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The Use of Traditional Media in Rural Communities in Canada

Zusammenfassung

Aus demographischen, räumlichen und technischen Gründen spielen traditionelle Medien im ländlichen Kanada noch eine wichtige Rolle. In diesem Aufsatz wird mit qualitativen Forschungsmethoden untersucht, welche Bedeutung traditionelle Medien wie Fernsehen, Radio, Zeitungen, Rundschreiben, Aushänge und interpersonale Kommunikation für die Bürger, für Vereine, Ämter und Geschäfte in sechs Gemeinden in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec sowie Neufundland und Labrador haben. Dabei wurde zwischen vier Ebenen unterschieden: der bürokratischen, der Marktebene, der Vereinsebene und der Gemeindeebene. Das Ergebnis der Untersuchung bekräftigt die These, dass im ländlichen Kanada traditionelle und neue Kommunikationsformen in unterschiedlichen Kombinationen koexistieren. Lokale infrastrukturelle Gegebenheiten und soziale Netzwerke beeinflussen dabei deren je spezifische Ausprägungen.

Résumé

Pour des raisons démographiques, géographiques et techniques, les médias traditionnels jouent encore un rôle important dans les régions rurales du Canada. Dans cet article, on examinera par des méthodes de recherche qualitatives l'importance qu'ont les médias traditionnels, tels la télévision, la radio, les journaux, les circulaires, les affiches et la communication interpersonnelle, pour les citoyens, les associations, les services administratifs et les commerces et ce, dans six municipalités réparties à travers le Canada, à savoir en Colombie-Britannique, en Saskatchewan, en Ontario, au Québec ainsi qu'à Terre-Neuve et au Labrador. À cette fin, on a distingué quatre types de relations sociales: les relations bureaucratiques, économiques, associatives et communautaires. Les résultats de cette recherche viennent confirmer la thèse voulant qu'en région rurale, les médias traditionnels et les nouveaux médias vivent en cohabitation. Ceci dit, la place de chacun dans cette cohabitation varie en fonction des infrastructures et des réseaux sociaux locaux.

Introduction

In recent years, the communications literature has been dominated by investigations of the impacts of new forms of media on society (Lorimer/Chan 2004; Sawchuk 2005). While some work has compared traditional to new media forms (e.g. Nerone/Barnhurst 2001; Yoon/Kim 2001; Cooke 2005; Chang/Leung 2005; Baym/Zhang/Lin 2004), less research, at least in a developed world context, has examined the importance of traditional media in rural areas. Canada is the second largest nation in the world, yet it has a population similar to the State of California in the United States of America. Given the vast size of Canada, and the fact that 80% of Canadians live in urban centres (Statistics Canada 2003), rural communities across Canada face unique challenges. Traditional resource-based sectors (e.g. fish, farm, forest, mining) are restructuring and populations are ageing, particularly as young people leave for opportunities in urban centres.

Rural Canada, particularly, remote-rural Canada, can also be disadvantaged because of lack of infrastructure. Many rural places lack adequate transportation networks (e.g. paved roads and sewage treatment) as well as the communications infrastructure required to adopt to new forms of media (e.g. high speed internet connections and cable television service) (Cameron/Annis/Everitt 2005). While the issues related to lack of advanced communications infrastructure are difficult for rural communities there is also a need to better understand how rural communities utilize traditional media sources along with these technological advancements in information and communications technologies (ICTs).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the importance of such traditional media (television, radio, newspapers, newsletters, bulletin boards, and interpersonal communications) to citizens, organizations, governments and businesses in rural communities in Canada. We argue that given issues of age, distance from urban centres, infrastructural deficiencies, there is a continuing role for traditional forms of media for capacity-building in Canadian rural communities. Following Reimer (2002) we suggest there are four types of social relations that contribute to social capacity (bureaucratic, market, associative, and communal). Within this framework, both traditional and modern forms of media provide assets and liabilities that can be reorganized into new outcomes. That is, particular media forms (e.g. radio, computers, bulletin boards) are used for different purposes and used differently within and across communities. Understanding this differential use, and in particular the importance of traditional media in rural communities, is the focus of this research. In particular, while lack of access to, and knowledge of how to use information technologies may be considered a liability for communities in rural Canada, traditional media in these communities can be their asset. Understanding its use for market, bureaucratic, associative, and communal purposes is fundamental to understanding the level of social capacity in rural Canada.

Scholarly context of traditional media in rural communities

There are many factors that aid a community in its ability to work together, create strong bonds, benefit from long-term economic activity and mobilize in times of crisis (Slack/Williams 2000; Theodori 2000; Wilkinson 1986; Warren 1977; Poplin 1972). In this paper we will focus on the way in which communication networks and communication media affect community, culture and social reality (Hischier/Reichart 2003; Rausch 2002; Shah/Kwak/Holbert 2001; Haddon 2000; Kerr 2000; Roe 1988). These networks and media can be understood as assets that can have both positive and negative impacts on outcomes within a particular place or group. Generally speaking, media and communication networks aid in the creation of links within and external to a given community (Servaes/Malikhao 2004; Blumler/Kavanagh 1999). Internally, these networks are likely to contribute to the development and maintenance of bonding social capital; externally their most important contribution will most likely be to bridging and linking types of social capital (Flora 1998).

With the rapid pace of technological advancement and change it has become crucial to closely examine how traditional communication media fit into the bigger, more technologically advanced picture – particularly in rural communities (Chan/Leung 2005; Cooke 2005; Baym/Zhang/Lin 2004). The rapid changes in communications technology have not rendered the need and role of traditional forms of media obsolete. If anything, traditional media may provide a critical bonding role that keeps the ‘wider’ community-based audience together in order to share ideas and take action. New forms of media and communication media on the other hand, may be too narrow in focus and therefore more likely to appeal to a limited audience (Ang 1991) thereby exacerbating social fragmentation. Traditional forms may serve to overcome these tendencies.

