

***The News Media, Environmental Collaborations and Accountability: A survey of the EPA's National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals***

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**ABSTRACT**

This study is exploratory research examining the relationship between the news media and environmental collaborations. It reports the results of a 2008 online survey of the 250 members of the EPA's National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals. The study asked about the impact of the media on environmental collaborations, but the major finding actually concerned the significant impact that the process of collaboration has had on the press and its role in environmental problem-solving. Collaboration professionals in the study apparently no longer see the press as a major influence in environmental dispute resolution. The most common estimate of press impact was "slight". A large majority of respondents (71%) said the news media overall have a positive or neutral impact on environmental collaboration outcomes -- surprising numbers, considering the past negative history of the press and environmental issues. From the practitioner's perspective, the most important finding may concern Media Ground Rules (guidelines that govern how collaborations interact with the news media). *With* Media Ground Rules in place, 74% of collaborations reported the press had a positive impact. In contrast, a negative press impact was reported by 60% of collaborations *without* Media Ground Rules in place.

Since 2008, we have seen growth in environmental collaboration, but at the same time, wholesale closures of American newspapers, along with a stunning decline in the number of environmental reporters and environmental coverage in local news. This study looks at the implications of these developments for accountability and environmental collaborations.

## DEDICATION

*To four of the Brown women who have each changed my life immeasurably for the better:  
Jane Brown, my grandmother; Ruth Brown, my mother; Kathleen Brown, my wife; and  
Lyn Brown, my daughter.*

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**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM STATEMENT**

**INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation is an exploratory research study that provides insights and understanding about the relationship between the news media and environmental collaboration processes. Over the past couple of decades, the American approach to environmental issues has shifted radically. Collaboration had become the dominant theme in environmental problem-solving. When collaboration replaces conflict, the result is dramatically changed roles for all involved – including a significant change in the role of the news media.

In 2008, the initial impetus for the study was to explore what impact the news media had on stakeholder collaborations in the environmental field. What emerged from the data resulted in a slightly different focus. The process of collaboration appears to have had more impact on the news media role, than *vice versa*, providing some possible lessons for the future, and raising some concerns about accountability in 2015 and beyond.

The historical context for the study is the era just prior to the financial collapse of 2008. The institution of the press, particularly the newspaper segment, was still relatively healthy. Although the signs were already there that some tough times might be coming, there were still 50,000-plus print reporters in newspapers across the country and papers like the *New York Times* still had dozens of environmental reporters on staff. Environmental collaboration had by this time developed into an institution, itself, with its own culture, rules, standards, professional cadre, and an acknowledged role in the public policy process. By 2008, when the data for this study was collected, environmental collaboration had been used successfully to resolve issues affecting millions of acres of land and billions of dollars of resources.

This study reports on expert survey data about how the two institutions interact, with data on 75 collaboration cases and their experience with the press. The cases were not a randomized representative sample. Because of this, and the small sample size, no reliable parametric analysis was possible. The conclusions of the study were essentially arrived at inductively, but are nonetheless still interesting and of value, given that the news media and stakeholder collaboration are very much at the heart of environmental problem-solving in the United States

## Background on environmental collaboration and the news media

Collaborative decision-making emerged in reaction to the bitter, expensive environmental fights of the 1970's and 1980's. The news media often played a pivotal role in these political/scientific/economic/legal conflicts. These long battles were vicious and often led to stalemates. They were spawned by the old adversarial, top-down process of environmental regulation and policymaking.

Increasingly, private-sector stakeholders and representatives of federal, state and local government agencies began turning to a highly collaborative approach toward environmental problems, where all the stakeholders in a conflict would get together to work out agreements, often using consensus as the decision rule (Gray, 1989). This kind of process has become one of the standard approaches toward environmental problem-solving, particularly since the 1990's when a President Clinton executive order mandated some form of collaborative process for environmental conflict resolution when federal agencies are involved. Lawsuits, legislative battles and regulatory hearings are still part of the environmental policy landscape, but now collaboration also plays a major role.

Some form of collaborative environmental decisionmaking process has been used to generate policies that affect Americans in all parts of the country, involving millions of acres of land and billions of dollars of resources (Randolph, 2003; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000). Collaboration is a relatively new tool in environmental conflict resolution. There are many unanswered questions about its relationship to existing legal frameworks, policymaking bodies and the public interest (Kunde, 1999; Pelletier, Kraak, McCullum, Uusitalo, & Rich, 1999; Randolph & Bauer, 1999; Weber, 1998, 2003). The relationship of the news media and environmental collaborations is likewise still developing, but has been the subject of little research attention.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

### Roles for the news media vis-à-vis environmental collaborations

Since the birth of the Republic we have seen radical changes in the relationships among the news media and important groups in the world of politics and policy. As Timothy Cook reminds us in his 1998 book, *Governing with the News: The news media as a political institution*, in the beginning the American news media were owned by political parties, licensed by bureaucrats, and dictated to by the elected legislators, while non-elected government officials had no policymaking power whatever, being restricted by the administrative law doctrine of “delegated authority”. Changes of power and influence occurred as Congress and the Presidency vied for ascendancy; administrative agencies maneuvered for political influence and policymaking power; and the news media struggled to gain independence from politics and government, while still retaining access to powerful politicians and bureaucrats (T. E. Cook, 1998; Weber, 1999).

Scholars in law, communications and public administration generally acknowledge a dual function for the U.S. news media in our modern public policy arena — a Public Watchdog role enhancing the accountability of government officials and a Public Education role as an information conduit (Freeman, 1997; Gans, 2003). Traditionally, in our pluralistic system, public policy has been developed in a relatively open atmosphere where competing interests vigorously advocate for public acceptance of their policies. This type of conflict-oriented process fit well with the usual way our news media report stories – using adversarial news frames. Now, however, in the environmental policy area, collaboration is replacing conflict in many instances and there are many more roles beyond watchdog and conduit that might be played by the news media. The numerous potential roles for the press in relation to this new kind of process are summarized below and discussed in more detail in the Literature Review, *infra*. Many questions remain unanswered regarding the nature, mechanics and extent of the media’s influence on the process of collaborative environmental policymaking. Does press attention improve or impede collaborative processes? Does press attention alter the outcomes of the collaborations? A need appears to exist for some reliable data about the general state of press/collaboration relationships, their mechanics and their influences.

The academic literature about collaborative environmental decision-making is substantial and growing. The role of the news media was discussed at length in the early literature because the media were seen as an important part of the problem and negotiating in the media was considered counter-productive (Amy, 1987; Susskind & Field, 1996). With the growth of collaboration, scholars began to focus on the new consensus approach to problem-solving and the role of the press became a very minor component of published studies. Books and articles about collaboration contain many anecdotal references to the relationship between the news media and environmental collaborations, but in the numerous case studies reported, there is no agreement about what the relationship is, or its effects on the collaboration process. Collaboration processes often take years and the role of the news media can change depending on the stage of the collaboration and the nature of its activities. Many cases have been reported where the effect of the news media was profoundly negative, but in other cases, characterizations of the media/collaboration relationship range from irrelevant to highly positive. Roles for the media as reported in the literature include the following:

- Public Agenda-Setting
- Watchdog
- Catalyst
- Public Communication Vehicle
- Negotiating Lever
- Stumbling Block
- Co-collaborator/participant
- Nuisance
- Policymaking Competitor
- Participatory Democracy Facilitator
- Irrelevant.

#### The research gap to be addressed

There has apparently been no systematic investigation into the relationship between the press and environmental collaborations, despite reported instances of the press affecting relationships among participants, and influencing how the processes work, their outcomes and accountability. Is the press getting in the way, or is it helping, or is it simply irrelevant?

Every year since 1994 Pew Research Center polling shows that substantial of Americans (58%-71%) believe that the press gets in the way of society solving its problems. Environmental collaboration is an important tool in our society's attempts at environmental problem-solving, but, at this point, the academic literature does not tell us whether the public perception is right or wrong.

After more than a decade of published research, a great deal still remains unknown:

- It is still unclear whether specific news activities such as having TV cameras in meetings have positive or negative influence on the ongoing work of environmental collaborations or their ultimate “success.”
- We do not know if there is an association between differences in press/collaboration relationships and specific variables such as the type of news outlets (local TV, newspapers, etc.); type of news activities (reporters in meetings, cameras in the room, etc.); prior history of news coverage of the issue; or the presence of media ground rules for contact with the press.
- We do not know if there is an association between variables such as amount, accuracy, tone, and balance of news coverage, and the efficiency of a collaboration's work or its success.
- We do not know if press influence varies with specific collaboration-related characteristics such as the type of environmental issue (natural resources, development & growth, etc.); the number of organizations involved; levels of government participating; or the geographic part of the country.

This study addresses the gap in the research by conducting a cross-sectional survey of more than 250 facilitators and mediators on the U.S. EPA's *National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals*—experts with specialized knowledge about thousands of collaborations and their relationships with the news media. These individuals should be able to provide relatively objective data about the impact of the press because these are people who care most about the process itself—as opposed to the issues in dispute. Their “clients” are the collaborations as a whole, and the nature of their job makes them privy to the thinking of the participant stakeholders throughout the process, including how they react to news media activities.

### Importance of the study

It is important to know more about the press/collaboration relationship because news coverage and the presence of reporters and cameras appear to have serious practical and theoretical implications for (a) how participants conduct their collaborations, (b) the outcomes of the collaborations and (c) public accountability of the process and its results.

At this point we do not know what the press/collaboration relationships generally look like or what their effects are, or whether the press is a generally positive or negative influence. This study will provide some much-needed data for addressing questions about the practical effects of the news media on environmental collaborations. That will be the primary focus of this study.

Importantly, as well, however, the study will provide additional grist for future legal and political science scholarship about accountability for collaborative processes and the news media's role therein. For legal and political science scholars, the kind of non-hierarchical, egalitarian, non-adversarial approach found in environmental collaborations plays hob with most of the usual criteria for administrative accountability. Political accountability scholars (Behn, 2001; Weber, 1998, 2003) have touched only tangentially on the news media, merely noting that they can have a public watchdog role in environmental policymaking. This study also provides a closer look at the relationship between the accountability of collaborative processes in general and the news media in particular. The study's results confirm that daily newspapers are the primary news media covering environmental collaborations. The literature shows that the role of the news media as a surrogate for the public is actually a fairly recent phenomenon, but the journalism community considers it a critically important one, seeing a strong and vigorous press as essential to our democratic system. The ability of the press to fulfill that mission is an issue that has become very significant in light of the wholesale closures of American newspapers since 2007 and the stunning decline in the number of environmental reporters and environmental coverage in local news.

### Research Design Summary & Research Questions

The study used a web-based survey instrument that asked Environmental Conflict Professionals to report their judgments about press activities and influences that the press may have had on the collaboration process. Respondents were asked to choose one of their collaborations where there was media coverage and answer questions relating to that

collaboration. Data about the type of news media were collected, along with judgment data about the amount, tone, balance and accuracy of news stories about the collaboration. The survey instrument also requested “demographic” data regarding the collaboration being reported on – the kind of environmental issues at stake, geographic location, number of organizations involved, levels of government represented, prior history of media relations, and the nature of media ground rules, if applicable.

A cross-sectional web-based survey collected data using as a sample frame more than 250 facilitators and mediators on the U.S. EPA’s *National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals*. These are experts with personal, specialized knowledge about more than 9,000 collaborations. The EPA requires individuals to have experience with multiple environmental collaborations before their names will be added to the Roster. All members of the Roster were surveyed. These individuals should be sources of relatively objective data because they would appear to care about the process itself—as opposed to the issues in dispute. They are privy to the thinking of the participant stakeholders throughout the process, including how they react to news media activities, and facilitators/mediators are also key players when the stakeholder participants negotiate media ground rules to govern press/collaboration interactions.

The study has at its heart perceptions of experts in the field – “statements of what individuals know or think they know about the world.” (Manheim, Rich & Willnat, 2002, p. 120). The expert facilitators and mediators were asked to report details of one specific case they were involved with. Collecting such perception data allows us to gather insider information without direct observation. There are some potential problems with perception data in terms of bias, accuracy and consistency; however we should be able to have a relatively high degree of confidence in the perception data in this study because our respondents all have highly specialized training in common, as well as substantial common professional field experience. We should expect the perceptions reported by this group to be more professional, unbiased, accurate and consistent than we could gather ourselves. (A more detailed discussion of this issue is in the Methods section.)

The over-arching Research Questions are:

RQ1: Do the news media have a positive or negative impact on the ongoing work and/or final outcomes of environmental collaborations?

RQ2: Do structural elements of environmental collaborations or characteristics of news coverage influence the impact of the news media?

The research questions led to research sub-questions, which generated specific hypotheses about various roles for the media, stakeholder responses to media attention, and positive or negative media impacts on the collaborative efforts. These hypotheses, in turn, were used to create questions for the survey instrument. The survey instrument was pre-tested by sending it to five randomly-selected members of the sample frame. Then it was distributed three separate times to the full EPA Roster of environmental conflict professionals. A discussion of the derivative research questions, specific hypotheses and survey instrument questions appears in the Methods section. The survey results were explored using descriptive analyses (frequency counts, means, standard deviations, etc.), chi-squares, independent and paired *t*-tests, ANOVA, regression analyses and factor analysis.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### ENVIRONMENTAL COLLABORATION AND THE NEWS MEDIA

#### The press in early collaboration literature.

The role of the news media was a significant part of the early collaboration and pre-collaboration literature. Authors wrote at great length about the need for an alternative to the command-and-control system of environmental regulation and the news media were seen as a large part of the problem. Litigation, protests, demonstrations and angry press conferences were often the tools at hand in that era's adversarial approach (Amy, 1987; Lake, 1980; Susskind & Field, 1996). The environmental policy literature documented serious problems associated with news coverage of environmental disputes in the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's. News coverage was generally conflict-oriented, often fanning the flames of controversy (Anderson, 1997; Karlberg, 1997). Mediation was seen as an alternative process for getting the parties together to resolve environmental conflicts, partly because, as Susskind put it, "Sadly in most controversies, the news media have become the medium for negotiation" (Susskind & Field, 1996).

