EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NEWSPAPER CODES OF

ETHICS: A *STAR-TELEGRAM* CASE STUDY
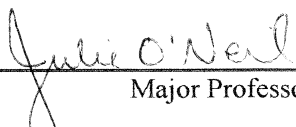
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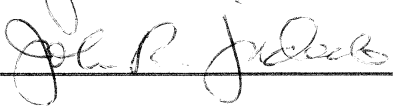in partial fulfillment of the
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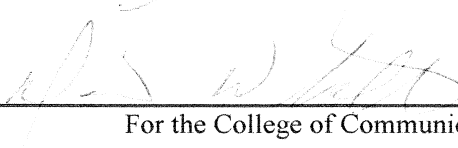
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I. Introduction

Improving the quality of journalism is a lofty goal most professionals in the industry strive to accomplish. Maintaining strong credibility, increasing accuracy, promoting honesty and standing up for the basic tenets of journalism should remain top priorities for each journalist in the field. However, despite the need for sound journalistic practices, ethical betrayers still plague this industry. Jayson Blair, Stephen Glass and Jack Kelly are recent poster boys for unethical behavior, but they are not alone in the growing list of journalistic reprobates. According to the 2005 Annual Report on American Journalism, the number of people who view news organizations as ethical has dropped from 54% to 39% (Project for Excellence in Journalism). "People have long considered the press sensational, rude, pushy and callous. But in the last 17 years, they have also come to see the press as less professional, less moral, more inaccurate and less caring about the interests of the country" (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005, Overview, ¶ 2).

These ethical lapses and public credibility issues with journalism illustrate the importance of evaluating current newspaper codes of ethics and determining whether they are effective. "If an ethics code is worth adopting, it ought to be worth going back to the drawing board periodically for it to be reviewed and strengthened" (Cranberg, 2003, p. 13). Exploratory research conducted by the author revealed that current and former professionals in the newspaper industry think newspapers should have a code of ethics, but the majority of them say the codes are not practical (Housley, 2006). This obvious gap between theory and reality puts forward the idea that practicality is just one of

several benefits a newspaper might garner from having a code of ethics. One of the main purposes of this study is to quantitatively measure the effectiveness of a newspaper's code of ethics from all aspects of a code's benefits and through the perspective of its employees.

Another purpose of this study is to measure whether personal ethical differences between individuals predict the level to which employees find the code of ethics effective. When looking at what influences ethical behavior, some respondents say that personal ethics play as much of a role in the ethical decision-making process as a corporate code of ethics (Housley, 2006). Because personal characteristics and ethical behavior are not independent of one another, it's important to see how perceptions vary among newsroom employees in regard to code effectiveness. One way to measure individual differences is locus of control, "a generalized expectancy pertaining to the connection between personal characteristics and/or actions and experienced outcomes" (Lefcourt, 1991, p. 413). Internal-external locus of control, which originated from Julian Rotter's social learning theory, illustrates how people differ in their levels of attributing responsibility to their own actions and to forces beyond their control (Rotter, 1966). It follows that internals see themselves as more in control of their outcomes because they take more responsibility for their actions. By contrast, externals are more likely to take less responsibility for their actions because they see luck, fate, or another external factor as the cause of their situation (Trevino & Nelson, 2004). Since externals are more likely to take less responsibility, an outside influence such as a code of ethics should be logically more effective for externals than internals. This study aims to measure whether

this logical relationship between externals and codes of ethics effectiveness has some significant validity.

Finally, another aspect of this study aims to measure employees' perception of code applicability and whether there are aspects of the code with which they do not agree. According to Hardin (2005), there are claims from critics that sports editors don't internalize the guidelines and pass them off as merely "lip service," (p. 66). His study concludes that sports departments are not following the ethical expectations outlined in codes of ethics much more today than several years ago (Hardin, 2005). In talking with newspaper professionals, the author found that some employees question whether their counterparts in other departments think the code applies to them as much as it does to other departments (Housley, 2006). This discrepancy in code application brings to light another purpose of this study: to measure employee perception of code applicability. Do employees feel that the code applies to them individually? Do employees feel that the code of ethics applies to all departments universally? This study aims to measure whether there are discrepancies among different departments with regard to code applicability and whether these discrepancies exist when comparing answers across all departments. In addition, it's important when looking at effectiveness to measure whether employees agree with all aspects of their newspaper's code of ethics. This study poses that question to see if there are any areas of the code that show a pattern of disagreement from the side of employees.

II. Literature Review

In this literature review, several topics are discussed in order to put into better context the purposes of this study. After a brief review of the research conducted on newspaper codes of ethics and general business ethical codes, a history of newspaper codes is provided so readers can see how this movement came to being. Next, the benefits and costs of having a newspaper code of ethics are examined through looking at professional and academic writings and opinions. After looking at these two extremes, the reality and practicality section illustrates the ways in which a code of ethics is both practical and impractical to newspaper employees. Locus of control, the psychological factor used in this study to measure personal ethical differences, is discussed in the last part of the review. All of these components in the literature review provide a clear picture of ethical code background, current perceptions and existing research on the topic.

Code of ethics research

Increasing press credibility, providing staff members a list of do's and don'ts and creating an environment that encourages ethical debate are all qualities editors would like to see emerge by creating their codes of ethics. In 2003, American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) Ethics and Value Committee member Gil Cranberg said, "Journalism is rife with ethics codes. You might call it an ethics glut" (p. 13). A 2003 survey of almost 1,500 daily newspapers showed that 58 percent of the newspapers have a code of ethics (ASNE Survey Results, 2005). Yet even with the existence of so many individual newspaper codes and association ethical guidelines, there are still the Jayson Blairs and Stephen Glasses of the journalism world who clearly fall between the ethical cracks.

Prior research on newspaper codes of ethics has proven somewhat inconsistent and has not recently addressed the overarching question of whether a code is effective in the newsroom. In a 2004 study, Lee Wilkins and Bonnie Brennen looked at how code content has changed over time by comparing the original 1923 ASNE and 1934 American Newspaper Guild codes of ethics to the 2003 *New York Times* code. They found that while all three codes emphasize the social significance of ethical journalistic practices, there are "striking differences" (McCaslin, 2004, ¶ 7) between the older and more recent codes in terms of how profits negatively influence the content and character of these guidelines (Wilkins & Brennen, 2004). In a 1992 case study, Boeyink spent three weeks at the *Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky to see if codes were effective when applied to specific situations in the newsroom. He found that all reporters and editors believed in the importance of having high ethics and that a strong commitment to the code, for the most part, translated into "clear and enforced ethic" (p. 180) in the newsroom (Boeyink, 1992).

Looking back further into the research, a 1987 study by Douglas Anderson showed that 95 percent of newspaper editors saw the value in making their employees aware of the newspaper code of ethics. In a 1986 survey, the ASNE Ethics Committee concluded that newspapers with codes are stricter in terms of what constitutes an ethics violation than those newspapers without a code (Giles). In contrast, a 1989 survey conducted at the Indianapolis *Star* evaluated the assumption that newspaper codes of ethics play a significant role in the ethical decision-making process of journalists. The study concludes that there is "no support for the assumption that ethics codes directly influence the decisions journalists make" (Pritchard & Morgan, 1989, p. 941). Although

these studies are about 20 years old, they illustrate that codes of ethics have played an important role in the newspaper's ethical integrity for more than two decades.

Because newspapers are like other businesses that establish codes of ethics for their employees, it's important to also look at the research on codes of ethics for businesses in general. When Schwartz analyzed 19 different empirical studies in 2001, he reported that 42 percent of the research found that business codes were effective, 11 percent found a weak relationship and 47 percent found codes had no significant effect on ethical behavior. In a 1994 review of empirical literature, Ford and Richardson found that the existence of a code of ethics has a positive effect on ethical beliefs and the ethical decision-making process. Some sources claim that codes of ethics are impractical and unproductive, while others say they are vital in order to set and maintain high ethical standards in newsrooms. With intermittent and inconclusive studies from the past, the question still remains: Is having a code of ethics an effective measure in the battle for ethicality in the newsroom?