As the venue and forms of communication delivery continue to evolve, it is also possible that the scope and nature of audiences will change significantly (Ang 1996). Given that the demographics and socio-economics of rural Canada are different to that of urban Canada, differences in the willingness and/or ability to adopt new media forms is also highly likely. For example, rural populations tend to be older, more reliant on traditional resources for economic wealth, have less formal education, earn less income, and be more conservative in their views (Bollman 1992). These differences raise questions about whether formal (newspaper, television, billboards) and informal (meeting places) forms of traditional media continue to have special importance in rural areas.

It has been argued that the Internet and some modern communication media actually serve to drive individuals further apart in an environment where individualism may have become dominant over collectivity and inclusiveness within society (Anderson 2006; Shah *et al.* 2001; Althaus/Tewksbury 2000; Bennett 1998). The Internet and new forms of media are often accused of fragmenting audiences and society through the “growing popularity of narrowcasting technologies [which]

represent a sharp break with the 'common carrier' model for news outlets, in which the news media are seen as providing a forum for the exchange of viewpoints and advocacy of the interests that reaches across all groups in a society" (Althaus/Tewksbury 2000, 23). Herein lies the importance of creating a platform in which members of a society can mutually access and exchange information, ideas and viewpoints, helping shape and balance the social reality of a given place and time.

Communications and the rural economy enjoy a long tradition of analysis within Canadian political economy (Winseck 1998; Shah/Kwak/Holbert 2001). Innis in particular (1951, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c), has provided an extensive discussion of the transformation from a staples to service economy – with a particular sensitivity to the role of communications. Following this tradition, others have shown how advances in communication technology and networks have fundamentally altered the way communities and community members interact (Winseck 1998; Mansell 2004). Daniels (2004) suggests that Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) create the foundation for the new economy to flourish. The capacity to perform any number of tasks may come to depend on the ability to effectively utilize new forms of communication technologies, as well as those of a traditional nature, within the new economy. While new information and communication technologies may play a fundamental role in establishing sustainable possibilities for the future (Alexander 2000), the possibilities that ICTs hold for economic growth may not be evenly distributed (Scott-Dixon 2005).

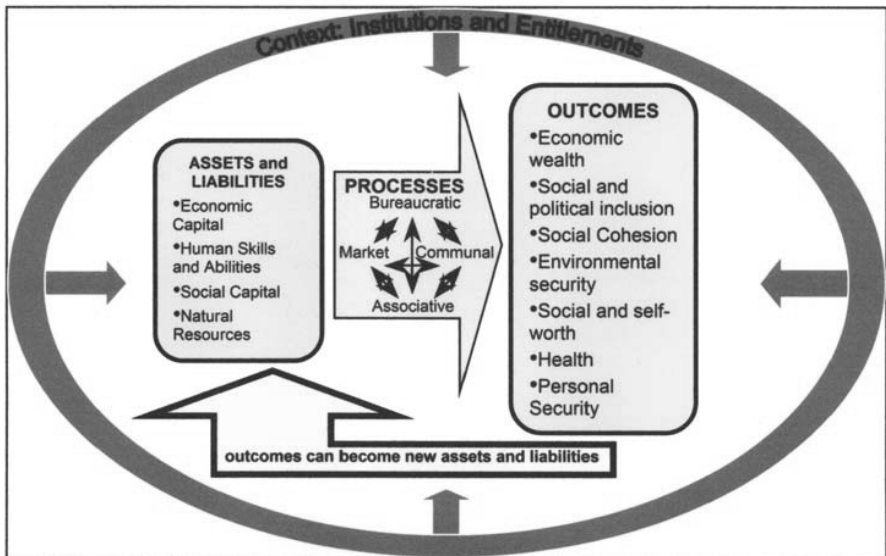
A capacity framework for analyzing traditional media use in rural Canada

Our interest in communication is driven by a concern for community capacity-building. We wish to investigate how traditional media may contribute to such capacity by enhancing information flow (Melody 1999; Tiepoh/Reimer 2004), building social cohesion (Duxbury 2002; Romanow/Bruce 2006), and structuring social capital (Flora 1998; Reimer 2002, 2006). In a detailed review of the literature, Romanow and Bruce (2006) elaborate some of the ways in which communications fosters community capacity with a particular emphasis on the importance of communications for developing social networks and social cohesion. In a recent special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Communication* (Duxbury 2002) explores the role of communications for linking culture and social cohesion. In establishing the context for the issue, the Canadian Government's definition of 'connectedness' is adopted as follows: "Ways that citizens connect to each other and to the rest of the world through intricate networks of social, economic, political and cultural ties" (quoted in Duxbury 2002, 122). Works such as these reinforce the importance of a better understanding of the role of communications media within communities.

Community capacity refers to the ability of a group or community to transform assets and liabilities into desired outcomes (Reimer 2002). Reimer (2002, 2006) illustrates how this capacity involves four fundamental types of relations: communal, bureaucratic, associative and market. Each has its own unique set of characteristics, norms and rules.

Figure 1. Capacity Framework Developed by the New Rural Economy Project

Source: Reimer (2006)



- Communal – refers to relationships between family and friends, communal relations are built over a long period of time, are based on shared identity and require a high level of trust and loyalty.
- Bureaucratic – rely on explicit and implicit knowledge of rights and entitlements through charters and laws. These rational/legal relationships are found in state and corporate structures. They must operate within set roles to be able to meet and maintain common objectives, strategies and structures.
- Associative – embedded in shared interests. These relationships require a substantial time commitment and merging of common interests to reach the desired goal. Examples of these relationships include church groups, food banks, and Internet chat groups.
- Market – these relationships are based on the exchange of goods and services in a highly mobile, information rich environment. Knowledge of markets, prices and access to tradable goods and services are essential for these relationships to be created and maintained.