Collaborative environmental decisionmaking has its roots in the mediation and negotiation procedures used in private sector disputes such as industry/labor conflicts. Collaboration has been defined generally as a collective process that involves joint decision making among stakeholders (Gray, 1989). Stakeholders in environmental conflicts typically include agencies from different levels of government, community organizations, environmental/conservation groups, industry representatives, businesses, recreational groups, landowners and other interested individuals. In the practitioners' world of environmental conflict resolution, collaborative processes have been used to generate policies affecting millions of acres of land and billions of dollars in expenditures. Examples are found across the spectrum of environmental issues, ranging from Superfund cleanups and brownfields development to habitat conservation agreements, EPA negotiated regulations, ecosystem and watershed management, natural resource uses, and planning for national forests and parks (Randolph, 2003; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000).

Environmental collaboration literature essentially begins with Gray's widely cited work in which collaboration is defined as a collective process to "assemble a representative sample of stakeholders (those with a stake in the problem) and let them work out an agreement among themselves" (Gray, 1989, 4). In the 1990's scholars began to write less on mediation and more

on stakeholder collaboration as a general consensus-seeking process. The literature focus shifted. Instead of dwelling on the problems with the existing system – including the influence and role of the news media – academics began to focus on the nature of the new collaboration processes. From this point on, the news media ceased to figure prominently in the literature.

Numerous case studies reported on the organizational structures and decisionmaking processes of environmental collaborations. A growing body of literature examined the theoretical bases, justifications and critiques of collaboration in the environmental context (Barker et al., 2003; Cortner & Moore, 1999; Healey, 1997; Lewicki, Gray, & Elliott, 2003; Porter & Salvesen, 1995; Randolph & Bauer, 1999; Schuett, Selin, & Carr, 2001; S. Selin & Chavez, 1995; S. W. Selin, Schuett, & Carr, 1995; Weber, 2003; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000). In this collaboration literature there is almost nothing focusing on the press/collaboration relationship. The press, however, did not go away. From an academic perspective, collaboration was at one point described as “practice in search of a theory” (Randolph & Rich, 1998). Today, that is not so true generally, but is still very much the case with regard to the relationship of the news media and collaborative processes. The next pages describe how the press/collaboration relationship is dealt with by academic scholars from various disciplines and differing philosophical perspectives.

Roles for the news media as discussed in the literature

**Table 1.**  
*Reported Stakeholder Perceptions of Roles of the News Media Regarding Collaborative Environmental Decisionmaking*

<b>Reported Stakeholder Perceptions of Press Role</b>	<b>Description of Role and Related Literature / Theory Sources</b>
i. Watchdog	Watchdog role of the press as accountability holder to ensure the public's interests are not jeopardized (Gans, 2003) – Communication/Mass Media; (Behn, 2001; Weber, 1998, 2003) – Political Science/Accountability
ii. Public Education Vehicle	Education role as a tool used by Collaborations to communicate with various publics – suggested by multiple scholars, but dealt with in more detail in practical Handbooks (Kunde, 1999; Susskind, McKernan, & Thomas-Larmer, 1999)
iii. Stumbling Block	Press presence can inhibit honest negotiation and free exchange of information among stakeholders (Kunde, 1999; Lewicki et al., 2003)
iv. Catalyst	Catalyst role for changes in stakeholder positions, spurred by feared or perceived reactions to news stories (Finney & Polk, 1995; Kunde, 1999; Porter & Salvesen, 1995) - Collaboration; (Anderson, 1997; Davison, 1983; Protess et al., 1991) – Communication/Mass Media
v. Negotiating Lever	Role as tool used by stakeholder groups as a threat or a club to engender cooperation or concessions from other stakeholders (Frooman, 1999) – Stakeholder theory; (Amy, 1987; Lewicki et al., 2003; Susskind & Field, 1996)
vi. Policymaking Competitor	Intermediary Political Institution role as member of the collective news media that functions as a part of modern government and exercises political/policy making power (T. E. Cook, 1998) – Political Science
vii. Participant	Media participates in the process as stakeholders as members of the community (Haas & Steiner, 2006; Rosen, Merritt, & Austin, 1997) - Public Journalism
viii. Public Agenda-Setting	Raising the public profile of the environmental issue before the collaboration is begun, and acting as an instigator for the collaborative problem-solving attempt; or Keeping awareness of the issue high in the public mind by continuing news coverage as the collaboration proceeds (Amy, 1987, Kunde, 1999, Susskind, 1996) -- Collaboration (Kingdon, 1995, Mutz & Soss, 1997, Shaw & McCombs, 1977, ) -- Mass Media
ix. Nuisance	Coverage focusing on negative aspects of conflict, personalities and dirt to entertain audience and generate revenue (Allen, 2003; Karlberg, 1997) - Communication/Mass Media; (Amy, 1987; Susskind & Field, 1996); Exposing who gets what in division of political spoils (Lindblom, 1965; Yanow, 1996) – Political Science
x. Participatory Democracy Facilitator	Conduit role for the kind of perfect information and ideal communication needed for collaborative policymaking in a truly participatory democracy (Dryzek, 1990) – Critical Theory
xi. Irrelevant	No real role in public agenda-setting and virtually no role in policymaking (Kingdon, 1995) – Political Science/Agenda-setting

*i. Watchdog.* There appears to be general agreement that the press has a watchdog role to play when government decisions are made and public policy determined. Mass media theory (Gans, 2003) and pluralistic political science accountability theory recognize this as an important media function and collaboration scholars generally acknowledge the watchdog role, as well. (Behn, 2001; Weber, 2003).

A study of the New Bedford Harbor provides a striking example of how the media watchdog role can alter collaborative outcomes. A Superfund cleanup plan was agreed to by corporate and civic “stakeholders” after four years of work and millions of dollars in studies. The heart of the plan was PCB disposal by bringing in a mobile incinerator, but the whole stakeholder plan had to be scrapped because of opposition from the general public and groups who lived along the harbor – opposition that began as a result of a news story about the potential dangers of mobile incinerators (Finney & Polk, 1995). The need for a press watchdog is highlighted by one New York study that looked at a stakeholder collaboration related to agriculture and food production policy. The study concluded that such stakeholder collaborations may not be good for the public and “may produce outcomes that are neither fair nor efficient and that reflect the values and interests of certain stakeholders more than others” (Pelletier et al., 1999). Collaboration scholars universally acknowledge the watchdog role for the media, but there has been no published research exploring how effectively the press actually plays that role.

*ii. Public education vehicle.* This is an area of general agreement across the scholarship spectrum from critical theorists to traditional pluralists and pragmatic practitioners. Benefits of press coverage are said to include public education about the process and increased public support; education of the constituents of stakeholder representatives about progress and direction of the process; and increased likelihood of support for implementation (Dryzek, 1990; Kunde, 1999; Weber, 2003).

*iii. Stumbling block.* Negative news stories about the process can increase tension among participants, and when reporters are present they can disrupt the collaboration proceedings with cameras, lights, microphones and questions. In addition, participants may not be candid and open in their remarks for fear of seeing their comments, out of context, on the news or in the paper the next day. This self-monitoring behavior is detrimental to trust-building. Some participants may be tempted to grandstand for the news media, saying things that heighten conflict when published; or they may leak information in an attempt to undercut public support

for a particular position. For these reasons, many collaborative mediators seek to avoid news media attention (Kunde, 1999; Lewicki et al., 2003).

*iv. Catalyst.* The press appears in the collaboration literature as both a positive and negative catalyst. First, Amy and Susskind argue that the media have a negative impact on collaborative efforts because the press presence acts as a catalyst for stakeholders to harden their positions so their constituents will think they are negotiating aggressively (Amy, 1987; Susskind & Field, 1996). Recent findings by Lewicki, Gray and Elliott confirm that phenomenon (Lewicki et al., 2003). On the other hand, it has also been observed that the presence of the news media can encourage more open, honest communication among stakeholders. A press presence has also reportedly caused stakeholders to soften their positions because they don't want to present a public image of negativity or unreasonableness (Porter & Salvesen, 1995).

*v. Negotiating lever.* The notion that going to the news media can be used as a threat or a club against other stakeholders is part of the newly-emerging field of stakeholder theory, which holds that news coverage is a significant "pathway to influence" for stakeholders, particularly those who have a relative lack of power within the collaborative group (Frooman, 1999). The concept is also recognized in the collaboration literature where the news media and news coverage have been described as tools for influencing public opinion and generating pressure on recalcitrant actors in public controversies (Amy, 1987; Lewicki et al., 2003; Susskind et al., 1999). Many of the workshops, guides and websites of environmental and community groups include going to the media as one tool for redressing power imbalances in environmental negotiations, a typical example being the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC, 2007).

*vi. Policymaking competitor.* Recent scholarship in the political science field argues that the news media collectively have developed into an institution that is actually part of the policymaking apparatus. Cook argues that the media are so influential and intimately connected that in addition to reporting on policy options suggested by others, the news media actually help determine what policy options are considered and which policies are chosen by legislators regulators and chief executives in government (T. E. Cook, 1998).

*vii. Participant/Co-collaborator.* The Public Journalism movement sees a more active, stakeholder role for the news media, where the press recognizes its role as a community member and actually participates in policy deliberations as an interested leader of public discourse (Rosen

et al., 1997). Also known as civic journalism, public journalism generated a lot of interest in the 1990's as a way to reconnect the media to the public, primarily through encouragement of civic commitment and the involvement of news outlets in community life. Traditional newspeople saw public journalism as a threat to journalistic objectivity, one of the most basic components of modern journalism. Despite this opposition, many newspapers and television outlets around the country tried hundreds of public journalism projects. The Pew Center for Civic Journalism was established in 1993. Of the 651 public journalism projects recorded by the Pew Center, none were specifically about environmental issues (Nichols, Friedland, Rojas, Cho, & Shah, 2006). After more than a decade of experimentation with no clear positive impacts on newspaper circulation, television viewership, or civic participation, the news media largely abandoned the field and in 2003 the Pew Center for Civic Journalism closed its doors, indicating that public journalism had pretty much run its course, even though some supporters still advocate for it (Haas & Steiner, 2006).

*viii. Public Agenda-Setting.* The agenda-setting role of the news media is well-established by numerous studies dating back to 1977 (McCombs, 2004). The literature documents the news media's influential role regarding what issues the public thinks about (F.L. Cook et al., 1983, Kingdon, 1995, Protesse et al., 1991). This agenda-setting function could be a factor in the decision to establish a collaborative process in the first place, if news coverage raises the public profile of environmental issues. During the process the agenda-setting role could serve to keep public attention focused on the work of the collaboration, through ongoing coverage of its work and the issue, generally. (Amy, 1987, Kunde, 1999, Susskind, 1996).

*ix. Nuisance.* Press coverage may have a nuisance effect that makes policy discussions more difficult. News coverage in the environmental field has been found to have a nuisance factor because the media try to attract readers/viewers by predominantly reporting about the environment using adversarial news frames that stress conflict among groups, positions and personalities. This focus on conflict may have no ultimate effect on the outcome, but "can obscure chances for helpful discussion and action" (Karlberg, 1997).

The public reporting of details of a collaboration process can be an irritant to the participants, particularly when the media talk about what is at stake for the various parties, or run stories about who gets what from any particular agreement. Public exposure of such things may

not be fatal to a policy process, but it can be embarrassing and can make agreements more difficult to sell to stakeholder constituencies (Lindblom, 1959, 1965; Yanow, 1996).

*x. Participatory democracy facilitator.* Environmental collaboration has been written about as a potential tool to further the growth of participatory democracy in the U.S. (Forester, 1989). In this larger context, the postmodern theory of communicative rationality sees environmental collaboration as a vehicle that might move our society closer to an ideal form of communication among citizen stakeholders and a more perfect participatory democracy. In this part of the literature, however, the news media received little attention, and is mentioned merely as an information conduit or a place for public discourse that might facilitate the growth of participatory democracy (Dryzek, 1990).

*xi. Irrelevant.* One scholar from the political science field assessed the relationship of the news media to the federal policymaking apparatus and declared that the press was essentially irrelevant to the process (Kingdon, 1995). Communications researchers have not been able to document the conventional wisdom that news coverage directly affects public opinion, which in turn affects policymaking decisions about particular issues (Bryant & Zillmann, 1994). The bulk of media effects research suggests that the news media influence is limited to agenda-setting, that is, influencing what topics the public thinks about, as opposed to increasing support for one position or another regarding those topics (F. L. Cook et al., 1983; Kingdon, 1995; Palmgreen & Clarke, 1977; Protess et al., 1991; Shaw & McCombs, 1977). In fact, even conscious efforts by the news media to change public opinion have failed. One study found no effect on public opinion even after a newspaper tried for over a year to move community opinion by increasing news coverage and coordinated editorializing about a particular issue (low income housing) (Mutz & Soss, 1997).