A history of newspaper ethical codes and their content

In the early 20th century, entertainment, sex, crime and government propaganda spread public disillusionment in regard to the press. By the 1920s, liberal magazines like the *Nation* and *New Republic* began campaigning for accuracy and balance into the newsroom, and the American Society of Newspaper Editors was formed (Wilkins & Brennen, 2004). It was also during this time that the government started regulating the movie and broadcasting industries, thus instilling a fear in newspapers that regulation could hit them if the necessity arose. In order to make the industry seem more professional and without need for regulation, media organizations began adopting codes

in the early 1920s (Blanchard, 1998). If editors could "rationalize" and "idealize" (Wilkins & Brennen, 2004, p. 299) their profession by writing codes of ethics, it could strengthen an industry that was mostly identified as a mouthpiece for melodramatic gossip and war promotion.

The first state press association to adopt a code of ethics was the Kansas Editorial Association in 1910. Missouri and Texas associations followed suit 11 years later, followed by South Dakota and Oregon in 1922 and Washington in 1923. That same year, the ASNE adopted the Canons of Journalism, an ethical code that is still used today as a framework by media ethicists. Among the issues addressed in this code were accuracy, impartiality, responsibility, honesty, freedom, independence and fair play. Three years after the release of the ASNE code, the Society of Professional Journalists jumped on the bandwagon and adopted the Canons as their own ethics guidelines (Blanchard, 1998). The American Newspaper Guild was formed about ten years after the ASNE code adoption, with a goal to bring higher ethics and professional expectations to the newspaper industry. Included in the first acts of business the following year was adopting a code of ethics.

After the ANG and ASNE adopted their codes of ethics, the popularity of ethical guidelines dropped over the next 40 years. By this time, television emerged as the most popular medium for daily news and the largest revenue source for media companies. Desperate to keep their circulation numbers from plummeting, newspapers started printing more sensational stories that kept readers intrigued and eager to read more. As a result, the public began to lose their trust in the media and starting questioning the suspicious ways journalists got their titillating stories (Blanchard, 1998). "An institution

that makes everybody's business its business has to be mindful of the standards by which its business in conducted" (Cranberg, 2003, p. 13). Thus came the post-Watergate media "ethics explosion" (Pritchard & Morgan, 1989, p. 934) of the 1970s, adopting codes of ethics and figuring out ways to bring back ethical behavior into the newsroom. By the 1990s, news organizations such as *The New York Times*, ASNE, and SPJ began to adopt and rewrite their codes in order to address issues facing the journalism industry. A decline in readership, increase in industry consolidation, rise in cost of libel insurance, growth in popularity of celebrity journalists and heightened mistrust of the media were some of these issues at hand (Wilkins & Brennen, 2004).

In 1999, Bob Steele and Jay Black looked at 33 codes from newspapers across the nation to see what was included (and not included) in these ethical guidelines. They found that most of them were lists of do's and don'ts that rarely discussed ethically shaky newsgathering techniques such as deception, naming minors, privacy issues and racial stereotyping. In addition, most of them did not address the issue of plagiarism, except to say that it is forbidden, and only about half of the codes included sections on printing corrections (Steele & Black, 1999). Five years after his analysis, based on the 2003 ASNE ethics survey, Steele saw some significant changes in these ethical codes. In this "benchmark year" (Steele, 2003, p. 8) for journalism ethics, newspapers around the nation reexamined their codes in light of several ethical infringements, like the Jayson Blair case at the *New York Times*. Steele (2003) notes that papers such as the *Denver Post*, *The Buffalo News* and *USA Today* made changes to their ethical guidelines in 2003, and other newspapers adopted codes for the first time.

How codes can be beneficial

Neal Jackson, vice president for legal affairs at National Public Radio, says ethical codes hold professionals to higher expectations of performance and conduct, not only in the media business, but in other industries as well. It gives managers and readers a strong base for determining whether a journalist has done his or her job or made a lapse in judgment. When reporters are held to this high standard, the public interest is served, which is the primary goal in ethical journalism (Steele, 2003). Irwin Gratz said of the SPJ Code of Ethics, "the code urges us toward an even higher ethical plateau than many of us now operate on" (2005, ¶ 8). Setting ethical codes helps strengthen journalists against unethical pressures and outside temptations by making ethical decision-making a requirement instead of a personal choice (White, 2001). Having a code of ethics can help increase the credibility of a newspaper by justifying a journalist's activities to his or her readership. This is especially important in a time when audiences are skeptical or distrustful of the media. As it is stated in the preamble of *The Journal Gazette* of Fort Wayne, Ind.:

> These guidelines have been developed to meet the dual responsibility journalists have to themselves and to the public they serve . . . . The guidelines represent a pledge by *The Journal Gazette* and its staff to maintain and cultivate public confidence (Steele & Black, 1999).

Mike Clark, *Florida Times-Union* reader advocate, makes it a point to summarize his newspaper's code of ethics in the newspaper every January. He says that the code has been taken seriously for more than 25 years, and it helps provide guidelines for promoting appropriate ethical behavior. "It is not elaborate or legalistic, nor can it cover

every situation, but it sets a tone of professionalism among the news staff. The intent is to protect the credibility of the news, which is a newspaper's most important asset" (Clark, 2001, 2004).

If a reporter's job is to hold others accountable for what they do, it must be important to hold the reporter accountable for what he or she does. Judy Fahys, a business reporter for the *Salt Lake Tribune,* says she reports on lawmakers that take free lunches, therefore, she should be held accountable to not take free lunches from sources when reporting on a story. Dan Meyers of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*'s Denver bureau says that since codes help outline what is right and wrong in the reporting process, he doesn't understand why newspapers wouldn't want one. "I say this as a sinner, not a bishop. I broke plenty of rules when I was young, partly because no one had ever laid out the ground rules. There were things I did then that I wouldn't do now" (Shepard, 1994, p. 6). In his *Courier-Journal* case study, Boeyink (1998) concludes that enforcing a sound code of ethics leads to strong ethical decision making, especially in cases involving conflicts of interest. *The Courier-Journal* code not only provides a strong baseline for discussing ethical dilemmas in the newsroom, it helps encourage ethical behavior by the employees. While the code is far from flawless in its applicability to all cases, it nonetheless provides an important ethical framework (Boeyink, 1998).

The code of ethics for Gannett Company, Inc., which mirrors the SPJ Code of Ethics, gives journalists specific ways to deal with sources who do not want to be named, handling corrections and keeping a professional distance from situations that might cause a conflict of interest ("Gannett adopts ethics guidelines," 1999; Gannett Company, Inc., 1999). The Hearst Newspapers Statement of Professional Principles addresses issues in

newsgathering techniques, conflicts of interest and confidentiality (Hearst Newspapers, 2002). Some companies have codes that measure only 500 words, while others last for multiple pages, totaling several thousand words and covering every topic under the journalism sun. In the end, they all strive to provide journalists with the same thing: a roadmap for conducting themselves both professionally and ethically (Steele & Black, 1999). Steele (1999) outlines what qualities a good code of ethics encompasses:

- Communication of the core values of the newspaper and what it stands for as an organization.

- Positive terms such as "do this" instead of "don't do this."

- A logical structure that is organized and is easy to navigate.

- A wide range of ethical issues and how they should be addressed.

- Unambiguous guidelines and outlines for ethical behavior.

- Development of the code thorough discussing diverse points of view and the acceptance of the code by the entire newspaper staff.

How Codes Can Be Harmful

Most of the ways in which codes of ethics can harm a newspaper has to do with potential legal implications on the newspaper as a liable source. "Any document describing newsroom practices will likely have to be disclosed to the party suing a media interest for wrongful publishing. Once that happens, the document can become a roadmap to proving the media defendant's liability," (Steele, 2003, p. 10) said John Bussian, counsel to Freedom Communications, the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association and the North Carolina Press Association. For example, if a newspaper's code expressly forbids misrepresentation and a reporter lies about his or her identity, that person is more

likely to lose a libel suit because actual malice becomes easier to prove. In addition, codes make it even easier to prove negligence, a type of libel suit that is less difficult to prove than actual malice. When a reporter fails to follow his or her newspaper's code of ethics, he or she appears to be less thorough and careless with ethical behavior, thus building a case for proving negligence (Shepard, 1994).

