may be published in various mediums, including print, broadcast and online.

I understand that the interview is part of a thesis component that is also part of a master's degree program offered by the Diederich College of Communication. I understand that I am free to contact either the researcher – Herbert Lowe, at 414-288-4068 or herbert.lowe@marquette.edu – or the chairman of my thesis committee – John Pauly, Ph.D., and the provost of Marquette University, at 414-288-7511 or john.pauly@marquette.edu – should I have any questions or concerns about this project.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I understand the scope of this research project and agree to participate.

_____   _____
Participant's Name (Please Print)   Participant's Signature

_____   _____
Researcher's Name (Please Print)   Researcher's Signature

Page 1 of 1

APPENDIX B:
NNS FOUNDING DOCUMENTS

This study includes an analysis of some of the documents created before, during

and after the launch of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS). They include

a one-page Q-and-A worksheet declaring NNS' intentions from December 2010, a one-

page news release in which news service announced itself in March 2011, and a draft of

the narrative questions portion of its grant application to the John S. and James L. Knight

Foundation, updated in March 2012.

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service

What is the Neighborhood News Service?
The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS), now in development, is an online source for objective, professional reporting about revitalization efforts in central city communities. The NNS website also will include interactive community sites — initially for Lindsay Heights and for Clarke Square — which will provide neighborhood residents information on events and activities in their communities, offer a forum to comment on local issues, and drive traffic to the NNS. The website is expected to launch in March 2011.

Why is it needed?
There is limited media coverage of the comprehensive and systematic efforts of organizations and individuals to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods. Professionally trained NNS beat reporters will cover the successes and failures of revitalization initiatives, regularly assessing progress toward achieving communities' goals in areas such as education, public safety, economic development, health and wellness, recreation, employment, youth development, housing and neighborhood beautification.

How will NNS benefit the news media?
Media outlets, including community newspapers, local radio and TV stations, online news sites and statewide news outlets, among others, will have the opportunity to subscribe to a free RSS feed that will highlight new postings to the website and provide news tips and a calendar of newsworthy community events. Polished enterprise pieces in a variety of media — including print, video and photography — will be available for news organizations to publish, broadcast or post online at no cost, with appropriate credit to the news service.

How will it work?
NNS beat reporters initially will cover developments in Lindsay Heights and Clarke Square. Editors, including faculty from Marquette University's Diederich College of Communication where NNS will be housed, will be highly experienced journalists skilled in print and multimedia storytelling. Website coordinators will work with editors to gather and post web-based content, design web pages using a content management system, disseminate content and drive traffic to the website.

Who is involved?
The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service, which traces its origins to the Zilber Neighborhood Initiative, is a project of the United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee. Other partners include Walnut Way Conservation Corp., Journey House and Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University.

How is it funded?
The news service project is supported in part by the Zilber Family Foundation, with in-kind contributions from United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee and Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University. It is seeking additional funding from philanthropic and corporate foundations.

For information, contact Sharon McGowan at smcgowan@milwaukeenns.org or 414-604-NEWS.

NNS one-pager 12/16/10

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service
A project of United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee

1131 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee WI 53233
Johnston Hall, Diederich College of Communication, Marquette University
www.milwaukeenns.org • info@milwaukeenns.org • 414.604.6397 (NEWS)

Online news service to cover community issues

For more information: Sharon McGowan, Project Director and Editor
smcgowan@milwaukeenns.org • 414-604-NEWS (6397)

For immediate release
March 21, 2011

MILWAUKEE — A new multimedia website that provides objective, professional reporting on urban issues in five Milwaukee communities launches today at www.milwaukeenns.org. The pilot communities are Lindsay Heights, Clarke Square, and the Layton Boulevard West neighborhoods of Burnham Park, Silver City and Layton Park.

Media outlets are free to use articles, videos, audio reports and photographs from the website at no cost, with credit to the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service.

The site also includes interactive Community Pages geared to each neighborhood, where residents and organizations can find information on upcoming events and submit content on local activities and issues.

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS) offers comprehensive coverage of issues such as education, public safety, economic development, health and wellness, recreation, employment, youth development and housing that are important to the people who live and work in the five target neighborhoods.

NNS is a project of United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee. According to Tony Shields, its executive director, "The news service provides an opportunity for the wider Milwaukee community to learn more about the neighborhoods, and for neighborhood leaders to learn from one another's experiences."

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service already has garnered significant community support. The Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University is partnering with NNS by providing training, equipment and a multimedia editor. The newsroom is housed at the college, and internships are available to students. Diederich Dean Lori Bergen is a member of the NNS editorial advisory board

"Our purpose is to tell a balanced story about successes and challenges in bringing new vitality to these historic neighborhoods," said Editor and Project Director Sharon McGowan. "We will follow stories such as the Longfellow School/Journey House partnership in Clarke Square, the upcoming changes at North Division High School in Lindsay Heights and community planning efforts underway in Silver City, Burnham Park and Layton Park," McGowan added.

"People who care about the city and understand its importance to the region will want to bookmark this site," said author and historian John Gurda, a member of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service editorial advisory board.

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service is supported in part by a grant from the Zilber Family Foundation.

###

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Community Information Challenge Full Proposal

Narrative Questions Draft

Updated 3/31/12

5. Describe the purpose of your project in a single sentence.

The purpose of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (www.milwaukeenns.org) is to provide an online source of objective, professional reporting about low income, minority neighborhoods that inspires residents to become more involved in civic affairs and debunks stereotypes by informing the wider community about central city revitalization initiatives.

6. What major activities will you undertake?

NNS would expand beyond the three pilot neighborhoods it has covered since its launch in March 2011 to 10 additional central city communities. It plans to hire part-time staff members who live, work or volunteer in those communities, building their capacity by training and mentoring them in reporting, writing, multimedia and web skills. This model has worked well for the individuals in the pilot communities and for the news service, which has been able to take advantage of their local knowledge and prior relationships. The new coverage areas would include communities that are part of the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative, LISC Milwaukee neighborhoods and UNCOM partner neighborhoods.

To expand the NNS audience, it would continue to establish and grow relationships with local community organizations and community media, encouraging them to link to or publish/broadcast NNS content; step up its social media and other promotion efforts; make the site more useful to residents by beefing up the events calendar, business directory and community organization directory; and intensify efforts to promote community interaction with the site. The news service would devote time and energy to digital innovation, seeking ways to generate revenue to lessen its dependence on foundation funding. NNS also would continue to nurture an already-strong relationship with the Marquette University Diederich College of Communication, which has provided in-kind contributions such as a newsroom, editor's office, laptop computers, software, still and video cameras, audio recorders and more.