## Media ground rules and accountability

Media ground rules are attempts to manage stakeholder interactions with the news media, and to control press access to information, meetings and people. There are many different types of ground rules. Some enforce openness by mandating press access to meeting rooms. Others restrict openness by placing limits on who can say what to the press, and when or where they can say it. Media ground rules are found in all policymaking areas and at all levels of government (T. E. Cook, 1998).

Media ground rules typically address eight issue areas:

1. reporters' access to meetings
2. TV cameras in meetings
3. press access to documents
4. designation of media spokespersons
5. participant availability for press interviews
6. participant "posturing" for the media
7. characterizing of other participants' points of view
8. restricting discussion of certain subjects with the press.

In the first instance, the stakeholders who put such ground rules in place are only accountable to one another (Kunde, 1999), but all media ground rules are attempts to regulate press/policymaker relationships (T. E. Cook, 1998). and it appears that there is a public accountability component, given the U.S. media's frequent role as surrogate for the public (Gans, 2003).

In Table 2, below, the Operating Agreements of The Nebraska Water Policy Task Force ("Nebraska Water Policy Task Force Website," 2009) show what Media Ground Rules look like, containing all the types listed above, except for specific restrictions on TV cameras. The 50-member Nebraska collaboration began in 2002 as an 18-month project to draft new legislation about surface water and groundwater use. It still exists in 2009 and its stakeholder members include representatives of state Natural Resource Districts, Power Districts, municipalities, agriculture, recreation, environmental groups, irrigators, power companies, the public at-large, and two state senators.

**Table 2.**

*Media Ground Rules of the Nebraska Water Policy Task Force*

***OPERATING AGREEMENTS  
FOR  
THE NEBRASKA WATER POLICY TASK FORCE  
July 29, 2002***

[EXCERPT from page 6 at  
<http://www.dnr.state.ne.us/watertaskforce/docs/OPERATINGAGREEMENTS2.doc>]

**COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE BROADER PUBLIC**

Work session minutes will be available to the public upon request. Information, including meeting minutes, will also be posted on the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources web site.

**COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEDIA**

Work sessions of the Task Force will be open to the public, including the media. The consensus process is a solution-oriented, problem solving approach, not a platform for lobbying the public through the media. The deliberations of the Task Force should not be used as opportunities for individual members to posture in order to gain the attention of the media.

If the Task Force as a whole or its Executive Committee decide that there is a need for the Group to communicate formally with the press, Task Force members will designate a spokesperson(s) and/or draft a statement. Stakeholders can refer members of the press to CDR for questions about the process.

In communicating with the media and the general public, a clear distinction should be made between preliminary information, concept papers, or proposals under consideration and final decisions. It is important to differentiate between discussions and decisions. Preliminary documents will be marked with “DRAFT” or “FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY.”

Each Task Force Member is free to speak with the press on behalf of the constituency or agency he or she represents, and must make it clear to the press that his or her comments should not be attributed to the whole stakeholder group. No Task Force Member will formally speak for or represent the Task Force or Executive Committee without express authorization by consensus of the Task Force as a whole. No Task Force Member will characterize to the press the point of view of other representatives.

Of course, the relationships among policymakers, elected officials, government administrators and the news media are constantly evolving. In the early days of the country, the media were owned by political parties, licensed by bureaucrats, and dictated to by the elected legislators. The modern news media have become a fourth estate completely apart from, and often perceived as adversarial to, the government and political parties. Today, our government agencies and policymakers regularly restrict press access to government offices, officials and information. Much of the daily interaction of media and government people is governed by media ground rules. Media ground rules can be formal (*e.g.* procedures for Senate Gallery Press Credentials), informal (who asks the first question at presidential press conferences) or quite arcane (*e.g.*, source attribution or use of off-the-record information), but some type of system exists at all levels of government, including federal, state and local. The rules have been developed to regularize the interactions of government officials and the press. Some rules are welcomed by the media (*e.g.*, credentialed press inside the ropes at public events), while others are not so popular (*e.g.*, no exclusive release of information to one media outlet). But media ground rules do more than simply place restrictions on media access. The rules often provide for special treatment of media representatives as representatives of the public, despite the fact that the a reporter generally has no greater legal right of access to government information than any other member of the public (T. E. Cook, 1998).

Rights of access by the public and the media are enshrined in federal and state legislation. Freedom of Information statutes now apply to most federal and state agencies, while access to certain kinds of meetings and policy discussions is also mandated by open meeting legislation or “Sunshine Laws” (Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, 2001). Such laws exist to increase the public accountability of government policymakers, be they elected officials or government administrators. However, it would appear that, with certain very limited exceptions (formal Federal Advisory Committees) it is unclear whether these legislative mandates apply to environmental collaborations, even though the usual goal of these groups is to come up with decisions that will become government policy (Weber, 2003). Unfettered by legislative requirements, collaboration groups are often free to establish their own public/press information schemes. It is also unclear to what extent these schemes may be in conflict with the legislative and policy duties of stakeholders who are also government officials. The Nebraska Water Policy Task Force, for example, states that meetings of the full Task Force are subject to the Nebraska

sunshine laws, but there is no explicit openness requirement for meetings of the subcommittees and working groups where much of the real work takes place, and there is no requirement for public notice that such meetings are even taking place.

The environmental collaboration literature contains a substantial quantity of writing about collaboration and democratic theory (Dryzek, 1990; Gray, 1989). The literature also contains some general discussions about collaboration and administrative accountability (Freeman, 1997; Weber, 1998, 1999), but there is a gap in the literature regarding the specific mechanisms of media ground rules and their implications for accountability.

#### Trust among stakeholders and other key attitudes

One of the few points of universal agreement in the emerging theoretical literature is a recognition that trust is a crucial element in the process (Dryzek, 1990; Gray, 1989; Schuett et al., 2001; Tenbrunsel, 1999; Weber, 1998; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000), and field research is confirming the point. A survey of 276 participants in 30 Forest Service collaborative processes led to the conclusion that trust and respect, while hard to achieve, are seen by respondents as central to achieving the collaboration's goals. (Schuett et al., 2001). Some commentators take the position that an increase in trust is a product of successful collaboration, not a prerequisite. They argue that an increase in trust can, in and of itself, be considered a measure of success and a benefit of collaboration (Carr, Selin, & Schuett, 1998).

Interactions with the news media have been identified as potential obstacles to trust. Some participants may be tempted to grandstand for the news media, say things that are inflammatory, or leak information in an attempt to undercut public support for a particular position. Such activity is clearly not conducive to developing or maintaining trust among participants. Negative news stories about the process can increase tension and mistrust among participants, and when reporters are present they can disrupt the collaboration proceedings with cameras, lights, microphones and questions. In addition, participants may not be candid and open in their remarks for fear of seeing their comments, out of context, on the news or in the paper the next day. This self-monitoring behavior is detrimental to trust-building. On the other hand, it is possible for interactions with the news media to actually bolster trust among collaboration participants. When clear ground rules exist for media contacts and where participants abide by those ground rules, trust can be enhanced (Kunde, 1999).

A review of the literature indicates that, in addition to trust, the following participant attitudes (or lack thereof) can be impediments or enhancements to collaborative processes: (a) attitudes brought to the collaboration as a result of prior history among the individuals or groups; (b) self-identification by participants as members of the collaborative enterprise, beyond their self-identification as members of their primary stakeholder group; (c) cooperative spirit evidenced by a willingness to work with other participants who may have different values and interests; and (d) willingness to make agreements with other participants who may have different values and interests (Carr et al., 1998; Gray, 1989; Schuett et al., 2001; S. Selin & Chavez, 1995; Susskind & Field, 1996; Weber, 1998; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000).

#### “Success” and “outcomes” in environmental collaborations

There is no generally accepted measure of success for environmental collaborations. Suggested criteria begin with the relatively low bar of merely improving participant relationships (Innes, 1999). Given the long-term, ongoing nature of many collaborative efforts it seems unreasonable to set the bar as high as the accomplishment of the major goals, and Susskind suggests “significant progress” as a criterion (Susskind et al., 1999). Such a measurement is subjective and vague regarding tangible outcomes, and, as Schuett, et al. find in their 2001 study of 300 participants, some “tangible outcomes” such as reports or actions seem to be required for participants to take satisfaction in any measure of success (Schuett et al., 2001). Given the idiosyncratic nature of environmental collaborations and the wide range of subject matter they cover, it would seem that any general concept of success will have to be somewhat vague. It does seem logical, however, to include some measure of tangible outcome when trying to assess collaborative success – along with the subjective component of participant satisfaction. To reduce the confusions generated by this definitional debate, this study will refer to “positive outcomes” and “negative outcomes” instead of “success or failure”.

## COLLABORATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE LITERATURE

One of the primary roles of the press is that of a watchdog over government, to hold government officials and processes accountable. As will be seen in the following review, collaboration scholars differ wildly in their approaches to governance and accountability, including the most basic questions, such as to whom is accountability owed, from whom is it to be exacted, what mechanisms should be employed, and what criteria should measure legitimacy and accountability. However, collaboration scholars generally agree on the importance of good information and effective communication throughout the process, to ensure effective collaboration and accountability. This is where the role of the news media becomes important, and – as will be examined in some detail later – why radical changes in the newspaper business may have significant, and possibly highly negative implications going forward, particularly in the much-disputed realm of accountability.

It should be remembered that the existing system was designed to increase the accountability of government decisionmaking by keeping interested stakeholders out of the process of decisionmaking – precisely the opposite of the current move toward collaboration – because of a long history of public lands being exploited for grazing, fisheries, logging and development by private interests, often aided and abetted by agency capture, or fraud and collusion by government officials (Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000). Our existing system succeeds in making the regulators accountable, but too often at the cost of efficiency, efficacy and transparency. As noted above, it was this kind of regulatory/judicial gridlock that inspired the move toward collaborative decisionmaking that could produce agreements about policies that would actually work and could be implemented in a timely, un-litigated manner. As the pendulum has swung back from the apogee of top-down, government-controlled, science-based, apolitical decisionmaking, accountability issues have again become a matter of debate and concern,

Much of the planning literature concerns itself with the pragmatic aspects of environmental collaboration and how it works: the effectiveness of various tools, identification of the problems to be addressed, the appropriateness of specific tools for problem-solving, the efficacy of its role in policy development and implementation, and how to measure success or failure. This was particularly true in the early collaboration literature when it was recognized that

the practitioners were way out in front of the academics. From the pragmatic practitioner's perspective, accountability was often discussed as a function of access or openness. Such was the case in early academic analyses as well.

### Healy's networks, power, communication analysis

Back in the earlier days of the literature when the theory was clearly behind policymaking practice, Patsy Healey attempted a bigger-picture analysis of collaborative planning in her book, *Collaborative Planning: Shaping places in Fragmented Societies* (Healey 1997). She starts with some intriguing analytical insights regarding individuals and their recent social re-organization into a complex of social networks connected by interest and technology, not primarily space, as in earlier times. This network-organization phenomenon, as presented by Healey, expands greatly the concept of stakeholder and increases dramatically the possible numbers of individuals who might be considered actual stakeholders in any given environmental collaboration.

Healy's later, more ideological chapters fail to deliver on the promise of the early ones, but she does identify accountability as a major concern of collaborative planning exercises. In the final chapter, Healey concludes that "What is needed are ways of calling to account any person or any arenas which claim to be engaging in governance and are acting in some way on matters of collective concern to answer for their action to all members of a political community" (p. 295). She argues that communication is at the heart of this accountability, but provides no practical recommendations for how to accomplish this. She appears to accept that the locus of decision-making responsibility in Britain will rest with government officials, and her analysis seems to be aimed at improving the basis for decisionmaking and acceptance of those decisions. Healey proposes to revolutionize planning by replacing the existing system of managed conflict among groups with a system of honest discourse among collaborating networks and Habermasian lifeworlds. In the early chapters of her book, she argues that a major problem with the old way of planning is its perception of people: as standardized units and sets of economic preferences. It would be better, she says, to see people as individuals who are part of many networks and cultures, so that planning can incorporate cultural phenomena and the interests of individuals who may have interests in a place, but not physically be anywhere near it. Such an approach would expand the notion of mutual accountability beyond the usual place-based-

planning stakeholders. Such an approach looks promising but Healy bright line of theory turns into a muddier ideological analysis. Healy admits that the basic planning questions she identifies as important are the same questions asked by almost all political and social theorists: How should resources be divided, how should those decisions be made, who should make those decisions, and how should they be held accountable? (p. 294). Healy provides no answers, or specific criteria, but suggests some things to consider when approaching these questions. She starts with the Steven Lukes idea that power and domination in society are not always overt, but are often embedded in culture and institutions, and Healy argues that we need to be aware of this and look for new ways to create planning processes that are fair for all stakeholders. Healy looks to Anthony Giddens' view of stakeholders as a collection of individual cultures, influenced by relational networks and structures. Healy cites Judith Innes for the principle that discourse creates social and political capital to address matters of shared concern. Healy argues that a dialogue that incorporates Habermasian communicative ethics will generate that social, political and intellectual capital, which will, in turn, take us toward a planning system of interconnected social networks that are open and will break down the barriers of power identified by Lukes. Healy writes, "The approach in this book may be seen as an idealistic vision" (p. 313), but she argues that societal institutions change all the time and her criteria should be used to change them for the better. Healy stays at the theoretical level and admits that her prescription does not offer any concrete recommendations for collaborative structures or accountability mechanisms, beyond a not-very-startling suggestions that careful financial auditing be done (309), and that Alternative Dispute Resolution techniques should be employed when the collaborating stakeholders cannot agree, with the courts as a last resort.