Legal liabilities aside, there are other ways codes of ethics can be flawed by either their existence or in their overall content. "Codes are not very helpful if they are watered down or so general to be meaningless. Sometimes specifics are instructional," (Steele, 2003, p. 11) said attorney Bruce Sanford, who represents news media clients like SPJ. In addition, it's not possible for codes to include all areas associated with ethical journalistic behavior. "There's probably nothing in any code of ethics that indicates all the ways that a reporter is supposed to verify that something is accurate. Instead, there is merely the presumption that you will do everything you can to make sure that it is accurate," (Schwartz, 2005, ¶ 7) said Kelly McBride, ethics group leader for the Poynter Institute.

At the same time, codes that are too specific make reporters more liable of breaking an ethical guideline. With codes that use absolutes such as never and always, there is little room left for gray area (Steele, 2003), and there are many times when ethical codes do more harm than good when the guidelines leave little room for interpretation other than what is literally on the page ("Adopt the ASNE code," 1993). Having a code of ethics may also keep reporters from making their own logical decisions because the code replaces ethical debate and independent decision-making. It transforms journalists from professional philosophers who are able to make difficult decisions into obedient rule abiders who don't ask why (Aiex & Gottlieb, 1999). Maintaining ethical

debate and questioning the current codes of ethics is what makes a newspaper create and sustain a good code of ethics in the first place. "Open, honest communication is the best way for us to avoid any potential problems with journalism ethics" (Burbach, 2003, p. 14).

Others claim that having a code of ethics is not always easy for some newspapers, especially those that have small circulations. For example, one popular ethics guideline is to stay away from conflicts of interest such as taking handouts or freebies from the subject being reviewed or covered. However, for the reporters at the *Napa Valley Register*, a 21,000-circulation newspaper in California, not taking free tickets to an event means that event won't be covered in the newspaper because of budget restraints (Shepard, 1994). In a 2005 study of sports editors, Marie Hardin reports that editors at small-circulation newspapers are less likely to question the ethics behind taking "freebies" (p. 71) because resources are not as vast. Another way ethical codes can conflict with small newspaper budgets is by requiring newspapers to double-check their facts. Such a standard proves difficult, it not impossible, to small papers, because most have small staffs and time constraints hovering over the editors. "It works well at the *Louisville Courier*, but don't put this down the throat of my clients," said Alice Neff Lucan, a Washington, D.C. newspaper lawyer (Shepard, 1994).

Reality and practicality

It is one thing to adopt a code of ethics as the ethical groundwork used by newsroom employees, but it is quite another for journalists to actually abide by that set of guidelines. Or, as Poynter Institute Fellow Jeffrey L. Seglin points out, "No written code of ethics, no matter how well intentioned and insightfully crafted, can work if there is an

obvious gap between what an organization says it will and won't do and what, when push comes to shove, it actually does" (2001, ¶ 1). In 1998, *Boston Globe* columnist Patricia Smith was fired after she confessed to fabricating characters and quotes in some of her columns. That same year, *Cincinnati Enquirer* reporter Michael Gallagher illegally broke into the voicemail system of Chiquita Brands International in order to get material for an expose on the company. One year later, the *Los Angeles Times* published a supplementary magazine that featured the city's new sports complex, the Staples Center, without mentioning that the newspaper was sharing the magazine's profits with Staples Center owners. There are two things all these examples have in common: they all exhibit unethical journalism practices, and they all involve newspapers with strong codes of ethics (Seglin, 2001). The question must be asked: Do reporters consult their codes when faced with ethical dilemmas?

After talking with a handful of reporters across the country, Shepard (1994) found varying answers to that question. Some rely on their own personal instincts to determine whether something is ethical, while others consult their editors instead of the code of ethics. "Generally, you know this is something you should or shouldn't do," (Shepard, 1994, p. 6) said *Miami Herald* reporter Joseph Williams, a ten-year veteran who wasn't sure if his newspaper had a code of ethics. Five years ago, six *New York Times* reporters were asked about their experiences with their code of ethics, and all of them confessed to having never read it because "they were busy putting out the paper" (Paumgarten, 2003, ¶ 8). Hardin found that even though more sports departments have adopted ethical codes in the past decades, employees in these departments are not much closer to abiding by codes than they were before these adoptions (Hardin, 2005). Arizona State University ethics

professor Marianne Jennings (2000) says the only people who use codes of ethics are usually the ones who are the most unethical. They use it to make others think they abide by the ethical guidelines, when in reality, they do not think they are bound by its words (Jennings, 2000). Simply adopting a code is not enough to make newsrooms more ethical. In the end, "somebody might expect you to live up to them" (Bain, 1995, ¶ 7).

Sissela Bok, philosopher at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies, says a lot of company codes of ethics are like fake smiles: cold and transparent, while attempting to fool somebody into thinking they are genuine. The bullet-point ethics guidelines that claim to bring ethical behavior into the everyday newsroom have no value unless action backs them up. She calls such guidelines "profit and the seven dwarfs," (Sloan 2003, ¶ 5) also mentioning that Enron too had a "resplendent" (¶ 5) code of ethics. *American Mercury* founder H.L. Mencken, one of the most well-known journalists of the mid-1900s, once called codes of ethics "flapdoodlish and unenforceable" (Jennings, 2000, p. 56).

Not all agree with the idea that codes of ethics are unpractical and have no effect on ethical decision-making. Nick Paumgarten (2003) gives the example of Steven Crist of *The New York Times* when illustrating the importance of having codes of ethics, even if it's just to define a reporter's limits. Fourteen years ago, *Times* sports reporter Crist was photographed in an issue of *Sports Illustrated* while making a bet at the horse race he was covering. He didn't see anything wrong with it. Today's *Times* code makes it clear that such a situation is outside a reporter's boundaries of being an unbiased observer, but without this code in 1989, Crist didn't think twice about laying his money on the line (Paumgarten, 2003). Not all codes of ethics are too vague or general to be used in a

practical setting. As the *Quill*'s Fred Brown (1999) said, "Several provisions of the SPJ Code of Ethics are applicable, and as plain as the egg on the publisher's face" (¶16). These provisions include keeping a clear line between what is news and what is advertising, denying special treatment from advertisers and sources, making known any unethical actions made by fellow reporters and coming clean with mistakes by correcting them as soon as possible (Brown, 1999).

Boeyink (1998) concludes that the newspaper's code of ethics is not just used to promote high-quality public relations, but as a tool to help promote professional behavior and encourage ethical debate on specific situations in the newsroom. Codes are not always clear or helpful in specific situations, but at least the creation or knowledge of one encourages journalists to question possibly unethical behavior that might otherwise go unchecked (Shepard, 1994). "Journalists have a head start on high-quality ethics . . . because they often come equipped with a healthy skepticism" (Sloan, 2003, ¶11). Corporations must foster the kind of openness that encourages journalists to point out ethical problems and debate the issue of ethics in the newsroom (Sloan, 2003). To put these codes into action, companies must come up with ways for the employees to internalize the guidelines. Encouraging discussions between supervisors and employees, expecting ethical behavior from those in charge and coming up with new ways to learn and understand the guidelines are all ways in which corporations can integrate a code of ethics into the everyday work environment. Once the codes become a part of the newsroom, actions can finally reflect the printed words (Seglin, 2001). Burbach (2003) says creating a good code takes listening to readers, non-readers, journalists, researchers and all departments of the newspaper to get a diverse view of what people think.

Locus of Control

Locus of control is related to ethics both logically and through empirical research. On the logic side, internals appear less likely to engage in unethical behavior because they attribute responsibility to themselves and don't make excuses for their behavior (Jones and Kavanagh, 1996). On the flipside, externals are more likely to engage in unethical behavior than internals because they tend to justify or make excuses for unethical actions (McCuddy & Peery, 1996). Jones and Kavanagh (1996) empirically validated this pattern by quantifying the direction of ethical tendencies in regard to internals and externals. In a study measuring the causes related to ethical decision-making, Trevino and Youngblood (1990) found that internal participants exhibited more ethical behavior than those who were external. In addition, they found that locus of control had more than double the effect on ethical decision-making than any other factor in the path analysis (Trevino & Youngblood, 1990).

In reviews of past empirical literature, researchers have found that personal values, beliefs, and individual personalities (including locus of control) have been significant factors in studies on ethical decision-making and relationships to business codes of ethics (Ford & Richardson, 1994; Loe, et al., 2000; Schwartz, 2001). In a 1996 study, Susan Harrington looked at the effects of codes of ethics and how they interact with individual levels of personal denial of responsibility in the information systems field. Denial of responsibility (RD) is a psychological trait similar to locus of control that measures how likely a person is to take responsibility of his or her actions. The rationale behind using this trait is that individuals who measure high on denying personal responsibility will benefit from being given clear ethical guidelines (Harrington, 1996).