The news service also plans to do more enterprise and in-depth reporting.

7. What are the specific roles of the community foundation in this project?

Zilber Family Foundation and Greater Milwaukee Foundation will help fund the expansion of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service; convene stakeholders to promote and advance the project; and help leverage additional support for the project.

8. How will the project improve the information needs of your community?

In Milwaukee, as is the case in many media markets, mainstream news organizations do not have the capacity to fully cover local communities. Online news organizations such as Patch.com do not cover inner city neighborhoods. Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service helps fill a significant gap by offering a more complete picture of people's lives in urban communities, increasing their ability to improve conditions and attract investment. Covering issues such as education, safety, economic development, health and wellness, and housing, NNS focuses on the successes and challenges of organizations and residents working to improve their quality of life. It facilitates communities' learning from one another: what works, what doesn't work and why. In addition, calling attention to residents who volunteer time to improve their neighborhoods can both energize them and motivate others to join them.

9a. What are your expected sources for the match (does not include in-kind)?

The Zilber Family Foundation and Greater Milwaukee Foundation will provide matching support for this project.

10. What steps will be taken to address on-going sustainability after initial funding?

Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service will create a part-time position of digital innovation coordinator to work with the editor and staff to create and implement a plan for generating revenue. This plan might include memberships, corporate sponsorships, advertising or other options. In addition, NNS expects ongoing in-kind support from Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University and technical and development support from the United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee.

11. Who might the likely partners be?

United Neighborhood Centers of Milwaukee (UNCOM), Diederich College of Communication at Marquette University, Public Policy Forum of Milwaukee, Zilber Family Foundation, Greater Milwaukee Foundation, LISC Milwaukee and local broadcast, print and online news sources.

12. Detail the status of your relationship with the proposed partners(s).

NNS is a project of UNCOM and has been supported in part by a grant from the Zilber Family Foundation. Diederich College of Communication has provided $116,000 in in-kind contributions since the project's inception in October 2010. The Public Policy Forum of Milwaukee is currently seeking a grant from the Argosy Foundation to support two Diederich graduate student fellows to cover public policy issues for NNS.

Greater Milwaukee Foundation has collaborated with Zilber Family Foundation on place-based initiatives in several Milwaukee neighborhoods. The foundations are currently working together to develop and implement a capacity-building and leadership development program for neighborhood residents and organizations. In addition, the foundations are part of a recently formed Community Development Funders Alliance working to strategically align resources to most effectively advance the community development system in Milwaukee.

13. Describe the level of interest and support by your CEO and board of directors.

Communication has been an underdeveloped component of the Zilber Neighborhood Initiative (ZNI). From the outset of the Initiative, the foundation's leaders have understood the critical importance of a robust and sophisticated communications initiative. The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service is proving to be an important vehicle for communicating the stories of inner-city neighborhoods and engaging residents in these neighborhoods. It is important to note that the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service is editorially independent of its funders and in-kind contributors.

14. What are your anticipated outcomes?

We anticipate stronger relationships and more information-sharing among organizations and individuals working to improve their communities; increased civic engagement prompted by more information and knowledge about how public policies are affecting central city residents; increased social interaction and sense of community; increased capacity in communities through training and mentoring of staff reporters; more journalists trained to cover urban affairs; greater appreciation and understanding of central city communities; more residents inspired to be part of neighborhood revitalization.

15. How do you plan to measure success?

The news service will measure its effectiveness by improvements in the following metrics:

- Page views
- Unique visitors
- "Likes" on Facebook
- Twitter followers
- Survey results
- Comments on articles
- Articles reprinted or broadcast on other online information sources
- Number of professional journalists who volunteer
- Number of internship applications
- Number of organizations seeking coverage of their issues or events
- Staff diversity
- Staff longevity

16. What will be different in the community as a result of this project?

Greater civic engagement; more residents working on neighborhood revitalization; increased social interaction and sense of community; more shared information about what works and what doesn't, and what it takes to be successful; more and better information about changes and potential changes in the community; easily accessible information about community resources such as social service organizations and businesses.

APPENDIX C:
NNS BYLINES

The NNS experiment relies heavily on recruiting and coaching reporters who may retain on staff for relatively short periods of time. The following 32 people have bylines on at least one of the 229 news service reports reviewed for this study:

Staff
- Andrea Waxman (32)
- Edgar Mendez (30)
- Brendan O'Brien (19)
- Shakara Robinson (18)
- Kenya Evans (8)
- Adam Carr (2)
- Sharon McGowan (1)

Interns
- Maggie Quick (15)
- Maria Corpus (13)
- Tom Momberg (10)
- Eric Oliver (9)
- Heather Ronaldson (8)
- Amalia Oulahan (5)
- Brynne Ramella (4)
- Matthew Bin Han Ong (2)
- Courtney Perry (2)
- Erynn James (1)
- Joshua McGowan (1)

Public Policy Forum Fellows
- Scottie Lee Myers (10)
- Rick Brown (10)

Others
- Alex Perry (5)
- Mark Doremus (4)
- Hannah Byron (1)
- Kara Chiuchiarelli (1)
- Monique Collins (1)
- Michael Grochowski (1)
- Jennifer Reinke (1)
- Caroline Roers (1)
- Kate Sheka (1)
- Karen Stokes (1)
- Carolyn Vidmar (1)
- City of Milwaukee (1)

JOUR 2100 (1 byline each)
- Jacob Born and Lauren Papucci
- Ben Greene and Joe Kaiser
- Kaitlyn Farmer and Patrick Leary
- Matt Barbato and Eva Sotomayor
- Christopher Chavez and Caitlin Miller
- Rob Gebelhoff and Joe Kvartunas
- Katie Cutinello and Aaron Maybin
- Monique Collins and Michael Lenoch
- Casby Bias and Courtney Perry

APPENDIX D:
MEDIA COVERAGE OF NNS and THE ZILBER INITIATIVE

The Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS) has earned a significant

amount of positive media coverage, of which the following was reviewed for this study:

- "News From the Neighborhoods," by Erik Gunn, *Milwaukee Magazine*, Sept. 21, 2010

- "Zilber Neighborhood Initiative Expands South Side Revitalization," by Georgia Pabst, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, October 29, 2010

- "News Service to Cover 3 Milwaukee Neighborhoods," by Georgia Pabst, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 21, 2011

- "Neighborhood News Service Launches at Marquette," Diederich College of Communication website, March 21, 2011

- "News Service for Milwaukee Neighborhoods Launches at Johnston Hall," by Andrew Phillips, *The Marquette Tribune*, March 29, 2011

- "Neighborhood News," a "Lake Effect" segment on WUWM-FM, April 18, 2011

- "Off and Running: Nonprofit Neighborhood News Service Starts to Find Readers," by Erik Gunn, *Milwaukee Magazine*, May 24, 2011