### Innes' Social deliberation, social capital and communicative rationality

As a theoretical basis for her approach to environmental collaboration, Innes, like Healy, incorporated Habermasian communicative rationality as developed by Dryzek, combined with aspects of social capital theory as propounded by Putnam (Innes 1999). Innes took a more pragmatic approach than Healy, grounding her analysis in techniques that seem to work and not just ideas that might be helpful. "It [collaboration] needs to produce good answers through good processes." (p. 415) She says the usual measures of success may not apply to consensus processes, i.e. getting an agreement, accomplishing goals, or having agreements implemented.

Innes does seem to stretch the boundaries somewhat, however, in her assertion that the mere fact of social deliberation could deem a collaboration a success, even without any agreement, “if participants have learned about the problem, about each others' interests, and about what may be possible.” (p. 415)

Regarding accountability, Innes also acknowledges serious problems created by the fact that collaborative processes lack our usual societal accountability mechanisms, having neither formal, legal mechanisms, nor traditional informal ones:

Unlike conventional decision making methods, consensus building is not grounded in the authority of law and tradition. Its participants usually are not elected to represent the public, nor are they operating as bureaucrats with authority. Consensus building stands or falls instead on the acceptability of its process. (p. 415)

For Innes, acceptable accountability appears to be achievable if two circumstances obtain: (1) a broad spectrum of interested parties participate, and (2) the resulting agreement is implemented without serious challenge. Broad participation is equated to democratic representation and the consensus rule of decisionmaking is seen as symptomatic of participatory democracy. Innes acknowledges that the lack of political, legal and bureaucratic authority is a serious issue for environmental collaborations. Moote, et al., attempt to address these deficiencies in their analysis of collaborations in light of participatory democracy theory.

#### Moote et al.'s participatory democracy theory and accountability

Using participatory democracy theory, a surprisingly prescient *Environmental Management* article (Moote, et al. 1997), addressed environmental collaboration and accountability in the same year as Healy's book. Like Healy and Innes, Moote et al. recognize the importance of communication and public sharing of information throughout the process.

Decision-making power has always been a difficult issue, as acknowledged by many collaboration scholars (Healey 1997; Coggins 1999; Innes 1999; Wondolleck and Yaffee 2000; Lewicki, Gray et al. 2003; Weber 2003). According to Moote et al., participatory democracy theory requires direct sharing of decision making with members of the public. Moote et al. call for agencies to relinquish their decision-making authority and cede that power to the collaborations, but, like other collaboration writers and legal scholars, they also acknowledge that such a delegation of power would generally be considered illegal (Barker et al. 2003; Weber

1999, 2003; Foster 2002; Coggins 1999; Freeman 1997; Aurelia 1995). From a practical standpoint, successful collaborations generate plans that agencies implement and participants do not appeal, but the decision-making authority issue is still largely unresolved from legal and traditional political theory perspectives.

Although theory-oriented, Moote et al.'s conclusions were less touchy-feely and less ideological than writers like Innes and Healy. Rather, Moote et al. stress that even from a participatory democracy perspective, there is a requirement of "tangible outcomes" (p 886). Some participants in the Moote study actually saw the social deliberation component as a kind of smokescreen used "as the BLM's way of excluding them from participating in planning" (p. 882). The article is a case study of a collaborative planning process about BLM's proposed acquisition of riparian land along Arizona's San Pedro River. The collaboration failed (mainly because of a lack of trust), but the article's value is to be found in what turned out to be a list of criteria for what successful environmental collaborations might look like. Fifteen years later, their list turns out to be a relatively accurate description of thousands of successful collaborations, yet they also point up some still-sticky, unresolved accountability issues regarding representation and decision-making authority. The list of evaluative criteria provided by Moote et al. (p. 878) are:

1. Efficacy – Resultant plan addresses needs, concerns and values and will not be appealed
2. Representation and Access – Everyone who might be affected by or have an interest in the plan is involved, *particularly nonactivist, nonaligned members of the public* [emphasis added]
3. Information exchange and learning – Active dialogue; collective revision of goals and criteria  
Continuity of participation – public is involved continuously through all stages of planning and decision making
4. Decision-making authority – Decision-making authority is explicitly shared among all participants with agencies holding no exclusive decision-making authority

When it comes to representation, Moote et al., are even more expansive in their notion of who should be involved. Healy suggests expanding the universe of interested parties to include individuals in non-place-based networks. Moote et al. claim that true representation would

include nonactivist, nonaligned members of the public. Moote et al. point to earlier studies that found members of the general public are more moderate and less polarized than the environmental groups and government agencies that are the usual collaboration participants. Further, they claim that such inclusion would produce better results than collaborations that are dominated by unrepresentative interest groups and unduly influenced by “the class bias and technical bias typical of agency officials” (p. 879).

In the early planning literature about environmental collaboration, discussions about accountability issues were often couched in terms of “participatory democracy.” Planners often use the phrase “participatory democracy” to encompass notions of public participation in the policy process. Tools that encourage citizen involvement are seen as fostering personal participation in our democratic system of governance. Stakeholder participation in environmental collaborations was seen as one such tool. Some kind of “democratic” legitimacy was alleged, based on the extent to which the participants in the collaboration were representative of the spectrum of those affected (Moote, et al. 1997). This approach seems to somehow conflate the very different concepts of representative democracy and stakeholder negotiations. The participatory democracy found in a vote in a New England town meeting is very different from an environmental collaboration involving consensus decisionmaking by local governments, state and federal agencies, environmental groups, business organizations, individuals, citizens’ coalitions, indigenous peoples, and property owners. Add to this, that there is an essential stakeholder missing from every environmental collaboration: the general populace of the U.S.A. Granted, *pieces* of the public are represented by various governmental officials, but these collaboration participants, including state-level officials (DEQ, DNR, DOT, etc.), federal officials (EPA, BLM, NFS, Army Corps of Engineers, etc.) and local officials (mayors, planners, council members, public works, etc.), all represent their own bureaucratic interests and have dramatically different goals and measures of accountability (Moote, et al. 1997). And when you combine all the regulatory and political governmental interests, it still doesn’t add up to a coherent representation of the interest of the general populace – the kind of people who may never visit Yosemite, but whose tax dollars support it and who have a genuine interest in its existence and management for the benefit of this and future generations (Coggins 1999). The issue of representation has been a thorny one since the beginning of environmental collaboration, and continues to pose problems today.

Coggins and McCloskey's critiques of collaboration accountability, representation, and decisionmaking authority

Contrary to Moote et al.'s perception of environmental collaborations as potential exercises in participative democracy, writers like Coggins, McCloskey, Foster and Mason see them as anti-democratic.

Coggins (1999) pointed out that co-opting, power differences, or self-dealing can result in participants sabotaging the larger public interest in favor of local self-interests. Some have tried to argue that the environmental groups represent the entire general public in environmental collaborations, but environmental groups themselves deny being agents of the public interest (Lewicki, Gray et al. 2003), and in one collaboration about Ohio water regulation standards, representatives of The Nature Conservancy, Rivers Unlimited and the Izaak Walton League stated categorically, "We don't presume to speak for the public" (p. 230). Environmental groups are actually classic examples of special interest groups advocating a special set of public policies that will benefit their constituents, often at the expense of other special interests such as business groups, landowners, and government bodies that prefer private interests, tax revenues and economic activity over stricter environmental protection. Granted, environmental groups claim to operate in what they see as the public interest. Of course, all the government regulators and elected officials also claim to be operating in what they see as the public interest. And a wide representation of differing interests does not ensure that the overall public interest wins out. One cannot simply add up the multiple interests because they often conflict.

Both McCloskey (1996) and Coggins (1999) argued that environmental decisions involving federal lands or larger issues of national policy should not be left up to local place-based stakeholder groups. The fear was that collaboration would result in local domination of national environmental decisions. Michael McCloskey, then chairman of the Sierra Club, expressed a concern that national environmental groups would be excluded from environmental collaborations, because the collaboration processes were supposed to be place-based. Such a system "is designed to disempower our constituency, which is heavily urban. Few urbanites are recognized as stakeholders in communities surrounding national forests. and the environmental groups were essentially urban." This fear has apparently not materialized in any significant way,

as we see environmental groups involved in almost all of the thousands of collaborations, to date, a fact clearly corroborated by respondents to the survey conducted for this dissertation.

However, McCloskey also raised concerns about the decisionmaking rule of consensus and the locus of decisionmaking power. He worried that a consensus rule would give small local minorities a veto power. That veto, combined with an effective abdication of authority by the agencies, could also result in handing over of national policymaking to self-interested local interests. As Foster (2002) notes, that is precisely the charge leveled at the Quincy Library Group, which achieved local agreement only by excluding the legitimate federal interest represented by the U.S. Forest Service. At the other end of the spectrum of concerns, McCloskey feared that where local interests were not strong advocates, they would be utterly dominated by powerful industry interests – again, resulting in decisions not in the national interest.

McCloskey could see little positive about local collaborative processes, and urged great caution about environmental groups becoming involved in them. The exclusion of national environmental groups did not come to pass, but as the environmental justice critique argues, the jury may still be out about the exclusion of other important constituencies.

#### Environmental Justice and accountability issues

More recent environmental justice writers argued that collaborations, as currently constituted, have a serious accountability problem because they exclude the most vulnerable groups (Foster 2002; Mason 2008). Sheila Foster (2002) claims that the “allure” of devolved collaboration and its consensus decision rule “adorns the process with democratic legitimacy” (p. 464), but the reality is that collaborative processes may actually reinforce existing regulatory failings when it comes to distributional equity. Foster argues that collaborative processes generally exclude the most vulnerable groups from meaningful accountability, because these groups lack the resources and social capital to be effective stakeholder participants. This is not just the case in *ad hoc* self-identified collaborations, but such groups are effectively excluded even when formal FACA committees are constituted or formal proceedings take place under the EPA’s Community-Based Environmental Protection initiative:

It is by now established that minority, low-income populations disproportionately suffer from an array of environmental and health risks ... These populations obtain far fewer environmental quality benefits-such as access to open space, parks, clean water, and

waterfront resources-than wealthier and whiter populations. These environmentally disadvantaged populations also tend to be disenfranchised from administrative processes that govern environmental decisions, mirroring their larger social and political vulnerability. (p.461)

Mason (2008) echoes these concerns and complains that environmental justice has received “rather scant attention,” particularly where smart growth initiatives are involved (p.11). Foster recommends that the federal government and the EPA should stop the current trend to devolved collaborative decisionmaking, which she sees as a flawed exercise in pluralism, and return decisionmaking authority exclusively to existing regulatory bodies – but the regulators should use the collaborative criteria to inform their decisionmaking. Foster identifies those criteria as:

a core set of normative principles-broad representation, deliberation, local empowerment, and equitable and sustainable outcomes-that can guide the shaping of environmental decision-making processes (p. 463).

#### Wondolleck & Yaffee -- Locus of Decisionmaking Authority, FACA, NEPA and Accountability Criteria

Wondolleck and Yaffee are strong advocates for increased use of environmental collaboration, but they also fall squarely in the camp that thinks decisionmaking authority should remain vested solely in government agencies, stating flatly that collaborations should be “adjuncts to normal administrative processes. Government agencies should not devolve their decision-making authority to collaborative groups” (p. 232). At the same time, however, they state that “one of the worst outcomes is for an agency that initiated a collaborative arrangement to fail to implement the resulting agreements” (p.227).

In their Island Press book, *Making Collaboration Work* (2000), they explore case studies from Alaska to Texas, examine the flaws in how FACA and NEPA processes attempt to involve stakeholders in environmental policymaking, and come up with three basic criteria for acceptable accountability.

As other writers have long concluded (Aurelia 1995; Barker, Chamberlain et al. 2003; Weber 2003), the Federal Advisory Committee Act, or FACA, was designed to bring the involvement of interested parties into the sunshine, but is generally held to be overly formal and

bureaucratic, with its elaborate charter process and requirements of Federal Register publication of meetings, minutes, etc. Wondolleck and Yaffee report the discouragement and frustration of national forest collaborations that have tried to use the FACA process. Wondolleck and Yaffee recommend that environmental collaborative processes be simply exempted from FACA, citing as precedents the exemption of recovery planning under the Endangered Species Act and fisheries councils under the Magnuson-Stevens Act (p. 242-3). A similar kind of exclusion in the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, excludes the Columbia River Gorge Commission (Barker, Chamberlain et al. 2003).

The NEPA public participation provisions are ineffective, according to Wondolleck and Yaffee, because agencies have developed a template that only involves the public in the scoping and problem-definition stages and then again in the review and comment phase, but the most important and valuable time for stakeholder involvement is in the middle portion of the process of EIS preparation. Collaborative processes should be involved at this stage, but that is simply not part of the bureaucratic process as it has developed, according to Wondolleck and Yaffee.