While each process is distinct, there are interrelationships among the four processes. For example, there can be overlap between communal and associate relations. That is, family and friends (communal) can be members of the same church or voluntary association (associative). Similarly, the exchange of goods and services (market) depends upon state and corporate structures to ensure the smooth operation of trade and commerce (bureaucratic). The empirical research conducted for this paper included interviewing community members about the use and importance of the traditional media based on these three processes.

Defining traditional media

Prior to the technology and communications revolution, time and space were viewed as a barrier to social cohesion and the evolution of communities and society (Innis 1951, 1995c). In fact, rural society maintained cohesion because of the distance to, and separation from, urban society. However, the telegraph changed the world. Previous to that initial technological advancement, communication was difficult to separate from transportation, but rather “[i]nformation traveled only as fast as the messenger who carried it. The telegraph dissolved that unity and quickly spread across the land to form the first of the great communication networks” (Czitrom 1982, 3). Essentially from that point in history forward we have been riding a technological wave that will in all likelihood continue to gain momentum and breadth. Yoon and Kim (2001, 53), for example, suggest that Internet advertising differs from traditional media advertising in many ways. The most pertinent aspects are: “(1) unlimited delivery of information beyond time and space, (2) unlimited amounts and sources of information, and (3) the ability to target specific groups or individuals”. As a result, the limitations of time and space become diminished.

For the purpose of this study the traditional media will be defined as those communication media that do not possess an interactive quality requiring advanced technology. *Table 1* provides examples of new and old forms of media and communication media, as well as examples of non-news related communication devices. For the purposes this research, we have included six types of communication media as forms of traditional media:

- Newspapers
- Television
- Radio
- Community Newsletters
- Bulletin boards – including informal locations such as storefront windows
- Interpersonal communication areas – such as meeting halls and restaurants

New Media	Old Media	Non-News Media
Computers Satellites Cable Television Recording devices Internet Fiber Optics	Broadcast Television Radio Newspapers Magazines Telephone Telegraph Bulletin Boards	Direct Mail Electronic Mail Polling Videoconferencing Computer Conferencing Teleconferencing Use of the above technologies (cable, satellites, broadcast televisions, etc.) for political purposes

Source: Adapted from Abramson/Arterton/Orron, 1988, 5

Newspapers, television and radio represent standard, or established, sources of traditional media, in terms of news and advertising. Community newsletters, bulletins and interpersonal communication areas, rather, represent alternative or informal sources of information which are often the product of volunteer organizations and associations. Together, these six sources of information reflect the range of traditional media that exist in rural communities. Some will have access to all six sources, others only a few.

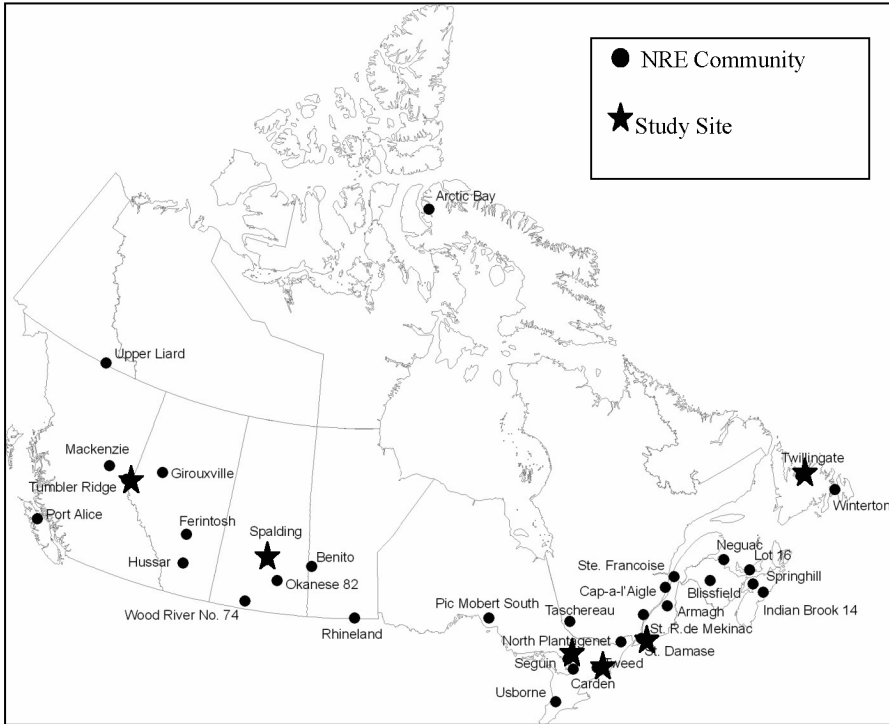
Analysis of rural communities in Canada

This study was conducted within the New Rural Economy (NRE) Project, a national research initiative developed to study rural communities across Canada. The NRE Project has been conducting research in a sample of 32 communities across Canada (Figure 2) since 1996. These communities were randomly selected from all rural communities in Canada based on five factors, including: connection to the global economy, whether the economy was fluctuating or stable, distance from major urban centres, levels of institutional capacity (e.g. schools, hospitals, or other services), and whether the community was leading or lagging with respect to a number of socio-economic characteristics (e.g. education, employment). The NRE is concerned with understanding changes taking place in rural Canada, identifying what causes this change, and identifying how rural Canada can best respond to change. Recent research by the NRE project has focused on four areas of the new economy: governance, services (e.g. Martz/Sanderson, 2006), environment (e.g. Parkins 2008), and communications (e.g. Bruce *et al.* 2006).