- "News Service Peeks Into Forgotten Areas," by Brooke Miller, Urban Life (Diederich College's Urban Journalism Workshop), June 2012

- "New Journalists in Town," by Michael Horne, UrbanMilwaukee.com, Oct. 22, 2012

- "Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service," by Dori Zori, RadioMilwaukee.org, Oct. 31, 2012

- "City Beat," by NSE, *Marquette Magazine*, Winter 2013

- "Stories from Under-Covered Milwaukee Neighborhoods," by Nicole Sweeney Etter, Marquette Matters, Feb. 2013

- "News From the Other Half: The Neighborhood News Service Shines a Light on City Life," by Erik Gunn, *Milwaukee Magazine*, March 26, 2013

APPENDIX E:
NNS ARTICLES AND REPORTS REVIEWED

What follows is a listing of the 229 articles and reports reviewed for this case study of the Milwaukee Neighborhood News Service (NNS), including those nominated for awards, special reports, discussed as segments on WUWM-FM's "Lake Effect" show and repurposed in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel,* produced by students in my digital journalism course, and otherwise published during 2013:

1. Stories Nominated for Awards (16)
   - "Long Journey Culminates in New Center for Longfellow, Journey House," by Edgar Mendez, March 20, 2011
   - "Communities Aren't 'Food Deserts,' But Healthy Eating Eludes Many," by Joshua McGowan, Sept. 6, 2011
   - "Demonstrators Flood Zeidler Park to Protest Economic Injustice," by Kenya Evans, Oct. 19, 2011
   - "Many Milwaukee Residents Fear Concealed Carry Law," by Erynn James, Nov. 21, 2011
   - "Latino English Language Learners Outperform Non-ELL Peers," Edgar Mendez, Feb. 20, 2012
   - "Family Day Care Providers Squeezed by Low Ratings, New Rules," by Matthew Bin Han Ong, May 21, 2012
   - "Young Moms Organize to Strengthen Their Community," by Andrea Waxman, July 31, 2012
   - "Hopkins Lloyd Community School Moving Forward One Year After Merger," by Kenya Evans, Sept. 27, 2012
   - "Residents' Energy, Community Resources Fuel 14th Street C.A.R.E.S," by Andrea Waxman and Adam Carr, Oct. 30, 2012
   - "Black Women Run for Their Lives," by Kenya Evans, Nov. 12, 2012
   - "Law Fails to Help Black-Owned Contractors Get 'Foot in the Door,'" by Heather Ronaldson, April 11, 2013
   - "MPD Public Website Posted Inaccurate Crime Data for 2012," by Andrea Waxman, July 15, 2013

- "New Test Could Force Thousands to Start Over on GED Exams," by Edgar Mendez, June 18, 2013

- "Special Needs Summer Camp Is 'Sensational,'" by Maggie Quick, July 9, 2013

- "'GED' Setback Does Not Deter Young Mother's College Dream," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Nov. 19, 2013

- "Pressure Mounts for Local GED Students as Deadline Approaches," by Edgar Mendez, Dec. 4, 2013

2. Special Reports (29)

- "Reporting Crime Key to Reducing Crime, District 3 Police and Activists Say," by Kenya Evans, March 20, 2011

- "Long Journey Culminates in New Center for Longfellow, Journey House," by Edgar Mendez, March 20, 2011

- "Streetscape Alters Look, Feel of Historic Business District," by Edgar Mendez, Aug. 29, 2011

- "Communities Aren't 'Food Deserts,' But Healthy Eating Eludes Many," by Joshua McGowan, Sept. 6, 2011

- "Community Holds Out High Hopes for 'New' North Division," by Kenya Evans, Sept. 26, 2011

- "Many Milwaukee Residents Fear Concealed Carry Law," by Erynn James, Nov. 21, 2011

- "How Service Agencies Work, From Inside and Out," #loweclass, Spring 2012

- "Latino English Language Learners Outperform Non-ELL Peers," by Edgar Mendez, Feb. 20, 2012

- "Support Groups Improve Quality of Life for Black Breast Cancer Patients," by Heather Ronaldson, April 25, 2012

- "Family Day Care Providers Squeezed By Low Ratings, New Rules," by Matthew Bin Han Ong, May 21, 2012

- "Borchert Field Block Club C.A.R.E.S. About 14th Street," by Andrea Waxman and Adam Carr, June 18, 2012

- "Despite Rules, 34% of Milwaukee County Deportees Lack Criminal Record" by Edgar Mendez, July 9, 2012

- "Growing Hispanic Population Triggers Need for Trained Medical Interpreters," by Kate Sheka, Aug. 6, 2012

- "Milwaukee Battles 'Silent Epidemic' On Multiple Fronts," by Carolyn Vidmar, Aug. 13, 2012

- "New Program to Keep Incarcerated Juveniles Close to Home," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 3, 2012
- "Healing Families Key to Saving At-Risk Youth," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 3, 2012
- "Residents' Energy, Community Resources Fuel 14th Street C.A.R.E.S," by Andrea Waxman and Adam Carr, Oct. 30, 2012
- "Low Reimbursement Rates Threaten Solvency of Child Care Centers," by Matthew Bin Han Ong, Nov. 5, 2012
- "Supporters of North Side Pool Sing Moody Blues," by Edgar Mendez, Dec. 3, 2012
- "Residents' Concerns Over River Contamination Prompt Changes In KK Project," by Edgar Mendez, Dec. 26, 2012
- "'Wisdom Walk' Leads Away From Violence, Toward Change," by Andrea Waxman, Feb. 18, 2013
- "Law Fails to Help Black-Owned Contractors Get 'Foot in the Door,'" by Heather Ronaldson, April 11, 2013
- "Abuse Victims on BadgerCare May Face New Barrier to Treatment," by Brendan O'Brien, June 4, 2013
- "New Test Could Force Thousands To Start Over On GED Exams," by Edgar Mendez, June 18, 2013
- "MPD Public Website Posted Inaccurate Crime Data for 2012," by Andrea Waxman, July 15, 2013
- "Fewer MPS Charters, Declining Enrollment Add Up To Lost Revenue," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 28, 2013
- "Mounting Fines for Minor Infractions Hit Low-Income Drivers Hardest," by Rick Brown, Dec. 2, 2013

