A COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUE OF THE PRAGUE POST COVERAGE

OF THE ROMANY MIGRATION STORY, 1997-98

by

RICHARD J. KENNEY

(Under the Direction of Leara D. Rhodes)

ABSTRACT

The 1993 book, *Good News*, by Clifford Christians et al., provided an argument that traditional press models had failed ethically in the building and maintenance of communities. This radical theory, sometimes equated with the civic/public journalism movement of the 1990s, in its purest form has never been tested in practical journalism. This dissertation explores whether and how Christians et al.'s communitarian theory might be applied to a particular newspaper in the emergent civil societies of post-communist Eastern or Central Europe. News coverage of the 1997-98 Czech Romany migration story as it appeared in an English-language newspaper is critiqued from the communitarian perspective. Through a textual analysis of the newspaper coverage, discursive strategies are mined for their inherent ethical values. Because the Romany migration story centered on the treatment of a marginalized group in civil society, the communitarian perspective provides the ideal lens through which to examine the coverage and critique its ethics.

INDEX WORDS: Ethics; Newspapers; International; Textual Analysis.

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DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to four people who saw it through all six years, from beginning to end: my parents, Joseph R. and Lois Kenney, who have never given up on me; my adviser and friend, Dr. Leara Rhodes, who wouldn't let me give up on myself; and my daughter, Zoe Nicole Kenney, whose love and whose belief in all I do was the only motivation I needed to complete this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

<u>Overview</u>

Over the past dozen years, the fall of communist totalitarian regimes and the rise of their democratically constituted replacements have brought the world's press to a crossroads of history. With the Cold War ended and walls literally having come down, journalists in many countries have been granted greater freedom than at any other time to cover the world, as well as tiny corners of it. Stories, issues, and photographs that might never have come to light prior to these changes are finally being published by newly free presses. The advent of this era of freedom also heralds opportunities for reconsidering, rethinking, and reforming press practices.

Good News: Social Ethics and the Press (Christians, Ferre, & Fackler, 1993) proposes a radical departure from conventional journalism. Using communitarian theory, the authors develop a normative ethical model in which the press abandons libertarianism and assumes a key role in civic transformation. Communitarian journalism has been posited at the foundation of the public/civic journalism

movement (Black, 1997; Rosen, 1991; Merritt, 1994), which presents a diluted form of communitarianism with both boosters and detractors (see Black, 1997, for a range of viewpoints and a definitive bibliography). Public/civic journalism has been undertaken primarily in the United States and is practiced at newspapers in cities including Wichita, Kansas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Tallahassee, Florida; Columbia, South Carolina; and Macon, Georgia. Craig (1996) has suggested that the real test of communitarian theory would be to put it into practice in daily American journalism. But to date a purely communitarian model of the press has not been established anywhere.

Jean-Claude Bertrand, however, writes of a European sensibility that seeks "an alternative" to the "horrors of totalitarianism" and "jungle individualism" (Christians et al., 1993, p. v), raising the possibility of Europe as fertile ground in which communitarian journalism might take root. Christians himself has since hinted at the potential for radical experimentation in the former Soviet communist bloc: "realignments underway in eastern Europe have made ethics central as a possible framework for writing new policies and generating national identity" (Christians, 1999, p. 18). This dissertation explores whether Christians

et al.'s communitarian theory might be applied to a particular newspaper, and if so, how.

In this dissertation, I use communitarian theory as an ethical lens to analyze news coverage of the 1997-98 Czech Romany migration story as it appeared in the English-language *Prague Post*. Through a close reading of the text, I examine discursive strategies—the very choices of language and presentation—for inherent ethical values through a critique of the kind suggested by Ringnalda (1997) and discussed at length later in this dissertation. Because the Romany migration story centered on the treatment of a marginalized group in civil society, the communitarian perspective outlined by Christians et al. (1993) provides the ideal lens through which to critique the ethics of the news coverage.

My dissertation is premised upon the following assumptions (see Chapters 3 and 4 for further discussion of these assumptions):

1. Reality is socially constructed;

2. Media reproduce dominant ideology and power relations;

3. Ethical choices are inherent in media texts;

4. Because media texts construct reality, media ethics is worth analyzing.

In the remainder of this chapter, I (a) provide a background on the major components of the *Prague Post*'s coverage of the Czech Romany story as a means of justifying my selection of these texts; (b) outline the history of the Roma as an oppressed and persecuted minority and detail the migration story of 1997-98; (c) describe the creation and success of the *Post* as an influential English-language voice in a formerly communist nation; (d) present the research statements that drive my study; and (e) preview upcoming chapters.

Brief History of the Czech Roma[1]

Roma origins. The Roma are mostly dark-skinned descendants of Hindus of the lowest caste who began migrating from India across Central Asia and to Europe in the Eighth Century. Until about two hundred years ago, they were popularly believed to be from Egypt—hence the equating of the Roma in many countries with some form of the word "Gypsy." It is speculated that the Roma may have left India because of drought or famine, or to escape from the strict caste system to which they were subjected and under which they were oppressed. Linguists and historians generally agree that these immigrants settled in Turkey from about

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[1] My brief account of Romany suffering has been summarized from the Patrin Web Journal: Romani Culture and History (1997), online at http://www.geocities.com/Paris/5121/patrin.htm. See also Ian Hancock's (1987) *The Pariah Syndrome: an account of Gypsy slavery and persecution* (Karoma Publishers: Ann Arbor).

the Twelfth to the Fifteenth centuries, then moved on to the Balkans and into Greece as part of Mongol and Turkish expansion, finally arriving in Czechoslovakia in the Thirteenth Century.

The Roma were welcomed in some places, but they often found it difficult to adapt to the value systems of other cultures in which they tried to settle. Early historical accounts described nomadic artists and scantily clad dancers as entertainers and courtesans, disdained by pious citizens. These wanderers differed from the indigenous population due to their darker skin and their foreign tongue. Many of the Roma lived in closed groups and did not try to assimilate, sometimes isolating themselves further. Some who have studied Romany history and culture believe today that the Roma feel no affinity for the majority society and treat it as something "secondary," from which they can steal and rob without shame.

Roma in Czechoslovakia. The first Anti-Roma legislation in Czechoslovakia was passed in 1538. As a result, the Roma were forced to live on the edges of villages and towns and were restricted from working in some of the higher-paying trades, primarily metalsmithing and the making of farm tools, for which they were known. In 1541, the Roma were expelled from Czechoslovakia after

being blamed for several fires that broke out in Prague. They continued to move about Europe and settled in other countries.

Seldom trusted, the Roma were restricted in terms of where they lived and the trades they employed throughout Europe during the Protestant Reformation and Thirty Years War. In the Eighteenth Century, Austria declared them outlaws. In 1710, Austria ordered all Roma men to be hanged, and all Roma were branded on the back for identification; in Moravia and Bohemia, their ears were lopped off for identification. In 1721, Austria ordered all Roma women to be executed. Taxes for Roma with a wagon, tent, or a horse were doubled.

Beginning in the 1760s, Czechoslovakia attempted to assimilate the Roma. Teen males were taught crafts, Roma settlements were created, and Roma children were placed in schools and foster homes. But roughly a hundred years later, they were forced to register as nomads, a regulation that remained in effect even after the Czechoslovakian Constitution gave all other national minorities equal rights.

For the last two-thirds of the Twentieth Century, the Roma in Czechoslovakia survived as a loosely organized minority group that persisted in a campaign to gain civil

rights in a country that tried to drive them out. The Roma were targeted for extermination under Nazi control in the 1940s; as many as 1.5 million Roma died in concentration camps. After the Second World War, many Roma, along with Czechs, returned to lands reclaimed from the Germans. Beginning shortly thereafter, however, the Roma were deprived of property and other civil rights for the next forty years by communists, who found the Roma's fierce independence and seemingly lawless way of life "incompatible with socialism" (Carty, 1994, pp. 4-5).

Under the communist press control in effect in Czechoslovakia from the late 1940s until 1989, minorities such as the Roma, Jews, and homosexuals were scarcely mentioned in the press, and when they were, they appeared only in crime stories (Carty, 1994). In 1968, the Roma began to campaign publicly for their civil rights when the communist party in Czechoslovakia, led by Alexander Dubcek, briefly allowed citizens limited freedom. This period came to be known as the "Prague Spring." Despite their efforts, the Roma were denied rights, silenced and relegated again to the margins of civil society throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Roma in the Czech Republic. Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution," the non-violent and nearly bloodless overthrow

of the communist regime in November 1989, however, gave
rise to an independent press that for the first time in
more than fifty years was free to report on issues such as
minority rights. There were 150,000 Roma living in the
Czech Republic in 1993, the year of the political division
of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.
Because of the split, the Czech government required all
residents to re-register for citizenship in the new
republic; the Roma failed to qualify and, to this day,
remain deprived of their civil rights in the Czech
Republic.

Today, there are about 300,000 Roma, constituting
about three percent of the country's population. Most Roma
of the Czech Republic are still seeking national minority
status, which would allow them full rights of citizenship.
All Czech residents born of non-Czech parents, such as
Roma, must apply for citizenship. To qualify, applicants
must be fluent in Czech, have had a stable residence for at
least two years, and possess no criminal record for the
previous five years. The law does not distinguish between
minor or major crimes, and when legislated, the criminal
records would have dated back to the communist era, an era
when unemployed or self-employed Roma would have been
subject to prosecution for avoiding work. Therefore,

children of the Roma are denied citizenship because their parents did not have a job. An amendment to the law allows citizenship to be granted on a case-by-case, but arbitrary, basis. The U.S. State Department, along with international rights groups and Romany special-interest groups, still considers this law to be a violation of civil rights.

The Roma have continued to be victims of "racist attacks, racial rhetoric, discriminatory laws and of general dislike" (Carty, 1994, p. 5). Violence against the Roma by members of a white supremacist group known as "skinheads" has been documented since at least May 1990, a mere six months after the fall of the totalitarian regime. Discriminatory acts have also come at the highest levels of government. Before Czechoslovakia split into two republics in 1993, officials plotted to have all Roma resettled in Slovakia. Municipal officials and extremist political party leaders have blamed the remaining Roma for numerous ills throughout the Czech Republic and have gone so far as to create "Romany ghettos"—evoking their treatment by the Nazis a half century ago. In 1997, the United States and the Council of Europe continued to urge the Czech government to clear up problems with the allegedly discriminatory attitude among some Czech bureaucrats. Some of the country's politicians and newspapers—the pro-

government *Denni Telegraf* and independent *Mlada Front Dnes* among them—denied or downplayed the charges, blaming the Roma for their own situation.

Later that year, a single Czech commercial television news report encouraging the Roma to migrate to Canada, which was followed by newspaper coverage widespread throughout the Czech Republic, ignited a reaction among Roma and Czech alike that flashed into a fire of nationalism and scattered attempts by nationalists to drive the Roma from the Czech Republic for good.

The Romany Migration Story of 1997-98

In August 1997, a feature documentary broadcast on TV Nova, the most-watched television station in the Czech Republic, depicted Romany emigres enjoying life in Canada (Chipman, 1997a, p. 1). The program, "*Na vlastni oci* (With your own eyes)," which told the story of a single Romany family's emigration from Ostrava to Toronto, prompted many Roma in the Czech Republic to inquire about immigrating to Canada. The rise in claims for Romany asylum in Canada was meteoric, soaring from 144 in 1996 to 1,216 in 1997 (Legge, 1998, p. 5). Of these claims in 1997, most were filed in August and September. Of these claims, 277 were withdrawn or abandoned by would-be migrants who changed their mind or could not afford to migrate, and only 19 had received a

positive ruling by the year's end. But the documentary had not explained the realities of the Canadian immigration bureaucracy. The Roma were never allowed to enter the country to stay and were forced to leave Canada. One third of the first wave of Romany emigres returned to the Czech Republic, disillusioned and, in many cases, in worse shape financially than they were when they initially fled the country.

The Romany migration issue, exacerbated by offers from municipal officials to help fly the Roma out of the Czech Republic to Canada, shone "an unwanted global spotlight" (Mortkowicz, 1997c, p. 1) on racism and the continuing difficulties faced by minorities there. Gal (1997) described the phenomenon as "the year the Western press suddenly noticed the relatively massive Romani emigration from [the Czech Republic] which has been going on for years" and lamented that "nothing is true until it appears on television" (p. 1). Coverage of the Roma's plight, including criticism from both foreign and domestic observers of the media's role in propagating negative stereotypes, "flooded the Czech media" (Legge, 1997i, p. 2) for nearly a year after the August 1997 broadcast.

The *Prague Post*

   Among the newspapers in the Czech Republic covering
the Romany story in 1997-98 was the *Prague Post*. Founded in
October 1991 by two young Americans, the *Post* followed the
Western, or U.S., press model (Bernstein, 1995). Now owned
by an American living in Houston, the *Post* is governed by
Czech press law, which the British magazine *The Economist*
ranks as fourth-best in terms of freedom, behind only the
United States, Spain, and Portugal (Jan Jirak, personal
communication, July 3, 1996; see also "Czech Republic,"
1996). Originally, the newspaper's staff comprised mostly
American-born and -educated journalists working for an
average of $500 per month (Bernstein, 1995). These
journalists accepted pay cuts to work for the *Post*. Alan
Levy, the newspaper's inaugural editor, said that
journalists from newspapers such as the *Atlanta
Constitution* and *Hartford Courant*, some of whom were making
ten times as much money, quit their jobs to apply for jobs
at the *Prague Post*. Another editor at the *Post* attributed
its popularity among job-seekers to "job satisfaction" and
a unique vantage point on world affairs: "a seat on the
balcony of Europe with a glass of Czech Pilsen in hand" (p.
11).

Four thousand copies of the first issue were printed Oct. 1, 1991, and sold in three hours (Chepesiuk, 1994). Since its inception, the newspaper has attracted a readership that is about one third American, one third Czech or Slovak, and one third tourists or other internationals (Bernstein, 1995; Garrison, 2000). In fact, its audience includes political elites; the Czech foreign ministry sends copies to its consulates in English-speaking countries (Chepesiuk, 1994). The newspaper continued to be profitable until 1993, when a 36-percent payroll tax was imposed on all Czech businesses, forcing advertisers to cut back on spending (Bernstein, 1995). Despite the loss in ad revenue, the *Post* tightened its own finances and persevered. By the mid-1990s, it was one of sixteen English-language newspapers in Eastern and Central Europe. At one time, Prague was home to three English-language newspapers: the *Post*, the *Central European Business Weekly*, and the biweekly *Prognosis* (Chepesiuk, 1994). Not all of the country's English-language newspapers have thrived or even survived, however. In 1994, the *Bohemia Daily Standard* shut down after only six weeks (English, 1995).

The *Post*'s staff today comprises mostly expatriate American journalists, along with some Australians, Czechs, and other Europeans (Garrison, 2000). They have filled a

need precipitated by indigenous journalists' wariness about "asking sensitive questions or [giving] even well-founded answers" (Martin, 1990, p. 16). The prevailing Czech view is that journalists should be independent and should function similar to an opposition party, to provide political balance to the government. In practice, however, no Czech newspaper—not even the *samisztat*, or underground periodicals—influenced the overthrow of the communist regime in 1989 (Konvicka and Kavan, 1994; Johnson, 1995). Years later, Czech newspapers by and large still follow the government line. Observers say this is because many practicing journalists are still associated, in the minds of critics, sources, and some readers, with the communist regime of the past (Culik, 1997; Stefek, 1997). As a result, the probing, investigative press role has been left to foreign journalists working in the Czech Republic.

Peter Green, who in the mid-1990s was a Prague-based foreign correspondent for several U.S. periodicals, including *Newsweek*, saw a "real strong educational role" (Green, personal communication, July 2, 1996) for himself and other Western journalists in Central and Eastern Europe. Having covered Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic from 1989-1996, Green assessed indigenous journalists as "timid." At news conferences with political

officials, Green said, Czech journalists were likely to stand by quietly, allowing and expecting U.S. and other Western journalists to ask "confrontational questions." By comparison with most U.S. journalism, Green said, Czech reportage is superficial: "There's no real depth, too many four-paragraph stories, and not many 800-1,000 word stories."