The overall objective of the communication focus is to examine how media and their uses reflect changes related to the new economy and the evolution of the concept of community. Three primary research objectives were developed for the project reported on in this paper, in order to achieve this: 1) to understand how the traditional media has changed over time, 2) to understand how the traditional media portrays the new rural economy, and 3) to help build the capacity for the tradi-

tional media to remain a critical component of the new rural economy debate. This paper will expressly share the lessons learned from the sample group studied.

Figure 2. Location of NRE sites across Canada



Using the New Rural Economy sampling frame of 32 communities across Canada (Figure 2), six sites were chosen for this study. These sites were selected based on several factors including the presence of newspaper and radio, regional and linguistic representation, and interest in the community. We focused on those communities in which there was a local or regional newspaper, or both. To ensure equal regional representation of Canada, sites were selected to include British Columbia (MacKenzie), the prairies (Spalding, Saskatchewan), Ontario (Seguin and Tweed), Quebec (St. Damase), and Atlantic Canada (Twillingate, Newfoundland and Labrador). In addition to regional representation, the communities also reflect a range of population sizes and changes as well as economies (Table 2). The economies include traditional (fishery, agriculture, forestry) and contemporary (tourism, second homes, retirement, recreation). There is also a mix of communities that have populations

that have grown, declined, and been steady. The study also sought to include at least one francophone community (St. Damase). Beyond regional and linguistic representation, efforts were made to ensure that the communities selected reflected the various types of traditional media as defined above.

Table 2. Study Community Descriptions

Community	Population 2006	Population 2001	% Change 2001-2006	Economic Function
MacKenzie	4539	5206	-12.8	Forestry
Spalding	237	261	- 9.2	Agriculture
Sequin	4276	3968	+15.6	Tourism, Second Homes
Tweed	5614	5612	No change	Tourism, Retirement
St. Damase	1329	1327	No change	Manufacturing, Agriculture
Twillingate	2448	2611	- 6.2	Fishing, Fish Processing

Source: Statistics Canada, Community Profiles.

To assess changes within a rural community's traditional media, we utilized five key informant interview guides, each one targeting a different component of the community. The key informant interviews took place with upper level management from newspaper companies, volunteer groups, businesses, libraries, and public meeting places. In some instances, assistant management or employees were recruited to complete the interview. Questionnaire guides focused on gathering respondent profile data including name and contact information, position and length of time within the organization, as well as the number of years they had resided within the community. This was important in order to gauge whether differences existed between respondents with varying amounts of organizational control or time spent living in the community. Questions of a qualitative nature were asked regarding their community and their views on the traditional media. All questions were tailored to suit each participant using one of the five interview guides. In general the information gathered reflected how each believed the community had changed over the past five years, the type of traditional media that is most commonly used and most useful in their community, and how the traditional media contributes to the four types of relationships found within communities: communal; associative; bureaucratic; and market.

A total of 44 interviews were completed in the six sites (*Table 3*) during the summer and fall of 2004. Of these, thirteen were from businesses, ten were from newspapers, ten were from volunteer organizations, four were from libraries, and seven took place with employees and owners of personal meeting places (*Table 3*). The average length of time that respondents had resided in their community was approximately 25 years, with the highest response being 71 years and the lowest re-

sponse being zero years (commuters and regional newspaper editors). Most respondents had reported living in the community for 25 years or more. Though no direct link was made between the type of response and length of time in the community, it is believed that the high number of individuals with long-term residency led to a more knowledgeable collection of answers, particularly with respect to how the community had changed over time. Organizational representatives interviewed reported involvement with a particular organization for an average of 13 years.

Table 3. Geographic and Thematic Distribution of Respondents

Community		Position in Community	
MacKenzie	10	Business	13
Spalding	5	Newspaper	10
Sequin	4	Volunteer	10
Tweed	7	Library	4
St. Damase	10	Meeting Place	7
Twillingate	8		
Total	44	Total	44

Source: Author's Interviews

Analysis of media use

Using the answers given during the key informant interviews, the type of communication used by volunteers and businesses was ranked in order of importance to the organization. Respondents were asked, "What type of communication is most useful for your business/organization? Why?" Interviewers prompted respondents using the six forms of traditional media (newspaper, newsletter, bulletin board, informal meeting place, radio, and television) though other answers given were also recorded.

Most of the thirteen business-people interviewed indicated that they utilized the newspaper as their primary form of communication. Respondents from the ten volunteer organizations indicated that both the newspaper and interpersonal modes of communicating were their principal source of communication. Other forms of communication used by businesses and volunteer organizations in the study included the Internet and electronic message boards.

When comparing responses of businesses and volunteer respondents between study areas, most communities employed a variety of communication media. *Table 4* illustrates the type of communication used in each of the six sites with the most common response indicated in bold. From this table it can be summarized that of the total responses recorded, the newspaper was the highest reported form of media used for communication, while television/cable were the lowest reported. Within the research sites many of the communities reported an evenly dispersed use of media, though respondents in St. Damase had a higher usage of the newspa-

per and Mackenzie preferred radio as their main mode of communication. Over half of the business and half of the volunteer respondents, reported that the type of communication medium they had used over the past five years had changed, with the majority of volunteer respondents moving toward an increased use of the print media and business-people choosing alternate modes of communication depending on the season and evaluation of results.