Similar to what one would expect from locus of control, Harrington (1996) found that those who score high on RD are significantly affected by generic codes of ethics. The claim that internal-external locus of control will predict how individuals perceive the effectiveness of their code of ethics is similar to Harrington's study on how denial of responsibility is a factor in whether codes are effective. If Rotter's (1966) theory states that those who score high on externality tend to see outside forces as the cause for their situations, it follows logically that codes of ethics are seen as more effective as an outside factor on ethics in the newsroom. In addition, because past research has shown externals are less ethical than internals, they are more likely to seek an outside source that clearly tells them what is inside and outside the lines regarding job expectations. By contrast, outside codes are perceived as less effective for internals because they rely more on their own personal ethics as journalists than they do their newspaper's code of ethics.

Despite the logical reasoning and empirical evidence linking locus of control to ethical decision-making and code of ethics effectiveness, the research is still inconsistent when it comes to validating this pattern. Stead, et al. (1987) found that in five of six experiments, locus of control was not significantly related to unethical decision-making. Similarly, one of three experiments conducted by Hegarty and Sims (1978, 1979) showed no significant relationship between locus of control and unethical decision-making. In the same study where Jones and Kavanagh (1996) empirically validated the relationship between high externality and unethical behavior, a second experiment showed no significant relationship between locus of control and ethical intentions.

III. Significance of this Study

Research has been conducted on the content of newspaper codes of ethics in regard to how they change over time and as new ethical cases emerge (Wilkins & Brennen, 2004; Boeyink, 1992). Case studies have looked at the practicality and effects of specific newspaper codes of ethics (Boeyink, 1998; Pritchard & Morgan, 1989). In addition to these studies, survey research has been conducted to measure the effects of codes of ethics and how editors deal with ethical issues (Anderson, 1987; Giles, 1986). In 2003, a "benchmark year" (p. 8) for journalism, the ASNE conducted a snapshot survey of U.S. newspapers to see how they reacted to the Jayson Blair scandal (Steele, 2003; ASNE survey results, 2005).

Outside of the newspaper field, much research has been done on code effectiveness in other businesses and produced mixed results (Schwartz, 2001). Loe *et al.* (2000) found that out of 17 empirical studies on the relationship between ethical codes and behavior, the majority of them reported a positive relationship. Ford and Richardson (1994) reported similar findings when reviewing the empirical literature on ethical beliefs and decision making. Harrington (1996) found that generic codes of ethics had a significant effect on improving some judgments and intentions of information systems employees who had high levels of personal denial of responsibility. Most of these studies are either becoming dated, they do not measure effectiveness specifically in the newspaper industry, they only measure one aspect of effectiveness such as practicality or the ethical decision-making process, or they don't measure the benefits of newspaper codes of ethics in light of individual differences between employees in the newsroom.

This study attempts to fill the gap within newspaper codes of ethics research by

quantitatively measuring the effectiveness of these codes through survey research.

IV. Hypothesis and Research Questions

Both logical reasoning and empirical evidence suggest that higher externality will lead to a higher use and need for codes of ethics. Because externals are more likely to consult outside resources and justifications, a code of ethics will theoretically be more effective to employees with higher externality. The following hypothesis follows this logic and measures whether individual ethical differences play a significant role in measuring a code's effectiveness.

H1: Locus of control will be positively related to employee perception of code of ethics effectiveness.

Measuring code of ethics effectiveness through a scale based on the benefits of having a code will provide insight into whether employees actually find their code effective and beneficial. Research question one will be examined quantitatively through analyzing effectiveness indices and individual statement scores, and it will be investigated qualitatively through participants' written responses to an open-ended question.

RQ1: Do newspaper employees think their code of ethics is effective?

Because data has shown that some departments don't take the code as seriously as other departments, it's important to assess whether employees think they are exempt from the code. Research question 2.1 will be measured by analyzing differences in scores to the "applies to self" statement among departments.

RQ2.1: Do employees think the code of ethics applies to them individually?

On the same note, do employees think that there are certain departments that are not liable for the code? While similar to the previous research question, RQ2.2 addresses

whether employees think that others are held accountable for the code's standards, and it will be measured by analyzing differences in "applies to others" scores in relation to the different departments. Furthermore, the differences in means for the "applies to self" statement and the "applies to others" statement will be evaluated to check for significant differences across all departments collectively.

RQ2.2: Do employees think the code of ethics applies universally to all departments?

As effective as a code of ethics might be, it's still important to determine whether employees disagree with aspects of the code. Research question three will provide important feedback if any areas of disagreement are found quantitatively through the agreement statement and qualitatively through open-ended responses. Because the level to which employees agree with the code might have an effect on their effectiveness index, the relationship between these two variables will also be analyzed to fully examine RQ3.

RQ3: Do employees disagree with parts of the code of ethics?

V. Method

Because an important aspect of this study is to measure the relationship between locus of control and ethical code effectiveness, a quantitative method was used to measure the relationship precisely (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Survey research is a quantitative method that has been commonly used in ethical research in a variety of fields to measure ethical decision-making and the effects of codes of ethics (Ford & Richardson, 1994; Harrington, 1996; Schwartz, 2001). Some of the advantages of survey research in relation to this study include being able to investigate a topic in its natural setting, having relatively low cost with a print survey, and collecting a large amount of data at one time from a relatively large sample. Another reason for employing a quantitative survey method is to add to the existing qualitative research that has already been conducted on newspaper codes of ethics. Studies using methods such as interviews, codes comparisons and case studies have shed some light on the topic, and this study's method will add a new perspective to the existing data on newspaper codes of ethics.

Instrumentation

An abstract concept such as code of ethics effectiveness is not measured easily. Reasonably, a code of ethics is considered effective when it is beneficial to its employees, so for the purposes of this study, effectiveness is operationalized through agreement statements related to the benefits of having a newspaper code of ethics. Exploratory research was conducted to determine the benefits that were used to create these statements, and these are outlined in Figure 1 (Housley, 2006). A six-point scale (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree) was used for the response options, and some statements were negatively

reversed to keep respondents from rating each statement the same. Because perceptions of ethics are rarely communicated in black and white terms, the "somewhat" levels were included to help participants chose a side between agree and disagree, while still allowing for some degree of uncertainty. There were no "neutral" or "not applicable" options, so respondents were required to make a choice regarding which side of agreement they lean the most (Frary, 2001). In addition to the scaled questions, two open-ended response questions were added to the survey in order to obtain details on code disagreement and gather qualitative data on whether employees think their code of ethics is effective.

An effectiveness index was created by summing up all responses to the code of ethics effectiveness statements. For the purposes of this study, the individual rating (on a scale from 1 to 6) for each effectiveness statement is referred to as the effectiveness score for that statement. The summation score is called the effectiveness index. Possible indices ranged from 12 to 72, with high indices reflecting high levels of effectiveness and negatively altered statements reversed for this computation. Effectiveness statements, along with applicability and agreement statements, are listed in Appendix A and labeled by content categories. The statements were found internally reliable, with a Cronbach alpha of .84. Construct validity of the effectiveness measurement was tested though a factor analysis using varimax rotation of all statements related to effectiveness. Results supported the proposed four factors used to create the statements, with all effectiveness statements loading on their expected factors. Factor loadings for each variable on the components are presented in Table 1.

Another concept in this study includes the internal-external locus of control scale that was analyzed to determine its relationship with code effectiveness. The Adult

Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External locus of control scale (ANSIE) consists of 40 questions that participants answered with "yes" or "no" responses (see Appendix B for ANSIE questions). Adapted from the children's version of the scale, the ANSIE is seen as easier to understand than some other I-E scales and produces a summation score ranging from 0 to 40, with a higher score translating to a higher degree of externality (Nowicki & Duke, 1974). Split-half and test-retest reliability checks show that the scale is "psychometrically sound" (p. 136), with the split-half ranging from .74 to .86 and the test-retest over a six-week period at $r = .83$, $N = 48$. In terms of the scale's discriminant validity, it has no significant relationship with social desirability bias, nor does it directly relate to intelligence test scores (Nowicki & Duke, 1974).