The *Post,* throughout its now more than ten-year history, has been the elites' primary English-language source for news in the Czech Republic (Garrison, 2000). Since the Romany migration story of 1997-98 became a significant global news event, the *Post*'s coverage of it represents a rich site for study of media ethics. Communitarianism becomes an appropriate lens for focusing such a study because of the dual factors of the continued oppression and marginalization of the Roma during a period of civic transformation.

<u>Research Questions</u>

Since the language of texts is based on choices, the existence of alternatives is implied. Choice, then, reflects values. As such, an ethical critique of value-rich media texts assumes that those texts are the product of a series of values choices. An ethical critique ought to begin by describing the choices and values observed in

media texts, and follow by defining relevant concepts and
ideas, determining implications and consequences, and
defending an ethical interpretation of the text. An ethical
analysis of the *Prague Post* is appropriate because
producers and audiences of texts take such "hidden" values
for granted (Ringnalda, 1997).

Using communitarian theory as my ethical lens, I ask
the following questions in this dissertation:

1. What values inhere in these texts?

2. What discursive strategies are employed?

3. What journalistic values lie behind those choices?

4. What reality about the Romany experience is
constructed by the text and the discursive strategies
therein?

5.   How might a communitarian approach construct that
reality?

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the *Prague Post*'s coverage
of the Czech Romany story as a significant and fertile site
for ethical critique of the press and of the coverage of a
specific marginalized community. The three chapters that
follow include a review of the literature in press ethics
and international communication; an explanation of major
ethical theoretical foundations of the press and the

evolution of communitarianism into a normative press theory; and an explanation of textual analysis and ethical critique as methods for use in this study. The fifth chapter presents findings, and the sixth presents conclusions about the relative effectiveness of communitarian theory and practical advice for journalists who seek to undertake a role in civic transformation.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Introduction</u>

The descriptive metaphor "marsh, mesa, mountain" (Lambeth, 1988, p. 20) best illustrates the growth and maturation of press ethics as a field of academic study over the past three decades. Courses and textbooks on the subject have proliferated, and university chairs in the discipline have been endowed; a virtual cottage industry has emerged to include paid expert consultants and an academic journal. Concurrently, the collapse of closed press systems and the development of global communication have created both the opportunity and the need for academic inquiry into emerging free press systems. Yet, despite increased attention to post-communist press systems and to press ethics, researchers have largely overlooked these issues as they pertain to the Czech Republic. This dissertation is, in many respects, a response to this oversight. In this chapter, I bring together contemporary literature on (a) press ethics, (b) the post-communist press, and (c) ethics in post-communist press systems. Doing so situates my project within the field of mass

communication research and demonstrates the need for further investigations of the type pursued here.

Press Ethics

Academic research. The word "ethics" and its cognates, both once considered essential in journalism training, virtually disappeared from titles of journalism textbooks for almost fifty years after Nelson Crawford's book, *The Ethics of Journalism*, was published in 1924 (Christians et al., 1993). Press ethics re-emerged as a subject of academic interest in the mid-1970s. Since then, scholarly work in journalism ethics has proliferated. This increase in attention to journalism ethics coincided with increased attention to the ethics of medicine, business and law (Christians, 1995)—and "a steady stream of media blunders" (Keith, 2000, p. 1), including fabricated sources and subjects of stories, plagiarism, and fraudulent and deceptive newsgathering techniques, including staged news events and hidden-camera fiascos.

A three-year study of the teaching of professional ethics in American higher education listed eight media ethics textbooks published in the 1970s (Lambeth, 1988). Sixty-eight freestanding media ethics courses were being offered in the late 1970s. In the 1980s, about 30 textbooks in media ethics were published; that number doubled by the

early 1990s (Christians, 1999). By 1996, the number of freestanding media ethics courses had risen to nearly 300, and more than 100 books had been published with communication ethics in the title. In addition, the first peer-reviewed academic journal in the field, the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, began publication in 1985. In mid-January 1999, one research university's online electronic index revealed that 94 percent of its non-periodical titles cataloged with the keywords "journalism ethics" were published in the last quarter of the 20th century, and the number of theses and dissertations on journalism ethics published annually doubled from 1982 to 1997 (Keith, 2000).

Academic books on press ethics tend to be either largely descriptive or normative. A descriptive ethic gives an account of press practices. A normative ethic seeks to prescribe what the press should do: "The discussion of normativity develops the field's standards" (Cooper, 1989c, p. 263). Christians & Covert (1980) also have maintained that the appropriate way to study media ethics is to consider it as applied, normative social ethics.

In 1980, media ethics textbooks were mostly descriptive and atheoretical (Christians, 1999). These books tended to describe practices without offering critique. Hulteng (1976) focused on codes and practices to

identify standards by which print and broadcast media operated. Swain (1978) and Goodwin (1983) summarized the variety of responses of professionals and academics to such ethical dilemmas as conflict of interest, deception, and privacy. Casebooks were atheoretical in the sense that they presented scenarios and challenged readers to reason out solutions without benefit of a foundation in moral philosophy. These casebooks, likewise, were descriptive (see, e.g., Heine, 1975; and Hulteng, 1981).

Some books, however, explored philosophical and theoretical issues in critiquing press practices (see, e.g., Merrill, 1974; Merrill & Barney, 1975; and Thayer, 1973). Most textbooks in media ethics since 1990 have included some theoretical foundations (Christians, 1995). Even popular casebooks today routinely critique press practices on the basis of enduring philosophical principles (see, e.g., Black, Steele, & Barney, 1997; Christians, Fackler, Rotzoll, & McKee, 2000; and Patterson & Wilkins, 1998).

Cooper's (1989a) *Communication Ethics and Global Change* contains both descriptive and normative content and is especially relevant to this dissertation. The book's nineteen chapters not only address nation-specific concerns about press ethics but also present a list of universal

press ethics. That list is derived by consensus, but not by unanimity. Merrill (1989) argues against the idea of global commonalities; Cooper (1989b) counters with three: "the quest for truth," "desire for responsibility," and "call for free expression" (pp. 20-21).

The Post-Communist Press

Regional studies. Research of press systems in post-communist nations has emerged since the collapse in 1989 of totalitarian regimes in Soviet republics and in Central and Eastern Europe (Garrison, 2000). Because many of those nations had previously been off-limits to researchers, most of the early post-revolution literature comprised quick-hitting daily newspaper or weekly magazine articles either heralding the possibility of a free press or considering the economic challenges of a free press(Aumente, 1991; Cohen, 1992; Ferdinand, 1990; Guskind, 1992; Kamm, 1990; Krimsky, 1993; Lo Bello, 1992; Pell, 1991; Perlez, 1994; Perrie, 1990; Simmons, 1993; "The new," 1990; Ungar, 1989; Veis, 1993).

Much of the academic research that followed focused on the dire need for training and equipment—areas that directly affected the day-to-day capability of publishers to produce viable newspapers—and either ignored or dismissed ethics. Starck (1999) concluded that "reality

suggests fundamental needs, including necessary materials and economic viability," appear to be more vital to Eastern and Central European journalists than the desire "to inculcate ethics" (p. 28). Journalists and journalism educators alike in formerly communist nations appeared willing to accept practical training from benefactors in the United States and from so-called *parachute professors* (Ognianova, 1996), a term used to describe media consultants who visited news organizations for only days or sometimes weeks at a time, then were seldom heard from again.

One academic journal on post-communist mass communication emerged in the mid-1990s: the multilingual *Le Reseau/The Global Network*. The journal, which is published by the University of Bucharest in Romania, focuses on the philosophical, legal, historical, and critical issues in the relationship between communication and society in post-communist Europe. A sample of its content and scope: Its first issue, in January 1995, featured cover stories on "*le journalisme de l'avenir*" ("the journalism of the future") (Bertrand, 1995) and an article on Romanian libel and access law (Middleton, 1995). Bertrand speculated that fifty years hence, democracies would network in a global journalism, and he concluded that the best hope for

improving journalism rested with the academy, which could effect positive change. Middleton's study of Romanian press law found little change in the five years after the collapse of communism and suggested that Article 10 of the European Convention of Human Rights and other European Court case law might offer guidance for development of free-press law. By and large, subsequent issues of *Le Reseau/The Global Network* have focused on Romanian and Bulgarian media.

One major study of the post-communist press in transition hinted at a new paradigm to come (Ognianova, 1997). Ognianova found that these press systems did not fit neatly into any of the previously existing major typologies (Altschull, 1995; Hachten, 1987; Picard, 1985; Siebert et al., 1956). As an alternative, Ognianova proposed that post-communist press systems be described as "transitional" until they fit into a traditional typological classification or until a new paradigm is established.

Czech press. One analysis of press transition in the early post-revolutionary years showed modest evolution in the Czech press system (Wilson, 1994). Comparing the evolution of the Czech and Slovak press systems in relation to their own governments, this study concluded that the key issues were newspapers' financial instability and the need

for capital infusion; a related concern about foreign
ownership; and inefficient distribution.

Another study compared the *samisztat*, or underground
press, movement of the 1980s to the brief press freedom of
the Prague Spring of 1968, when Czechoslovakia enjoyed a
respite from the absolute repression of Soviet authority
(Konvicka & Kavan, 1994). This study found some evidence
that young revolutionaries in 1989 were active in the
press. Konvicka and Kavan concluded that the pro-
revolutionary media workers in the underground were not
instigators of change for political and social
justice—autonomous moral actors, as it were—but rather
mirrored that change. Johnson (1995) found that contrary to
the widespread belief in media effects, particularly the
effect on politics, the mass media have had little to do
with political revolution at any time in the history of
Czechoslovakia.

Garrison (2000) surveyed readers of the *Prague Post*,
an English-language newspaper in the capital city of the
Czech Republic, where English is not the dominant language,
and held group discussions with newsroom, production, and
circulation staff. His work built on research of the
Bulgarian press, which had resulted in the creation of the
"transitional press concept" to define post-communist press

moving toward a Western model (Ognianova, 1997). Garrison sought to determine whether the *Post* fit Ognianova's transitional concept or already followed the Western press model. Generally, Garrison concluded that the *Post* represented media in transition and that "the history of the news media and evolution of the independent press and democratic governments in [the Czech Republic and Bulgaria] are sufficiently similar" (p. 3).

Surprisingly, however, even some of the most comprehensive recent studies of international communication have included little or no mention of the newly democratic Czech Republic or of its English-language news media. Both a study of history, culture, and media in contemporary conflicts in Eastern Europe (Casmir, 1995) and a study of news people around the world by Weaver (1998) examine most of the European nations but fail to include the "media-rich" Czech Republic (Garrison, 2000, p. 3).

A limited history of the Czech press (Aumente & Johnson, 1993), as well as an update of that work (Aumente, 1999) attempted to assess the problems of transition. These studies, however, are hindered by a merging of developments in the Czech press with those in the Slovak press. This approach fails because the two nations, which resulted from the split of Czechoslovakia in 1993, operate autonomously

and need to be studied separately. Each has its own laws, its own press, and its own press ethics. The two may be compared, but ought not to be conflated.

Two other major studies of international communication are of limited usefulness in helping to understand the ethical performance of the press in the Czech Republic. One, a survey of press freedom and press ethics around the world, includes the Czech Republic (Sussman, 1995) but does not address the ethical performance of journalists in the Czech Republic, though the title indicates it might. Instead, that part of the study that is relevant to the Czechs focuses only on press law and attempts to equate journalists' moral authority with the freedom allowed by government. Another study of international press law examined Czech press law but not Czech press ethics (Kaplan, 1994). This study concluded that changes in media law would be the most significant changes in the future of the Czech press.

Post-Communist Press Ethics

   International press. The focus of press ethics research in the past decade has shifted "from local and isolated concerns to the international arena" (Christians, 2000, p. 16). In part, this shift arises out of the 1980 MacBride Commission report, which criticized the inequities

of global information and communication in the world

economic order. Research in international communication

since then has included significant studies of media ethics

in many countries (see, e.g., Black, 1989; Christians,

1989; Cooper, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Merrill, 1989;

Nordenstreng, 1989; Weaver, 1998; and Starck, 1999).

Despite these advances in the academic research of

journalism ethics, Cooper (1989c) found the field of

international communication ethics "embryonic" and wrote

that "the study of media ethics in particular nations and

specific cultures is extremely underdeveloped" and

deserving of "far greater scholarly attention" (p. 263).

One study of the African press called for greater attention

to journalism ethics in the development of mass media in

emergent democracies: "There is a symbiotic relationship

between journalism ethics and democracy" (Kasoma, 1992, p.

7). Nordenstreng (1995) pointed out that the study of

British media, for example, "so rich in general, has

remained sterile in ethics" (p. 141).

Post-communist press. Several studies have focused

narrowly upon the ethical concerns of the post-communist

press of Central and Eastern Europe. An inquiry into the

ethics of publishers' business practices in the region

questioned the morality of press releases that were

accompanied by payment for placement, a standard practice in the new free market (Obermayer, 1994). A descriptive study of Romanian press ethics concluded that universal values in journalism exist (Starck, 1999). "Clearly, given competing demands ranging from fulfilling a social need to maintaining economic viability, ethical practices must evolve in their own due time and fit their own particular circumstances" (p. 40). As noted previously, Starck concluded that "reality suggests fundamental needs, including necessary materials and economic viability, come [before concerns about ethics in a transitional press]" (p. 28). He also concluded

A cross-regional study of the newly independent press in Central Europe and sub-Saharan Africa noted that "a professional ethic that emphasizes responsibility and even-handedness in reporting remains unevenly developed in both regions" (Campbell, 1996, p. 3). The study identified the "propagandist past" (p. 3) as an obstacle to developing the professional ethic that facilitates journalistic credibility and respect. "In neither region have the newly independent newspapers unequivocally established themselves as respected, trusted sources of information and analysis. Too often, the independent newspapers contain shrill accusations and thinly sourced denunciations" (p. 3).

At least two books in the post-communist era directly related to the idea of new democracies and press ethics (Altschull, 1995; Herman, 1995). These authors hinted at the plausibility of communitarianism as a lens through which scholars might observe and critique the post-communist media.

> . . . a democratic media is a primary condition necessary for a political democracy. Even in democracies, however, media are controlled by powerful and privileged elites, and the perspective serves their own best interests. The result is a limited political democracy, not a genuine democracy. (Herman, 1995, pp. 45-46)

Reflecting a communitarian persepctive, Herman called for increased attention to and funding of journalism's civic sphere: non-governmental, non-commercial media but stopped short of prescribing communitarianism as a potentially mainstream press theory.

> The civic sector is the locus of the truly democratic media and that genuine democratization in western societies is going to be contingent in its great enlargement. . . . Media democrats should be preparing the moral and political environment for such financial

support, while doing the utmost to advance existing

democratic media. (pp. 49-50)

Likewise, Altschull (1995) identified the press as an

ideological institution and part of the economic power

structure.

Exactly how the role of the media will be defined in

[the former Czechoslovakia, which] . . . was once the

chief standard-bearer of a Communitarian press

ideology remained to be determined. Despite the

heights on which the market was riding, it was clear

enough as the twenty-first century approached that the

Communitarian movement of the symphony of the press

continued to command a robust group of adherents.

(p. 422)

A study of the information gap developing in newly

democratized nations cautioned against Western media

imperialism (Bellows, 1993). References to *culture* and

values, however, were not in the context of ethics, perhaps

because Western journalists and journalism trainers in the

post-communist nations in the early 1990s were more

concerned with problems of production rather than with

ethics.

Czech press. Mass communication research focusing on

former communist nations, however, has paid little

attention to either news media ethics or the English-
language news media of the Czech Republic (Garrison, 2000).
Gitlin (1991), alone, has specifically studied Czech media
ethics. He considered ethics a corollary to the larger
morality tale of politics in transition from communism to
libertarianism. Addressing whether the highly secretive
list of names of former police informants in the communist
regime should be published, thereby exposing those
informants to possible abuses, Gitlin questioned whether
Czech journalists could learn to cast off the chains of
political party bias and tell a more-rounded truth. Gitlin
critiqued new Czech President Vaclav Havel's anti-press
speech and interviewed journalists and former communist
informants. He concluded that Westerners and newly
democratized Czechs may continue for some time to see press
controversies through different moral prisms because of
long-ingrained values of truth and trust.