Table 4. Use of Traditional Media by Businesses and Volunteer Groups

Site (Number of Respon- dents)	Number of times communication was sited							
	News- paper	News- letter	Radio	TV/ Cable	Bulle- tin Board	Inter- per- sonal	Other	TO- TALS
Mackenzie (8)	4	2	6	1	4	4	1	22
Spalding (2)	2	1	1	0	2	2	1	9
Seguin (2)	2	2	1	0	1	2	0	8
Tweed (3)	3	0	2	0	2	1	0	8
St. Damase (4)	4	1	0	1	1	1	1	9
Twillingate (4)	3	0	1	0	1	3	1	9
TOTALS (23)	18	6	11	2	11	13	4	65
Source: Author's Interviews								

More than half of the businesses representatives interviewed confirmed that they wished that there were other forms of communication available to them. These respondents were almost equally divided between the Internet and television. Cost was cited as the main reason they did not currently make use of these forms of media. Half of the volunteer respondents reported that they had no inclination to use other forms of media for communication. Of those who did report wanting an additional media source, the Internet, television and more frequent newsletters were mentioned.

Participants in the study were asked whether they used non-traditional forms of media for communication within their business or organization. In total, less than half of the respondents said they did not use any form of non-traditional media, though this number was higher among volunteer groups than among businesses. Advanced interactive forms of media including email, Internet, and company owned and municipal websites were the most frequently reported form of non-

traditional media. Non-traditional media forms reported by participants include business-related sources such as business cards, trade shows and flyers. Electronic sources, partnerships, and art displays were also mentioned (*Table 5*).

Table 5. Types of non-traditional media used by businesses and volunteer organizations								
Interview Group (# of Respondents)	Type of Non-Traditional Communication Used							
	Cyber Media - internet, email, websites	Business Cards	Partnership	Trade shows	Direct flyers/ Posters	Electronic Message Board	Art Display	TOTAL
Business (13)	11	2	1	1	1	0	1	17
Volunteer (10)	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	7
TOTAL	16	2	1	1	2	1	1	24
Source: Author's Interviews								

Traditional media and relationships

Respondents shared their opinions regarding the role they believe the traditional media plays in the four types of community relationships: communal, bureaucratic, associative, and market. This question was posed to participants in all communities in the study except for Mackenzie, which due to receiving an earlier version of the key informant instrument, only had the question presented to personnel at the local and regional newspaper. Responses to this question were varied between study sites and between key informant groups, resulting in a greater understanding of viewpoints.

Communal relations

For the purpose of this research, communal relations within rural communities refer to relationships formed between family, friends, and cultural groups. The relationships are based on kinship and favours. These types of relationships often occur over an extended period of time and are based upon the concepts of identity, trust and loyalty (Reimer 2006). Data generated from the key informant interviews indicate that commonalities exist across the sample group of communities in regard to the role and importance of the traditional media within rural communities. However, stronger patterns were found to exist among respondents within each of the study sites (*Table 6*).

Table 6. The role of traditional media in communal relations

Site	Role of Traditional Media in Communal Relations
Mackenzie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The paper significantly impacts the community – The traditional media generates strong community bonds and contributes to the family fabric
Spalding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Radio announcements of community events and seniors activities are free – The church utilizes the newspaper – The radio announces community events – Newspapers publish local events and there is some local content announced on the radio – Bulletin boards are important – Bulletin boards and monthly newsletters are the most important
Seguin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The traditional media creates awareness – People watch television and read the newspaper, but the newspaper does a better job – The media informs people about what is happening in the community – It is used for community events and by churches
Tweed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Newspapers are very important in Tweed – Elderly people read the paper and watch the news because they love all things local – Print media, then radio, then television play a role in these (relationships) – Print media and free radio advertising plays an important role – Traditional media helps, but the main source of communication is word of mouth – Newspapers are the best way to reach seniors and radio the best way to reach youth
St. Damase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They play a role in advertising and promoting our businesses – TV makes people aware of what is going on in our community – Newspapers do not play a big role in families, though they do relay the news to seniors and the general public and influence shopping and consumption – Newspapers keep people informed about local life – Newspaper reflects the aging religious population and addresses agricultural issues – The traditional media plays an important role, but the newspaper is the most important – Free newspapers that contain community ads and announcements get delivered to everyone in the community – TV has an influence as one can observe changing habits as a result of certain shows; some newspapers print stories that people believe to be the truth – Newspapers are full of advertisements and articles, radio plays a role too – The free newspaper is important to advertise business and events as it is distributed to all
Twillingate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (TV) the community channel is very important as everyone watches it; newspaper and word of mouth also important – (TV) the paying cable channel advertises birthdays, buy and sell, anniversaries, etc.

A common theme that arose from the key informant interviews spoke to the high level of importance attached to the traditional media within the sample group of communities studied in this project. Newspapers and print media appear to be highly valued with regard to communal relations; local content and information is perceived to be effectively disseminated through local and regional newspapers. An interesting theme that arose from discussions regarding the importance of newspapers was the capacity of newsletters and flyers to generate immediate community updates and the rapid transfer of pertinent information. This technique may be used in a variety of ways; in times of emergency it can be seen as an effective mechanism to create awareness and pass along relevant information to community residents as quickly as possible. In Tweed, Ontario most respondents indicated that the print media was their most important source of news and communication. However, in Tweed the importance of this medium was first directed toward the elderly cohort of the population and then for the community in general. In St. Damase the same also appeared to be true, although no distinction was made with respect to demographics. One respondent suggested that community newspapers create stronger bonds within communities, emphasizing the continuing importance that some forms of the traditional media continue to play within a progressive and highly technological environment, where electronics and advanced forms of communication often appear to dominate.

The radio was deemed to be the second most important medium of news and local communication within communal or personal relations in a given community. Some irregularities will likely be discovered with respect to the level of perceived importance associated with local radio due to the fact that not all rural and small communities have their own local station. Since radio announcements for community events are often free of charge, local organizations and community members often employ the radio as a means to disseminate their messages. For example, in Spalding, church groups can relay their information free of charge both on the radio and in the newspaper. In Tweed, both radio and newspaper advertisements are free and play an important role in the community.