3. Reports That Led to "Lake Effect" Segments on WUWM-FM (11)

- "Family Day Care Providers Squeezed By Low Ratings, New Rules," by Matthew Bin Han Ong, May 21, 2012
- "New Program to Keep Incarcerated Juveniles Close to Home," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 3, 2012
- "Supporters of North Side Pool Sing Moody Blues," by Edgar Mendez, Dec. 3, 2012
- "Law Fails to Help Black-Owned Contractors Get 'Foot in the Door,'" by Heather Ronaldson, April 11, 2013
- "City Nonprofit Organizations Shy Away From Residency Debate," by Edgar Mendez, April 23, 2013

- "Abuse Victims on BadgerCare May Face New Barrier to Treatment," by Brendan O'Brien, June 4, 2013

- "New Test Could Force Thousands to Start Over on GED Exams," by Edgar Mendez, June 18, 2013

- "MPD Public Website Posted Inaccurate Crime Data for 2012," by Andrea Waxman, July 15, 2013

- "Motorcyclists Call for Awareness Day as Crashes Increase," by Eric Oliver, Aug. 26, 2013

- "MPS and Local Officials Pushing for Earlier School Start Date Law," Scottie Lee Meyers, Sept. 16, 2013

- "Mounting Fines for Minor Infractions Hit Low-Income Drivers Hardest," by Rick Brown, Dec. 2, 2013

4. Most Popular Reports and Posts (20)

- 2,303 page views – "Brothers Return to Riverwest to Help Children Like Them," by Andrea Waxman, Feb. 28, 2013

- 2,257 page views – "La Luz del Mundo Opens Violence Prevention Center on South Side," by Brendan O'Brien, Aug. 29, 2013

- 2,164 page views – "Family Day Care Providers Squeezed By Low Ratings, New Rules," by Matthew Bin Han Ong, May 21, 2012

- 1,573 page views – "New Test Could Force Thousands to Start Over on GED Exams," by Edgar Mendez, June 18, 2013

- 1,305 page views – "2013 Earn & Learn Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP)," by the City of Milwaukee, Feb. 2, 2013

- 1,128 page views – "Ain't It 'Grand': Jake's Deli Opens Downtown," by Kenya Evans, Dec. 3, 2012

- 1,137 page views – "New Program to Keep Incarcerated Juveniles Close to Home," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 3, 2012

- 1,051 page views – "Walnut Way Vows to Rebuild After Fire," by Rick Brown, Oct. 2, 2013

- 977 page views – "Viewers Say Burnham Park Public Art 'Looks Like Life,'" by Andrea Waxman, Nov. 11, 2013

- 967 page views – "Building Neighborhood Capacity Program Hires Staff From Target Neighborhoods," by Kenya Evans, Jan. 15, 2013

- 937 page views – "Goldin Center to Open Medical Clinic for Underserved," by Brendan O'Brien, March 7, 2013

- 922 page views – "First Cheese Factory in Milwaukee to Open Soon," by Mark Doremus, March 13, 2012

- 852 page views – "TRUE Skool Prepares for Grand Opening at Grand Avenue Mall," by Andrea Waxman, Jan. 14, 2014

- 828 page views – "Blacks, Latinos Dispel Myth of 'Typical' Harley Rider, by Scottie Lee Meyers and Rick Brown, Sept. 5, 2013

- 783 page views – "Growing Hispanic Population Triggers Need for Trained Medical Interpreters," by Kate Sheka, Aug. 6, 2012

- 743 page views – "Black Men Create 'Healing Space' in Support Group," by Kenya Evans, Feb. 4, 2013

- 714 page views – "Layton Boulevard West Gears Up for Mobile 'Bike Hub,'" by Brendan O'Brien, Jan. 30, 2013

- 620 page views – "Mitchell Street Market Lofts Raise Up the Near South Side," by Monique Collins, Oct. 24, 2012

- 610 page views – "Teens Speak 'Real Life on Stage' at State Poetry Slam Finals," by Amalia Oulahan, March 6, 2013

- 594 page views – "Alex Runner Serves Up Fresh Eggs, Friendship in Sherman Park," by Andrea Waxman, Jan. 25, 2013

5. Reports Republished Via the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (29)

- "Fewer MPS Charters, Declining Enrollment Add Up to Lost Revenue," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 28, 2013

- "'Community-Oriented Community' Unites to Build a Garden," by Amalia Oulahan, May 23, 2013

- "The Guest House Provides 'One-Stop Shop for the Homeless,'" by Caroline Roers, May 28, 2013

- "New Grant Makes "College Possible" by Preparing Students for ACT," by Andrea Waxman, June 3, 2013

- "Abuse Victims on BadgerCare May Face New Barrier to Treatment," by Brendan O'Brien, June 4, 2013

- "Westside Students Hold Peace Walk, Create Poems and Art to End Violence," by Maggie Quick, June 13, 2013

- "Teens Say 'Y.E.S.' to St. Charles Job Training Program," by Maggie Quick, June 17, 2013

- "New Test Could Force Thousands to Start Over on GED Exams," by Edgar Mendez, June 18, 2013

- "Fathers Gather to Support Breastfeeding for Their Babies," by Brynne Ramella, June 21, 2013

- "Diverse Performers Take Center Stage at World Refugee Day Celebration," by Maggie Quick, June 25, 2013

- "Special Needs Summer Camp Is 'Sensational,'" by Maggie Quick, July 9, 2013

- "Milwaukee Succeeds Takes Case to Community," by Andrea Waxman, Aug. 6, 2013

- "Donors, Shelters Have Mixed Success Providing Bread to the Hungry," by Maggie Quick, Aug. 15, 2013

- "Volunteers Build Playground Designed by Neighborhood Kids," by Shakara Robinson, Aug. 21, 2013

- "Painted Facades for Foreclosed Houses 'Tool For Stabilization,'" by Shakara Robinson, Aug. 27, 2013

- "La Luz Del Mundo Opens Violence Prevention Center on South Side," by Brendan O'Brien, Aug. 29, 2013

- "United Way Grant to Help Test-Takers Finish GEDs Before Deadline," by Edgar Mendez, Sept. 9, 2013

- "Disabled Friends Fear Coverage Changes Could Threaten Independence," by Andrea Waxman and Alex Perry, Sept. 23, 2013

- "Homeless Advocates Plead With County Officials for More Funding," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Sept. 24, 2013

- "Walnut Way Vows to Rebuild After Fire," by Rick Brown, Oct. 2, 2013

- "Volunteers Clean Up KK River in Advance of Trail Grand Opening," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Oct. 7, 2013

- "Affordable Health Care Counselors Prepare Enrollees, Wait Out Technical Issues," by Brendan O'Brien, Oct. 11, 2013

- "North Side Clinic Promises to "Make a Difference" in Children's Health," by Eric Oliver, Oct. 14, 2013

- "MPS, Nonprofits Hope Synergy, Energy can Turn Around Carver Academy," by Rick Brown, Oct. 21, 2013