Other academic inquiries relating indirectly to post-
communist Czech press ethics included a study of the new
opportunity to report freely about politics (Kusin, 1991).
That study did not refer explicitly to *ethics* but explored
the notion of objectivity. The study concluded that Czech
journalism in the first two years after the overthrow of
the communist regime could not be characterized as

objective. "The so-called activist writers have always peopled the Czech . . . journalistic scene; they are the combined products of culture, politics, and the press—neither simply reporters nor simply politicians nor simply authors of fiction but a little of all three" (p. 6).

Garrison's (2000) analysis of the *Prague Post* did not examine specifically the ethics of *Post* staffers (Bruce Garrison, personal communication, July 28, 2000). Garrison's survey of readers found that two out of every three respondents judged the *Post* "credible" and that a "minority" felt the stories were "biased" (Garrison, 2000, p. 7). These findings do not speak directly to journalism ethics but at least they touch on the idea of ethics.

Conclusion

This review of the research literature on post-communist journalism and press ethics, particularly the study of media change following the collapse of the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia has uncovered little mention or concern with ethics as its own academic discipline or as a lens for analysis. Because the more visible change has been the easing of some controls, academic studies of the post-communist press have tended to examine law and ownership, rather than ethics. Still, the

research literature reveals ethical concerns about
objectivity, credibility and bias. Garrison's (2000)
analysis of the *Post* supports the need for this
dissertation. The analysis concluded that "one lingering
question centers on whether the *Post* is trying to practice
American journalism in a place not quite ready for it a or
a place not even wanting it. Additional research is
necessary to answer that question" (p. 20). Any such
research should be theoretically grounded. The next chapter
discusses the major foundational theories of press ethics
and explains the appropriateness of communitarian theory as
an ethical lens for critique.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY

Introduction

   Communitarian theory, as I note in Chapter 1,

represents a recent and radical prescription for ethical

press performance that has yet to be fully adopted by any

newspaper. Prior to the emergence of communitarianism as a

normative press ethic in the early 1990s, most media

scholars and press practitioners relied primarily on four

classic moral theories. Communitarianism, which has been

translated into a controversial practice known as public or

civic journalism, has increasingly entered contemporary

debate about press ethics. This dissertation, however, goes

beyond a debate about public or civic journalism to return

to the original conception of communitarianism as a press

theory to be normatively applied. To set the stage for that

presentation in the form of an ethical analysis of the

Prague Post, this chapter examines the four classic moral

theories.

   First, this chapter explains and then applies each of

the four classic theories to journalistic practice. In the

second section, communitarianism as it emerged as a social

movement and as a normative press ethic is discussed. That section describes how communitarianism entered the dialog about contemporary media ethics and how its proponents have construed communitarianism as a press model in response to libertarianism and social responsibility. Then, this chapter explains the strengths of communitarian press ethics as a theoretical model for studying the case of the Czech Roma and explains the choice of communitarianism as the lens through which to focus the ethical critique of this dissertation.

Four Classic Ethical Theories

Ethicists from the mass communication and philosophy branches of scholarship have relied primarily upon four classic theories—Aristotle's virtue ethics, Kant's duty ethics, Mill's formulation of utilitarianism, and Rawls' theory of social justice—as foundation for the principles that guide journalists (Black, Steele & Barney, 1998; see also Day, 1996; Klaidman & Beauchamp, 1987; Lambeth, 1992; MacIntyre, 1984; Merrill, 1974, 1989; Patterson & Wilkins, 2001; Rawls, 1971). Although none of the four primary philosophers referred to in these works formulated their theories around journalism, media ethicists have successfully applied their theories to the dilemmas journalists face. These theories fall into two major

oppositional categories: teleological (consequential, or outcome-based) and deontological (duty- or rule-based). Each of these theories bears striking features that must be understood to best appreciate the distinctiveness of communitarianism. In the next section, I introduce each of the four major theories in turn. Next, I explore each theory in greater depth, providing examples of how each is, or could be, applied to press practice.

Teleological ethics. Among the teleological theories, virtue ethics has been ascribed to Aristotle (trans. 1980), and utilitarianism, which was first described by Bentham (1823/1948) was revised and re-articulated by Mill (1863/1979). Aristotelian or virtue ethics speaks to excellence of reasoned human behavior, with the goal of self-realization and the ultimate good, or prosperity, in mind. Utilitarianism, with its adherence to either rules or acts, is based on the achievement of the greatest good for the greatest number, with a focus on an outcome, or consequence.

Deontological ethics. Among the deontological theories referred to by contemporary media ethicists are duty and the categorical imperative, developed by Kant (trans. 1948); and social justice, developed by Rawls (1971). Kantian ethics calls for people to abide by duties or

guiding principles and to apply them to all situations. Rawlsian justice calls for all members of society to determine whether all rights and duties are being observed equitably among all persons.

Aristotle: Virtue. Almost 400 years B.C., the Greek philosopher Aristotle formulated aretaic, or virtue ethics (Pojman, 1990). He believed that each human being has a goal or function, which he called *eudamonia*, which has traditionally been translated as "happiness," but which today might be thought of as "flourishing" or "prospering" (Pojman, pp. 120-121). The highest good for the individual, Aristotle held, is the complete exercise of the specifically human function of rationality. Rationality, or reason, will lead a person to virtuous, moral acts.

Applied to journalism, "flourishing" could mean the exercise of reason through the setting of high standards—lofty goals rather than minimal expectations. Media codes of ethics suggest some standard for journalists, but some codes have been criticized for their low expectations (Black & Barney, 1985). And according to Aristotle, virtuous acts, rather than rules, are the moral basis of activity (Pojman, p. 121). Still, some virtuous principles—"truth telling, humaneness, justice, freedom, and stewardship of free expression"—are to be found in

normative U.S. journalistic standards (Lambeth, 1992, p. 80). Journalists seeking to follow a virtue ethic might ask themselves the following types of questions: "What kind of reporter should I become? How shall I tell this story?" The virtuous answer, naturally, is to strive for good; to work toward attaining excellence. Aristotle also asserted that virtue lies at the "golden mean" between extremes of excess and deficiency (Pojman, p. 121). But the middle ground of a virtue won't be the same for everyone. For the journalist, for example, the golden mean of courage required to report on guerrilla warfare in Central American jungles is different from that required to photograph an auto crash scene.

Kant: Duty. The Eighteenth-Century German philosopher Immanuel Kant (trans. 1948) strove to find a rational principle that would serve as a basis for all ethical judgments. He called this idea a "categorical imperative," meaning that the principle, or maxim, would have to apply for all people in all cases, rather than as a conditional rule. Kant posited that true morality has nothing to do with what individuals like or don't like, believe or don't believe. Individual abilities and opportunities, Kant wrote, are historical accidents, or accidents of birth. Any

real ethical principle must transcend them. Kant's theory is implicitly deontological, or duty-based.

Guidelines found in some journalistic codes of ethics, such as the Society of Professional Journalists' primary ethical principle, "Seek truth and tell it fully" (Black, Barney & Steele, 1998), are examples of a Kantian journalistic ethic. Kant's theory allows critics to judge journalists' morality by examining the nature of their actions and their will, rather than by the goals achieved in, for example, writing a story. This theory looks at inputs: what a journalist puts into, or brings to bear upon, an ethical decision. Kant's ethical theory states that the ends can never justify the means. According to this theory, then, journalists cannot mistreat a source for the purpose of obtaining a story or winning an industry prize. Journalists would be praised or blamed for actions within their control. Kant would say that a good outcome (story) without ethical willing does not result from a moral decision.

Two key formulations of Kant's categorical imperative are:

1. Universalizability. Always act in such a way as to also will that the maxim of an action should become a universal law.

2. Equality and Respect. Always treat all persons as an end and never merely as a means.

If the maxim or rule governing an action cannot be universalized, then it is unacceptable. A person—for example, a journalist—must be able to will that the rule would be made universal. If a journalist would not will that everyone follow the same rule, the rule is not a moral one. Journalists might consider that formulation in the ethical treatment of sources for stories, subjects of stories, and even those stakeholders who aren't so obvious (such as the family of a man identified in the newspaper for his arrest on a charge of soliciting a prostitute). And journalists would report negative news about the daughter of a close friend just as they would treat similar news about a stranger.

The second formulation of the categorical imperative emphasizes that persons ought never to be merely used. A journalist's sources are never instruments; they are ends in themselves. Sources may be useful, but should never be used. And in being useful, they must always be treated with all respect due to a person conceived also as an end. By treating all people with full respect and dignity, journalists would be treating all people equally. Duty-based ethics acknowledges individual human rights. Again,

in journalistic terms, this formulation could apply to the treatment of sources, subjects and other stakeholders. The sometimes-overbearing drive to win awards or to scoop the competition may cloud journalists' thinking.

Kant would urge that journalists decide what they want to do, decide which journalistic rule or principle they are following if they follow through on that decision, attempt to universalize that rule, confirm that the rule (and therefore the action they have chosen) respects the dignity of all the stakeholders in a story, and then act.

Mill: Utilitarianism. Nineteenth-Century British philosopher John Stuart Mill (1863/1979) adapted the theory of utilitarianism from the "hedonistic" philosophy of his mentor Jeremy Bentham (1823/1948). Utilitarianism is teleological, meaning that it focuses on consequences, or outcomes, of acts or rules. It implies the existence of a goal, and it evaluates the morality of a person's actions in terms of progress toward that goal. Utilitarianism defines morality in terms of the usefulness of a decision or action for the greatest number of the parties involved. The basic principle of utilitarianism is this: Actions are right to the degree that they tend to promote the greatest good for the greatest number.

But what constitutes "the greatest good"? Mill defined "the good" in terms of well-being (Aristotle's eudamonia) and insisted that "the greatest number" included all who were affected by the action in question, with everyone counting equally. What benefits the majority has the greatest utility. The choice in any ethical dilemma, then, is always clear: Choose that which has the greatest utility.

Utilitarianism is the most pervasive theoretical foundation for journalism ethics in the United States. Journalists are constantly making ethical decisions on a cost-benefit basis. News judgment—deciding to cover to some stories while rejecting others, ranking and placing stories and photographs throughout a newspaper—is most often a utilitarian act. News judgment reflects what editors think will be of most interest and usefulness to the greatest number of readers, viewers, or listeners.

According to utilitarian theory, journalists facing an ethical dilemma would (a) acknowledge the range of actions they might take, (b) project who might be affected by their action, (c) determine the likely consequences, including how many people would benefit or be harmed by those consequences, (d) qualify and quantify the benefit and harm, and (e) choose the consequence that would result in

the greatest good for the greatest number of people. One journalistic example of a utilitarian ethical dilemma would be whether to publish names and addresses of registered sex offenders, a practice protected by law and urged by some victims groups, but which also has been criticized for the harm that has resulted from misinformation.

Utilitarianism poses some major problems for journalists. Reporters and editors cannot always accurately predict outcomes, nor is it always clear how to determine the stakeholders: those who will be affected by a decision. Judging an action by predicting the outcome is impossible. And, choosing the greatest good for the greatest number still may be harmful to a minority. Utilitarianism implies the majority always wins at the expense of the minority. The theory does not acknowledge that individual rights may be violated for the sake of the greatest good. But even the death of an innocent person would seem to be condoned if it served the greatest number.

Rawls: Social justice. Twentieth-Century American philosopher John Rawls (1971) borrowed from Kant to develop a conception of social justice as equality and fairness that borrowed from Kant. According to Rawls, people can never be totally fair when establishing a "social contract"—the agreement under which people live at peace or

in ethical relation with one or more persons—because they can never truly eliminate all of their biases and prejudices.

     According to Rawls, a journalist can—and, in order to be ethical, must—take steps at least to minimize their biases and prejudices. Rawls' theory suggests that journalists imagine themselves behind a "veil of ignorance" (p. 12). Behind this veil, journalists know nothing of themselves, their natural abilities, or their position in society. They know nothing of their sex, race, nationality, or individual tastes. Behind such a veil of ignorance, all individuals are rational, free, and morally equal beings. The journalist knows, however, that in the "real world," there will be a wide distribution of natural assets and abilities and that differences of sex, race, and culture will distinguish groups of people from each other. Behind this veil, journalists do not know whether they will suffer or benefit from biased social practices and institutions. Hence, the only safe principles to choose will be fair principles. Ethical journalists, according to Rawls' theory, would choose to do unto others as they would have done unto them.

An Alternative Theory: Communitarianism

Ethical theories for the press beyond the four mentioned here abound, but these are the most commonly cited. Communitarianism has emerged during the past two decades in response to the individualism advanced by liberal theory and practiced historically in the United States (see Merrill, 1974, 1989, 1990, 1997). A group of political philosophers in the 1980s—Charles Taylor, Michael J. Sandel, and Michael Walzer—questioned the individualist opposition to the idea of a common good. Their ideas resulted in *The Responsive Communitarian Platform: Rights and Responsibilities* (1994). These authors asserted that communitarians assume a common ground across all societies and all ages, namely the community. The community ought to secure the proper balance between common good and individual autonomy, avoiding a society that leans towards social anarchy or conformism.

Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1993) articulated that communitarianism seeks to balance individual rights with social responsibilities, in the belief that the self neither is autonomous nor exists in isolation but is shaped by values and culture of overlapping and interdependent communities. Communities, according to communitarians, are not traditional, patriarchal, majoritarian, and

utilitarian, but democratic, centrist, pluralistic, and diverse. These communities start with family—paying particular attention to children—and propagate tolerance and peaceful conflict. Communitarianism views all people as connected through a variety of community networks. Problem-solving emerges through the interaction of people with one another. Individualism is replaced not by its opposite, collectivism, but instead by a universal solidarity characterized by mutuality.

The notion of communitarianism is not new. Etzioni (1993) points out that, although the term was coined in 1841, the philosophy itself is rooted in ancient Greece. Now, the media have become an inherent part of the newly repopularized communitarian ideal.

A new ethic for the press. John Ferre (1988) hinted at communitarianism as a potentially promising press ethic in a groundbreaking article in a special issue of the Journal of Mass Media Ethics on journalism moral philosophy. Ferre argued that contemporary journalism suffered from a misplaced faith in individual autonomy. Ferre wrote that "to successfully counter individual autonomy, a normative ethics of news reporting must understand that both community and personhood are central to the nature of human being and democratic social life" (p. 21). Ferre called for

a moral theory that recognized the "twin mandates of personhood and community" (p. 26) as fundamental and essential to ethical decision-making. Others agreed that the press had failed in its societal duties, and a new journalism based on community participation was framed (Christians et al., 1993; Merritt, 1995; Rosen, 1991).

Summary of *Good News*. Christians et al. (1993) articulate a press theory based on communitarianism and critical of the liberal foundations of the press. Tracing the U.S. press paradigm to the individual autonomy of the Enlightenment mind, the authors point to how what they call the outdated libertarian ideology and the classic liberal theory of the press have contributed to an amoral and antisocial order. While eschewing the singular importance of the self, the authors' communitarianism also rejects collectivism/communism as an alternative. The truly moral social solution, they argue, is in communitarian democracy and in the notions of person- and group-in-community. In other words, journalists should not consider themselves to be "lone rangers" but rather should become vested stakeholders in a community's well-being. Communitarian ethics, the authors argue, requires: a reorientation of the journalistic mission to strive for and incorporate notions of social justice; a covenant between all interdependent

members of a community; and empowerment of all members of the community, not just those with money and ready access to the press.

The authors lay the groundwork for this thesis first by asserting that the libertarian approach has failed to establish an equitable and free press for all. They begin with an examination of the philosophical roots and historical rise of Enlightenment individualism. Eighteenth-Century man saw himself as free from nature and independent of authority; personal freedom was the most cherished among the rights that accrued to the individual. The Enlightenment established for future journalists "a pervasive individual autonomy" (p. 43). The authors argue that Locke's "commitment to the sacred self" underlies this theory, and that the idea in U.S. press theory of "free expression as a natural right" (p. 45) also has its roots in Locke.