They suggest what they call “process-derived accountability” (p. 237) where the process gives credibility to the result (as opposed to legislative/regulatory legitimacy?). The three criteria set out for accountable collaborative groups are (a) legitimate, (b) fair and (c) wise. Legitimate means “*tied* to existing law and regulation through direct involvement of responsible officials [emphasis added]” (p. 231), and providing for normal public review and comment. Fair includes involving credible representatives of stakeholders, open, accessible, transparent, consensus decisions, and “no decision imposed without agreement” (p. 231). Wise means promoting creativity and flexibility, science-based, and opportunities for learning and adaptation. Given their position that agencies are expected to implement agreements and that no decisions are to be imposed on stakeholders, it would appear that, ultimately, Wondolleck and Yaffee’s criteria do not really advance the search for a solution. It appears that their suggestions generally mirror the existing system where agencies effectively cede their decisionmaking power, while holding on to the pro forma authority.

### Weber's legislative, bureaucratic and political criteria for accountability

In *Pluralism by the Rules* (Weber 1998) collaborative processes in the realm of pollution control are examined and Weber derives what he calls New Accountability Criteria to make the processes effective, yet politically and administratively accountable. He suggests that statutory goals set the parameters for environmental collaborations, so there would be a clear line of political accountability; that a new breed of bureaucrats be put in place who are skilled and committed to a personal environmental professionalism and ethics; and the active participation of politically important constituents and policy groups should be encouraged, to ensure the legislative attention and agreement required for implementation of collaborative solutions.

The principal objection to the legislative heart of Weber's criteria is that it is highly unlikely to ever happen. Legislators simply do not work at the level of specificity of emissions, pollution standards, methodologies, etc., recommended by Weber. He himself acknowledges the unlikelihood of this level of micromanagement citing Katzmann (1990). As to the new breed of bureaucrat, standards of expertise are relatively simple to measure against, but there is a problem with bringing in a personal environmental ethic as a criterion. Personal attitudes are difficult to measure and police, and this would be 180-degree reversal of our traditional requirement of neutral administrators. Regarding the encouragement of politically important constituents, that would seem to put special interest power politics right smack back into the middle of a system that is being developed to minimize it.

In *Bringing Society Back In* (Weber 2003) accountability issues for collaborative groups are revisited. Weber reverses field, warning of problems with bureaucrats who have too much discretion and commitment, legislative interference as in the Quincy Library case, and pluralism run amok in environmental negotiations. Weber foresees the potential for a new hybrid form of governance and accountability, and puts forward a demand for what he calls broad-based accountability for decentralized, collaborative participative arrangements. However, he concludes that in the face of so many conflicting interests and idiosyncratic collaborative processes, we can only wait and see where the efforts to "revamp governance formulas" take us (p. 255).

### Behn's radical rethinking and 360<sup>0</sup> accountability or Lindblom's muddling through

The premise of *Rethinking Democratic Accountability* (Behn 2001) is that for legal and political science scholars the non-hierarchical, egalitarian, non-adversarial, collaborative approach plays hob with most of the usual criteria for administrative accountability. Behn and other academics acknowledge that the practitioners were way out in front of academics on collaboration, and Behn sees this as a continuing phenomenon, and if big changes in accountability systems are coming, he sees them coming from the practitioners, not the theoreticians.

Behn notes that the traditional accountability targets finances and fairness. The current paradigm is rooted in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century thinking of Woodrow Wilson, Winslow Taylor and Max Weber – each of whom valued efficiency and fairness in public administration. Wilson's principal contribution was the belief that politics and administration should be kept separate from each other. Taylor supplied the credo that administration experts could apply science to find the best method of implementing policy, and Max Weber's contribution was the acceptance of bureaucracy as the most efficient organizational structure (p. 40)

Our system has evolved to hold public managers accountable for fairness and finances, but not performance, according to Behn, and that is where a lot of the problem lies. Behn takes the concept of 360<sup>0</sup> accountability from business, and suggests we try to find a way to apply it to public managers working in the new collaborative world. He asks if it would be possible to create “a web of mutual responsibility” (p. 201) in which everyone in the “accountability environment” would be accountable to everyone else. Just as business people in Fortune 500 companies are being held accountable to superiors, subordinates, peers, team members, customers and suppliers, so Behn suggests that government administrators may be able to share mutual accountability with members of their web of accountability, including stakeholders, administrators, superiors, attorneys-general, inspectors-general, suppliers, members of the public, legislators, and the press (although even Behn acknowledges that the press are a special case and probably would never be part of a 360<sup>0</sup> accountability regime). Behn argues that such a radical change would require more than an institutional restructuring. It would require a complete mental reorientation to accept collective responsibility where everyone in an accountability environment would be accountable to everyone else. One of the critical components for such a system would be complete openness, Behn says, because in a more decentralized collaborative

system the collaborations could quickly degenerate into cabals that function for their own purposes, not the public's. We need to experiment, Behn says. He does not have a prescription for how to design or achieve a 360<sup>0</sup> accountability system in government, but argues that we should try things that might get us to that kind of radically new system. Behn acknowledges that such changes would be difficult. One problem area in particular is how to hold public managers accountable for performance, given that legislative policy goals or environmental issues are often unclear, and at times even contradictory. Incorporating goals and values into a 360<sup>0</sup> accountability equation creates problems, although the basic concept of stakeholder collaborations holds some promise in this area.

The antithesis to a radical restructuring of accountability would be to simply continuing “muddling through” (Lindblom 1959), making changes at the margins of our existing accountability system. Charles Lindblom's classic analysis still has applicability half a century later as government agencies and environmental collaborations try to accommodate conflicting values into policy choices, trying to reconcile that kind of decisionmaking with traditional accountability standards. Instead of radically restructuring the system or the approach to accountability, Lindblom would have us make changes at the margins, building on what we already accept, moving incrementally forward to what might, ultimately, be a radically new place, but doing so in a way that is not overly disruptive and is more acceptable to our American traditions. In areas like social security and health care we can see examples of how incremental changes accumulate into radical differences. Even in our current health care reforms we can see Lindblom's incrementalism at work. We didn't establish a whole new system of health care delivery; we simply added a requirement that everyone participate in the existing one that most people already accept. We retained our mixed public-private system, and for those with financial issues, we created a mix of government subsidies and expanded Medicaid. We have seen this kind of incrementalism in the evolving system of environmental collaboration, as government agencies and stakeholders try to work within and around existing accountability rules.

## The Press -- Committed To Public Accountability for Itself and Governments

As noted above, the press started out as a government lapdog, not a government watchdog. However, in our modern era, the watchdog role has become so engrained as to be part of journalism's DNA. As Behn (2001) wryly notes, "And, of course, journalists believe that it is their constitutional mission to hold everybody accountable" (p. 1).

Generally, the press genuinely believes that one of its primary roles is to hold government accountable – as is made very clear in the first clause of Statement of Principles of the American Society of Newspaper Editors:

*The American press was made free not just to inform or just to serve as a forum for debate but also to bring an independent scrutiny to bear on the forces of power in the society, including the conduct of official power at all levels of government.*

Accountability for journalists, themselves, has also evolved. Journalists generally see themselves as accountable to the American public, instead of to political parties or wealthy publishers. The governing bodies of journalistic organizations and individual practitioners include these concepts as the very foundations of their work, as reflected in their codes of principles and ethics, including the Coded of Ethics of the Radio and Television News Directors Association:

*Professional electronic journalists should operate as trustees of the public, seek the truth, report it fairly and with integrity and independence, and stand accountable for their actions.*

### *Journalists' Codes of Ethics*

The original professional body promulgating a code of ethics for journalism was the American Society of Newspaper Editors, which set out in 1922 its "Canons of Journalism". Today they are known as the ASNE Statement of Principles and they make clear that the American press is committed to public accountability for itself and to its role as a government watchdog. It is not just newspapers and editors that subscribe to these precepts. Journalists at every level and in every kind of publication also accept the dual responsibilities of government watchdog and their own public accountability. The Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics adopted in 1973 makes clear the bedrock journalistic belief in the role of a free press in our society: as the watchdog of government and one of the foundations of an informed

democracy. The SPJ Code of Ethics also makes it clear that the press itself must be accountable, and that accountability is primarily to the American public.

Broadcast news media and electronic news outlets also embrace these principles. The Radio and Television News Directors Association promulgated a Code of Ethics specifically for those who work in the non-print media. Again, the code reinforces the basic concepts of the press as cornerstone of democracy and primary accountability of the media to the American public.

Despite the proliferation of pundits, bloggers, partisan news aggregators and broadcast outlets, the mainstream news media practitioners still believe in these principles and try to adhere to them, particularly in the newspaper industry. And it is the newspaper segment of the press that is of most concern in this study. After more than 20 years of experience working with the press, the author can confirm that news media practitioners generally have a deep and continuing commitment to what they see as their constitutional role of holding government officials -- at all levels – accountable to the American public.

## **CHAPTER 3 - METHOD**

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

As noted in the Problem Statement, there has apparently been no systematic investigation into the relationship between the press and environmental collaborations, despite reported instances of the press affecting relationships among participants, and influencing how the processes work, their outcomes and accountability. Is the press getting in the way, or is it helping, or is it simply irrelevant?

RQ1: Do the news media have a positive or negative impact on the ongoing work and/or final outcomes of environmental collaborations?

RQ2: Do structural elements of environmental collaborations or characteristics of news coverage influence the impact of the news media?

#### *Research Sub-Questions*

- Is there an association between positive or negative media impact and structural elements of collaborations (levels of government participating, size, geographic location, length of time, type of issue involved, and adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media)?
- Is the amount or direction of media impact associated with specific characteristics of news coverage (amount of coverage, perceived tone, perceived bias, type of media outlet, kinds of press activities or coverage prior to establishing the collaboration)?
- Do media-related activities of collaboration stakeholders influence the impact of the news media on the collaboration processes?
- Is there an association between the role that the press plays in relation to the environmental collaboration, and the amount and direction of media impact?

### **RESEARCH DESIGN FOR EXPLORATORY STUDY**

#### **Data Collection Method & Response Rate**

Data was collected using a cross-sectional survey of experts with specialized knowledge, administered by web-based internet questionnaire.

#### *Pre-test*

The instrument was pre-tested in June, 2008 by sending it to five randomly-selected members of the sample frame with a request to review the instrument online. The first questions

about the news media's factual accuracy and its role in societal problem-solving were criticized as being too general. Apart from that, the three pre-test responses were generally positive.

#### *Survey administration*

Participation was solicited by e-mail at the beginning, middle and end of July, 2008. On each occasion, an e-mail was sent to each of the 245 valid e-mail addresses in the sample frame.

#### *Response rate*

Eighty-seven surveys were completely or partially completed, producing a percentage response rate of 36%. Of the 87 people who started the survey, 75 answered almost all the questions about individual cases (31% of sample frame). Roster members are inundated with requests for survey participation and other calls on their time. Only 31 (13%) responded to the first e-mail solicitation. Telephone calls and two more mass e-mails solicitations resulted in 87 responses. One Roster member informs me that a 30% response rate from this group is very high and very rare.

#### Type of Data Collected

1. Nominal data about characteristics of collaborations and news media.
2. Ordinal data ranking news frames, media outlets and stakeholder groups.
3. Interval data and Likert scale data regarding stakeholder activities, press coverage, impacts of media activities, and stakeholder attitudes.

#### Units of Analysis

- A. For Part One about judgments of overall press accuracy and influence, the unit of analysis is the individual respondent.
- B. For Part Two dealing with variables in the press/collaboration model the unit of analysis is the case (single collaboration reported on by each respondent).

#### Survey Population

The survey population is all Environmental Conflict Professionals who mediate or facilitate collaborative processes seeking solutions to environmental problems.

#### Sampling Frame

The sample frame was the valid e-mail address list of members of the *National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals* listed on the website of the U.S Environmental Protection Agency website as of April, 2008. The Roster is a list of professional mediators and facilitators with combined experience in more than 9,000

environmental collaborations. Most Roster members have advanced degrees, including many lawyers and people with a Ph.D. To be included on the EPA's Roster an individual must meet the following criteria of education and experience: 1) served as the principal professional on two to ten environmental cases totaling 200 case hours in aggregate, and 2) a total of 60 points across three categories relating to case experience, training work, and substantive background.

([http://ecr.gov/roster/r\\_main.htm](http://ecr.gov/roster/r_main.htm))

Of the 284 e-mail addresses listed, 39 were invalid, incorrect, or otherwise returned as undeliverable. This resulted in a sample frame of 245 valid e-mail addresses.

### Sampling Method

All members of sampling frame were included in the survey.

### Sampling Error and Confidence Levels (Manheim, Rich, & Willnat, 2002)

Sampling error rates and confidence levels could not be determined with certainty from tables because the tables begin with a minimum population of 500 and the total population of Environmental Conflict Professionals with experience in multiple environmental collaborations cannot be determined with certainty – although a total population of 500 could be a reasonable estimate, given that the primary professional list as contained in the EPA's Roster is between 250 and 300. Assuming a total population of 500, the Roster population of 245 slightly exceeds the sample size of 222 that the tables show will produce a 95% confidence interval and a +/-5% sampling error rate.

### Survey Instrument

The web-based survey questionnaire is attached as Appendix A. Documentation of how questions were developed, and their linkage to RQ1, RQ2 and subquestions can be found in Appendix B. The basic structure of the instrument comprises two parts. Part 1 solicits information about the individual respondent and Part 2 seeks information about collaboration cases.

Part 1 asks general questions seeking judgments about:

- A. How well the press does its job
- B. The overall relationship of the press and environmental collaborations.