The importance of local and community television in the sphere of community interpersonal relations appears to be somewhat less important than found to be associated with the print media and radio. However, patterns of perceived importance appeared to be linked to specific study sites, rather than across the entire sample group of communities. For example in Twillingate, television and the community channel play an important role in community life. Respondents indicated that the local channel was widely watched by all community members. Television in Twillingate is a means for community residents to publicize birthdays and anniversaries, as well as providing a platform for the informal economy.

Bulletin boards and word of mouth communication appear to be less appreciated and important for communal relations according to the data generated through the key informant interviews. This is interesting in that one could expect face-to-face

and informal modes of communication to play a significant role within family relationships and friendships. Their de-emphasis may be partially due to the fact that informal modes of communicating are not immediately associated with the traditional media. For example, respondents emphasized the role and importance of word of mouth communication and bulletin boards in their additional comments. Respondents in Spalding emphasized the significance of bulletin boards within communal relations in their community. In Tweed one respondent reiterated the importance of the traditional media in community life, but added that people may not immediately associate word of mouth and informal communication with the traditional media.

Associative relations

Associative relations are rooted in shared interests. These types of relationships within communities require substantial time and effort to be exerted in an effort to reach and maintain common goals and interests. These types of relationships are often formed as a part of membership or inclusion within a particular community organization, such as in church groups or variety clubs and are controlled by civil law, municipal by-laws, social norms, and informal sanctions (Reimer 2006). Communications play a key role in fostering these types of social relations (Romanow/Bruce 2006). As noted earlier, the data indicate that though commonalities are readily apparent across the sample sites, patterns of similarity are more common within specific communities. The traditional media are generally perceived as having an important role within rural communities but the form they take may be less important than their impact: the traditional media are often seen as a vehicle to distribute community information and create awareness. Some variation in importance was also noticed, especially in comparison to the print media. Other respondents felt that the radio or television has more of an impact on associative relations within their community. This variation is illustrated when one examines the structural differences within the traditional media in particular areas or communities. For example, some communities may not possess their own local radio station or community channel (*e.g.* Spalding, Seguin), but may have a popular well-read local newspaper or community newsletter (*Table 7*). This finding is also confirmed by Bruce, Ellis and Delury (2006) in their study of a community newsletter in Prince Edward Island.

Table 7. The role of traditional media in associative relations	
Site	Role of Traditional Media in Associative Relations
Mackenzie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper helps volunteer and community groups with their work and activities
Spalding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radio announces functions, bulletin boards help sign people up and some functions are advertised in the newspaper - The newsletter encourages people to join organizations and clubs; posters and word of mouth is good for advertising too - Groups often submit write ups to the paper - They are important to promote and report on activities within the community - People have the opportunity to sign up for things on bulletin boards, people attend events in other communities when they hear about them on the radio
Seguin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The traditional media generates awareness - Volunteer and community groups advertise and gather information via the newspaper - (They contribute) mostly through interpersonal communication by telephone
Tweed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ads and stories in the newspaper on community events and some on the radio - Local volunteer groups use the free radio publicity to communicate with community - Groups rely on newspaper to run their stories, sometimes on the radio - Newspaper plays an important role - Print media advertises and promotes community events - Service organizations rely on newspapers, bulletin boards and storefronts to communicate with the community
St. Damase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radio and newspaper announce local activities - (Traditional media) can give ideas and incite people to volunteer or get involved - Reporting about associations' activities gives them publicity and advances their cause - Newspapers keep people current on recent discussions affecting the community - Newspapers have a page dedicated to community organizations events, the newspaper follows community activities very closely - Bulletin boards and word of mouth are the most important for these relations - Newspapers are important for these relations - Issues that are discussed frequently in the media will be supported by volunteers, mostly in the newspapers though as people listen to radio more for the music - Newspaper and bulletin boards important for these (relations) - All (forms of traditional media) are important to inform the public about activities
Twillingate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some use (of traditional media) by small businesses - Posters, newspapers and TV (play a role in these relations) - TV and the newspaper are important

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|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Organizations use the community channel, some advertising is done on the radio, but not as much as on TV, not a lot in the newspaper – Local cable channel (TV) is important because everyone watches it, newspapers report on events after they have occurred – The cable channel (TV) and the local radio play a role in these (relationships) – They (traditional media) are important, especially newspaper as they give credibility and visibility to organizations – It (traditional media) gets the message out though it may not encourage people to join |
|--|---|

The data suggest that newspapers and the print media are generally perceived as being the most important media for associative relations. It is perceived as an effective tool to reach community groups and volunteers and to disseminate relevant information. By reaching the widest possible audience, awareness will generate interest and therefore, boost the morale and capacity of local organizations and associative relations. Generally speaking, respondents suggested that the dissemination of information regarding events by community organizations advanced their cause and helped them to reach their goals. Community organizations, activities and objectives are also legitimized through the traditional media. For example, media announcements and coverage of a service club-based event could result in increased interest in the organization, and with persistent coverage, acknowledgment by residents of the merits of the actions of the organization.

In fact, all forms of traditional media were highlighted by interviewees in each of the six sites, including: newspapers (all), television (all), radio (all but MacKenzie and Seguin), bulletin boards (Tweed and St. Damase), and interpersonal communication (Spalding). Of particular note is the role of 'informal' traditional media such as billboards and community newsletters for volunteer groups in Spalding, Seguin, Tweed and St. Damase (Table 7). These results support the importance of community newsletters as noted by others (Bruce/Ellis/Delury 2006; Rausch 2002).