That individual autonomy, supported by Millian utility, is philosophically weak, the authors contend (p. 44). They argue that what is paramount is neither persons nor their communities; but the relationship between individuals and their communities is (p. 49). The authors cite Levy and Beard (p. 44), who contended that the arguments for the natural right of freedom were

counterbalanced by self-interest, and that press owners were concerned with the ways in which regulation might interfere not only with profits but also with free expression or truth-telling. The preponderance of early U.S. newspapers as political-party organs was evidence. Still, journalism historians concede that the absolute right guaranteed by the First Amendment was necessary to effect the political revolution that transpired in the Western world.

But through the Nineteenth Century and into the Twentieth, as the United States shifted from an elite to a mass democracy, and the economy shifted from an agrarian to an industrial orientation, philosophical and legal challenges to the libertarian world view emerged. Even the U.S. Supreme Court qualified the freedoms espoused by libertarian press theory, upholding popular restrictions on defamation, invasion of privacy, obscenity, and sedition.

Christians et al. (1993) concede that although libertarian individualism once had its usefulness in establishing and protecting the autonomy and rights of the "peasant vs. king" (p. 43), it has run its course and has become anachronistic for a democratically pluralistic society. The authors' communitarian theory respects individualism but emphasizes mutuality by recognizing the

value and interdependence of all members and institutions of a community. A libertarian press, they argue, is driven by a negative freedom: freedom from, rather than freedom for. Libertarianism, for example, upholds a freedom from coercion but does not prescribe a freedom for committing any journalistic or social act in particular. Residing in a community requires that all moral agents act to support and even enhance that community.

The authors call for news media organizations to reform their culture around a principle of mutuality that extends beyond the individualism of the news worker or the media organization to a sense of community. Collectivism, the countervalance of individualism, cannot be a solution, according to the authors, because it dismisses the individual altogether. The authors propose communitarianism as a "more radical notion of media-society-ethics relationship at this critical juncture in history" (p. 44). Communitarianism (or mutuality) is not a synthesis of individualism (atomism) and collectivism (organicism) but integrates both in a reconceptualization of the tripartite relationship. Communitarianism situates the journalist and—equally crucial—the media organization as person- or group-in-community. Normative ethics of news reporting, the authors write, insists "both community and personhood are

central to the nature of human being" (p. 54). Social systems precede and follow the existence of individuals within them (p. 62). Media "are not alone in the world and should not behave as if they were" (p. 112). In all, communitarian ethics rejects the notion that liberal institutions, including the traditional U.S. press, can outlive what the authors argue is the collapsed utility of its philosophical foundations. If libertarianism is no longer a good fit for society, the authors ask, how can a press system be justified by that philosophy?

The Hutchins Commission (1947) prescribed social responsibility as a shift away from libertarian individualism. Both social responsibility theory and communitarian theory hold that freedom requires co-existent obligations; and the constitutionally protected press is obliged to be responsible to society for carrying out certain essential functions in mass communications. Christians et al. (1993) add to the idea of a socially responsible press a focus on justice. They cite Paul Tillich, who characterized "justice for the oppressed" as an "unconditional imperative" and "the centerpiece of a socially responsible press" (cited by Christians et al., p. 92). Tillich held that, since the powerless had few alternatives, "a press bound by distributive justice will

serve as a megaphone for those who cry for fairness, relief and recognition" (p. 92). As Christians et al. put it, "ethical commitments are considered privately honorable but extending them beyond the personal domain into public discourse is commonly regarded as regressive and illegitimate" (p. 93). Communitarian ethics requires more of journalists than merely being fair in covering newsworthy events. "Under the notion that justice itself—and not merely haphazard public enlightenment—is a telos of the press, the news-media system stands under obligation to tell the stories that justice requires" (p. 93).

The authors go beyond the notion of social responsibility and prescribe that the press plays a key role in civic transformation. This prescription has special relevance to the case of an emergent democracy such as the Czech Republic. Among the many issues in the transformation of such a nation is the status of civil rights for all inhabitants of the country. The Czech Romany, as previously described, have been relegated to the margins of Czech society and denied their civil rights for more than a half century. The central role of a communitarian press would be to provide a voice for the voiceless and to encourage a

civil public conversation. Communitarian ethics suggests either of two metaphorical models for the press:

   1. a lighthouse, focusing its beam around and reaching everywhere, including the marginal or peripheral stories (p. 124), such as the Czech Romany; or

   2. a power plant, dispersing energy to a million bulbs — a public forum for the widest spectrum of debate (p. 125).

   As the authors note, "A press devoted to the telos of civic transformation aims to liberate the citizenry, inspire acts of conscience, pierce the political fog, and enable the consciousness raising that is essential for constructing a social order through dialogue, mutually, in concert with our universal humanity" (p. 64).

   Because the traditionally objective or neutral press has positioned itself so distant from subjective involvement within community, to return to that realm would require a redirection of the news media's mission. The new elements of that mission become justice (an equitable social order), covenant (as opposed to contractual agreement), and empowerment (no longer "freedom from," but "freedom for"). The centerpiece, but not the sole feature, of a socially responsible press is, as Tillich suggested, justice for the oppressed (p. 92). The covenant bond

between media and community means transformation for the press as well: The media function as a forum of democratic pluralism, wherein the public conversation is not only accepted or tolerated, but encouraged—even literally in public forums (p. 99). But more than that, the multitudes are empowered; the disenfranchised are given voice; the elements of their lives are "named." Rather than news as an identifiable and recoverable objective truth, news should be told as "truthful narrative," in which truth moves from "epistemology to a moral sphere" (p. 119).

Ethical framework in *Good News*. The authors compare the merits and flaws of the aforementioned classical ethical theories, which they characterize by the terms consequence, virtue, and duty (p. 76). News judgment, as exercised traditionally, follows a consequentialist-utilitarian ethic. The flaw, according to Christians et al., is that predictions of consequences can never be precise. The authors recall failed censorship programs as evidence of utilitarianism's weakness (p. 77). Virtue ethics centers on the heart of the actor rather than the act, in some ways presupposing that the actor can overcome any given situation. The authors assert, however, that this is not always true; the individual cannot always be effective when the structure of an institution works

against her (p. 79). Duty, the authors argue, is a more compelling means of moral decision-making (p. 79). Communitarianism identifies an act as morally wrong when it is rooted in selfishness, and morally right when it is intended to "maintain the community" (p. 73). The focus is not on individual right, but the well-being of all humans. The primary duty, for journalists and others, is to treat others with dignity and care; the secondary duty is to readers (p. 81).

This last statement is significant in that it places care, or minimizing harm, ahead of truth-telling in the case of competing interests. That is a radical departure from other contemporary arguments for normative ethics, most of which maintain that, all things considered, the primary duty of journalism is truth/information. It is possible and even helpful to imagine that truth-telling itself is the greatest show of care, the greatest minimizing of harm that can be done. But such is not always the case.

Stewardship is another key theme of communitarian ethics for journalists. The journalist's role of informing the public is a moral imperative, and journalism needs to be practiced as if it were a public trust. As such, the values that must be treasured and integrated into

journalistic activity are not those that have become

inculcated within the confederacy of journalists

themselves—isolated, by choice, from community—but rather,

those shared pluralistically by the community itself.

Journalism—its persons and organizations—needs to insinuate

itself within the dialogue of a community, allowing that

community to transform itself.

The authors credit the Hutchins Commission (1947) for

resurrecting the 1920s call for ethics as duty to involve

and include all segments of the community; the panel's

report sounded "a note that continues muted, until today"

(p. 37). *Good News* amplifies the volume of that note,

emphasizing an active, transformational role for the press.

Critiques of communitarian press theory. Although

Lambeth (1992) and Altschull (1995) also devoted

significant discussion to communitarianism as part of their

broader treatments of press ethics, *Good News* (Christians

et al., 1993) was the first book to propose

communitarianism as a freestanding press theory and to

prescribe it as normative. Craig (1996) compared Lambeth's,

Christians et al.'s, and Altschull's separate notions of

communitarianism along four lines:

1. the continuum between emphasis on the collective

and emphasis on the individual;

2. philosophical roots;

3. political theory; and

4. the view of each book toward earlier normative press theories.

Generally, he concluded that:

1. Altschull's view of communitarianism was that it was Marxist and liberal, rooted in the Soviet communist press;

2. Lambeth's view was libertarian-based, emphasizing individualism in society, but also connected to social responsibility; and

3. Christians et al.'s view was rooted in theology and Christian agape and emphasized mutuality between individuals and communities and went beyond social responsibility to civic transformation.

Black (1996; 1997) brought together the thinking of a number of leading communication scholars and other ethicists in an expansive critique of communitarianism, first in a special issue of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, and then in book form in *Mixed News: The Public/Civic/Communitarian Journalism Debate*. The title *Mixed News* reflected ethicists' widely varying responses to the theory. Merrill (1997) and Barney (1996; 1997) contended that communitarianism was really just

collectivism/communism in disguise and therefore a threat to a free and democratic press. Christians (1997) and Anderson, Dardenne, and Killenberg (1997) defended communitarianism and proposed that it be applied to press performance.

Ethics scholars concur that *Good News* (Christians et al., 1993) presents an alternative normative theory, building on the classical four theories described previously in this chapter. Christians is "the leading exponent of communitarian thinking among scholars in communication," and *Good News* "sets the agenda for scholarship in [communitarian ethics]" (Hodges, 1996, p. 136). Communitarian theory represents "a major departure philosophically from previous press theories" (Craig, 1996, p. 1). *Good News* is "an important new work that explicitly called for the abandonment of libertarianism in favor of communitarianism in journalism" (Coleman, 1997, p. 69).

Conclusion

As noted in Chapter 2, ethical theories of the press are either descriptive or normative. Some theories describe how the press performs in an ethical dilemma. Normative theories prescribe how the press should perform. A normative press theory, such as communitarianism, may argue for a certain press system as the best arrangement but does

not correlate to actual conditions. It serves not so much as a theory that explains the way the press operates, but rather as a model of the way it could operate. Therefore, a normative press theory cannot be judged by its correspondence with actual press performance, but by how press performance measures up to a normative model. Communitarianism has motivated new models of the press in terms of public/civic journalism and participatory democracy.

The emergent and widely debated communitarian theory articulated by Christians et al. (1993) argues for journalism in the service of the public good—that is, the public as a whole community, and not just a majority desiring the greatest good that utilitarianism seeks to satisfy. Critics such as Altschull (1996) have agreed with that end but have expressed concern over the means. Hodges (1996) describes communitarian journalism as "a fresh way, potentially redemptive and potentially dangerous, to look at the human condition and the function of the press in the modern world" (p. 137).

Given the diversities of modern communities, the news media as traditionally construed are awkwardly positioned to help build bridges. There would have to be a journalistic paradigm shift. Until then, journalists are

vulnerable and prone to leaving out those people who face obstacles—economic, racial, gender, physical or emotional—leaving them marginalized and largely invisible. In the last chapter of *Good News* (1993), the authors argue for the Kantian principle of "the sacredness of human dignity" (p. 178) and champion civic involvement as a duty, thus making the journalist's active participation in transforming civil society a morally binding calling.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for communitarianism would be to put this transformative press ethic into practice in daily journalism (Craig, 1996). Because of the theory's emphasis on marginalized groups like the Roma and because of its call for journalism to transform civil societies like the nascent free Czech Republic, communitarian ethical theory represents a fitting lens through which to analyze the *Prague Post*'s coverage of the Romany story.

CHAPTER 4

METHOD

Introduction

This dissertation is a textual analysis and ethical critique of a series of articles about the Roma that appeared in 1997 and 1998 in the *Prague Post*, an English-language weekly newspaper published in the largest city in the Czech Republic. Twenty-four news articles constitute the newspaper's complete coverage of the issues of Romany rights and ethnic discrimination that arose from media reports that encouraged the Roma to leave the Czech Republic. This chapter first traces the intellectual roots of textual analysis and demonstrates its vigor through examples of how the method has been used in mass communication scholarship. Next, this chapter discusses the method of ethical critique as a useful way of analyzing news coverage. Finally, the chapter concludes by outlining the protocol for this dissertation, which employs textual analysis in an ethical critique of the *Prague Post*.

Textual Analysis

In proposing textual analysis as a method for ethical critique, Ringnalda (1997) notes that "ethics is latent in our decision-making, in the stories found in media texts, and in how the audience chooses to use media texts" (p. 3).

Textual analysis provides a perspective on the understanding of ethics in journalism and other forms of mass communication not possible with other methods. In 1975, Hall introduced textual analysis as a viable method for researching media texts, suggesting that "literary-critical, linguistic and stylistic methods of analysis are . . . more useful [than content analysis] in penetrating the latent meanings of a text" (p. 15). Textual analysis, Hall proposed, "employs recurrence as one critical dimension of significance, though these recurrences may not be expressed in quantifiable terms. . . . These recurring patterns are taken as pointers to latent meanings from which inferences as to the source can be drawn."

Hall and subsequent communication scholars doing textual analysis of newspaper coverage—such as Acosta-Alzuru (1997), Lester (1994), and Lule (1989; 1991; 1993; 1995; 1997)—have demonstrated that, through language, the media act as signifying agents, constructing meaning and, hence, reality. Moreover, since components of language can have more than a single meaning, textual analysis acknowledges that language-texts can have more than a single meaning. However, a consensus meaning, making sense of an event, can be derived through a dominant reading of a

text, which is one way in which mass communicators seek to

position the reader in relationship to the text.

The text is "only a means in cultural study . . . a raw

material from which certain forms . . . may be abstracted"

(Johnson, 1986/1987, p. 62). As Acosta-Alzuru (1999) noted,

"while we do not know all the possible understandings

(meanings) that could be derived from a particular text, we

can make arguments about the kinds of meanings that can be

in the text" (p. 33). Media texts offer readers three

positions: (1) the preferred reading, (2) the negotiated

reading, and (3) the oppositional reading (Hall, 1980). The

preferred or dominant reading is that which the author

intends or desires for the reader. Good textual analysis,

however, must seek to uncover all layers of meaning in a

text. To do so, the researcher undertaking textual analysis

should determine both the preferred reading and alternative

readings. By unpacking the multiple layers of meaning in a

text, the researcher is able to demonstrate the ideological

force of these meanings, illustrating the intimate

relationship between language and ideology (Kress, 1983).

An entire ideological system can be discerned through close

study of the "domain of discourse—where language is deeply

penetrated and inscribed by ideology" (Grossberg & Slack,

1985). Language thus allows ideology to shape perception

and makes it possible for individuals to accept their role
in the existing order of things (Lukes, 1975). Moreover,
culture is "the signifying system through which . . . a
social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and
explored" (Real, 1989, p. 49). Dominant social and cultural
classes define reality; defined reality becomes
institutionalized and, through institutionalization,
becomes lived reality (Grossberg & Slack, 1985).

Particularly in the U.S. press system, free news media
pride themselves on fierce independence and eschewing
connection to any particular class, thus maintaining at
least a perceived appearance of objectivity, neutrality,
and balance (Hall, 1977). But news media—by a routinization
of practices that has been revealed repeatedly in studies
of contemporary news organizations (Breed, 1955/1960; see
also Altschull, 1995; Gans, 1980; Schudson, 1989; Shoemaker
& Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978)—are part of a system that
conveys the dominant ideological thought that becomes lived
reality. Media workers decide from criteria for
newsworthiness what news is, how to rank it, and how to
classify the news according to the dominant ideology of the
news culture. The media are not "some kind of united mafia"
(Galtung, 1989) imposing a dominant ideology, but rather
operate within the dominant ideological system, which

allows for little disagreement over meaning and interpretation, but not for alternative readings. In this way, the media establish consensus by excluding deviance and including only interpretations of events that "make sense" (Hall, 1977).

In arguing for an interpretation of the text, textual analysis implies a critical theoretical perspective in the tradition of British cultural studies. Central to "the positive mission of cultural studies," especially in Hall's work, "are the terms text, interpretation, meaning, conflict, ideology, and hegemony" (Real, 1989, p. 53). Because textual analysis is a method of interpretation, it positions the scholar as interpreter and, thereby, critic. Therefore, a textual analysis must effect a critique. Lester (1994) argued that "textual analysis . . . focus[es] on discursive strategies within the text that . . . help reveal how ideological dimensions structure reporting of news and in fact narrow the range of discursive and democratic possibilities."