- "Candy-Flavored Tobacco Products Lure Underage Smokers, Report Warns," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 31, 2013

- "'GED' Setback Does not Deter Young Mother's College Dream," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Nov. 19, 2013

- "Newly Arrived Refugees Get a Taste of Thanksgiving," by Tom Momberg, Nov. 20, 2013
- "Planned Facilities, Job Headline Lindsay Heights Community Briefing," by Rick Brown, Nov. 21, 2013
- "Harambee Tour Highlights 'Environment Of Self-Empowerment,'" by Brendan O'Brien, Nov. 26, 2013
- "Summit Sheds Light on Youth Perceptions of Gun Violence," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Nov. 29, 2013
- "Mounting Fines for Minor Infractions Hit Low-Income Drivers Hardest," by Rick Brown, Dec. 2, 2013
- "Pressure Mounts for Local GED Students as Deadline Approaches," by Edgar Mendez, Dec. 4, 2013
- "New Program Awards Scholarships to Milwaukee Inmates' Children," by Tom Momberg, Dec. 6, 2013
- "MANDI Award Nominees Named to 'Sweet Sixteen,'" by Sharon McGowan, Dec. 12, 2013
- "Metcalfe Park Community Wrestles With Housing, Jobs," by Andrea Waxman, Dec. 16, 2013
- "Big Ideas for Bronzeville Emerge From Community Brainstorming Session," by Mark Doremus, Dec. 19, 2013
- "Nonprofits Helps Bermese Refugees Feel at Home in Milwaukee," by Tom Momberg, Dec. 23, 2013
- "TRUE Skool Prepares for Grand Opening at Grand Avenue Mall," by Andrea Waxman, Jan. 14, 2014

6. Reports Produced by Digital Journalism 3 (JOUR 2100) Students (9)

- "Clock Shadow Building Developer 'Wouldn't Do It Any Other Way,'" by Ben Greene and Joe Kaiser, April 17, 2013
- "Football Program Founder Teaches Kids Much More Than a Game," by Jacob Born and Lauren Papucci, April 25, 2013
- "Sanders Steers King Drive Redevelopment," by Kaitlyn Farmer and Patrick Leary, May 2, 2013
- "Agape Development Director Sees His job as 'Purveyor of Hope,'" by Matt Barbato and Eva Sotomayor, May 7, 2013
- "53rd Street School Principal Provides Reasons for Students to Believe," by Christopher Chavez and Caitlin Miller, May 10, 2013

- "Harling Credits Mom for Inspiring Civic Passion," by Rob Gebelhoff and Joe Kvartunas, May 15, 2013

- "Bed and Breakfast Owner Works to Uncover City's 'Lost Culture,'" by Katie Cutinello and Aaron Maybin, May 20, 2013

- "Interest in Ethnic Groups Drove Lackey to Pursue Urban Anthropology," by Monique Collins and Michael Lenoch, May 21, 2013

- "Motivational Speaker and Poet Has 'Gift For Inspiring Youth,'" by Casby Bias and Courtney Perry, June 5, 2013

7. Other Reports from 2013 (195)

- "Building Neighborhood Capacity Program Hires Staff From Target Neighborhoods," by Kenya Evans, Jan. 15, 2013

- "Alex Runner Serves up Fresh Eggs, Friendship in Sherman Park," by Andrea Waxman, Jan. 25, 2013

- "Layton Boulevard West Gears up for Mobile 'Bike Hub,'" by Brendan O'Brien, Jan. 30, 2013

- "2013 Earn & Learn Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP)," by the City of Milwaukee, Feb. 2, 2013

- "Black Men Create 'Healing Space' in Support Group," by Kenya Evans, Feb. 4, 2013

- "'Wisdom Walk' Leads Away From Violence, Toward Change," by Andrea Waxman, Feb. 18, 2013

- "Brothers Return to Riverwest to Help Children Like Them," by Andrea Waxman, Feb. 28, 2013

- "Teens Speak 'Real Life on Stage' at State Poetry Slam Finals," by Amalia Oulahan, March 6, 2013

- "Goldin Center to Open Medical Clinic for Underserved," by Brendan O'Brien, March 7, 2013

- "Law Fails to Help Black-Owned Contractors Get 'Foot in the Door,'" by Heather Ronaldson, April 11, 2013

- "Clock Shadow Building Developer 'Wouldn't Do it Any Other Way,'" by Ben Greene and Joe Kaiser, April 17, 2013

- "North Side Gets a Running Start On Decreasing Summer Violence," by LouRawls Burnett, April 22, 2013

- "City Nonprofit Organizations Shy Away From Residency Debate," by Edgar Mendez, April 23, 2013

- "Milwaukee Rep Connects Students to Their Neighborhoods Through Arts," by Alex Perry, April 24, 2013

- "Community Honors Professor's Memory at South Side Clean-Up," by Andrea Waxman, April 25, 2013

- "Football Program Founder Teaches Kids Much More Than a Game," by Jacob Born and Lauren Papucci, April 25, 2013

- "City Hall Exhibit Helps Others Walk in the Shoes of Child Abuse Victims," by Heather Ronaldson, April 26, 2013

- "Community Group Seeks Share of Stadium Funding for Kids," by Shakara Robinson, April 26, 2013

- "LISC, Police Department Create Director of Community Safety Position," by Brendan O'Brien, April 29, 2013

- "Ni De Aqui Ni De Alla Exhibit Tells Stories of Milwaukee Immigrant Families," by Amalia Oulahan, April 30, 2013

- "Neighborhood House Families Celebrate Earth Day," by Andrea Waxman, May 1, 2013

- "Sanders Steers King Drive Redevelopment," by Kaitlyn Farmer and Patrick Leary, May 2, 2013

- "First Public Allies Conference Helps Alumni, Nonprofit Leaders Evolve," by Jennifer Reinke, May 3, 2013

- "Study Analyzes Quality of Milwaukee After-School Programs," by Edgar Mendez, May 6, 2013

- "Agape Development Director Sees his job as 'Purveyor Of Hope,'" by Matt Barbato and Eva Sotomayor, May 7, 2013

- "New Group Aims to Support Native American Women, Strengthen Community," by Courtney Perry, May 8, 2013

- "College Possible Seniors Anticipate Graduation at Year-End Celebration," by Andrea Waxman, May 9, 2013

- "53rd Street School Principal Provides Reasons for Students to Believe," by Christopher Chavez and Caitlin Miller, May 10, 2013

- "Harling Credits mom for Inspiring Civic Passion," by Rob Gebelhoff and Joe Kvartunas, May 15, 2013