Part 2 asks Specific questions about one of the respondents' environmental collaboration experiences where there was media coverage:

- Background: Type of issue, number of organizations, levels of government, geographic region, number of years of involvement, prior history and trust levels.
- Ground Rules regarding News Media: Content and Compliance
- Types of News Media and Press Activity: Media outlets involved, Kinds of press activity, Positive/negative effects of press activities, Amount of coverage, Accuracy of reports, Tone of stories
- Press Influence on Participants' Attitudes and Actions
- Press Roles: Degree to which press played possible roles
- Press Overall Influence on Process: Hurt, help or neutral
- Press Overall Influence on Outcomes: Hurt, help or neutral

### **Data Management & Interrater Reliability**

Data will be held in confidence according to IRB-approved standards. Coding books were managed on computer. All coding was computer-generated during the online survey completion process and recoding was done by one person so interrater reliability errors are not an issue.

### **Data Analysis**

Detailed descriptions of statistical data analysis procedures are included in the chapters reporting Findings. Reliable parametric analysis was not possible because the sample of collaborations was not a randomized, representative sample, and the sample size was too small (N=75 cases reported). Some hypothesis testing was done to determine if they were consistent or inconsistent with the data gathered. Conclusive results were, of course, not obtainable. Conclusions, while interesting and of value, were essentially inductive and not statistically reliable. Basically, 4 types of statistical analysis were performed:

- Cross-tabulations, and where appropriate, Chi-square analyses: To identify the relationship of nominal data variables such as geographic location with nominal data variables such as the presence or absence of Media Ground Rules and to assess the statistical significance of those relationships.

- ANOVA tests and *t*-tests: To assess the relationship between nominal data variables such as geographic location and scores on interval data variables such as the Positive/Negative Impact of News Media.
- Bivariate regression analyses: To assess the relationship of interval data variables such as the Grandstanding for the Press, and their reliability as predictors of other interval data variables such as Positive/Negative Impact of the News Media.
- Factor analysis: To attempt to extract useful profiles from the data, given that in the collaboration process multiple variables can interact with each other and it may not be possible to clearly isolate which variables are producing effects.

Responses to questions 1 & 2 were analyzed separately from questions 3-30 because the Unit of Analysis was different. The unit of analysis for questions 3-30 is at the level of the collaboration organization, whereas for responses to questions 1 & 2 the unit of analysis is the individual respondent (opinions about press accuracy generally and whether press gets in the way of society solving its problems). Responses to questions 1 & 2 were compared to responses from other professional groups surveyed by the Pew Center, using these same questions. Ultimately the results of questions 1 & 2 were also compared to the responses to questions 21, 28 and 29, relating to accuracy of news reports and media helping or getting in the way of a *particular* collaboration.

## DEFINITIONS

“Collaboration Process”. The definition of “collaboration process” is a process that meets the criteria for inclusion on the U.S. EPA’s National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals.

“News Media”. For a definition of “news media” we turn to the Pew Center for Research on People and the Press, a nationally recognized non-profit organization that for decades has carried out opinion surveys about the news media. The Pew Center typically uses the following categories for news organizations:

1. Local TV news
2. Local newspapers
3. Cable TV news
4. Network TV news
5. Major national newspapers

6. Public radio
7. Talk radio
8. Internet news blogs.

The Pew Center will, on occasion, make finer distinctions in these categories, or add to them, depending on specific issues being polled. For example, a poll about Young People and Campaign News expanded the categories to include such sources as Comedy TV shows, C-SPAN, Newsmagazines and Religious radio, while the Network news category was more finely broken out to include separate entries for Morning TV shows, Evening news shows, Sunday morning political shows and TV newsmagazines. For the purposes of this study, “news media” will be defined as the typical Pew Center list, above.

“News Media Activities”. For a definition of “news media activities” the literature was reviewed for press actions that might be expected to affect the collaboration process. (Lewicki et al., 2003) (Amy, 1987; Black, 1997; Kunde, 1999; Susskind & Field, 1996) Content frames and tone descriptors are from articles in the mass communication literature that analyzed media coverage of environmental and collaboration issues. (Karlberg, 1997; Lewicki et al., 2003; Nichols et al., 2006)

1. News organizations response to press releases (if any)
2. Reporters attendance at press conferences/briefings (if any)
3. Reporters’ review of documents (meeting minutes, studies, reports, etc.)
4. Reporter-initiated contact with collaboration participants
5. Reporters at collaboration meetings
6. Cameras at collaboration meetings
7. Reporters interviewing collaboration participants
8. Reporters interviewing non-participants about collaboration issues
9. News organizations compliance with Media Ground Rules (if any)
10. News coverage of the collaboration in published stories
  - a. Amount of coverage (frequency of stories, number of stories)
  - b. Content frames (conflict, problem-solving, issue-oriented, human interest)
  - c. Tone of coverage (balanced, positive, negative)
11. Prior news coverage of the issue before the collaboration process began.

“News Media Impact on Ongoing Work of the Collaboration Process”. For the purposes of this study “media impact on the ongoing work of the collaboration process” will be the degree to which the day-to-day work of the collaboration was made easier or more difficult.

“Stakeholders’ Negative Media-related Actions”. Negative media-related actions (Kunde, 1999):

1. grandstanding for the press
2. hardening positions in public to impress constituents, members or superiors

3. attempting to use the press as a negotiating lever to coerce other stakeholders
4. leaking information to the news media that put other stakeholders in a bad light.

“Stakeholders’ Positive Media-related Actions” . Positive media-related actions (Kunde,1999):

1. softening positions to appear more reasonable to the public
2. saying positive things to the press regarding other stakeholders

“Success” of Collaboration Processes . The literature provides no generally accepted measure of success of environmental collaborations. Suggested criteria begin with the relatively low bar of merely improving participant relationships (Innes, 1999). Given the long-term, ongoing nature of many collaborative efforts it seems unreasonable to set the bar as high as the accomplishment of the major goals. Susskind suggests “significant progress” as a criterion (Susskind et al., 1999), but as Schuett, et al. find in their 2001 study of 300 participants, some “tangible outcomes” such as reports or actions seem to be required for participants to take satisfaction in any measure of success. (Schuett et al., 2001) For purposes of this study the definition of “success” in the collaboration process will be the degree to which respondents report positive outcomes.

## LIMITATIONS AND RATIONALE FOR STUDY METHODS

The primary sources for much of the methods discussion that follows are the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Manheim, Rich & Willnat text on research methods in political science (Manheim et al., 2002) and the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the O’Sullivan & Rassel text on research methods in public administration (O’Sullivan & Rassel, 1999).

### Quantitative vs. Qualitative Methods

#### *Validity Issues*

A qualitative, case study research design in this area would encounter serious problems with validity of data—particularly regarding the truthfulness of participant respondents. In the course of collaborations, the participating corporate representatives, environmental groups and government agencies perform a complex calculus of public and private relationships. These calculations can be the types of judgments and thought processes that many do not want to share publicly, even after the fact. Qualitative data in many instances would simply be unverifiable and untrustworthy.

Promises of confidentiality or anonymity would not be very helpful for a case study, because the number of participants who might be the source of any particular perspective is very

limited and individuals would be relatively easy to identify. A collaboration is often essentially a negotiating process and for many of the parties involved it will not be a one-shot deal.

On the other hand, participants in a quantitative survey of environmental conflict professionals from all over the country can be credibly promised anonymity or confidentiality as part of a large pool of hundreds of respondents. This should encourage more truthful responses.

### *Reliability Issues*

There is a reliability problem inherent in qualitative research. At the end of the day, even with a design that includes two or three case studies, one simply would not be able to make any generally reliable conclusions. As pointed out in the literature review, the conclusions from existing qualitative studies are limited and often contradictory when it comes to news media roles and relationships.

It appears that a need exists for some reliable data about the general state of press/collaboration relationships, their mechanics and their influences. A beginning point for that kind of information can be provided by the 87 responses to this quantitative survey of more than 250 mediators/facilitators of environmental collaborations.

There are, of course, problems associated with a quantitative study in this area, as well. Some of the major problems in data collection and data analysis are discussed below.

### Data Collection Problems

*Problem: Idiosyncratic nature of environmental collaborations:* No two cases are exactly the same in terms of content, geography, process or personalities:

- unique personalities/relationships that may advance or impede progress
- special characteristics of place-based environmental issues
- varying mixes public agencies involved
- variety of local organizations.

*Solution:* Data was collected on a large number of cases to identify common elements that tend to be significant factors in press/collaboration relationships.

*Problem: Inconsistent ground rules governing press/collaboration interactions*

*Solution:* Data was collected on a large number of cases to identify any common elements and their possible association with perceived success/failure of collaboration efforts.

*Problem: Validity issue of biases / limited experiences of judgmental data sources*

*Solution:* Collect aggregate judgment data from many mediators/facilitators and check their response against each other. The major difficulty pointed out by Rich and Manheim “to find

several qualified judges who differ in background and their experience with the subject matter” (p. 181). In this study, an extremely wide range of backgrounds and experience are represented by the Roster members from academics who perform occasional facilitation activities to professional full-time mediators with social science backgrounds and lawyers who specialize in Alternative Dispute Resolution .

*Problem: Validity issue with lack of truthfulness of survey respondents*

Solution: Mediators and facilitators from the Roster are likely to have the process as their focus (not a particular outcome as is more likely for participants) and have been promised confidentiality as part of a large pool of respondents.

*Problem: Validity issue with lack of precision of judgmental data*

*Solution:* To minimize this limitation inherent in the opinions or impressions of experts or people with special knowledge, the survey instrument asked about variables that involve discrete events and concrete factual matters where possible.

*Problem: Perception data issues of inaccuracy, inconsistency and bias:* Perception data will be the main focus of the study, and all perception data is filtered to some degree. In many instances, even apparently factual data can have perception problems. For example, distance is an objectively measurable fact, but two people standing side-by-side can look at the same object in the distance and disagree on how far away the object is—raising issues of accuracy and consistency among respondents. These issues are potentially increased when people are asked to characterize the world or parts of it – precisely the kind of perception data that this study will gather – and, in addition, the potential for bias is increased.

Inaccuracy in perception can arise from:

- misinterpretation of observed events or
- errors of observation through carelessness or lack of knowledge of what is being observed.

Bias errors in perception can result from:

- cultural or personal perspectives (see what you want/expect to see)
- stereotyping (prejudging)
- preconceptions (rose-colored glasses)

Inconsistency in perceptions from respondent-to-respondent can arise from:

- differences in training and education
- differences in experience
- inaccuracy
- bias

*Solution:* Despite these very real potential problems, this study attempts to minimize bias by seeking the perceptions of a large number of experts who have no substantive stake in the outcomes but, like individuals marginal to a group, “have the insight born of close association with the events in question but can still take a critical perspective on those events” (Manheim, Rich & Willnat, 2002, 348).

Inconsistency will be minimized as a result of the Roster membership’s (a) common training in certified courses and (b) common experiences with environmental collaborations – including in many instances experience with the same private-sector and government stakeholder organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Greenpeace, the Bureau of Land Management, the EPA, and others.

Inaccuracy will be minimized as a result of the respondent experts’ training and experience. All respondents have had multiple experiences with environmental collaborations, so they know what they are observing, and we can be confident in the accuracy of their perceptions. They are trained to (a) closely observe events and evaluate stakeholder actions and relationships, and (b) accurately identify attitudes and opinions of collaboration participants.

Our respondents’ specialized training, experience and judgment substantially overcome those problems, allowing us to collect data that are accurate and consistent.

#### Data Analysis Problems

*Problem:* Some aspects of the Instrument will generate ordinal and nominal data, creating problems for multivariate regression or factor analysis.

*Solution #1:* Where possible, the instrument questions used a Likert scale format so as to generate data that can be treated as interval data for analysis purposes.

*Solution #2:* Where appropriate, non-interval data were collected in such a way as to generate dichotomous responses that can be coded as 0 or 1 for dummy variable use.

*Problem:* A poor response rate of fewer than 100 could limit the usefulness of multivariate analysis tools.

*Solution:* Only 87 surveys were completely or partial completed, despite attempts to generate a minimum of 100 responses, including following up of mailed instrument with phone calls and e-mails. The first e-mail solicitation generated only 31 responses.

### Concepts Relationship To Theory – Empirical referents

According to Manheim, Rich & Willnat, the lack of empirical referents may be overcome by collecting aggregate judgment data from experts. In this study, judgment data were collected about the non-observable “influence” of news media activities, from experts with actual collaboration experience.

It is often impossible to track directly the impact of news media activities on policy processes, even where there is a clear locus of decisionmaking and only one decisionmaker. There is often no clear observable phenomenon that one can point to as a result of press activities. In environmental collaborations, most of the “influence” may be inside the heads of collaboration participants, as they make choices among a wide range of possible actions or choices in response to multiple sources of competing pressures from other private sector and public sector participants, their own constituents, public opinion, market forces, elected officials, and the implications for future negotiations and relationships.

Given that public pronouncements may be at odds with private deliberations, it would be unwise to use participants’ public statements to assess the influence of press activities. And it would be extremely difficult to test the validity of interview responses about such issues, even if participants would agree to be interviewed about whether or not they were influenced by press activities.

Being intimately involved with a collaborative process is the only way to obtain knowledge about possible press influence on the participants and the process. Mediators and facilitators have intimate access to the thought processes of participants, and facilitators and mediators are trained to make extremely close observations of precisely the kinds of things we wish to explore in the study.