Recent examples of textual analysis. Mass communications scholars have employed textual analysis in examining print and broadcast news reports and even advertising messages. Some recent examples include work by the following scholars:

- Acosta-Alzuru (1996) compared coverage of the 1982 British-Argentine war by newspapers from four countries. She found that each newspaper's version of the war reflected the diplomatic position of its home country; for instance, the very name used to identify the site of the war (the British-preferred Falklands versus the Argentine-preferred Malvinas) correlated with newspapers' nationalistic sympathies.

- Acosta-Alzuru (1997) examined *New York Times* coverage of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and found the newspaper's construction of women superficial, simplistic, and trivial. The Mothers were portrayed as demons or victims rather than as interlocutors of reality.

- Lester (1994) analyzed *Washington Post* reporter Elizabeth Becker's coverage of Cambodia. Lester found that the focus, the language, and the symbolism of the coverage tended to romanticize a Western view of a faraway and exotic country while legitimizing Western anti-communism.

- Lester and Raman (1997) analyzed the *Atlanta Journal & Constitution*'s periodic special sections of Olympics coverage for children. They concluded that some examples and depictions of international culture were stereotypical, trivial, inaccurate, and misleading.

• Lule (1989; 1991; 1993; 1995; 1997) has studied how news media constructed several national and international news events such as the downing of KAL Flight 007, the space program, the hijacking of TWA Flight 847, and Mike Tyson's rape trial. His work has resulted in a collection of such texts as examples of myth-making by the media (Lule, 2001).

Ethnic/racial studies. Textual analysis has also been found to be useful in examining press coverage of ethnic and racial discrimination.

• Skjerdal (2001) analyzed the values at the core of the dominant discourse of South African newspaper journalism to determine whether communitarian journalism is an emerging 'paradigm' of journalism in South African. He found libertarianism and, to a lesser degree, social responsibility to be the prevailing practices. He also found that communitarian ideals are absent within the current South African journalism debate, although some calls for social responsibility ethics resemble the essence of communitarianism.

• van Dijk (1991), in a research project on the reproduction of racism in the press in Europe, found that the Western press often conveys a negative image of minorities, immigrants, and refugees, contributing to

intolerance of and discrimination against Third World people.

- • Shah and Thornton (1994) found that U.S. news magazines portrayed black-Latino relations in the frame of a racial hierarchy that is ideologically constructed by and for the benefit of, whites.

Ethical Critique

Kieran (1995) suggests that philosophical reflection may help us to grasp why certain media practices may be "ethically admirable, permissible, or even immoral and thus, hopefully, show us what ought to be done" (p. 83). Ethical critique has been found useful from a variety of approaches in mass communication scholarship, particularly in newspaper journalism.

- • Brown (1999) relied on interviews to conduct an ethical inquiry, based on grounded moral theory, into the relationships between photographers and the subjects of their routine news photos and revealed that an ethic of "care" existed between newsmaker and news gatherer.

- • Buller (1995/1996) examined news media coverage of the O.J. Simpson murder trial and showed how the story was the perfect amoral news story: fulfilling traditional news values and sociological values, but lacking ethical value.

- Craig (1998; 2000) used ethical theory as a lens in a textual analysis of print and broadcast news coverage of genetic testing and found a concentration of consequentialist concerns and a dearth of deontological references.

- Evans (1993) examined journalists' ethical decision-making through self-referential stories about dilemmas and found that journalists omitted from their stories any mention of market and organizational influence. Evans' findings conflicted with earlier sociological studies (Breed, 1955/1960; see also Altschull, 1995; Gans, 1980; Schudson, 1989; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Tuchman, 1978) and raises questions about journalists' self-awareness.

- Schroll and Kenney (1997) employed a close reading of newspaper editorials as the rhetorical artifacts of journalistic acts and revealed an epistemology for determining the relative virtue of a politician's character.

Newspaper research is not the only useful home for ethical critique. Ringnalda (1997) encourages even broader use of ethical analysis to include critique of other media forms, including entertainment texts such as the motion picture industry:

The unique contribution of an ethical critique is its attention to uncovering [inherent] values . . . It is based on the assumptions that media texts represent a series of choices influenced by ethical values and frameworks, and that attention to these values is a significant factor in understanding our culture and society, as well as understanding the role of media in the formation and reproduction of cultural values. (p. 1)

Applied critique. Like textual analysis, ethical critique requires that the scholar enter into a text for the purpose of evaluating it. Such a method does not produce a broad overview of a text or series of texts but instead closely examines the values mediated through the choices made at four sites, which are defined in this section: production, content, dissemination, and consumption (Johnson, 1986/87; see also Ringnalda, 1997). Depending on the case, any one of these sites may accrue more relevance for critique than any of the others. A single site may offer the opportunity for the thickest description. These sites, however, may be interrelated, so each merits some consideration in a comprehensive study of a single text. I begin with a discussion of the merits of

each site in the context of this case study of the *Prague Post*.

Production refers to the process of creating a media text. It involves choices in story idea selection, writing, and editing, all of which are manifest in the text. The site of study in this case is coverage of the Roma in the *Post*. My focus includes textual choices actually made and, through use of moral imagination—the actual exercise of critique—determination of which values choices may have been rejected.

Content of a media text manifests those choices actually made and thereby models the ethical dilemmas that constantly arise in, for example, word choice. Similar to qualitative content analysis, ethical critique considers ethical themes and issues to be manifest, but in the spirit of true textual analysis, the *Post*'s coverage will be mined for latent meaning as well.

Dissemination involves targeting an audience and marketing a text. So the site could include the text, the market for media message distribution, and distribution strategies. My ethical critique of the *Post* considers values behind the decision to start up a newspaper in Prague, values of free-market competition among newspapers,

and the newspaper's marketing and sales position—as they relate to the textual choices.

Consumption, usually an essential site for study because of the opportunity to compare audience values with values mediated in production, is often less available as a site for ethical critique. Critique of consumption ideally would examine, for example, audience selection, perception, and retention of text, perhaps through surveys or ethnography. My study, however, critiques the *Post*'s coverage of the Roma as an exemplar of journalistic practice in which the important comparison to be drawn is between paradigms.

These sites of analysis provide insight into the ethical values contained in the creation and content of the case text. Such an ethical analysis identifies cultural values in, and the reality constructed by, coverage of the Roma in the *Prague Post*.

Conclusion

I have chosen textual analysis for its demonstrated usefulness in identifying patterns and clusters in the text that, as this chapter supports, represent inherent meaning and value, which may be critiqued for their ethical standpoint. My critique follows a process that satisfies Hall's (1975) prescribed method of textual analysis: (1) a

"long preliminary soak" in the text, which allows the researcher to focus on particular issues while preserving the "big picture" (p. 15); I have closely examined the *Post*'s entire coverage of the story in 1997-98; (2) close reading of the text and preliminary identification of discursive strategies and themes; per Ringnalda (1997), I used this stage to identify ethical choices; and (3) interpretation of findings within the larger framework of the study; in which I defend my critique through the text itself. The latter two stages merit further explanation.

In my experiencing the text both in the preliminary soak and in the close reading, critical ethical issues, themes, and choices emerged from the text. Using the ethical lens of communitarian theory described previously in this dissertation, I have examined instances in the production and content of the text that exemplify values identified as common in global journalism: "the quest for truth," "desire for responsibility," and "call for free expression" (Cooper, 1989b, pp. 20-21). My descriptions of the text are a form of deconstructing, decentering, and reconstructing the text.

After identifying and describing these ethical issues, I began the work of interpreting and evaluating. There may be in any textual analysis a multitude of findings. I

produce the textual evidence to support my own conclusions.

These assertions are compared to the ethical rationales of

communitarianism espoused by Christians et al. (1993). The

resulting quality of my ethical critique, detailed in

Chapter 5, is a product of the analytical method applied to

the evidence.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discussion that
result from my textual analysis and ethical critique of the
Prague Post coverage of the Roma migration story. After
introducing the concept of news frames as either episodic
or thematic, I identify and explain the *Post*'s coverage as
episodic—a serial news narrative that reports discrete
events in as timely a fashion as possible. Next, I mine the
initial articles about the migration story and uncover in
them the traditional, but amoral, news craft values of
importance, prominence, conflict or controversy,
timeliness, and proximity embedded there under the guise of
objectivity. Then, I provide examples of the thematic
frames that recurred during the *Post*'s nine months'
coverage of the Roma migration story. My textual analysis
reveals that, through traditional journalistic choices of
subjects, sources, and language, these themes articulate a
hegemony that reinforces stereotypes about the Roma and
helps constrain them to the margins of Czech society. The
chapter concludes with an ethical critique, in which I view

the Roma story through a communitarian lens and suggest an alternative coverage based on communitarian values.

Analysis and Discussion

My textual analysis revealed two types of news frames, *episodic* and *thematic* (Iyengar, 1991), one much more evident than the other. Framing refers to the way messages—in this case, a cohesive serial news narrative—are constructed through language and presentation and the way they signal audiences how to interpret and classify information. Episodic news frames focus on discrete events involving individuals at specific times and in specific places: "Who did what when and where?" or "What happened to whom when and where?" These questions are generally answered through the objective presentation of facts according to a value system of importance, prominence, conflict or controversy, timeliness, and proximity. Thematic news frames provide a broader context by focusing on general conditions, which gives a "big picture" view of issues. "Episodic framing tends to elicit individualistic rather than societal attributions of responsibility while thematic framing has the opposite effect" (p. 39).

Episodic coverage. The serial news narrative that comprises the *Prague Post* articles I analyzed is simplistic, episodic, and linear. The *Post*'s coverage of

the Roma had been minimal, almost non-existent before August 1997. The word Roma or its cognates had appeared in only 11 *Prague Post* articles in the five-plus years of the paper's existence. Then, on Aug. 6, 1997, the Czech channel TV Nova broadcast a documentary titled "*Na vlastni oci* (With your own eyes)," which told of a single Romany family's successful emigration from Ostrava, Slovakia, to Toronto, Canada. More than two hundred Roma in the Czech Republic inquired the next day about migrating to Canada (Legge & Chipman, 1997, p. 1). Inquiries reached 400 on Aug. 12, the day after the mayor of Ostrava-Marianske Hory announced that the town would pay two-thirds of the air fare to Toronto in exchange for an apartment occupied by the Roma. A mass exodus of Roma ensued as they left homes and possessions behind. Within ten days of the broadcast, sixteen Roma had already been turned back by Canadian immigration officials and had returned to Prague.

Initial coverage. The initial articles among the *Prague Post*'s coverage of the Romany migration story were published on the front page of successive editions of the weekly, on Aug. 13 and 20 ("Romanies ready," 1997; Legge & Chipman, 1997). The very first article was brief and served two primary purposes, which illustrated the episodic nature of the story and foreshadowed thematic frames to come.

Published under a small "Breaking News" label — clearly
indicative of the episodic frame — the first article noted
that, prompted by the broadcast documentary, Roma were
fleeing by the thousands ("Romanies ready," 1997, p. 5).
Immediately, the article established an Otherness/racism
frame. It began with the words "Tired of being victims of
widespread racism ..." The concept of racism itself, as I
will show in this chapter, connotes Otherness by way of
"balkanizing" small groups within communities or societies.
By the third paragraph, this Otherness had become more
clearly delineated. The first authoritative source
introduced and quoted was the mayor of Marianske Hory, who
asserted that "We have two groups of people—Gypsies and
whites—that live together, but can't and don't want to."
This claim is established in the initial article and goes
uncontested for the duration of the nine months' coverage.

Perhaps most significant, and certainly most
indicative that this coverage was episodic, was the seventh
paragraph. This single sentence served as the historical
backdrop against which the entire news narrative would be
played: "The Czech Republic has been criticized by the
international community for its treatment of the small,
impoverished Roma community, commonly known as Gypsies"
("Romanies ready," 1997, p. 5). Herein, the Roma have been

introduced to *Post* readers for essentially the first time. It is also significant that the sentence established Gypsy rather than Roma in the preferred position. Because the Roma were not a prominent people — it has been shown that they were absent from the pages of Czech newspapers for decades—they did not previously measure up to the journalistic news value for prominence. But now that the migration episode—with its attendant news values of conflict, proximity, and importance—has occurred, the Roma assume a generalized prominence.

Because of the weekly publication cycle, the second issue of the *Post* to be published after the Aug. 6 broadcast was the first to report on the subsequent fallout from this discrete event. In shining "an unwanted global spotlight" (Mortkowicz, 1997c, p. 1) on racism and the continuing difficulties faced by minorities in the Czech Republic, the resulting stories in the *Post*, as well as other newspapers, further highlighted that the Roma had existed previously unseen in the shadows of news coverage. Gal (1997) described the phenomenon as "the year the Western press suddenly noticed the relatively massive Romani emigration from [the Czech Republic] which has been going on for years" and lamented that "nothing is true until it appears on television" (p. 1). The episode of news

lingered as a meta-episode comprising dozens of mini-episodes for six months. Coverage, including criticism from both foreign and domestic observers of the media's role in propagating negative stereotypes, "flooded the Czech media" (Legge, 1997i, p. 2). But then as quickly as the Roma surfaced in the news, coverage of them ended before they reappeared—episodically again—over the next five years as it became apparent that issues of Roma citizenship and migratory rights had not been resolved. The very appearance of the story, following almost six years' virtual absence of news about the Roma satisfies the definition of the coverage as episodic.

The Aug. 20, 1997, edition of the *Post* carried a fuller report of the Roma migration and the fallout and reaction that followed. The articles published in this edition set the tone for later coverage. A close reading of these articles revealed a gamut of choices made through selection of subjects, sources, and language that thematically framed Romany coverage for the next six months. First, the presentation and structure of the Aug. 20 story established the migration phenomenon as a "crisis" depicting Roma—or Gypsies, as the story alternately called them—as an Other in conflict with societal norms and seeking a fantasy existence or easy life. Last, details in

this first account used stereotyped portrayals of the Roma: that they are seen by some as largely uneducated, mostly unassimilated, and often criminal.

The headline "Romanies awaken to the Canadian dream" (Legge & Chipman, 1997, p. 1) immediately established the idea of controversy or conflict as the ultimate news value at play. The conflict in this case was between the Romany "dream" of a better life in Canada and the reality of the difficulties of migrating. The concept of conflict was woven throughout the article, beginning with the scene-setting first paragraph. The lead began by describing the harsh "reality" of typical Romany life in Ostrava, which was identified as a "gritty steel town." One street where the Roma live was a "crumbling public-housing block" where "[c]hildren play in the dirt." There was "no running water, no gas, no electricity and ... no work." This picture was immediately contrasted to that of Canada, which was "painted" by the TV Nova program: "a utopia for Romanies." Conflict predominated the article. The Canadian Embassy and airlines in Prague, presumably unable to manage the surge of interest in emigration, were "inundated with calls." Roma from the Czech Republic were seeking asylum but "are being turned back by immigration officials in Canada." Sources, too, expressed a variety of conflicts. A Romany

woman spoke of "freedom" waiting overseas if she and her family could only escape. But the picture was not that clear to all Roma. An unidentified entrepreneur trying to take his family to Canada was said to have "mixed feelings about the move" but was willing to go "for his children's sake." The Roma were cast in this early article as people in conflict with not only the majority of civil society, but also other publics around them. The story noted that the Roma were "victims of skinhead beatings" and "verbal abuse on public transport." A taxi driver was quoted as saying "No one will miss them. ... On the contrary it'll get rid of our problems." Ostrava's mayor neatly summarizes an underlying tension, as previously noted: "We have two groups of people—Gypsies and whites—that live together, but can't and don't want to."

Conflict even served to satisfy the journalistic ideal of balance, which is required by the craft value of objectivity: "the belief that one can and should separate facts from values" (Schudson, 1978, p. 5). This balance was achieved in the twenty-first paragraph of the article, when a Social Democrat party leader noted that the Roma who could most afford to leave "are successful Romanies" and "a positive influence on their community. It would be a disaster if they all left" (Legge & Chipman, 1997, p. 1).

Finally, the chosen discursive technique of coming full circle concluded with an emphasis on the idea of conflict. The final paragraph noted that a Romany official was urging his people to "solve their problems, rather than succumb ..."