- "New Environment Charter School to Focus on Real-World Projects," by Amalia Oulahan, May 16, 2013

- "Three Bridges Park Completes Menomonee Valley Transformation," by Edgar Mendez, May 17, 2013

- "Bed and Breakfast Owner Works to Uncover City's 'Lost Culture,'" by Katie Cutinello and Aaron Maybin, May 20, 2013
- "Interest in Ethnic Groups Drove Lackey to Pursue Urban Anthropology," by Monique Collins and Michael Lenoch, May 21, 2013
- "Basura Bash 2013 Sweeps Through Walker Square Park," by Shakara Robinson, May 23, 2013
- "'Community-Oriented Community' Unites to Build a Garden," by Amalia Oulahan, May 23, 2013
- "The Guest House Provides 'One-Stop Shop for the Homeless,'" by Caroline Roers, May 28, 2013
- "'Positive Energy' Flows at the Heal the Hood Block Party," by Brynne Ramella, May 30, 2013
- "MPD Increases South Side Presence to Tamp Down Summer Crime," by Eric Oliver, May 31, 2013
- "Old MPS Middle School Becomes New Senior Living Community," by Shakara Robinson, May 31, 2013
- "New Grant Makes "College Possible" by Preparing Students for ACT," by Andrea Waxman, June 3, 2013
- "Abuse Victims on BadgerCare May Face New Barrier to Treatment," by Brendan O'Brien, June 4, 2013
- "Motivational Speaker and Poet Has 'Gift for Inspiring Youth,'" by Casby Bias and Courtney Perry, June 5, 2013
- "North Division Students use Spoken Word to Describe Their Neighborhoods," by Alex Perry, June 5, 2013
- "Shelters and Charities Glean Timely Donations From Social Action Group," by Eric Oliver, June 6, 2013
- "Record Number of Students Compete at Lindsay Heights Academic Olympics," by Shakara Robinson, June 7, 2013
- "Neighbors Sow Seeds of Connection, Engagement," by Andrea Waxman, June 7, 2013
- "'Telenovela' Focuses on Diabetes in Latino Community," by Brynne Ramella, June 8, 2013
- "Long-Awaited Packers Field Opens in Mitchell Park," by Edgar Mendez, June 10, 2013
- "Colorful Public Art Project Brings 'Vitality And Hope' to Dreary Underpass," by Shakara Robinson, June 11, 2013

- "First-Ever COA Family Literacy Summit 'Shines Light' on Literacy," by Courtney Perry, June 12, 2013

- "Westside Students Hold Peace Walk, Create Poems and Art to End Violence," by Maggie Quick, June 13, 2013

- "Comprehensive Care Helps Troubled Teens See 'Light at End of the Tunnel,'" by Eric Oliver, June 14, 2013

- "Teens Say 'Y.E.S.' to St. Charles Job Training Program," by Maggie Quick, June 17, 2013

- "New Test Could Force Thousands to Start Over on GED Exams," by Edgar Mendez, June 18, 2013

- "LBWN Home Tour Emphasizes Neighborhood Amenities, Financing," by Maggie Quick, June 19, 2013

- "Volunteers Fight Hunger at 'Feed the Children' Kickoff Event," by Eric Oliver, June 20, 2013

- "Fathers Gather to Support Breastfeeding for Their Babies," by Brynne Ramella, June 21, 2013

- "Block Club Finds Building Community Takes Patience, Hard Work," by Andrea Waxman, June 24, 2013

- "Diverse Performers Take Center Stage at World Refugee Day Celebration," by Maggie Quick, June 25, 2013

- "Milwaukee Youths 'Speak Truth to Power' at Commemorative Civil Rights March," by Alex Perry, June 25, 2013

- "Hairstylist Gives Free Haircuts to the Poor at St. Bens," by Brendan O'Brien, June 26, 2013

- "Two-Thirds of Recreational Facilities at County Public Schools Sub-Par, Study Finds," by Brendan O'Brien, June 27, 2013

- "Fondy Farmers Market Kicks Off New Season With Food and Festivities," by Shakara Robinson

- "Milwaukee Succeeds' Report Reflects Contributions of Many Community Members," by Andrea Waxman, July 1, 2013

- "Taxpayers May Lose Out on $200,000-Plus in Federal Loans to Dollar Tree Developer," by Shakara Robinson, July 2, 2013

- "Supreme Court Ruling Raises Questions for Gay Married Couples Living in Wisconsin," by Maggie Quick, July 3, 2013

- "Police Roll Call Welcomes Neighbors to Oasis Meal Program," by Edgar Mendez, July 4, 2013

- "First Neighborhood Art Fair 'Brings the City Together,'" by Michael Grochowski, July 5, 2013
- "Enderis Park July 4th 'Slice of Small Town in the Middle of a City,'" by Brynne Ramella, July 8, 2013
- "Special Needs Summer Camp Is 'Sensational,'" by Maggie Quick, July 9, 2013
- "Bakery Goods and Photography Served Up at Washington Park Duplex," by Amalia Oulahan, July 10, 2013
- "Governor Ignores SOC Plea to Maintain City Residency Requirement," by Edgar Mendez, July 11, 2013
- "Experts and Novices Learn Gardening Basics at Walnut Way," by Shakara Robinson, July 12, 2013
- "MPD Public Website Posted Inaccurate Crime Data for 2012," by Andrea Waxman, July 15, 2013
- "'The Big Idea' Showcases Connections Between Art and Academics," by Maggie Quick, July 15, 2013
- "MPS Close to Meeting Teacher Staffing Goal for New School Year," by Brendan O'Brien, July 17, 2013
- "Family Remembers Loved One While Clinging to Hope For Justice," by Edgar Mendez, July 18, 2013
- "Food Pantry Provides Sustenance and Sparks a 'Feeling of Belonging,'" by Eric Oliver, July 19, 2013
- "Walnut Way Lets Sun Shine on Plan to Curb Electricity Costs," by Shakara Robinson, July 23, 2013
- "Truck Studio Delivers Art to Kids in Parks," by Andrea Waxman, July 24, 2013
- "Hundreds Flock To The Grand Opening Of Three Bridges Park In The Menomonee Valley," by Brendan O'Brien, July 25, 2013
- "History Comes To Life At Old South Side Day Celebration," by Maggie Quick, July 26, 2013
- "Parents, Supporters 'TeamUp' to Send MPS Students Off to College," by Maggie Quick, July 29, 2013
- "Proposed Futsal Center Would Mentor, Tutor Young Athletes," by Eric Oliver, July 30, 2013
- "Safe & Sound Recognizes 'Selfless' Neighborhood Leaders," by Edgar Mendez, July 31, 2013
- "Block Party Launches Student Exhibit at Arts@Large Gallery," by Maggie Quick, Aug. 1, 2013