Bureaucratic relations

Some have argued that new media technologies have improved participation in local democratic processes (Tambini 1999), while others have been more critical (Althaus/Tewksbury 2002). Much of this participation occurs through associative relations as reflected in volunteer and lobby groups, but it is also facilitated through communication regarding bureaucratic-based roles and relations. Getting a driver's license, health care, education, welfare services, or even accessing money at a bank require the knowledge, information, and skill to manage roles and accessibility conditions (Reimer 2006). These relations (e.g. government, corporations, law, formal organizations) are based on authority and status and generalized principles and are controlled by legislation and corporate law. Communication media make much of this possible (cf. Table 8). This is most obvious when considering the dissemina-

tion of information regarding government services, school closings, or deadlines for income tax.

Table 8. The role of traditional media in bureaucratic relations	
Site	Role of Traditional Media in Bureaucratic Relations
Mackenzie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Newspapers cover town and school news and events – Public opinion, positive or negative, can form based on stories in the newspaper, which may alter what groups are doing
Spalding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Local governments publicise through the newspaper and radio – The village will put notices in the newspaper and on bulletin boards – School kids talk about upcoming events at the local radio station, the newspaper will also have write ups from school kids and the municipality – High school students relay information to radio, graduation pictures go in the newspaper – The bulletin boards have notices from the kids club put on by the library, and kids club events through the church
Seguin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Government should use these to inform people – The town government has to advertise for tenders, etc., the paper also covers school events and the school sends in stories about their teams and graduation – Seniors and other groups advertise through the school newsletter
Tweed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Some ads are in the newspaper about school events and municipal council meetings – Kids bring home newsletters from school and the council puts minutes in the newspaper – TV doesn't play much of a role, newspapers and radio announce school events and the newspaper prints the minutes of meetings – Newspapers cover upcoming events and school meetings, newsletters and free radio advertising are important for getting out important announcements, the government still rely on media to get their message out to the masses – Print media (announces) council minutes, and schools send home newsletters and notices – Traditional media no longer plays an important role in government, government and schools are turning towards internet
St. Damase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – They (traditional media) serve to direct people toward services – The community centres, schools and businesses have a big role to play in emergencies – They (traditional media) can be used to address issues that are happening in schools, the town uses them to track peoples' experiences and concerns and address issues – Flyers are used when news is urgent and can't wait until the next month's edition of the newspaper, though the town has email, people will phone instead – The newspaper is dedicated to many of these areas such as health, social

	<p>services and education, as well as the social economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional media are very important for communicating with the public but they also convey public opinion, which influences these institutions; bulletin boards and word of mouth are also important - Newspapers are important for these (types of relations) - If the media presents views that support the schools and government people will accept them, especially in the print media, if not people will reject them - The newspaper and bulletin boards are important for this
Twillingate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Traditional media used for coming events - Free community channel, newsletters from school and newspaper (important) - These groups use the community channel and newspaper for jobs - Institutions use radio more than TV for urgent messages but the community channel is also used to advertise events, newsletters used in schools, not much in newspapers - Radio gives a little coverage, but mostly the pay for community cable channel - Schools use the cable channel and people advertise yard sales on the channel - Important to schools and government as they advertise things on community channel - Active encouragement from local newspaper media

A key finding of this research indicates that the most important link between bureaucratic relations and the traditional media is the ability or potential ability of the traditional media to communicate local government’s and community organization’s messages to the general public. More commonality was discovered within communities than across them. This likely depends to a great extent on the medium and perceived success and popularity that the medium has within a given area.

While the burden of relaying public information rests upon the traditional media, it is also faced with some criticisms regarding its fairness and impartiality. Some respondents indicated that the ability of the local media to sway public opinion was a concern because particular community objectives and subsequent outcomes are significantly altered by public opinion. For example, local politicians often rely on the traditional media such as newsletters and ‘town hall’ meetings to disseminate their messages to the residents of their community and region. Using only one type of medium to convey these messages may introduce biases with respect to the message, sender, or recipient. Our data reinforces the point that both traditional and non-traditional media are still required to maximize such dissemination.

In nearly all cases, emergency measures to relay information required the use of traditional media. During the “Ice Storm” of 1998 that created power outages throughout eastern Ontario and southern Quebec, the community of St. Damase relied on traditional media to direct community residents to emergency services. In many cases, *ad hoc* forms of communication are generated to supplement regular media in a time of crisis, including flyers distributed door to door and posted in public places.

Market relations

The importance of social capital to economic development has long been argued at length (e.g. Teipoh/Reimer 2004; Putnam 1993). Market relations are based on supply and demand and formal contracts. They are supported and controlled by trade agreements, competition legislation, labour law, and the courts (Reimer 2006). Our focus in this discussion is on how businesses and community leaders utilize the traditional media for this development. Most businesses and economic transactions occur within the norms of market-based relations. These guide the exchange of goods and services to ensure access to information, fair competition, and accountability. Knowledge of markets and prices, as well as access to information regarding tradable goods and services are critical to the health and vitality of these relationships (Reimer 2006). The traditional media play an important role with respect to all aspects of these relations.

Not only did interviewees note a range of uses of traditional media for market relations, they also highlighted the need to improve these relations and identified the role that the local media might play in this process. Some argued that in order to remain economically competitive in the changing economy, players must have the capacity to access and utilize the infrastructure and skill sets that participation in advanced communication networks require. However, a competitive edge may necessitate some form of working relationship that includes both traditional and advanced forms of media. Interview respondents indicated that there are often discrepancies between traditional and advanced forms of media delivery networks in the study sites and area: most often due to the under-representation of the more advanced technologies. A number of reasons could be responsible for this under-representation, including poor infrastructure, an inability to access necessary technologies, low interest or an inadequate skill base and experience.