    <u>Emergent themes.</u> Several recurrent themes emerged from my textual analysis of the *Post* coverage of the Romany migration story. Language and labels — word choice — were the primary evidence of recurrent thematic framing. For example, the most evident theme was the manifest editorial decision to identify the Roma as Gypsies instead. Deviance, in the presentation of the Roma as an exotic Other, was a way of framing coverage that sought to place the Roma in social context—or, perhaps more appropriately, outside society. A competing dualism of fantasy and reality, closely related in this case to Romany Otherness, was also recurrent in the text. The themes of ethnicity and crime, which appeared also episodically, were almost always interrelated and manifest in the thematic framing of the ongoing story. Finally, the editorial question or decision whether to identify the narrative focus as an issue, problem, crisis, or situation appeared as the least consistent theme that emerged.

Roma or Gypsies? The Roma are more commonly called Gypsies in the United States and in most English-language texts. *Webster's New World College Dictionary* provides a first definition of Gypsy as "a member of a nomadic Caucasoid people with dark skin and black hair ..." (2002, p. 635). Webster's does not include Roma as an entry, but it does include Romany, which it defines on first reference as "a Gypsy." Gypsy is not a denotative pejorative and therefore perhaps not objectionable per se. In fact, *Webster's* considers Gypsy an informal term only in its second adjectival form: "unlicensed or nonunion." The Roma of Europe and specifically in the Czech Republic, however, prefer to be known as Roma (see e.g., Carty, 1992; Watrous, 1998). Therefore, in the case of the *Prague Post*'s coverage of the Roma, the use of the term Gypsy instead of Roma denies the Roma their preferred position and grants that position instead to the communicator (the *Post*) and the communicant (*Post* readers). That dynamic takes away some indefinite measure of control—choice of identity and self-realization—from the Roma and hands it over to other parties, establishing theirs as the preferred position in the rest of the text. This is especially significant, because the rest of the text is about the Roma. Several terms or word usages that appear in stories related to the

migration deny the Roma the preferred position, relegating them to the oppressed position.

The *Prague Post* referred to the Roma as Gypsies in at least one instance in all of the articles analyzed, except one. In fact, dating to 1991, the *Post* had historically used the term "Gypsy" almost exclusively in the few instances in which it published news about the Roma. This practice continued into 1997. Throughout the coverage of the migration story during the six-month period that this dissertation entails, the *Post* almost always referred to the Roma as both Gypsies and Romanies. Depending on whether the group name reference appeared in noun or adjectival form, the label always appeared in the following fashion: first reference to the group name as a noun was "... Roma (Gypsies)..."; first reference to the group name as an adjective was "Romany (Gypsy) ..." All articles about the Roma required a signifier prominently positioned in the article, so these alternate references to "Gypsy" or "Gypsies" usually appeared in the first paragraph of each story — or a least, very early in the story. For example, in the first issue of the *Post* that included coverage of the Romany migration story, both stories on the subject offer the alternate label in the first paragraph: "They are

Romanies (Gypsies)..." (Legge & Chipman, 1997, p. 5); and

"Two Romany (Gypsy) men ..." (Chipman, 1997, p. 1).

These are not isolated cases. Examples abound during

the period discussed here. Some included the alternate term

as the second word in the story — the most prominent

position available for an alternate term anywhere in a

text:

With thousands of Romanies (Gypsies) inquiring about

immigrating to Canada ... (Chipman, 1997b, p. 5).

... Simon, a 22-year-old Romany (Gypsy) laborer ...

(McCune, 1997, p. 1).

... more than 30 Romanies (Gypsies] who flew to

Toronto ... (Legge, 1997a, p. 6).

... thousands of other Romany (Gypsies) ...

(Mortkowicz, 1997b, p.3).

... the complaint of one Czech Romany (Gypsy) ...

(Legge, 1997b, p. 2).

... several Czech Romanies (Gypsies) requesting asylum

... (Legge, 1997c, p. 3).

Romany (Gypsy) leaders hope ... (Legge, 1997d, p. 5).

... state policy toward Romanies (Gypsies) ... (Legge,

1997e, p. 4).

... an apartment housing 16 Romanies (Gypsies) ...

(Legge, 1997g, p. 8).

Another 12 news articles contain similar Roma-Gypsy or
Romany-Gypsy or Romanies-Gypsies references according to
the same protocol. The singular exception to this protocol
should be noted, although there is no context or
explanation for why this article omitted any iteration of
the word Gypsy (Chipman, 1997c, p. 6). Likely, since it was
the singular exception, the omission of the word was an
oversight.

Although my dissertation covers exclusively news
articles, it should be noted that three times, the *Post*
inserted the term Gypsy in opinion texts submitted by non-
staffers. Two letters to the editor referred to "Romanies";
the term Gypsies was inserted in brackets following the
term ("On," 1997, p. 12; "What's," 1997, p. 12). This
exemplifies a newspaper convention that allows editors to
add to a speaker's (in this case, the letter writer's)
words so that the direct quote or passage remains
consistent with the newspaper's chosen style. The
convention was employed again in an opinion column that
appeared on the subject of the Roma (Druker, 1998).

Further, two of the first three articles about the
migration story included a second reference to the
alternate term Gypsy, each in a direct quote: " 'We just
want to help the Gypsies' " (Legge & Chipman, 1997, p. 1);

and "The two assailants ... kicked the Romany in the head while shouting 'you Gypsy pigs,' local police said" (Chipman, 1997a, p. 1). In a more significant representation, the term Gypsy appeared in larger type in a subordinate headline: "But Gypsy leaders upset that it took international pressure to force government to act" (Legge, 1997i, p. 7). The subordinate headline appeared just below an even larger headline, which used the term Romany. Again, the rationale for such a protocol is a newspaper convention that encourages use of synonyms when repeating an idea in close proximity to avoid redundancy. Such reiterations of the alternate term, however, can serve to reinforce the perception that the true identity of the Roma is Gypsy.

In some cases of reiteration, the subsequent use of the term Gypsy appeared in the text as part of a direct quote. In one case, the superficial context may have appeared innocuous, but the subtext was fraught with meaning. The passage refers to a teenager's apology to a reporter for having attempted to burn down an apartment housing Romanies: " 'It wasn't my idea,' said Michael Svec, 16. 'My parents told me the Gypsies living in this building are good people, and I'm sorry I did it.' " (Legge, 1997g, p. 1). Ethical concerns arise from the publication of this passage in its form. First, the quoted statement was made

to a reporter, not to any of the residents of the apartment that burned. The article did not specify whether the youth apologized to the Roma. The inference may be drawn that the Roma themselves in this case were not worthy of a direct apology. Second, the teenager specified that these particularly Roma, he had been told, were "good people." The obvious subtext was that "good" Roma do not deserve to be persecuted or made targets of potentially murderous arson; "bad" Roma, however, may be a different matter altogether and fair game for genocide.

Other direct-quote references to Gypsies are likewise problematic. These references include:

"The two assailants ... kicked the Romany in the head while shouting 'you Gypsy pigs,' local police said." (Chipman, 1997a, p. 5).

... placards with statements such as "Canada is Not a Trash Can" and "Out, Gypsies, Out!" ... (Legge, 1997c, p. 3).

... skinheads . . . shouting "Sieg Heil!" and "Gypsies to the gas chambers" ... (Legge, 1997f, p. 3).

"... all forms of racial scum, such as Gypsies ..." (Giordano, 1997, p. 6).

... which some Czech teachers bluntly label "the Gypsy schools"... (Farnam, 1997, p. 4).

... what has become known as "the Gypsy problem" ... (Mortkowicz, 1997b, p. 8).

"Despite the fact that the majority of people, according to opinion polls, think that (Gypsies) are lazier than most citizens, there are exceptions," reported the Czech daily *Mlada fronta dnes* Nov. 6 (Legge, 1997j, p. 4).

Finally, and curiously, in mid-October, at the height of the story's coverage, a full-length *Post* article for the first time referred the Roma exclusively without any mention of the word Gypsy. (Chipman, 1997c, p. 5). This appears to have been an aberration, though it looms potentially large in a textual analysis of such language choices. In that same edition, an accompanying article on a violent attack reverts to the paper's practice of referring to the Roma on first mention as "Romanies (Gypsies)" (Legge, 1997g, p. 8).

A separate reality. The first indication that the Roma described in the texts represented an Other was present on several levels in the first article to appear. The episodic appearance of the Roma in this particular news narrative, after a long absence from the *Post*'s news pages of any mention of the Roma, served to isolate them from the Czech society that was the subject of routine coverage. Lasswell (1971) described this routine coverage as surveillance of

the environment and identified it as one of three functions

of mass media: that the media provide audiences with

important information they need in order to live and to

work. Another function of media is transmission of the

social heritage from one generation to the next. In both of

these respects, the lack of Roma news in the *Post* before

coverage of the migration story suggests that neither their

social heritage nor their very existence mattered. They

were not newsworthy until they were a problem.

The separate reality of the Roma in Czech society was

distinguished by the proverbial line drawn in the sand in

the lead paragraph of this early article (Legge & Chipman,

1997, p. 1). The thesis statement was simple and clear as

the writers strove to establish the Roma's place in their

environment. To dramatic effect, the writers presented the

Roma as outsiders or Others: "They are Romanies (Gypsies),

and this is Ostrava." This was not a quote, but rather the

writers' (and by extension, editors' and publishers') own

statement—their own construction of social reality for the

Roma, which was that the Roma don't belong.

The first government source quoted in the story

affirmed this notion of the Roma as Other. Liana Janackova,

the mayor of Ostrava, said, "We have two groups of

people—Gypsies and whites—that don't want to live together"

Legge & Chipman, 1997, p. 1). One of the news values of journalism, I have noted previously, is prominence. As both an elite government source and as a catalyst for the Roma exodus, the Ostrava mayor occupied a preferred position in the text. His words were offered, uncontested, at face value. First, he stated as fact that "Gypsies and whites" did not want to live together, and the article did not dispute that by offering an alternative view or any other support for that notion. Second, the authoritative source delineated between the majority whites and the minority Gypsies, clearly framing the latter's Otherness. He was quoted further as saying that his proposed solution—which was to encourage the Roma to leave—was not "racist." Again, he was framing the difference between Roma and non-Roma as one of race—an indefensible claim that the newspaper, even under the objectivity paradigm, did not contest.

One unattributed and obviously exaggerated claim published in this early article was that "[e]very Romany in Ostrava has a firsthand account of racial discrimination." This statement—unattributed and therefore a claim by the writer—served to establish a number of truths about the *Post*'s position. First, the statement began a paragraph of six sentences that framed the Romany migration story as causally related to race. Of these, only the fifth sentence

included attribution—the vague "they say." Moreover, the

phrase "[e]very Romany" served to round up all members of

that ethnic group and brand them all as complainants

against discriminatory treatment by societal institutions

or attacks against them by members of another group.

The unidentified Romany entrepreneur mentioned in the

story was said to have "high hopes of finding a racist-free

environment." The words were not his, but the writers'.

This Romany man was never quoted mentioning race or racism.

He only likened the Roma to Italians and Spaniards in

appearance; they are all members of the same Caucasoid

race, a point that continued to go unmentioned in the

Prague Post.

Even the Romany family that was the subject of the TV

Nova documentary was never identified by name in any of the

Post's coverage of the Romany story. The Romany family is

present in two articles in that first issue—by mention in

the main story analyzed above and in a sidebar about the

documentary's producer—but family members are never

accorded any identification that would grant their words

and their views equal status in the newspaper, if not in

society.

The thematic frame of Otherness recurred a few issues

later in a lead paragraph of another front-page article in

the *Post*: "Romany (Gypsy) leaders hope that a report by the state's Council for Nationalities and Ethnic Minorities will be a springboard for government action toward alleviating discord between Czechs and Romanies" (Legge, 1997d, p. 5). The second sentence further supports this notion of Otherness with the phrase "between Romanies and the state." In the latter instance, the paragraph explains that the Roma are not citizens. That is a matter of law—"the country's controversial citizenship law," the article notes. In the former instance, however, the delineation between Czech and Roma, out of context, constructs or affirms a reality that the Roma are something other than Czech, no matter that some of them are of a lineage that has survived in the country for hundreds of years.

Yet another article reiterated this delineation by use in the lead, or first, paragraph of the phrase "state policy toward Romanies (Gypsies)" (Legge, 1997e, p. 1). Again, the two subjects are in antipathy ("toward"), and the meaning is explicit: The Roma are a foreign group about whom the state formulates policies for establishing relationships.

The concept of Romany Otherness evolved into a full-blown thematic frame of race by the third week of coverage

during the six-month period. By this time, the *Post*'s
coverage of the issue had shifted a little toward more
explanation and context. In seeking to make meaning of the
Romany migration story, the *Post* quickly adopted the
hegemonic view already articulated by state sources, of the
issue of race, rather than ethnicity. The *Post* called a
Romany man's beating by skinheads and other forms of
discrimination against the Roma "racially motivated," a
term that appeared three times in the same article
(McClune, 1997, p. 1). Again, the paper's linguistic choice
placed the term—and hence the idea of Roma as members of an
Other race—in the preferred position by which readers would
learn the information and understand the issue.

The racism frame recurred for the duration of coverage
of the migration story. For example:

But the bilingual Romany (Gypsy) quickly transferred
... to escape the rampant racial discrimination (Farnam,
1997, p. 4).

She added that outbursts of racial intolerance are
extremely rare in Canada" (Legge, 1997c, p. 3).

... more than 1,000 cases of racially motivated
attacks, in which 18 Romanies have died ... (Legge, 1997g,
p. 8).

...Havel appealed to all Czech residents of the Czech
Republic to fight against the 'unconscious and
inconspicuous elements of our latent racism which slumber
in our society'" (Legge, 1997i, p. 7).

... gathered in the street where the Romanies lived,
yelling racist insults ... (Legge, 1997g, p. 8).

Romany leaders ... to escape racial persecution ...
(Primlani, 1998, p. 1)

One other way in which the Other thematic frame
recurred concerned the use of fantasy/dream metaphors that,
in constructing a separate reality for Roma, ironically
constructed an alternate reality—or un-reality. This
metaphorical construct was prevalent from the earliest
coverage.

An article about Roma being turned back by Canadian
authorities after being encouraged by the TV Nova
documentary life in Canada was headlined "Romanies awaken
to Canadian dream" (Legge & Chipman, 1997, p. 1). The dream
metaphor, reinforced by use of the word "awaken" and made
explicit in large type, quickly and overwhelmingly
established the preferred position that these Roma were out
of touch with reality. This reality was confirmed in the
lead paragraph, already mentioned as describing the
harshness of Roma life. The article quantifies that 18,000

Roma "dream of starting a new life." The documentary, this article points out, was said to have "painted a utopia for Romanies"—implying that a good life for the Roma existed only in a place that was nonexistent. In that same article, Roma statements are referred to as "[s]entiments," a term that, in all its denotative and connotative meanings attaches emotionalism and a degree of irrationality. Likewise, even the one Romany man identified in the article as capable of leaving the reality of his existence in the Czech Republic for the reality of an existence in Canada, is said to have "high hopes." Perhaps most telling, the article concludes with the words "an illusion of an easy life in exile," in juxtaposition with the pragmatic idea of the Roma "solv[ing] their problems."

So the Roma, virtually unmentioned in the *Post* prior to this coverage, were essentially introduced to the readers as a dreamy Other, reifying the separate reality in which they exist outside society. Taken one step further, this metaphor of place effectively positioned the Roma as deviants, metaphysically outside the communities in which they actually co-exist.

Ethnicity and crime. As this chapter has illustrated thus far, *Post* coverage of the Roma presented them in a context in which they were considered primarily a problem

for the Czechs. In several instances, it has been shown, one problem was the word the newspaper used to describe the Romany situation. Thematically, the focus of this problem was on racial or ethnic crime—whether it was a Roma being attacked or many Roma suspect in petty or property crime. Almost all of the news stories in which this racial predicate was invoked were framed in a conflict or negative perspective: conflicts with Czech society, culture, government, and institutions. Although conflict or negativity was featured prominently in these news stories, narratives or other explanations of the episodes or other historical processes that had led up to the daily life of the Roma were rarely present, let alone prominent. The criteria of news selection (relevance, urgency, authenticity of source) placed emphasis mainly on the ongoing episodes of the serial news narrative, which portrayed the Roma as a problem for Czech society and its institutions.