Site Selection

The print survey was distributed to newsroom employees from the *Star-Telegram* bureaus in Fort Worth, Arlington, and Northeast Tarrant County, Texas. "Newsroom employees" consisted of those staff members whose primary job responsibilities lay in the news and editorial production of the newspaper. The *Star-Telegram* was selected as the site for this study because of convenience and its reputation for strong ethics as one of the two leading daily newspapers in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. As a subsidiary of The McClatchy Company, the *Star-Telegram* has a daily readership of 537,500 daily; 487,700 on Saturday and 819,800 on Sunday.

The *Star-Telegram's* ethical code was first created in 1973 in response to evolving ethical expectations in journalistic practices. In the years since its adoption, the code has gone through a handful of revisions, being edited each time by a diverse committee of newsroom employees from all sections of the newspaper. The current

requirement regarding employee exposure to the code is that employees are required to read and sign the code at least once a year, while new employees are trained in the code's practices during new hire orientation. News and editorial employees of the *Star-Telegram* are responsible for upholding the newsroom code of ethics, in addition to the ethical code for its owner, The McClatchy Company.

Method and sample

The questionnaire was distributed in February of 2008 to employees through inner-office mail and returned directly the researcher through the mail. Employees were reassured in the cover letter and through e-mail from management that all responses would be held completely confidential. Employees had the option of entering into a drawing for completing the survey, as well as the opportunity to receive their personal locus of control scores from the researcher. Participants had two weeks to complete the survey, and management sent out a reminder e-mail to complete the survey by the deadline.

Out of the 300 surveys distributed, 35% were returned, 6 of which were voided from the quantitative analysis of this study because not all scaled questions were answered. Of the 99 respondents, 40 percent were female and 60 percent male. The majority of responses came from employees in the news and sports departments, although the sample has representation from all major newspaper divisions. Employee positions were comprised mostly of editors and reporters, with a handful of representatives from other categories. More than half of respondents have worked at the *Star-Telegram* for 10 or more years, and the 50 or more age category yielded the highest number of responses.

Table 2 outlines these sample demographics by category – employee department, position, tenure, age and gender.

Selection of this sample provides both benefits and limitations in terms of studying the effectiveness of newspaper codes of ethics. Allowing employees to answer questions about their own newspaper's code in lieu of a generic code has its logical advantages. Some research has shown that generic codes of ethics have no direct effect on the ethical decision-making process, while specific codes have had mixed effects (Harrington, 1996). Another logical advantage is that the information obtained from this sample can be given back to the newspaper and used for practical applications and alterations. Employees tend to have more respect and ownership for a code of ethics when they feel they have had some say in its evaluation, so this is an added benefit for the *Star-Telegram*. In addition, using one newspaper in this study ensures that the code content is constant for all participants. One of the most significant limitations to using this sample is that the results can't be easily generalized to other newspapers different than the *Star-Telegram* in terms of ethical climate and code content.

VI. Results

Quantitative Results

According to hypothesis one, locus of control is predicted to have a positive

relationship with the overall effectiveness index. Descriptive tests were run on locus of

control scores, resulting in a mean of 9.37 (on a scale from 0 to 40), with a standard

deviation of 3.35. The confidence interval yielded a parameter mean between 8.70 and

10.05. Descriptive analysis of the effectiveness index revealed a mean index of 53.03 (on

a scale from 12 to 72), a standard deviation of 7.90 and confidence interval between

51.45 and 54.61. To test for a positive relationship, regression was most appropriate test

for this study because both locus of control and the effectiveness index are

conceptualized as continuous variables – not ones on an ordinal scale. The analysis

showed that locus of control is not positively related to the effectiveness index, r = .17,

F(1, 98) = 2.75, p = .10, therefore Hypothesis 1 was not fully supported.

Research question one asked whether employees think their code of ethics is

effective. Because effectiveness comprises of four distinct factors, differences between

these factors were analyzed to check for significance. As shown in Table 3, the "sets

guidelines" factor yielded the highest mean (M = 5.13 out of a possible 6), while the

"useful tool" factor had the second-highest mean (M = 4.24). The two lowest means came

from the "increases ethical dialogue" factor (M = 4.04) and "helps credibility" factor (M

= 4.02). A one-way, repeated measures ANOVA showed that the four factors had a

significant effect on the effectiveness index, F(1, 98) = 41.07, p<.001. According to a

Tukey LSD test, the mean for the "sets guidelines" factor differed significantly from all

of the other three factors (p<.05). No significant differences were found between any

another factors.

In addressing the effectiveness question in RQ1, overall effectiveness indices

were also analyzed to check for differences among the employee demographic categories.

As illustrated in Table 4, the 45-49 age category had the highest mean index (M = 57.40),

followed by the 50+ category (M = 54.43) and 35-39 age category (M = 54.39). The 40-

44 category came in next (M = 51.36), with the 30-34 category (M = 47.60) and 24 or

less category (M = 47.00) following behind. The 25-29 age category had the lowest mean

index (M = 45.55). ANOVA results indicated there were significant differences in mean

effectiveness indices by age, $F(6,98) = 3.80$, $p < .002$. A Tukey HSD test showed

significant differences between the 25-29 age category and the 35-39 category ($p < .03$);

the 45-49 category ($p < .001$); and the 50+ age ($p < .01$) category. No other significant

differences were found between age groups. Because the 24 or less age category had only

one respondent, post hocs could not be performed to check for significant differences

between this age category and the others.

When analyzing differences in effectiveness indices by employee tenure, the 7-9

tenure category had the highest mean index (M = 56.13), followed closely by the 10+

category (M = 52.98), as illustrated by Table 5. The lowest two means came from the 4-6

tenure category (M = 49.00) and 1-3 category (M = 49.00). An ANOVA test performed

on the mean differences in effectiveness indices yielded slightly significant differences

between tenure categories, $F(3,98) = 2.80$, $p < .05$. The more conservative Tukey HSD

and Newman-Keuls post hoc tests yielded no differences among tenure categories at the

.05 level of significance, so a Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) was performed

to compare individual categories. The LSD test showed that the 7-9 tenure category differed from both the 4-6 and 1-3 tenure categories at p < .03. No other ANOVA tests on demographic data (employee department, position and gender) yielded significant differences between mean effectiveness indices.

Research questions 2.1 and 2.2 asked whether employees perceive the code as applicable to themselves as individuals and to all departments universally. As illustrated in Table 6, the "applies to self" statement mean (M = 5.46) produced a higher value than the "applies to others" mean (M = 4.16) across all departments, and a t-test yielded significant differences between these two means, p < .001. Research questions 2.1 and 2.2 also addresses whether there were differences in means for both the "applies to self" and "applies to others" statements among the individual departments, but ANOVA results showed there were no significant differences among departments for either of these two means.

Research question three asked if employees disagree with parts of the code of ethics. Descriptive analysis of the agreement statement yielded a mean agreement score of 4.24 (on a scale from 1 to 6), standard deviation of 1.42 and confidence interval between 3.96 and 4.52. Because perceived effectiveness of the code of ethics is likely not independent from agreement with the code, a linear regression was performed to check for a significant relationship between these two variables. Results showed that agreement scores do not significantly predict overall effectiveness, r = .15, F(1, 98) = 2.349, p = .13.

Qualitative results

Respondents had the opportunity to provide open-ended responses on the questionnaire in regards to code effectiveness and agreement with the code. Although six

surveys were removed from the quantitative analysis because not all survey questions were answered, the open-ended responses were still used for the qualitative analysis. Research question one, which asked whether employees think their code of ethics is effective, was answered qualitatively through the survey question, "Do you think the *Star-Telegram* code of ethics is effective? Why or why not?" Ninety-one out of 105 respondents answered this question, and the results were analyzed by dividing comments into emerging categories pertaining to their perception of code effectiveness. Out of all the comments, 53% fell into the "effective" category, 38% into the "somewhat effective" category and 9% in the "ineffective" category.

   Codes are effective. In the words of one respondent, "Everyone needs to be able to go to a reference to know what is and isn't appropriate." This echoes the main theme of the vast majority of comments regarding why employees think the code of ethics is effective. Other employees with similar comments said the code prevents employees from bending the rules and helps provide quick resolutions to ethical dilemmas. These responses support the quantitative finding that the "sets guidelines" factor has the highest mean in measuring code of ethics effectiveness. Other employees said the code is effective because it is a resource for employees in ethically sticky situations, and it has the ability to increase both internal and external credibility in the newsroom.