### Minimizing Possible Measurement Errors (from Manheim & Rich, 64-67)

1. “Differences in the distribution of other, relatively stable characteristics among the cases that are unintentionally revealed by our measures:”

Urban vs. Non-urban cases: Urban environmental cases will be generally different from rural or wilderness cases in at least two potentially significant areas—a much more complex political milieu and a larger, probably more intense media presence with more local media outlets, including commercial and public television; commercial and public radio; daily newspapers; community newspapers and alternative press voices.

*To guard against this type of error*, respondents classified their cases as “development & growth” (primarily urban issues), “natural resources management includes water issues, parks use and planning” (primarily non-urban issues), or environmental cleanup. The data from each group were compared against the other groups for significant differences.

2. “Differences in the distribution of temporary characteristics among the cases that are reflected in our measures:”

Press Coverage: Individual respondent attitudes toward press coverage of environmental collaborations might be skewed by unusual amounts of press coverage of environmental issues, or by highly positive or negative coverage of a particular environmental issue.

*To guard against this type of error*, the major U.S. newspapers and magazines were monitored for high profile coverage of environmental issues during the survey time period and two months prior. In terms of environmental issues, the major news media reflected the presidential campaigns’ focus on the global warming issue and fossil fuel use. Wildfires in California were also prominent in the national news, but it would appear that there was nothing in the news coverage of environmental issues that would skew the results of the survey.

Prior Experience with News Media: Nationwide Pew Center surveys consistently show that people who have had direct interaction with the news media tend to have a more negative attitude toward the news media, particularly regarding inaccuracy and lack of objectivity.

*To guard against this type of error*, data were collected about respondents’ previous direct experience with the press.

3. “Differences in subjects’ interpretation of the measuring instrument:”

Ambiguously worded questions:

To guard against this error, as many questions as possible used the same wording as earlier surveys (Pew, et al.) that have been verified for reliability.

Disagreements about the meaning of key terms:

Some flexibility in interpretation of key terms may be useful, if accounted for and used intentionally (e.g. “collaboration success” “positive influence” or “negative influence” as it pertains to collaborative processes). However, measurement error can result from the unintentional use of words that don’t have a common understanding among respondents.

- To guard against this error, for purposes of the survey, some definitions of key terms were included in the questions. When the survey instrument was pretested definitional issues did not cause apparent confusion or difficulty.

4. “Differences in the setting in which the measure is applied; and differences in the way individuals respond to the form of the measuring instrument:”

Varying responses depending on the interviewer

Factors such as the age, gender and race of the interviewer can affect responses.

*To guard against this kind of measurement error*, surveys were conducted online with no personal interviewer.

5. “Differences in the administration of the measuring instrument:”

Layout and length of survey instrument

Response differences can result from interviewees getting tired during a long survey or confused by the question layout, etc.

*To guard against this type of error*, the instrument was pretested. Length or layout were not reported as issues in the pretest or in feedback from actual respondents.

6. “Differences in the processing and analysis of data:”

Mistakes in transformation of data

To guard against this kind of error, transformations were checked more than once and the original data files will be retained.

## **CHAPTER 4 – RESULTS & FINDINGS**

### ORGANIZATION OF THE CHAPTER

*First*, the chapter begins with the most interesting major findings: how the collaborative process appears to have affected, in a very basic way, the role the news media play in society's attempts to solve environmental problems.

*Second*, Media Ground Rules appear to play an important role in this new relationship and the findings in this area are reported next.

*Third*, a summary is presented of the positive/negative impacts that the press was reported to have had on collaborations. The Table-format summary looks at 17 additional elements besides Media Ground Rules that were expected to affect the impact of the press on collaborations. These include structural elements, such as collaboration size and type of environmental issue; positive or negative press-related actions by stakeholders; and news coverage elements such as balance, tone, amount and framing of news stories.

*Fourth*, a detailed review of data from the survey responses includes demographic data about the respondents; descriptive data about the 75 cases included in the study; and results on other aspects of the collaboration/press relationship.

*Finally*, research questions RQ1, RQ2, and subquestions are revisited in light of the survey results data.

## MAJOR FINDINGS ON ROLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA

It appears that the nature of the collaboration process has resulted in changes to the news media's role, as it relates to environmental problem-solving. This phenomenon is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. The summary below outlines the principal findings in this area

### Media Ground Rules.

The presence or absence of Media Ground Rules (MGR's) appears to be strongly associated with the kind of impact the press has on environmental collaborations.

Half the collaborations in the study put MGR's in place. Half did not.

- *With MGR's* -- 71% reported the press had a positive impact.
- *Without MGR's*, -- 60% reported the press had a negative impact.

### Importance of the Press.

The news media were seen as not very important in most instances.

- More than half the cases (56%) reported the press had only slight, or no effect.
- Only 1 in 10 respondents reported a strong media effect.
- In zero (0%) cases the press was reported as having a very strong effect

### Public Education & Watchdog Roles.

Public Education was the only role in which the press was reported to have moderate impact.

Other roles such as Watchdog and Agenda-setter were reported as being essentially irrelevant. A few respondents rated the Nuisance role as high impact, but most rated it as irrelevant (Mode response = 1). From the practitioner perspective, an interesting result was the reported attempts to use the news media as a negotiating lever in 30% of the cases, but the data also indicate this had almost impact on the process.

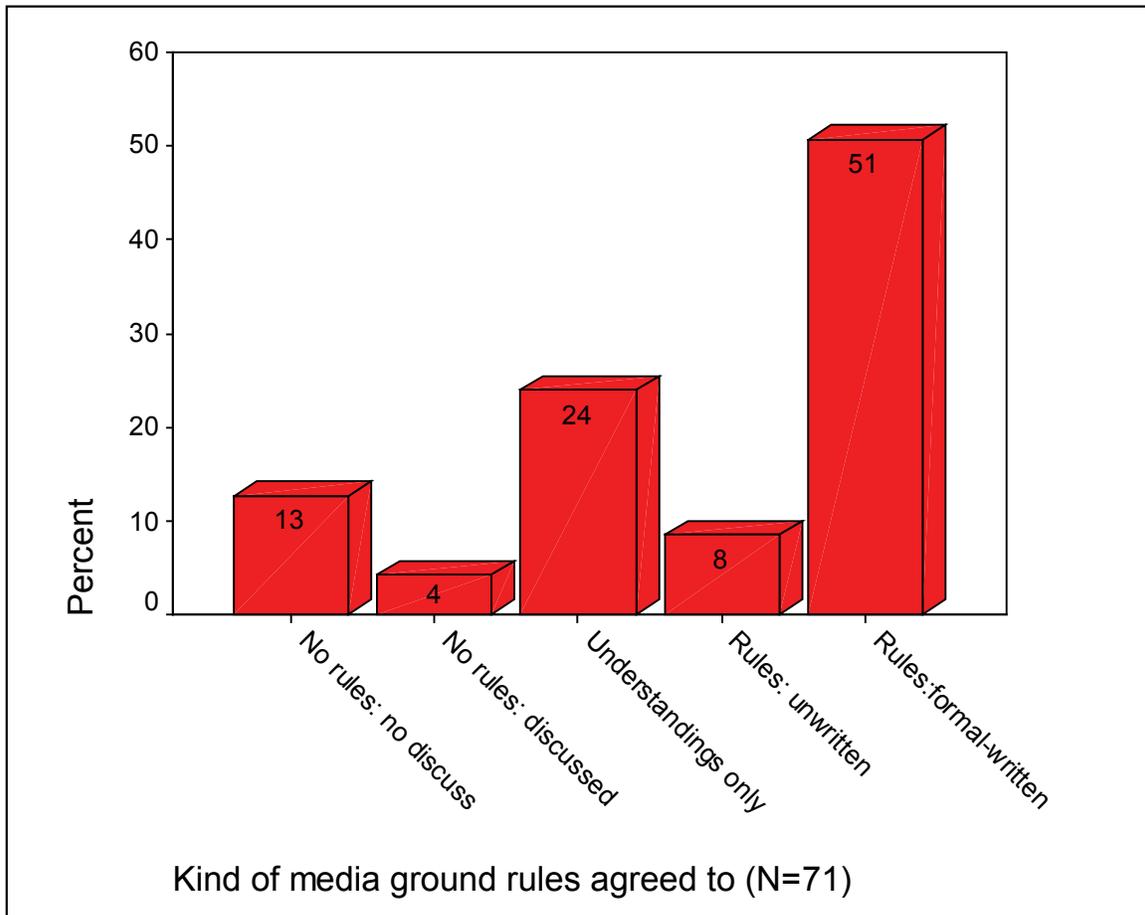
- Public Education role rated highest (moderate-strong impact in 1/3 of the cases).

## MEDIA GROUND RULES

### Formal, Informal or Nonexistent Media Ground Rules

Media Ground Rules or MGRs are guidelines that govern the way collaborations interact with the news media. Media Ground Rules can be Formal (discussed by participants; written down; agreed-to), Informal (discussed; unwritten; understood or agreed-to), or Nonexistent (no discussion; no common understanding; no agreement in advance on dealings with the press).

Formal, written MGRs were adopted by 51% of the collaborations in the study (N=71). Another 32% reported having unwritten rules or understandings about appropriate media-related behavior. An interesting result was the fact that 13% of the cases didn't even discuss the issue of dealing with the press.



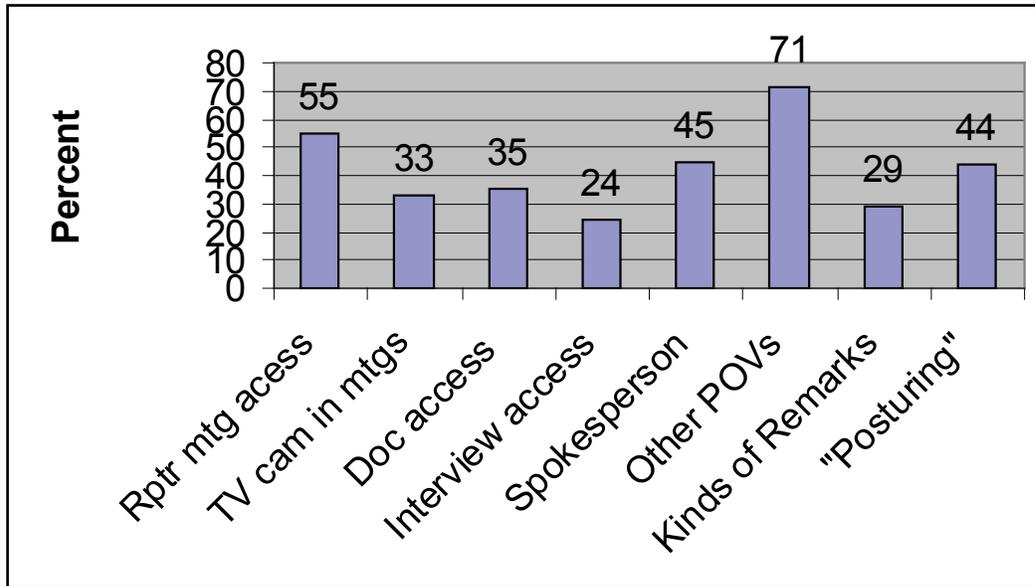
**Figure 1:** *Written vs. Unwritten Media Ground Rules*

### Press-related activities covered by Media Ground Rules

MGRs can vary widely. The surprising result from this survey was how few media ground rules are put in place, even by collaborations that have formal written rules about interactions with the press. Research during the literature review led to the impression that when collaborations established media ground rules, they essentially put in place a fairly complete framework for media interaction, and it led to the assumption that The Nebraska Water Policy Task Force MGRs were fairly typical of MGR frameworks. Survey results indicate that this assumption was in fact wrong. Only two of the collaborations had such frameworks in place. Most collaborations only had two or three specific MGRs in place.

Some MGRs restrict what stakeholders are allowed to talk about with the media, the kinds of comments they are allowed to make, who is or is not allowed to give press interviews, etc. MGRs apply to all participants – private sector stakeholders, government agency participants, mediators/facilitators, contractors and staff. MGRs also attempt to dictate the behavior of journalists and media organizations when covering the collaboration by dictating when or if TV cameras are allowed in meetings, which documents journalists will be allowed to see, etc. (An example of one collaboration’s MGRs can be found on page 17.)

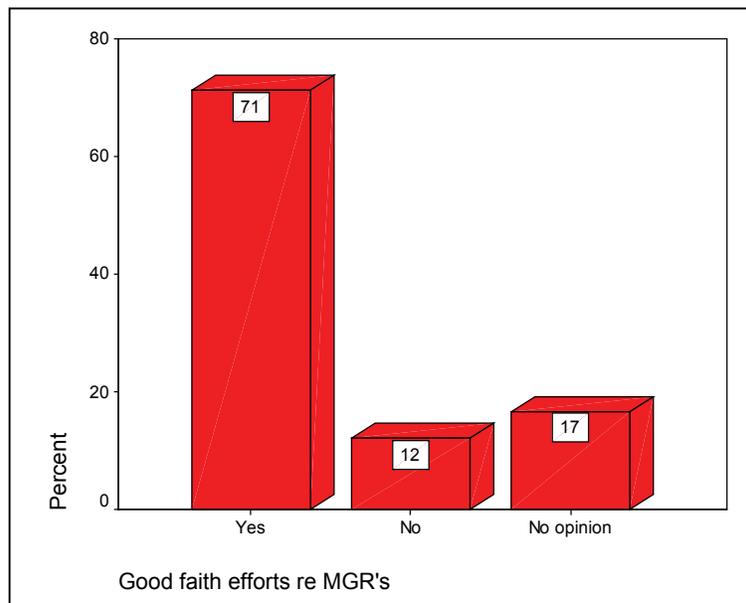
Respondents were asked about eight possible issues that are often addressed by MGRs. The cases in the study typically reported having rules addressing three of the eight issues. A ban on characterizing other stakeholders’ point of view (when talking to the press) was reported by 71% of cases with MGRs, making it the most frequently appearing restriction on press-related activities. The second-most-frequent was a restriction on press access to certain meetings (55%), and the third spot was essentially a tie between MGRs that banned “posturing” for the media (44%) and MGRs that required a designated spokesperson to make press statements on behalf of the collaboration (45%). Surprisingly, only one in three had a rule specifically about TV cameras in meetings, usually considered one of the more disruptive media activities.