This "problem frame," as Altheide (1994) termed it, represents a structural bias of news presentations. It is both episodic and thematic and acts like a magnifying glass on noteworthy events, distorting them out of size so much that they appear larger and more important—and often more frightening—than they are. Therefore, hints or fears in

stories about crime become perceived as actual narratives about crime. Such was the perception of the Roma reified by the *Post* coverage. One local government official is quoted in the first article in the migration narrative, "The Gypsy families usually cause problems and terrorize the other people. ... They tell their children they should rob cars, they spit at people ..." ("Romanies ready," 1997, p. 5). The next week, the newspaper connects Romany social struggles to crime: "With little education and beset by unemployment that soars as high as 70 percent, many Romanies resort to petty crime. Pickpockets feeding off the fat wallets of tourists are common complaint in Prague" (Legge and Chipman, 1997, p. 1).

Once the Roma had been introduced in the news, episodic and thematic treatment of crime—the problem frames—was almost continuous as a part of the serial narrative of their migration story.

Two Romany (Gypsy) men ... were hospitalized earlier this month because of skinhead attacks. (Chipman, 1997b, p. 4)

Police ... have charged three teenagers ... with arson for attempting to burn down an apartment housing 16 Romanies (Gypsies). (Legge, 1997g, p. 8)

Rumors are rife of over-generous state handouts, thieving and shoplifting binges. ... "If I see them, I'm going to beat them up ..." (McClune and Tasker, 1997, p. 1)

As the country mourned the loss of another Romany (Gypsy) to skinhead violence ... Roughly 300 people ... gathered ... for the funeral of a 26-year-old mother of four who was allegedly beaten ... by skinheads and thrown into the Labe (Elba) River, where she drowned. (Primlani, 1998, p. 1)

One article seeking to offer perspective on the recent history of the Roma used the example of a 22-year-old Romany man who was attacked by skinheads but refused to report it to authorities (McClune, 1997, p. 1). In one single issue of the *Post* late in the serial narrative, four news articles focused on the problem of violence against the Roma and the lessening outcry. The main article noted that a funeral for a Romany woman killed by skinheads drew a significantly small crowd (Fronk and Brown, 1998, p. 1). Another three articles described the growth of the Czech skinhead population and an increase in skinhead violence; problems among police struggling with their own prejudices; and increasing criticism of permissive courts (Giordano, 1998, p. 5; Jakl, 1998, p. 4; and Greene, 1998, p.6).

One journalistic tradition that reinforced this notion was a reliance on prominent sources. In that first article, as in subsequent *Post* coverage, few Roma themselves participated in telling their story. Of the nine sources interviewed and quoted in the story, one third are Roma. None of the Roma is fully identified. The first source introduced in the lead paragraph was a Romany woman identified only as Marie. No explanation for the partial identification is given. Two other Roma, one a male neighbor of Marie's and the other an entrepreneur, were left unidentified. On the other hand, all six of the other sources quoted in the story were identified by name and occupation. The impression left was that the Roma were neither fully realized participants in this story, nor in society. To the reader, they were nameless, and only one, the ambiguously described "entrepreneur," held a job by which he could be identified. The Roma, it clearly implied, were social deviants.

The prime themers of the Roma situation as problem-ridden and conflict-oriented, then, were members of various elites of society: local governments, police officials, politicians and national government leaders interviewed and quoted in the news stories. Their perspective was accepted, usually uncontested, as objective truth—another

manifestation of the news values. When sources, whether elite or non-elite, expressed prejudiced views of the Roma, no challenge or balance by the journalist was automatically evident. In those few cases in which Roma were active in the news texts (when they were quoted, rather than merely mentioned or described), their role was confined to a negative point of view and their position was mainly defensive. The content, style, structure, and syntax of the news texts largely ignored the possibility of Roma as potential audience. The Roma, throughout the news narrative of their immigration saga over a period of six months, were talked about, not talked to—nor were they given much opportunity to talk.

If there was a public commons for a journalistic conversation about the Roma, the *Prague Post* was not it.

Issue, problem, plight, crisis. The terminology chosen to describe the precise situation of the Roma throughout coverage of the migration story also merits close reading for latent meaning. Variably, the situation is referred to as either an *issue*, or a *problem*, or a *plight*, or a *crisis*. Connotatively, as well as denotatively, the terms are neither equal nor, for the most part, neutral. *Webster's New World College Dictionary Fourth Edition* defines issue as "a point under dispute" (2002, p. 759); problem as "a

perplexing or difficult matter" (p. 1144); plight as "a distressing situation" (p. 1107); and crisis as "a decisive or crucial time, stage or event" (p. 344). The terms are used interchangeably in the *Post*'s coverage about the Romany migration story, however, and without any explanation or context for their appearance or disappearance or reappearance from the texts. Given that word choice is a highly valued skill in journalism, it is highly unlikely that the repeated interchangeability of the terms is a mere accident.

Beyond the considerable denotative differences, these words' connotative meanings must be considered for the inherent values they represent.

The word *crisis*, which has both the denotatively and connotatively strongest meaning of the possible variants, appeared in only one instance — the first article that appeared after the story began developing. "Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus met with Romany leaders Aug. 14 to discuss the current crisis ... " (Legge and Chipman, 1997, p. 1). In the same article, however, the crisis was downgraded to the more moderate but still descriptive *problem*: "Scuka urged Romanies to stay in the country and work with Czechs to solve their problems ..."

Other articles assigned a connotative hopelessness to the situation. "The plight of Czech Romanies, rather than improving under the international scrutiny the situation created, may actually have worsened in recent months" (Chipman, 1997c, p. 5). "Romany community leaders, while glad the document was approved, are miffed that it took international muscle to address the plight of the Romanies" (Legge, 1997i, p. 7)—much as it took semantic muscle to settle on *plight* as the proper term in this case. Yet elsewhere in the latter article, the *plight* is referred to as merely "the current situation."

Among these terms, the one least laden with ethical values is *issue*. As a journalistic convention, the term *issue* implies controversy—itself not an ethically loaded term, but rather one reflecting the conventional journalistic value of conflict. *Issue* appears twice in the texts, yet both contexts are schizophrenic, as the writer vacillates between the unequal terms *issue* and *problem*.

Though saying it should not become a major obstacle to Czech integration in European structures, he emphasized that the Romany issue could become a problem if neglected. (Mortkowicz, 1997b, p. 8) Jiri Malenovsky, the Czech ambassador to the CE, also criticized Czech authorities for ignoring Romany

problems. "It's necessary to open up the Romany

issue," he said. "Problems stem from insufficient

communication, which can take the form of certain

displays of racism." (Legge, 1997h, p. 5)

Situation, a term void of values, appears as the

descriptor in only one other instance: "the situation of

the Romany community in the Czech Republic" ("Is media,"

1997).

Certainly, using the proper terms to paint a clear

picture in any story is a universal journalistic

obligation, the metaphorical embodiment of seeking truth

and telling it.

Conclusion About Textual Analysis

My textual analysis of this singular serial news

narrative has revealed an episodic and thematic framing

that follows conventional media practices that legitimize

ethnic inequalities and continued oppression of

marginalized groups. In this particular case, the *Prague

Post*'s extended coverage of the Romany migration story of

1997-98 promulgated the preferred position of social

discourse that depicted the Roma as a dreamy Other living

or seeking an alternate or fantasy reality/existence and as

a continuing problem for Czech society and its

institutions. These texts helped construct an active

opinion or set of attitudes for an elite readership among the majority population. The *Post* thus provided a pre-definition of the Roma with which readers and other recipients of the newspaper's messages could create or shape their own attitudes.

In my close reading of the text, critical ethical issues, themes, and choices emerged. My analysis also revealed that the *Post* tended to follow traditional news craft values of objectivity, conflict or controversy, importance, timeliness, and prominence. In other words, the *Post*'s discursive practices, such as reliance on official and authoritative sources and emphasis on discrete events rather than on long-term or historical processes, as well as its editorial strategies (adherence to journalistic norms; focus on crime in a cultural and ethnic context; pre-defining a minority as the out-group) represented a dominant ethnic discourse detrimental to the ideals of community, cultural diversity, and ethnic equality.

In the next section of this chapter, I offer a critique of the Romany migration story through a communitarian lens. My ethical critique will include a suggestion for how a communitarian press might provide an alternate coverage.

Ethical Critique

My textual analysis of this singular serial news narrative has revealed an episodic and thematic framing that follows conventional media practices. These practices have been shown to potentially legitimize or validate ethnic discrimination and continued oppression of marginalized groups. These texts helped construct an active opinion or attitude for an elite readership among the majority population. The *Post* thus provided a pre-definition of the Roma with which readers and other recipients of the newspaper's messages could build their own attitudes.

Because my textual analysis constituted a method of interpretation, it positioned me as interpreter and critic in the case of the *Post*'s coverage of the Roma. My analysis, therefore, must effect a robust and thoroughgoing critique. Although I have previously offered a descriptive critique—describing and explaining actual practice—the true heuristic value of my analysis lies in its normative content—prescribing how the press should perform. As I have set forth in Chapter 3, a normative press theory cannot be judged by its correspondence with actual press performance; however, press performance may be judged by how it measures up to a normative model. To qualify as normative, such an

enterprise must also prescribe a course of action. In this section of the chapter, I offer a critical view of the Romany migration story through a communitarian lens. My ethical critique will offer suggestions for how a communitarian press might provide an alternate coverage. I also offer a decision-making model, which fulfills the normative quality of the ethical enterprise.

The amoral value of news in the *Prague Post.* My textual analysis has shown the *Post*'s coverage to be full of value choices, but void of ethics. The values chosen and exercised by reporters and editors fit the description of craft values of objectivity, conflict or controversy, prominence, timeliness, and interest. Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg (1994) issued a radical call for a de-emphasis on the reliance on current news values and the attempt to project objectivity, a shift from the heavy reliance on the inverted pyramid format of presenting news to the much more natural narrative (storytelling) format, a change from the linear transmission of news as a commodity to a communication mode that entails interactive feedback, as well as a reconceptualization of ethics to encompass multicultural and feminine perceptions (Gunaratne, 1996).

Building on that critique of traditional news, Buller (1996) has used news media coverage of the O.J. Simpson

murder trial to illustrate how these craft values are
typically selected and come into play. Carefully analyzing
aspects of the Simpson news narrative, Buller illustrated
that these craft values are significantly different from
the sociological values identified by Gans (1979) and
ethical values suggested by Patterson and Wilkins (1994)
and others whose work I described in Chapter 3. Buller
differentiated these craft values as amoral: functional in
a libertarian press but inherently unconcerned with moral
standards; neither moral nor immoral" (p. 46).

My textual analysis has shown that these same craft
values resulted, in the *Prague Post*, in a lack of coverage
of the Roma except in stories about crime or about their
being unwanted. Communitarianism requires journalists to
acknowledge that the social marginalization of any minority
group is harmful to both the marginalized group and to
society—the community—in general. The communitarian
perspective also demands that journalists acknowledge that
reporting on whole communities, including otherwise
marginalized groups, is not only a professional duty but
also an ethical value. Not engaging the whole story of the
Roma—instead ignoring or avoiding telling stories about any
particular person or group in a community—is journalism
void of ethics. By not covering the Roma as fully as

possible and choosing to ignore their plight, journalists are at least tacitly supporting a xenophobic ideology. The news media's choice to concentrate coverage on constituents who "matter" socially and economically represents a simplistic—but typically journalistic—utilitarian choice: favoring the greatest good for the greatest number. Choosing to ignore any segment of the community is a form of tacitly supporting an ideology of dangerous and harmful "-isms": racism, sexism, or ageism, for example. Conversely, a thorough and ongoing discussion of such issues—or rather, the public conversation about them on the conversational commons that journalism could represent—however painful, is a way of challenging the dominant social, economic, and political ideology. Communitarian journalism confronts morality and centralizes it in the exercise of craft skills.

    <u>The communitarian model.</u> Communitarian journalism is "committed to justice, covenant, and empowerment" (Christians et al 1994, 14). I offer here one such model, based on these three ethical values, which are the heart of communitarian journalism, and apply it to the *Prague Post*.

    <u>Justice.</u> The normative principle of justice for the communitarian journalist: always act justly. Journalists' actions—the stories they choose to cover and write and the

stories they choose not to cover or not to write—are available to public scrutiny. Justice is a social concept. To act justly, the journalist must consider community obligations, history, and the actions of all people. Communitarian journalists seek to actively enhance their own and others' community connections. Communitarian justice, therefore, would demand that journalists at the *Prague Post* actively connect to community. This poses a special challenge for an English-language newspaper in the Czech Republic, especially one staffed largely by expatriates of other nations. Continued integration and settlement of journalists into the Czech community—as opposed to the "parachute principle" decried by Ognianova (1995)—is one step toward connecting. Another would be the continued integration into the newspaper's staff of Czech journalists. The *Post* has established itself as community partner by sponsoring and otherwise supporting local arts and recreational events, but the connection requires additional and ongoing training and corporate commitment, perhaps especially to the country's journalism schools. To fulfill the justice principle, journalists must also see beyond the craft value of objectivity. Objectivity is a utilitarian orientation that values strongly held or majority views that, by definition, exclude minority views.

Communitarian journalists must seek truth and report it fully—beyond the majority view. Issues such as racism, suffrage, and social welfare have all been historically defined in the press according to the hegemonic view. Therefore, the communitarian journalist would acknowledge that telling the truth, even about unpleasant things, is not just a professional duty or a craft value, but instead an ethical obligation. Communitarianism holds that news, rather than objective and untouchable, should be told as "truthful narrative," in which truth moves from "epistemology to a moral sphere" (Christians et al., 1993, p. 119).

Communitarian journalists must engage a community and its issues to let everyone know why a particular story is newsworthy and has been brought to public attention. Discrete news events are by definition episodic, but the serial coverage of the mistreatment of minorities, such as the Roma, shows that it is a continuing problem. This is not to say that episodes should be ignored or that the *Post* should not have reported on each episode. On the contrary, such stories needed and need to be told. But, accounts need to be complete and contextual. An incomplete account, published primarily to meet a deadline or fill a space need, is not likely to include all stakeholders and their

moral claims. That was clear from the outset of the *Post*'s coverage. By communitarian standards, the traditional craft value of timeliness, which may further individual interests in the marketplace where media businesses compete for news, carries less weight when measured against a community value of completeness. By communitarian standards, business competition is not an ethic. Given the ongoing narrative of minorities' mistreatment, neither does the traditional value of breaking news hold much weight.

Rather than follow journalism's craft value of objective, "on-the-other-hand" reporting, communitarianism demands that journalists actively counter false claims or inflammatory statements with actual fact. For a newspaper such as the *Prague Post*, this implies a sea change; not because the newspaper is inaccurate in its reporting, but because it faces immense intercultural and historical challenges. (The indigenous press of the Czech Republic faces its own challenge of history in a country that suffered for more than a half-century under deceptive and destructive regimes.) Communitarian journalists would demand that those who make claims produce evidence and be accountable. Each statement, whether by elected or appointed public officials, business proprietors, or other Czech citizens, could have been contextualized and

countered if necessary in the *Post*. Unable to produce evidence, specious claims offer nothing substantial to offer in the community debate of issues. They bring nothing to the conversational commons.

When reporting episodes of negative news—whether crimes against people or property or the continued denial of citizenship rights to the Roma—communitarian journalists must include context and background that explains the harm such practices and policies cause. Communitarian journalists must do this prominently in the same story in which the episodic news is reported, rather than relegate the background to the "bottom" of the story as the traditional craft value of writing in inverted pyramid style demands. Communitarian journalists must provide stakeholders who are most affected the opportunity to make their claims and counterclaims — within the framework articulated in the previous paragraph — in those episodic news accounts. The *Post* could have provided some counterclaims—contesting the concept of racial difference, for example—on its own and sought out Romany response as well.