- "South Side Carnaval Highlights Diverse Latin Cultures," by Edgar Mendez, Aug. 2, 2013
- "Anti-Violence Parade And Rally 'Counter Culture Of Violence' Through Arts," by Shakara Robinson, Aug. 5, 2013
- "Milwaukee Succeeds Takes Case to Community," by Andrea Waxman, Aug. 6, 2013
- "Collaborative Clinic Will Bring Nurse Practitioners, Health Education to Amani," by Maggie Quick, Aug. 7, 2013
- "Field Of Dreams to Become Reality for Boys and Girls Club Teams," by Maggie Quick, Aug. 8, 2013
- "Poverty, Crime Contribute to 'Uncertain Outlook' for MPS," by Edgar Mendez, Aug. 9, 2013
- "Rival MPS Football Teams Face Off to Raise Scholarship Funds," by Shakara Robinson, Aug. 9, 2013
- "Kids Kick Their Way To a Healthier Lifestyle," by Eric Oliver, Aug. 12, 2013
- "New MPS Community Service Requirement to Foster Student Engagement," by Brendan O'Brien, Aug. 13, 2013
- "Exploring The Heart of Milwaukee a Mile at a Time," by Eric Oliver, Aug. 14, 2013
- "Donors, Shelters Have Mixed Success Providing Bread to the Hungry," by Maggie Quick, Aug. 15, 2013
- "Leadership Institute Tours Sherman Park," by Mark Doremus, Aug. 16, 2013
- "Youth Coalition Celebrates Being Above The Influence," by Maggie Quick, Aug. 19, 2013
- "Youth Resource Mapping Initiative Helps in More Ways Than One," by Maggie Quick, Aug. 20, 2013
- "'Peace Bracelet' Highlight of Public Art Display at City Hall," by Edgar Mendez, Aug. 21, 2013
- "Volunteers Build Playground Designed by Neighborhood Kids," by Shakara Robinson, Aug. 21, 2013
- "Walnut Way Honors Young Artists at First Summer Celebration," by Shakara Robinson, Aug. 23, 2013
- "Back-To-School Health Fairs Focus on Disease Prevention," by Edgar Mendez, Aug. 23, 2013
- "Motorcyclists Call for Awareness Day as Crashes Increase," by Eric Oliver, Aug. 26, 2013

- "Painted Facades For Foreclosed Houses 'Tool for Stabilization,'" by Shakara Robinson, Aug. 27, 2013
- "Youth Recall Violence, Encourage Peace At North Side Gathering," by Andrea Waxman, Aug. 28, 2013
- "La Luz del Mundo Opens Violence Prevention Center on South Side," by Brendan O'Brien, Aug. 29, 2013
- "South Side Organizer Does 'A Little Bit of Everything' to Improve Quality Of Life," by Edgar Mendez, Aug. 30, 2013
- "Metcalfe Park Health and Wellness Event Helps Revitalize People, Community," by Shakara Robinson, Sept. 3, 2013
- "College Possible Freshmen Move In to Their Futures," by Andrea Waxman, Sept. 4, 2013
- "Blacks, Latinos Dispel Myth of 'Typical' Harley Rider," by Scottie Lee Meyers and Rick Brown, Sept. 5, 2013
- "United Way Grant to Help Test-Takers Finish GEDs Before Deadline," by Edgar Mendez, Sept. 9, 2013
- "District 3 Police, Residents Bond on the Ball Diamond," by Rick Brown, Sept. 10, 2013
- "Fondy Food Market Pays Tribute to Local Civil Rights Activist," by Shakara Robinson, Sept. 11, 2013
- "Visitors Travel World in One South Side Neighborhood," by Edgar Mendez, Sept. 12, 2013
- "Tour Showcases Highs and Lows of Bronzeville Development Effort," by Mark Doremus, Sept. 13, 2013
- "MPS and Local Officials Pushing for Earlier School Start Date Law," Scottie Lee Meyers, Sept. 16, 2013
- "Rain Can't Dampen Mexican Independence Day Celebration on South Side," by Edgar Mendez, Sept. 17, 2013
- "New Neighborhood Leadership Program Featured at National Conference," by Andrea Waxman, Sept. 17, 2013
- "Wellness Walk Promotes Formula for Good Health," by Tom Momberg, Sept. 18, 2013
- "Neighborhood Ambassador Program Moves Parents 'From W-2 to the Workforce,'" by Rick Brown, Sept. 19, 2013
- "UWM Program Nurtures Latino Community Leaders," by Brendan O'Brien, Sept. 20, 2013

- "Disabled Friends Fear Coverage Changes Could Threaten Independence," by Andrea Waxman and Alex Perry, Sept. 23, 2013

- "Homeless Advocates Plead With County Officials for More Funding," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Sept. 24, 2013

- "Despite Setbacks, Projects to Reduce Black Infant Mortality Are Getting Underway," by Rick Brown, Sept. 25, 2013

- "Forest Home Library Kicks Off National Hispanic Heritage Month," by Maria Corpus, Sept. 26, 2013

- "Consumers Seek Help as Obamacare Launches," by Brendan O'Brien, Sept. 27, 2013

- "LBWN Mobile Bike Hub Repairs Bicycles, Gains a Following," by Tom Momberg, Sept. 30, 2013

- "Here's How to Sign Up for Affordable Health Care Coverage," by Andrea Waxman, Oct. 1, 2013

- "New Program Teaches 'ABCs' for Healthy Infants," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 1, 2013

- "Milwaukee's First 'Big Day of Serving' Makes Big Difference in Clark Square," by Maria Corpus, Oct. 2, 2013

- "Walnut Way Vows to Rebuild After Fire," by Rick Brown, Oct. 2, 2013

- "Enrollment Lags Behind Demand for Affordable Health Care," by Andrea Waxman, Oct. 3, 2013

- "Mayor Envisions Turning Foreclosures Into Opportunities," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Oct. 4, 2013

- "Volunteers Clean Up KK River in Advance of Trail Grand Opening," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Oct. 7, 2013

- "Fire and Rain Can't Stop Walnut Way's Harvest Day Celebration," by Shakara Robinson, Oct. 8, 2013

- "Patrons Hope Forest Home Library Will Be Redeveloped on Same Site," by Maria Corpus, Oct. 9, 2013

- "'First of its Kind' Program Teaches Milwaukee Businesses How To Scale Up," by Andrea Waxman, Oct. 10, 2013

- "Affordable Health Care Counselors Prepare Enrollees, Wait Out Technical Issues," by Brendan O'Brien, Oct. 11, 2013