   Codes are somewhat effective. Not all responses were riddled with positive feedback in terms of code of ethics effectiveness. In the "somewhat effective" category, employees explained what makes the code both effective and ineffective. Unlike in the "effective" category, reasons behind finding the code ineffective were not as unanimous, yielding six main causes: lack of enforcement, not a practical tool, isn't applied to all

departments, only useful for ethical employees, not made aware to the public or readership, and insufficient employee exposure to the code. Most of the comments in the "somewhat effective" category combined the benefit that the code provides a set of strong guidelines, followed up by one of these six reasons for code ineffectiveness. One respondent commented on how the code of ethics isn't a very practical tool for employees in the newsroom. "It's effective to a degree, but I don't think anyone consults it when faced with a problem. It's more of a general guideline that we are aware of and follow." A few employees wrote about how the code is not applied to all departments equally, one specifically noting the sports department's lack of compliance. Another talked about how the employees are not familiar enough with the revised code to determine its effectiveness.

  Codes are ineffective. The third category is comprised of the comments made by employees on whether they think the code is effective. "It's horribly ineffective. When we were purchased by McClatchy, somebody tacked the McClatchy code of ethics on the wall near the elevator. That's all the guidance we've gotten." This comment communicates the concern that employees are not exposed to the code or trained enough on its directives, and more than half of the open-ended responses in the "ineffective" category reiterated this point. Other respondents talked about the code not being applied to all departments equally, in addition to the concern that the public has no clue that the newspaper has any kind of ethics or ethical code. A couple of remarks supported one respondent's statement regarding code applicability and employee accountability. "I think it is almost routinely violated by some staff members, and no one does anything about it."

Code Agreement. Research question three asked if respondents disagree with parts of their code, so respondents were also invited to provide further feedback on the topic of code agreement to help qualitatively answer this question. Twenty employees wrote about the areas of the code with which they did not agree or saw as unreasonable. More than half reiterated the concern that employees are unreasonably restricted from being active in politics, noting specific restrictions regarding political signs, participation in caucuses, monetary donations, volunteering time, and serving on community panels. Some employees briefly mentioned this concern in their comments, while a couple of others wrote passionately about how it abridges their freedom of speech and limits their rights to citizenship and public life. A few respondents commented on how they think the political involvement aspect of the code doesn't make sense for employees not working on a political beat. "I think non-political reporters should be provided more leeway in the political arena." A handful of other comments touched on code disagreement regarding not accepting free items such as tickets or meals, restrictions from participating in contests or signing petitions, and not being allowed to earn money through writing or public relations skills. Overall, 20 percent of total respondents made comments about why they disagreed with some aspects of the code, but one respondent made a comment supporting the code in light of all its limitations. "It's all there - laid out. Hard to disagree with this."

VII. Discussion

The conclusion to hypothesis one that locus of control does not have a significant positive relationship with perceived code effectiveness provides an important finding, even if it is not the predicted outcome of this study. Past research shows us that locus of control has had a significant effect on ethical decision-making and ethical judgments and intentions (Ford & Richardson, 1994; Jones and Kavanagh, 1996; Loe, et al., 2000; McCuddy & Peery, 1996; Schwartz, 2001; Trevino & Youngblood, 1990), but none of these has looked at locus of control in relation to a broad measurement of overall code effectiveness. Perhaps the difference between past studies, which were more focused on ethical behavior and intentions, and this study, which looks more at overall code effectiveness, helps explain why locus of control had no significant effect in this study. Other research has produced mixed results and insignificant relationships between locus of control and ethical intentions or ethical decision-making, sometimes within the same study that found significant results (Hegarty and Sims, 1978, 1979; Jones and Kavanagh, 1996; Stead et al, 1987). Therefore, the results of this study are not strongly unexpected, for they add to the existing literature that is already somewhat inconsistent. It should also be noted that the while the relationship didn't have a strongly significant relationship, p = .10, the correlation was not without some substance – at least enough to warrant further investigation through future research.

From a practical side, this finding is likely a positive one for newspapers because it means the code can be applied universally, without regard to these personal differences. In reality, codes of ethics are the same for all employees, both internal and external, so having a somewhat insignificant relationship between locus of control and perceived

code effectiveness supports current code application. This is an important finding because it suggests that individual differences are not a significant factor when it comes to newspaper employees following a code of ethics. In addition, because locus of control had no significant effect on the effectiveness index, the scores for individual effectiveness statements were analyzed without having to take locus of control into consideration.

When examining RQ1, which asks whether employees think their code is effective, it's important to look at effectiveness as a whole, the four factors that constitute effectiveness in this study, and how effectiveness differs among employee demographic categories. The method for measuring overall effectiveness started with the index, which, because it was created for the purposes of this study, has no baseline for comparison or past research with which we can contrast it. However, when a confidence interval shows that the parameter mean falls between 51.45 and 54.61 (on a scale from 12 to 72), it is clear to see that the scales tip on the side of moderately high effectiveness. This is encouraging, especially because it helps explain why employees in the author's exploratory research still expressed the need for ethical codes, even though the majority of them said codes are impractical (Housley, 2006). These high indices show that there are other reasons why employees find their code effective, even if they think it's not practical.

When examining the comparisons between the effectiveness factors for RQ1, results show us that the major benefit employees find in a code of ethics is that it provides a set of expectations and guidelines to which they are held liable for compliance. Previous research illustrates that a code of ethics encourages ethical

behavior, not because of its practicality, but because of its ability to provide a strong ethical framework (Boeyink, 1998). When viewed in light of the author's exploratory study, this study's finding is logical because it doesn't necessarily have to do with the code being a practical tool in the ethical decision-making process. After all, a set of guidelines can be helpful, even when not consulted as a practical resource in an ethical dilemma. This idea is echoed in the qualitative findings of this study as well, where the majority of employees said the code is effective because it defines boundaries, sets guidelines and outlines behaviors that are "out of bounds." Survey comments also showed that employees think the public isn't aware of the code or that the code doesn't change their perception of the newspaper's credibility. This supports the statistical findings that put the "helps credibility" factor as the least effective benefit of having a code of ethics. The same link between quantitative data and qualitative comments were found for each of the other two factors. Having consistency between what the statistics show and what the employees said in their own words not only increases the validity of the survey instrument, it also gives the findings of this study that much more solidarity.

Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects of the quantitative results for research question one are the significant differences found in the effectiveness index in the tenure and age demographic categories. With no research to support significant differences, these findings might seem a little out of the ordinary, but they provide some useful information to the *Star-Telegram* and code of ethics research in general. In both categories, the higher groups for both tenure and age yielded higher effectiveness indices than those in the lower groups for both of these categories. This means that the younger and more inexperienced employees are the ones who have the lowest perception of the

newspaper's code of ethics. There are several factors that might contribute to this finding, including lack of exposure to the code (which was confirmed in the survey comments), difference in generational perspectives regarding codes of ethics and lack of experience in the journalism industry. These are just a few of the proposed reasons behind these significant differences, but these findings open the door for future research in terms of perceived code effectiveness in relation to age and tenure.

Results for RQ2.1 and 2.2, which address the issue of code applicability, are illustrated mostly through the significantly different means between the "applies to self" and "applies to others" statements on the survey. While there were no significant differences found among different departments with regard to both applicability statements, this study shows that there is still a discrepancy between what employees think about themselves and what they think about others across all departments. The high mean found on the "applies to self" question illustrates that respondents see themselves as liable for the tenets laid out in the code of ethics. However, those same respondents think there are other employees or departments to which the code does not apply. Given that the sample is representative of all employee departments, positions, ages, genders and tenures, there appears to be a discrepancy between what employees see of themselves and what they see of others regarding code applicability. This is an important point because it involves internal credibility of the newspaper – whether employees have a high perception of the place in which they work. This study reveals the disconnect between perception of self and perception of others in the newsroom, and it appears that this discrepancy spans all departments.