Christians et al. (1993) pointed out that the 1947 Hutchins Report on Freedom of the Press used the term "social responsibility" and deliberately shifted the issues

away from the individual and freedom toward their
opposites. It denied the premise of neutral
observation—"that events themselves control content"—and
promoted the observer's interpreting and analyzing their
environment. The Commission wanted journalists to report
not only the facts but the "truth" behind them. Christians
et al. cite Paul Tillich (1963), who contended that the
only "unconditional imperative 'is the demand to become
actually what one is essentially and therefore potentially'
... [and that] justice for the oppressed stands as the
centerpiece of a socially responsible press" (p. 92).
Tillich held that when the powerless have few alternatives,
a press bound by distributive justice would be a megaphone
for those who cry for "fairness, relief and recognition"
(Christians et al., 1993, p. 92). "Under the notion that
justice itself—and not merely haphazard public
enlightenment—is a *telos* of the press, the news-media
system stands under obligation to tell the stories that
justice requires" (Christians et al, p. 93).

Covenant. The communitarian journalist buys into more
than the fair and just treatment of events deemed worthy of
coverage. The normative principle of covenant for the
communitarian journalist is: seek not just to serve the
public, but also to effect civic transformation. "A press

devoted to the *telos* of civic transformation aims to liberate the citizenry, inspire acts of conscience, pierce the political fog, and enable the consciousness raising that is essential for constructing a social order through dialogue, mutually, in concert with our universal humanity" (Christians et al., p. 64). This focus shifts the conversation of journalism away from a one-way or two-way asymmetrical model of communication to a public discussion among potentially all citizens. Under this principle, journalists' work becomes more than just the locus for a debate within community; it becomes virtually the conversational commons that constitutes community (Anderson, Dardenne, Killenberg, 1994). The journalist's role is absorbed into the social, political, economic, and democratic structure of community. How journalists view their contract with society affects what they see and report on and how they construct social reality — where they shed light or focus its beam.

Communitarianism is especially sensitive to the hegemonic value of, in the case of the migration story, words such as *Gypsy*, *whites*, *race*, *problem*, *plight*, *crisis,* and other loaded language that shape the view that some people are undesirable not because of their individual qualities but because they are also members of particular

groups. Judging or labeling individuals by their member groups rather than by their individual virtue as person-in-groups offends the democratic ideal of the newly constituted Czech nation. The *Prague Post* could have countered such tactics in several ways. First, avoid such labels and language unless germane to the context of the story. Second, a communitarian journalist would have engaged the whole community, seeking out sources who could speak to the Romany issue. These sources would be listed in a communitarian-oriented contact notebook with names, phone numbers, addresses and all other means of reaching them. Include not just the official "experts"—government leaders, politicians, bureaucrats and other elites who are part of journalism's traditional craft—but also the unofficial "experiencers"—people whose everyday life is affected by the acts, policies, and ideas of public and private institutions in their community. Communitarianism demands that such sources be put on equal footing.

Empowerment. Empowering the oppressed requires diminishing the hegemonic view. The centerpiece, but not the sole feature, of a socially responsible press is, as Tillich suggested, justice for the oppressed (Christians et al, p. 92). The covenant bond between media and community means transformation for the press as well: media as a

forum of democratic pluralism, wherein the public conversation is encouraged (p. 99). But more than that, the multitudes are empowered. The disenfranchised are given voice; the elements of their lives are "named" in a way they agree represents them justly. A well-rounded discussion and examination of the Romany issue, in such examples as the migration narrative, can provide citizens with alternative ways of thinking and seeing not only the Roma, but also other groups: foreign nationals, homosexuals, and the homeless, for example. Ultimately, that knowledge, when spread among a community, may even become an advocacy that could expose and stop the harm that has been done historically to the Roma.

As previously noted, communitarian ethics suggests either of two metaphors for institutional forms promoting empowerment:

1. the media as lighthouse, focusing its beam everywhere, including marginal or peripheral stories (p. 124).

2. the media as power plant, dispersing energy to a million bulbs; a public forum for the widest spectrum of debate (125).

Empowerment relates to more than just subjects and sources of stories. It relates also to audiences: the

remainder of community. The communitarian journalist must
offer readers alternate sources of information to provide a
wide and deep understanding of issues and social and
political action. For the *Post*, such an attempt to empower
readers would have begun with a "grand tour" of the Czech
community landscape. Contextual reporting, including the
frank and sometimes painful recounting of real (and not
sanitized) history, can be that metaphorical beacon of
truth. Such an effort cannot be accomplished in a single
issue of a newspaper. But as group-in-community settling in
for the long term, a newspaper such as the *Prague Post*
needs to earnestly take on the social responsibility of
community-building. Communitarian journalism will not
necessarily prompt immediate and complete change in
communities. Such change is a long-term process. But
journalism already represents a social asset and potential
community resource that merely needs to be re-inventoried
and reallocated to build communities. Providing alternate
and additional information through more inclusive and
expansive sources is one way to maximize communitarian
journalism's social capital. Print has its limitations, but
situating itself as a public forum for the exchange of
ideas—as the conversational commons—the *Post* as a
communitarian newspaper could become a virtual index,

connecting to almost unlimited sources, such as books,
journals, broadcasts, Internet sites (and the related chat
rooms, listservs and discussion boards) about almost any
issue.

Conclusion

This ethical critique represents a view of the *Prague
Post*'s coverage of the Romany migration story of 1997-98
through a communitarian lens. I have suggested
communitarian alternatives, based on the principles of
justice, covenant, and empowerment, to the traditional
journalistic forms of representing the story that were
revealed in the textual analysis. The overall impression is
that a communitarian perspective offers a distinctive and
normative narrative approach to storytelling in the case of
the Czech Roma. In the final chapter, I consider whether
communitarian journalism has a place in contemporary and
future journalism and suggest ideas for further research of
journalistic discourse.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

<u>Introduction</u>

This dissertation has examined, through a close
reading of the text, the *Prague Post*'s coverage of the
Romany migration story of 1997-98 and has suggested,
through an ethical critique, a communitarian alternative
framework to the amoral craft values of journalism that
imbue the traditional news coverage found in the *Post*. The
textual analysis constitutes a description of ethics; the
ethical critique offered is normative.

The conclusion described the *Post*'s coverage as
lacking moral weight. The traditional objective reporting
that marked the *Post*'s coverage instead emphasized the
amoral news values of timeless, prominence, conflict or
controversy, prominence, and importance—a utilitarian ideal
that further marginalized the Roma. The alternative
prescription for coverage suggested by this dissertation
emphasizes three principles that lie at the heart of
communitarianism: justice, covenant, and empowerment. Steps
were suggested that the *Post* might have taken—and might yet
take—to seek justice for the Roma, to establish a covenant
of civic transformation between the newspaper and its

publics, and to empower both Roma and other readers by serving as the conversational commons through which such civic transformation might take place, in part.

The general conclusion of this dissertation is that traditional media practices reproduce a discourse that legitimizes inequalities within communities. I do not mean here that media discourses automatically and immediately are translated into social communication by direct imitation or repetition of media texts. There is no magic bullet. The audiences for media messages, including the readers of the *Prague Post*, may not even recall the media texts from which they have learned information.

Nor do I mean that media alone can change basic values or shared beliefs of people. But audiences "tend to abstract and generalize and thus form decontextualized meanings, beliefs, or opinions" (van Dijk, 1987, p. 23) from texts and the diffusion of their meanings. The ethnic inequalities of Czech civil society and the preponderance of prejudice in the public sphere—as represented, for example, in the words of a variety of non-Roma sources—were around long before the *Post* came into existence. Even today, those problems are not being produced by media discourse, such as the *Post*'s continuing coverage, alone. But in free-speech democracies such as the Czech Republic,

the media not only enjoy a great deal of freedom but also
constitute hegemony in the reproduction of ideas.

Still, there is reason for hope. The good news, as the
title of Christians' book partly implies, is that a
thoughtful, ethically grounded journalist can be part of
the solution. Recognition of this problem and possibility
has led, over the past decade, to the rise of new press
models related to communitarianism: public journalism,
civic journalism, and community journalism. The
relationship between communitarian journalism, as a theory,
to the public journalism movement and its prescriptions
cannot be denied. Despite my pre-emptive strategy in
Chapter 1 to differentiate communitarian journalism from
other forms, they do share some features. Communitarian
journalism as I have described stems from a social theory
that, in turn, is rooted in the work of John Dewey (1927)
and Robert Park (1955). Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg
(1994) note: "Dewey envisioned a society of
conversationalists who encounter and respond to messages as
participants, not as news consumers" (p. 21); and Park saw
journalism as essential to "maintaining a Jeffersonian
democracy" (p. 102). Communitarian journalists, engaged in
cross-cultural communication, would be creating a social
good of reciprocity (Dykers, 1995).

Communitarian journalism is also, in some ways, a normative form of the explanatory journalism advocated by the Commission on Freedom of the Press (1947), which called for news reporting that projects "the opinions and attitudes of the groups in society to one another" and "a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of the society" (p. 20). The commission called for "a truthful, comprehensive and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning" (1947, p. 20), a matter of reporting not just "the fact truthfully," but "the truth about the fact" (p. 22).

Communitarian journalism is not the only or even the first normative response to this call. In addition to the widely publicized ideas about public, civic or community journalism, Gans (1980) suggested "multiperspectival journalism," Parisi (1995) put forth "explanatory" journalism, and as noted previously, Shah (1994) has theorized an "emancipatory journalism." These latter three approaches not only include historical, sociological, economic, and psychological contexts but also extend almost to advocacy journalism. Communitarian journalism, in fact, does advocate. The communitarian triptych of justice, covenant, and empowerment advocates a community. Communitarian journalism would give voice to the voiceless.

And, as Anderson, Dardenne, and Killenberg note: "Given a voice, people become part of the conversation" — the community in conversation with itself (1994, p. 43).

Relying on traditional authoritative sources—the venerable college of experts who never seem to agree, thus denying rather than discovering community consensus—is inadequate in communitarian journalism. New and alternative questions require that journalists seek new and alternative sources, which in itself would represent a paradigmatic shift in journalistic storytelling. One early step in this shift is to ask not only the "expert" sources, but also the "experienced" sources: citizens whose lives are actually central, but have been virtually invisible in those journalistic narratives told traditionally from institutional perspectives. Asking people about their concerns and their hopes and, generally, their ideas on issues of economy, health, education, crime, war, etc., represents a start. Such spectacular displays as bringing citizens together in community rooms, as some public journalism projects have done, are genuine manifestations of journalism as public forum. But the real change must be the development of the journalist's own moral imagination. What communitarian journalism really requires is the ability to understand, and act upon, news as a social good.

In a sense, communitarian journalism represents a sort of communication theme park: Newstopia! Perfect Press, Wonderful World.

But communitarian journalism need not represent merely another Utopian theory for our bemused consideration. The concerns and questions raised when episodes of news are placed in more thoughtful context, combined with the community resource that journalism promises, can result in real social capital that builds community.

A communitarian newspaper by definition would build community and thus contribute integrally to civic transformation in two stages. In the first stage, the newspaper would identify the community in which it sits and the publics it serves, including the Roma. This would not be a matter of advertising market research—in fact, it would require thinking in an entirely different direction, away from notions of economics and instead in the direction of morality. More likely, this would require a virtually ethnographic or anthropological enterprise beyond traditional hit-and-run beat coverage. A communitarian newspaper would identify and illuminate the shared reality or meaning created through community experience. Coverage would illuminate problems, and through interaction with citizens, would lead to resolutions to those problems,

further achieving a universal solidarity based on mutual

goals. The second stage would require a drastic overhaul of

journalistic routine, which, this dissertation among other

research has shown, has left some groups in communities

marginalized.

Communitarian journalism itself, then, represents a

social good to be achieved at the ethical nexis of

community, culture, and communication, with the collective

result becoming the real news. To be implemented in

practice, communitarian journalism at the *Post* first would

require:

1. a rethinking of journalism's classic communication

models. As Anderson, Dardenne and Killenberg (1994)

suggest, the linear transmission model needs to be replaced

by a narrative form that is contextual and ongoing, rather

than episodic. Rather than a two-way asymmetrical or

symmetrical model, journalistic communication needs to take

on a dynamic form of conversation available to all who may

want or need to participate.

2. a redefinition of news. The amoral craft values of

prominence, importance, conflict or controversy,

timeliness, proximity—the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where* of

episodic journalism—constitute a traditional objectivity

that simply doesn't meet the fundamental ethical

obligations of truth, justice, and equality. The communitarian principles of justice, covenant, and empowerment must become the driving social ethic of journalism.

3. a restructuring of narrative. Traditional episodic journalism needs to be replaced by a nonlinear, but logical, approach that constructs reality not only as a series of related events, but also a web of patterns and a framework of structures. Such a narrative form in its totality would provide information that builds a community's moral, as well as political, literacy and leads to thoughtful choices.

4. a reconstitution of the journalist as person-in-community—a person who engages in public life rather than merely observes and reports on it. The journalist herself must participate in the dialectic of public conversation to help the community think about itself, learn about itself, understand itself, and on the basis of that synthetic knowledge, arrive at decisions and take civic actions that represent just choices for all. The communitarian journalist and the community must share an underlying ethical goal: the preservation of the community.

Journalists would have to open their minds and imagine beyond the episodes of discrete news events to community-

based perspectives. Better journalistic questions would have to be asked, beyond the traditional "Who did what when and where?" Such questions would have to take on a broader context. In U.S. communities, for example, the news episode that occurs with the release of periodic economic reports might be presented in the context of such questions as "What economic forces are creating or influencing our economic difficulties?" and "What social, political, or economic alternatives could lead to broader (not just greater) prosperity?"

> Implicit in these practices is a fundamental shift in the consciousness implicit in journalistic representation to a concerned, compassionate vision that seeks larger tendencies in reported events, the questions that might occur to a concerned and intelligent citizen. The kaleidoscopic vision can (and daily does), for instance, report business after business laying off workers or closing, and leaves the matter at that. The latter approach turns from those reports to ask: What is happening to the economic fortunes of the U.S.? Where will this lead and leave us? What does it mean to workers, youth, minorities, as well as business owners? (Parisi, 1994, p. 7)

<u>Future Research</u>

Ten years of debate over the public journalism movement, which represented the first significant paradigm shift in journalism since Siebert's (1956) *Four Theories of the Press*, has yet to reach a conclusion about a pluralistic journalism. Gauging by the reaction of mainstream journalism, however, one would conclude that public journalism is either a failure, rejected by acclimation, or just another way of restating what good journalism already does: engage the public. Editors of some of the United States' best newspapers turn up their noses at public journalism and suggest that it may be "using smoke and mirrors to hype what's been going on for decades" (Sheppard, 1994, p. 33). Traditional journalism already "spotlights a problem, solicits reader feedback and aggressively follows the story until it's resolved." Whether journalists ever philosophically accept and pragmatically adopt public journalism—let alone communitarian journalism—as the new paradigm remains a long-shot bet at best.

The heuristic value of my dissertation, then, may be in the accomplishment of textual analysis and ethical critique as a way of suggesting an alternate and viable ethical journalism. More broadly, my dissertation builds on

an emergent tradition of textual criticism and close
attention to the language of news stories. Much good work
has already been done (e.g. Acosta-Alzuru, 1997; Lester,
1994; and Lule, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997), and my
dissertation has sought, in part, to add to the increasing
volume of critical voices. The danger remains that such
analysis can dwell on problems—what's wrong with
journalism—rather than focus on solutions—how to make it
right.

Identifying and demonstrating that even radically new
approaches to journalism—in the case of my dissertation,
expanding coverage from the episodic to the narrative and
building that narrative on the foundation of a new and
social ethic—is an enterprise with immeasurable heuristic
value. Further textual analyses might be applied not only
to serial news narratives on the scale of the Roma
migration story or the O.J. Simpson murder case but also to
whole traditional areas of newspaper coverage: police,
courts, schools, environment. The joint project of textual
analysis and ethical critique proves that evaluating the
newspaper can—and normatively speaking, should—transcend
the superficial excitement that results in contest-driven
journalism winning out over content-driven journalism.
Further research into the ethics of narrative strategies

might result in the development of better journalistic practices for thoughtful journalists.

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