- "North Side Clinic Promises to "Make a Difference" in Children's Health," by Eric Oliver, Oct. 14, 2013

- "'Shocked' Raffle Winner Gets First Chance to Buy House for $3,500," by Maria Corpus, Oct. 15, 2013
- "Milwaukee Evidence Added to Complaint Against U.S. Bank," by Brendan O'Brien, Oct. 16, 2013
- "Grandfathers Honored for Being "The Shoulders Upon Which We Stand,'" by Alex Perry, Oct. 17, 2013
- "City, Churches Blanket Neighborhoods With Safe Sleep Message," by Tom Momberg, Oct. 18, 2013
- "Cyclists Applaud Scenic Slice of KK River Trail," by Andrea Waxman, Oct. 18, 2013
- "MPS, Nonprofits Hope Synergy, Energy Can Turn Around Carver Academy," by Rick Brown, Oct. 21, 2013
- "Marquette Health Care Center Fills 'Great Need' in Hillside Area," by Kara Chiuchiarelli, Oct. 22, 2013
- "New King Commons Development Makes Couple's Life 'So Much Better,'" by Scottie Lee Meyers, Oct. 23, 2013
- "Student Artists Explore Nature's Life Cycles at Arts@Large Exhibit," by Maria Corpus, Oct. 24, 2013
- "For Young Adults in Metcalfe Park, Jobs Building Rains Garden Marks 'Watershed' Moment," by Tom Momberg, Oct. 25, 2013
- "New Process 'More Respectful Way' to Help Homeless Find Shelter," by Andrea Waxman, Oct. 25, 2013
- "Fewer MPS Charters, Declining Enrollment Add Up to Lost Revenue," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 28, 2013
- "Day of The Dead Celebration Brings Loved Ones to Life Through Art," by Maria Corpus, Oct. 29, 2013
- "Neighborhoods Eye Five Key City Budget Items," by Brendan O'Brien, Oct. 30, 2013
- "Candy-Flavored Tobacco Products Lure Underage Smokers, Report Warns," by Edgar Mendez, Oct. 31, 2013
- "City Year Members Wield Paintbrushes to Inform, Inspire Jackson Students," by Maria Corpus, Nov. 1, 2013
- "Insurance Companies Optimistic About Affordable Care Act," by Andrea Waxman, Nov. 1, 2013
- "Federal Grant to Next Door to Prompt 'Dramatic Change' in Head Start," by Rick Brown, Nov. 4, 2013

- "Mexican Celebration Honors Dead, Aims to 'Heal Milwaukee,'" by Maria Corpus, Nov. 5, 2013

- "Pan-African Group Helps Southeast Asian Children Learn English," by Edgar Mendez, Nov. 7, 2013

- "As Weather Turns Cold, Need for Energy Assistance Grows," by Brendan O'Brien, Nov. 8, 2013

- "Viewers Say Burnham Park Public Art 'Looks Like Life,'" by Andrea Waxman, Nov. 11, 2013

- "Historic 'Settlement House' Model Serves City's Immigrants and the Poor," by Shakara Robinson, Nov. 12, 2013

- "Local Fair Housing Council Grantees to Reinvest in Home Ownership, Rehab," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Nov. 13, 2013

- "WNOV Expands Talk Radio Show Geared to Black Audience," by Tom Momberg, Nov. 14, 2013

- "Housing Resource Fair Provides First Steps for Prospective Homebuyers," by Maria Corpus, Nov. 15, 2013

- "Marquette Program Talks to Autistic Teens 'In Their Own Language,'" by Tom Momberg, Nov. 18, 2013

- "'GED' Setback Does Not Deter Young Mother's College Dream," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Nov. 19, 2013

- "Newly Arrived Refugees Get a Taste of Thanksgiving," by Tom Momberg, Nov. 20, 2013

- "Planned Facilities, Job Headline Lindsay Heights Community Briefing," by Rick Brown, Nov. 21, 2013

- "Preschool Prepares Burmese, African Refugees for U.S. Schools," by Maria Corpus, Nov. 22, 2013

- "Art Program Helps Reagan Students 'Know Thyself,'" by Tom Momberg, Nov. 25, 2013

- "Harambee Tour Highlights 'Environment of Self-Empowerment,'" by Brendan O'Brien, Nov. 26, 2013

- "Free Construction Skills Training Aims to Meet Growing Need," by Andrea Waxman, Nov. 27, 2013

- "Summit Sheds Light on Youth Perceptions of Gun Violence," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Nov. 29, 2013

- "Mounting Fines for Minor Infractions Hit Low-Income Drivers Hardest," by Rick Brown, Dec. 2, 2013
- "UWM Program Helps Parents Be Students," by Maria Corpus, Dec. 3, 2013
- "Pressure Mounts for Local GED Students as Deadline Approaches," by Edgar Mendez, Dec. 4, 2013
- "New Program Awards Scholarships to Milwaukee Inmates' Children," by Tom Momberg, Dec. 6, 2013
- "Time Management Main Challenge for College Possible Freshmen," by Andrea Waxman, Dec. 9, 2013
- "Nextdoor Social Media Website Builds Milwaukee Neighborhoods," by Scottie Lee Meyers, Dec. 10, 2013
- "Ribbons, Foil and Red Bows Create Oasis on Close-Knit Block," by Brendan O'Brien, Dec. 11, 2013
- "Growing Power Celebrates 'Good Food Revolution,'" by Maria Corpus, Dec. 12, 2013
- "MANDI Award Nominees Named to 'Sweet Sixteen,'" by Sharon McGowan, Dec. 12, 2013
- "Dedicated Court Administrator 'Epitome of a Public Servant,'" by Hannah Byron, Dec. 13, 2013
- "Metcalfe Park Community Wrestles With Housing, Jobs," by Andrea Waxman, Dec. 16, 2013
- "Washington Park Residents Energized to Build 'Strong, Successful Community,'" by Karen Stokes, Dec. 17, 2013
- "Young Milwaukee Gets Into the Spirit of Giving," by Maria Corpus, Dec. 18, 2013
- "Big Ideas for Bronzeville Emerge From Community Brainstorming Session," by Mark Doremus, Dec. 19, 2013
- "Low-Cost Car Loan Program Helps Parents Get to Work," by Rick Brown, Dec. 20, 2013
- "Nonprofit Helps Burmese Refugees Feel at Home in Milwaukee," by Tom Momberg, Dec. 23, 2013
- "Cooperative Offers Alternative to Traditional Insurance Companies," by Brendan O'Brien, Dec. 24, 2013
- "Nia Imani Provides Women Temporary Shelter, Permanent Skills," by Andrea Waxman, Dec. 26, 2013