Research question three, which asked whether employees disagree with parts of their code, yielded somewhat low scores, with a mean of only 4.24 and confidence interval between 3.96 and 4.52. When the dividing line between agreement and disagreement lays between scores 3 and 4, these results illustrate that *Star-Telegram* employees don't appear to fully support all the guidelines laid out in the code of ethics. This is an important finding for both the *Star-Telegram* and newspapers in general because it reveals an area of inconsistency between what the employees think is right and what they are held accountable for when it comes to their jobs. In light of these relatively low scores, however, it's important to keep in mind that more than half of the written comments on code disagreement had to do with restrictions on political involvement, and the survey was distributed in the middle of political primary season in a closely watched and debated presidential campaign. Although feelings toward political involvement are not likely to change, even in an off-season for presidential politics, the level of disagreement might not be as low had the survey been administered at a different time.

VIII. Limitations and Future Research

The most obvious limitation to this study is that the sample consists of employees from one newspaper, without equal representation from each demographic subset within that sample. However, the purpose of this study is not to generalize to the greater newspaper population, but rather to shed some light into the effectiveness of one newspaper's code of ethics from the perspective of its news and editorial staff. Results from this research show that a larger-scale study on a variety of newspapers could shed a more general light on newspaper code of ethics effectiveness. Another limitation is that it's difficult to measure differences in the effectiveness index between departments when the sample sizes for each department has such a high range and is not necessarily representative of the size of that department. Perhaps future studies could make a stronger attempt to resolving this problem by using a more stratified sample.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of this study is that the four benefits used to measure effectiveness significantly divided into four distinct factors. This is useful for future research because it opens up the avenue for exploring each factor more extensively by itself. Results show that the "sets guidelines" factor is perceived as the most effective benefit for having a newspaper code of ethics. Therefore, future research should look into what makes that factor the most effective and why other factors fall significantly behind that benefit. The factor that falls into second place for effectiveness is the "useful tool" benefit, which measures the practicality of a code of ethics through the eyes of employees. This factor provides another interesting direction for future code research because it looks at the direct relationship between codes of ethics and the ethical decision-making process. Prior research has provided the business world with ethical

decision-making models that look at the role a code of ethics plays in employees making ethical decisions (Jones, 1991; Schwartz, 2001; Trevino & Youngblood, 1990). However, there is a lack of empirical research on measuring this decision-making process in the journalism industry. This study illustrates the need for evaluating that process in the newsroom to more fully understand the practical role of a code of ethics. Furthermore, future research into an overall effectiveness structural model, of which ethical decision-making is a variable, could greatly benefit the industry by illustrating which aspects of ethics effectiveness have the most significant impact on a newspaper's ethical climate.

This study also reaffirms the need for further research into how measures of individual ethical differences relate to perceived effectiveness of codes of ethics and other methods for promoting ethics in the workplace. Even though no significant relationship was found between locus of control and the effectiveness index in this study, the inconsistency in past research and theoretical consideration on this topic still warrants some further investigation. Perhaps including locus of control in a larger-scale study would result in a significant relationship between externality and a high effectiveness index, and it's possible that conducting this study at another newspaper might produce different results regarding this relationship as well. The questionnaire developed for measuring both effectiveness and locus of control in this study is not specific to the *Star-Telegram*, nor is it limited to being administered at only one newspaper at a time. Coupling its universal applicability with its high reliability and validity, this instrument provides future studies with a tool for measuring code effectiveness at any level of sample research.

Looking at functional implications of this research, there are several aspects of this study's results that provide important implications to the *Star-Telegram* and other newspapers as well. The first of these involves the need for newspapers to resolve the discrepancy between how employees view themselves in light of code applicability and how they view other employees and departments. It's important for newspapers to work out this inconsistency because it leads to low internal credibility at the newspaper, as well as general animosity toward other employees and their respective departments. Another way this study's findings are practical to newspapers is in the area of code disagreement. Limits on political activity proved to be the main theme in code disagreement, so perhaps newspaper leadership should re-evaluate this aspect of the code or provide some justification to employees to increase support in this area.

If newspapers wish to win the battle for ethicality in the newsroom, they must evaluate their codes of ethics to determine what is and is not effective. This study outlines the level to which employees think their code is effective and the reasons they give to support these findings. The next step for newspapers is to begin examining and improving their ethical codes so they can do what it takes to increase strong credibility and sound ethical behavior in the newsroom today.

IX. Figures and Tables

Figure 1. *Newspaper code of ethics effectiveness is measured in terms of the four benefits*

to having a newspaper code of ethics. These four benefits are outlined below.

Newspaper Code of Ethics Effectiveness

Code Benefits

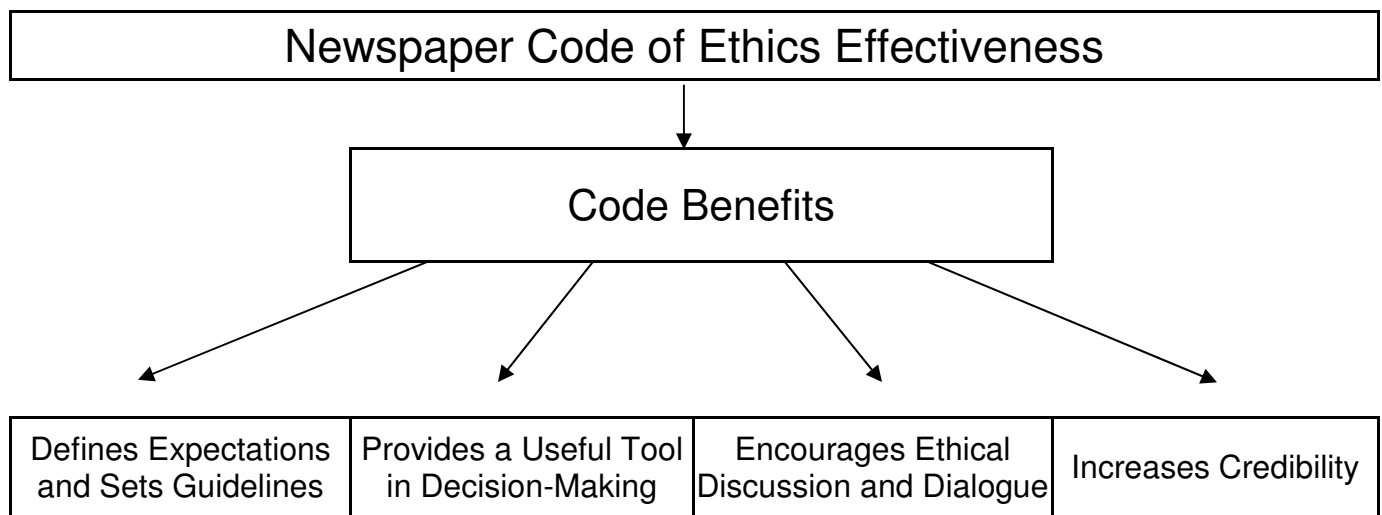| Defines Expectations and Sets Guidelines	Provides a Useful Tool in Decision-Making	Encourages Ethical Discussion and Dialogue	Increases Credibility

Table 1. *Factor loadings of effectiveness statements on extracted components. Statements are categorized by the four benefits of having a newspaper code of ethics.*

Effectiveness Statements	Extracted Components			
	1	2	3	4
Encourages Dialogue Q1	0.887			
Encourages Dialogue Q2	0.908			
Encourages Dialogue Q3	0.887			
Helps Perception Q1		0.735		
Helps Perception Q2		0.745		
Helps Perception Q3		0.816		
Provides Guidelines Q1			0.757	
Provides Guidelines Q2			0.773	
Provides Guidelines Q3			0.714	
Useful Tool Q1				0.893
Useful Tool Q2				0.776
Useful Tool Q3				0.587

Note. For ease in table interpretation, factor loadings are only reported for loadings greater than 0.5.

Table 2. *Sample demographics by category.*

Department:	Percent	N	Age Group:	Percent	N
News	48%	48	50+	35%	35
Sports	20%	20	45-49	15%	15
Living	9%	9	40-44	14%	14
Business	5%	5	35-39	18%	18
Entertainment	5%	5	30-34	5%	5
Management	5%	5	25-29	11%	11
Opinion	5%	5	24 or less	1%	1
Other:Online	2%	2			

Position:			Gender:		
Editor	29%	29	Male	60%	59
Reporter	29%	29	Female	40%	40
Copy Edtior	14%	14			
Designer	8%	8			
Photographer	8%	8			
Columnist	6%	6			
Other	5%	5			

Tenure:		
10+	57%	56
7-9	24%	24
4-6	10%	10
1-3	9%	9

Table 3. *Mean ratings for each factor in measuring codes of ethics effectiveness. The four*

factors listed below are defined as the four benefits to having a code of ethics.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Sets Guidelines	5.13[a]	0.64	5.00	5.26
Useful Tool	4.24[b]	0.94	4.06	4.43
Increases Dialogue	4.04[b]	1.20	3.81	4.23
Helps Credibility	4.02[b]	1.06	3.81	4.28

Note. Means with different subscripts differed significantly by a Tukey test (p<.05).