The results suggest that within the sphere of market relations, some balance between traditional and advanced forms of communication networks and delivery systems is essential. This may simply be that to reach all demographic groups, communication schemes must be carefully tailored to meet the specified desires, needs, and abilities of each group. Some respondents suggested that younger individuals might be more inclined to utilize modern technologies to meet their communication needs. The same may be true of the capacity of traditional devices to reach other segments of the population. It would appear likely that in smaller, non-urban settings mixed methods might most effectively deliver necessary messages. Our data show the importance of the traditional media for advertising (all but MacKenzie), particularly television, radio and flyers. Linkages among relations were also noted, particularly between market and communal relations. For example, the private sector sponsored particular community events in Spalding and St. Damase (Table 9).

Table 9. Responses from all key informant interviews on the role of traditional media in market relations

Site	Role of Traditional Media in Market Relations
Mackenzie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some work need to be done to improve this relationship
Spalding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Banks advertise low interest and loan rates in the paper - All types of these communications used for advertising - Communication forms are mostly used for advertising - Advertising is done through the radio and bulletin boards; businesses support local events which also acts as advertising - (These relations) often make use of the newspaper, bulletin boards also play a role in advertising
Sequin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People advertise in the newspaper - They (market organizations) use the newspaper, radio and tv to advertise, new people use them more than long term residents
Tweed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lots of ads in the local newspaper for businesses, financial organizations also place ads - Local businesses use local media - Businesses and financial institutions rely on newspaper because lots of people read them - They use traditional media and new technology, they may advertise through the local paper but communicate through email and the internet - Local businesses use radio, newspaper and word of mouth; banks do not promote locally but rather regionally on TV and radio
St. Damase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Businesses use the TV for advertising - TV plays a role in publicity, newspapers play role in advertising, internet plays a role too - Newspapers are less important for business than municipal, but they are still important - Businesses, banks, etc don't publish in the local paper, they use the regional paper to advertise for jobs and maybe some radio - There is a lot of coverage of finance and economy in the paper, banks also get a lot of coverage in the regional paper - Traditional media is important for publicity, their role is to share information, especially through bulletin boards and newspapers - Traditional media influences consumer behaviour, young people become very educated through newspapers and looking beyond traditional media, older people rely on it - The newspaper and bulletin boards are important for this - Businesses and financial institutions get involved in community life by using traditional media for their sponsorship activities
Twillingate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (Traditional media) is used a bit - Maybe the cable station and the bulletin boards, not a lot of radio - Flyers and local TV allow people to advertise, but not much through the newspaper - The pay for ads cable TV channel is used a lot for advertising business, businesses also use bulletin boards, but not much on radio or newspaper - The pay for ads cable TV channel is used as well as radio and flyers - These organizations use the cable channel and pay for advertising because more people watch it than the free channel - They use the community channel, the newspaper and radio a bit - Flyers are the most important as newspapers advertise to too many people

Concluding remarks

The purpose of this paper was to examine the importance of the traditional media to citizens, organizations, governments and businesses in six communities located in rural Canada. The results indicate that such an importance exists. The research was embedded in a theoretical framework of social capacity that is defined on four interacting relations: market, bureaucratic, communal and associative. The research represented but one piece of a large puzzle which seeks to better understand the social capacity of communities in rural Canada (Reimer, 2006). Communication is central to acting on capacity. Much of rural Canada lacks access to, or knowledge of, new technologies and networks. Moreover, within rural Canada there are differences in use levels and reliance on certain traditional media.

Overall, there appeared to be agreement regarding the value of newspapers for news, advertising as well as other general community information. The value of radio, newsletters and television are a reflection of availability. In rural Canada, smaller more remote communities tend to have less access to local programming in radio and television. In fact, of the six communities studied, Twillingate was the only one with a local cable access television station. Local newspapers and newsletters are also more difficult to maintain. However, as mentioned by an interviewee in St. Damase, while the most urban proximal of the communities examined, these sources of information are vital to certain groups such as seniors. Thus, other forms of traditional media, including bulletin boards and informal meeting places can play important roles in fostering community and disseminating information to community residents.

One of the core features of community is interaction. Directing, organizing, and informing this interaction is dependent on communication (Romanow/Bruce 2006). In many ways traditional media by its low cost, familiarity, and adaptive nature is well suited to such communication for local and regional interaction. Our research results confirm these claims. Traditional media remain an essential component of rural communication in spite of the introduction of newer forms. Our respondents made clear how they use both forms – often for similar objectives and often in a complementary fashion. We also found that the type of media used will vary according to the nature of the relationships involved. Newspapers and print media were most important for communal-based relations, for example, with some indication of the added advantage of word-of-mouth communication. Radio and TV appeared predominantly for associative-based relations. These media also remained important for bureaucratic-based relations in spite of increased use of the internet by many government organizations. Market-based relations were supported by a wide range of media – with the new technologies emerging as particularly important for connecting with non-local markets.

Finally, these results suggest important considerations for policy-makers and researchers. The current trend to rely on the internet for informing and accessing

government services is likely to introduce considerable inequities in service delivery if it is not accompanied by support for traditional media. Our respondents made clear that many rural communities do not have wide (or free) access to this technology and continue to rely on traditional forms of communication to manage their lives. Researchers have an important part to play in minimizing potential social exclusion as well. These results rely on a relatively small sample of communities and respondents. They can therefore only be suggestive of the relationships identified. To build our confidence in these results and to refine the details of media, users, and processes we need much more work – and more cases. This paper makes clear that such research needs to be systematic – comparing all types of media, and all types of normative relations, in communities both close to and far away from urban centres.

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