Table 4. M*ean effectiveness indices by employee tenure. Indices are in order of how many years the employee has worked at the* Star-Telegram.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1-3 Years	49.00[b]	2.33	43.63	54.37
4-6 Years	49.50[b]	2.90	42.93	56.07
7-9 Years	56.13[a]	1.51	53.00	59.26
10+ Years	52.98[ab]	1.03	50.92	55.04

Note. Means with different subscripts differed by Fisher's LSD test, $p < .03$.

Table 5. M*ean indices by employee age. Indices are listed in order of age category.*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
24 or less	47.00[a]	--	--	--
25-29	45.55[a]	6.52	41.17	49.92
30-34	47.60[ab]	7.86	37.84	57.36
35-39	54.39[b]	6.39	51.21	57.56
40-44	51.36[ab]	8.59	46.40	56.32
45-49	57.4[b]	6.43	53.84	60.96
50+	54.43[b]	7.75	51.76	57.09

Note. Means with different subscripts differed by a Tukey test, $p < .05$.

Table 6. M*ean scores for the statements measuring applicability of the code to self and others.*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Applies to Self	5.46[a]	0.72	5.32	5.61
Applies to Others	4.16[b]	1.56	3.85	4.47

Note. Means with different subscripts differed by a t-test, p < .001.

X. Appendices

Appendix A: Code of Ethics Statements
Organized by effectiveness, applicability and agreement, and demographics sections

Newsroom Code of Ethics Effectiveness: Scale is 1-6: Strongly Disagree**,** Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, and Strongly Agree.
(**Bold phrases indicate the benefit that statement measures)**

1. The code of ethics helps define expectations of the newsroom staff **(sets guidelines)**
2. The code of ethics is a practical resource for me when making an ethical decision **(useful tool)**
3. Exposure to the code of ethics initiates ethical discussion among employees **(increases dialogue)**
4. The code of ethics clarifies the boundaries I must stay within as a newsroom employee **(sets guidelines)**
5. Having a code of ethics has little to do with the positive public perception of the newspaper **(helps credibility)**
6. Exposure to the code of ethics sparks ethical dialogue among newsroom employees **(increases dialogue)**
7. The code of ethics sets clear rules for newsroom staff members **(sets guidelines)**
8. The *Star-Telegram* code of ethics helps strengthen the credibility of the newspaper **(helps credibility)**
9. Reading the code generates conversation about newsroom ethics **(increases dialogue)**
10. When faced with an ethical dilemma, I consult the code of ethics as part of the decision-making process **(useful tool)**
11. Having a code of ethics communicates to readers that the *Star-Telegram* is a credible and ethical news source **(helps credibility)**
12. I use the code of ethics when I am not sure what to do in an ethical situation **(useful tool)**
13. Do you think the *Star-Telegram* code of ethics is effective? Why or why not? – note: space provided for open-ended response

Applicability and Code Agreement Questions: Mixed in with questions related to effectiveness.

1. The code of ethics applies to me in my position at the Star-Telegram **(applies to self)**
2. There are some newsroom employees or departments to which some or all of the code of ethics does not apply **(applies to others)**
3. There are parts of the code of ethics with which I do not agree (please specify below) – note: space provided for open-ended response **(agreement)**

Demographic Questions: Included at the end of the questionnaire

1. Please select the option that best describes your position at the Star-Telegram: Management; Publisher; Editor; Reporter; Columnist; Copyeditor; Photographer; Other (please indicate)
2. For what department of the newspaper do you do the majority of your work? Management, News, Opinion, Sports, Business, Entertainment, Living; Other (please indicate)
3. How long have you worked at the Star-Telegram? 1-3 years; 4-6 years; 7-9 years; 10 or more years
4. Please indicate your gender: Male, Female
5. Please indicate your age: 24 or less; 25-29; 30-34; 35-40; 40-49; 50 or more

Appendix B: ANSIE Questions

Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal/External Locus of Control: Yes/No answers

1. Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?
2. Do you believe that you can stop yourself from catching a cold?
3. Are some people just born lucky?
4. Most of the time, do you feel that getting good grades means a great deal to you?
5. Are you often blamed for things that just aren't your fault?
6. Do you believe that if somebody studies hard enough, he or she can pass any subject?
7. Do you feel that most of the time, it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?
8. Do you feel that if things start out well in the morning, it's going to be a good day no matter what you do?
9. Do you feel that most of the time, parents listen to what their children have to say?
10. Do you believe that wishing can make good things happen?
11. When you get punished, does it usually seem it's for no good reason at all?
12. Most of the time, do you find it hard to change a friend's opinion?
13. Do you think cheering more than luck helps a team win?
14. Did you feel that it was nearly impossible for you to change your parents' minds about anything?
15. Do you believe that parents should allow children to make most of their own decisions?
16. Do you feel that when you do something wrong, there's very little you can do to make it right?
17. Do you believe that most people are just born good at sports?
18. Are most other people your age stronger than you are?
19. Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?
20. Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in deciding who your friends are?
21. If you find a four-leafed clover, do you believe that it might bring you good luck?
22. Did you often feel that whether or not you did your homework had much to do with the kind of grades you got?
23. Do you feel that when a person your age is angry with you, there's little you can do to stop him or her?
24. Have you ever had a good-luck charm?
25. Do you believe that whether or not people like you depends on how you act?
26. Did your parents usually help you if you asked them to?
27. Have you ever felt that when people are angry with you, it was usually for no reason at all?
28. Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?
29. Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen, they are just going to happen no matter what you try and do to stop them?
30. Do you think that people can get their own way if they just keep trying?
31. Most of the time, do you find it useless to try to get your own way at home?
32. Do you feel that when somebody your age wants to be your enemy, there's little you

can do to change matters?

33. Do you feel it's easy to get friends to do what you want them to?
34. Do you feel that when good things happen, they happen because of your hard work?
35. Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?
36. D o you feel that when someone doesn't like you, there's little you can do about it?
37. D id you usually feel it was almost useless to try in school because most other children were just plain smarter than you were?
38. Are you the kind of person who believes that planning ahead makes things turn out better?
39. Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?
40. Do you think it's better to be smart than to be lucky?

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XII. VITA

Emily Elizabeth Housley was born on July 11, 1980 in Weatherford, Texas as the daughter of John Harold and Paula Simmons Ward. After graduating from Springtown High School in 1998, Emily received her Bachelor of Science degree in May 2002 with a double-major in Mathematics and News/Editorial Journalism from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, TX.

While working on her masters in journalism, Emily worked in Student Affairs at TCU for four years and taught math part-time at Tarrant County College and at TCU for the Upward Bound high school summer program. She was voted as Teacher of the Year for Upward Bound in 2004 and 2005, and she is now a full-time math teacher at North Side High School.

Emily is married to John Stanford Housley and has two children, Harrison Stanford and Grace Anne Kathleen Housley.

XIII. ABSTRACT

In an industry where public perception is at an all-time low, it is vital to evaluate the effectiveness of newspaper codes of ethics. Studies have evaluated the role of codes of ethics in the ethical decision-making process, but none have looked at the overall effectiveness of having a code. This study is a quantitative evaluation of one newspaper's code of ethics, in relation to individuals' ethical differences, code applicability and code agreement. Conducted at all bureaus of the *Star-Telegram* in Fort Worth, Texas, this study showed that employees think their code of ethics is effective mostly because it helps set guidelines and clear expectations of the employees. Although individual ethical differences (measured by locus of control) did not significantly predict effectiveness, age and tenure did have an effect, with the older and more tenured employees rating the code higher in effectiveness. Employees also commented on areas of the code with which they disagreed and revealed a discrepancy between their perception of code applicability to themselves as individuals and to those in other departments.