**Figure 2.** *Press-related activities restricted by Media Ground Rules*

Stakeholder Compliance with Media Ground Rules

In the cases with MGRS, both written and unwritten, 71% reported that all stakeholders made good faith efforts to comply with the rules. Only 12% reported that stakeholders failed to do so.



**Figure 3.** *Good faith efforts to comply with MGRs*

## IMPACTS OF OTHER PRESS-RELATED ELEMENTS

As indicated in the literature review, multiple elements might affect a collaboration's outcome in a positive or negative way. Table 3, below, summarizes whether the study's data are consistent with each element having some kind of impact on a collaboration process. The non-parametric and parametric analyses supporting the table's conclusions are found in Appendix B.

The table sets out an estimate of how strong an impact each element might have, and whether the impact would have a positive or negative effect on a collaboration. The table columns:

- (a) identify specific elements in the press/collaboration relationship that might have a negative or positive impact
- (b) indicate whether the reported data were consistent with a specific element being associated with positive or negative impact (YES/NO)
- (c) indicate the intensity level of associated impact (SLIGHT/MODERATE/HIGH)
- (d) indicate whether the impact was positive or negative for collaborations ((+) / (-)).

The size of the positive impact findings relating to Media Ground Rules was surprising, as noted in the previous section. The high impact ratings of factual inaccuracy, perceived bias and conflict framing were not surprising since these data were reported by cases in the 27% that said the press had a negative effect on the process. Complaints about bias, inaccuracy and a focus on conflict have always been a hallmark of inflammatory and unhelpful press coverage.

**Table 3.**

*Summary of findings about elements (apart from MGR's) and their association with positive/negative impacts on environmental collaborations*

<b>STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF COLLABORATION PROCESSES</b>	<b>DATA CONSISTENT WITH IMPACT</b>	<b>LEVEL OF IMPACT</b>	<b>POSITIVE (+) OR NEGATIVE (-)</b>
Size (# of groups/orgs)	No		
Life span of collaboration	No		
Levels of gov't	No		
Type of issue	No		
Geographic location (Northeast only)	Yes	Slight	(-)
<b>PRESS-RELATED ACTIONS BY STAKEHOLDERS</b>			
Positive actions (+ comments, etc.)	Yes	Slight	(+)
Negative actions (grandstanding, etc.)	Yes	Slight	(-)
<b>NEWS COVERAGE ELEMENTS</b>			
Type of media (TV, newspaper, etc.)	Insufficient data		
TV camera presence	Insufficient data		
Amount of coverage	No		
Balanced coverage	Yes	Slight	(+)
Perceived Bias (Gov't agencies only)	Yes	Moderate	(-)
Factual Inaccuracy	Yes	High	(-)
Conflict framing of coverage	Yes	High	(-)
Press Role – Public Education	Yes	Moderate	(+)

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

About 1/3 of the 284 members of the EPA'S *National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals* responded to all or part of the survey (N=87). The Roster is a list of professional mediators and facilitators with collective experience in more than 9,000 environmental collaborations. The EPA will only allow experienced professionals as Roster members. Most have advanced degrees. Many have a law degree or a Ph.D. They report an average of 32 ½ cases each in the past 10 years and more than 2/3 have had at least 10 personal interactions with the news media.

### “DEMOGRAPHICS ” OF CASES IN THE STUDY

The survey asked respondents to select one particular case, then respond to a number of questions about that particular case (See Figure 4, below for Location and Type of Issue.) A summary of the demographics of the 75 cases selected by the respondents follows.

#### Location in U.S.

About 60% of the individual cases reported on were from the western U.S. and about 40% of the cases were from the eastern U.S. Almost 30% of the cases were in the Northwest, with the same number in California/Southwest. The Northeast and Southeast made up 36% (with 18% each), while fewer than 6% of cases were from the Midwest.

#### Size

Most cases (69%) had 20-35 participating organizations. The smallest had 2 stakeholder groups. The largest was an anomaly with 75 participating organizations.

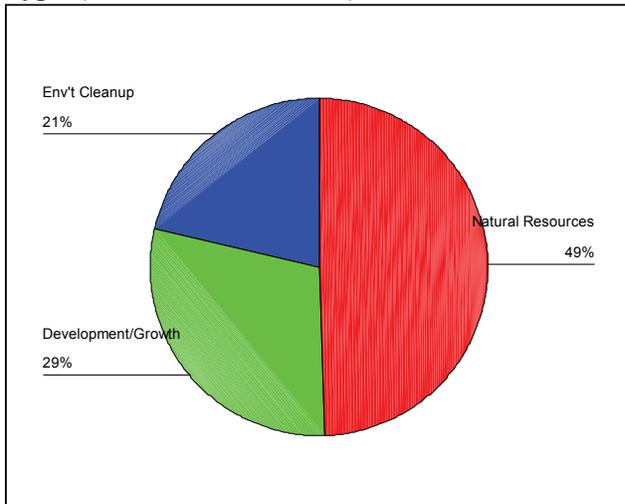
#### Duration

Almost half the collaborations lasted more than 4 years. About 35% were in their first year or took less than a year to resolve. The balance of 15% were 2-3 years old.

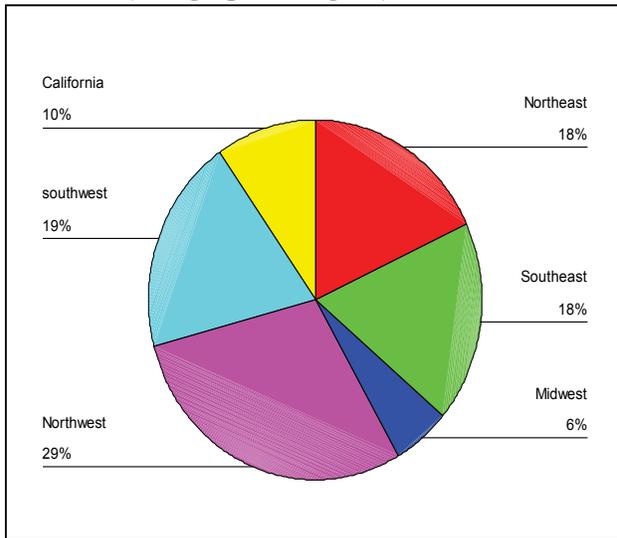
#### Environmental Issues

About half the involved natural resources, 30% involved development/growth issues and the balance of about 20% dealt with environmental cleanups.

### Type (Environmental Issue)



### Location (Geographic Region)



**Figure 4.** Location & Type of Issue of collaboration cases reported in the study

## NEWS MEDIA COVERING THE CASES

### Types of news media outlets covering collaborations

Local newspapers provided far and away the most news coverage. Ninety-one percent of collaborations in the study were the subjects of news stories in local newspapers. Almost half were the subject of local TV news stories (45.7%), and local radio did stories on 31% of the collaborations.

National news outlets provided an unexpected amount of coverage, with 30% of the collaborations being the subject of stories in major national newspapers. Coverage by national network news was reported by 10% of the cases. Cable news also covered 10% of the cases and almost 1 in 4 received attention from Public Radio (24.3%). Another unexpected result was the percentage of collaborations that reported coverage by Internet news blogs (17%).

**Table 4.**

*Media outlets that provided news coverage of collaborations in the study*

<b>Response (N=70)</b> <b><i>Which of these news organizations covered the collaboration? (Check all that apply.)</i></b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Local newspapers	64	91.4%
Local TV news	32	45.7%
Local radio	22	31.4%
Major national newspapers	21	30.0%
Public radio	17	24.3%
Internet news blogs	12	17.1%
Network TV news	7	10.0%
Cable TV news	7	10.0%
Talk radio	7	10.0%

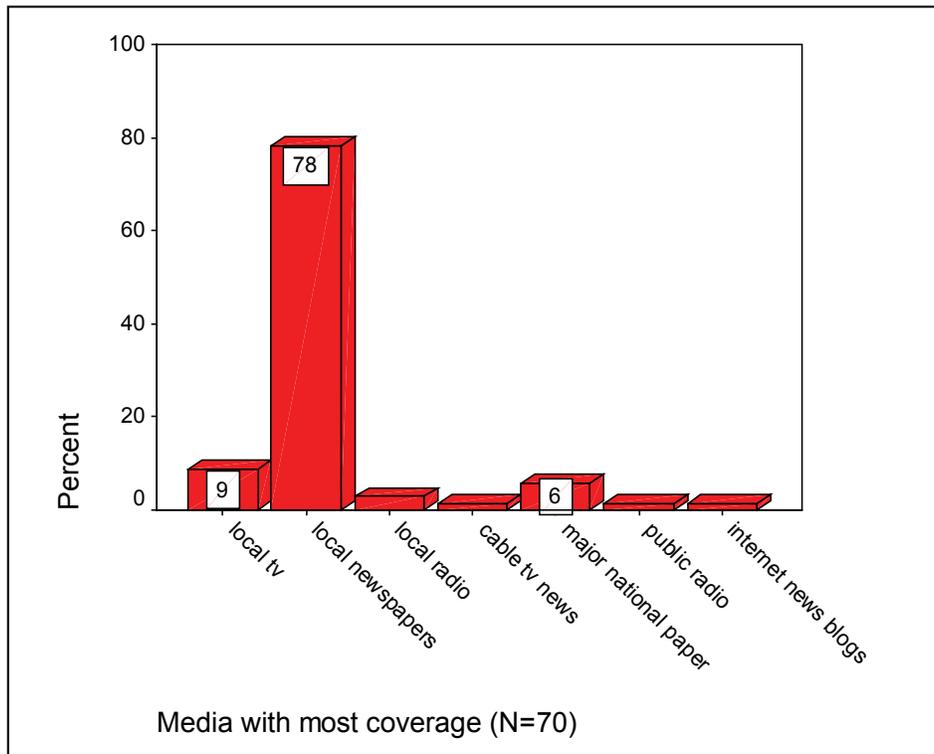
News media providing the most coverage

Not surprisingly, about 8 out of 10 collaborations (78.3%) reported that local newspapers provided the most news coverage. None of the other news outlets even reached double digits. Coming in second to newspapers was local TV news, providing the most coverage in 8.7% of the cases.

**Table 5.**

*News Outlets Ranked By Amount Of Coverage*

<b>Response (N=69)</b> <i>Which of the following news media outlets provided the most coverage?</i>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Local newspapers	54	<b>78.3%</b>
Local TV news	6	8.7%
Local radio	2	2.9%
Major national newspapers	4	5.8%
Public radio	1	1.4%
Internet news blogs	1	1.4%
Network TV news	0	0.0%
Cable TV news	1	1.4%
Talk radio	0	0.0%

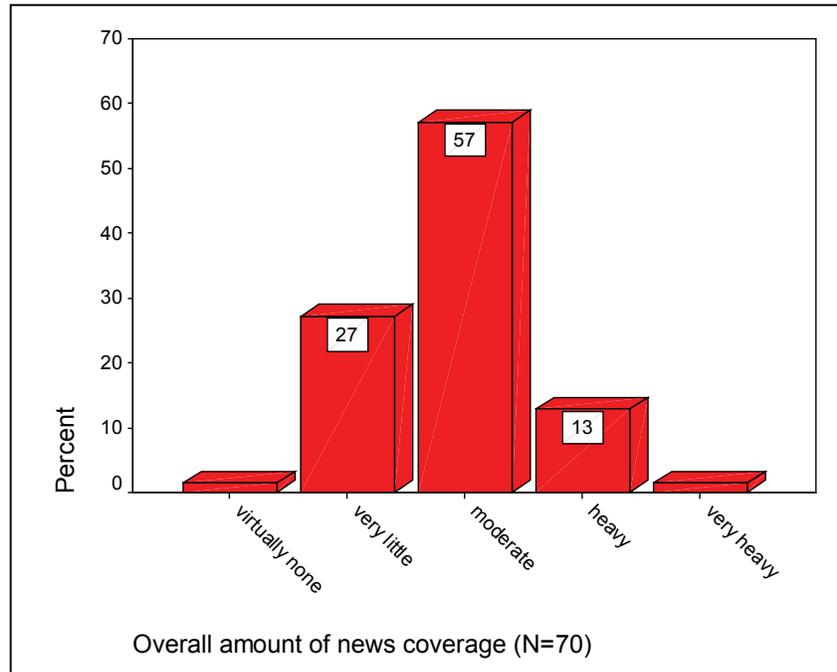


**Figure 5:** *Bar Chart of media outlets providing the most news coverage*

## NEWS COVERAGE - AMOUNT, BALANCE, FRAMING & ACCURACY

### Typical amounts of news coverage

Moderate to heavy news coverage was reported by 70% of the cases. Most cases reported moderate news coverage overall (57%). Very little press attention was reported by only about 1 in 4 of the cases.

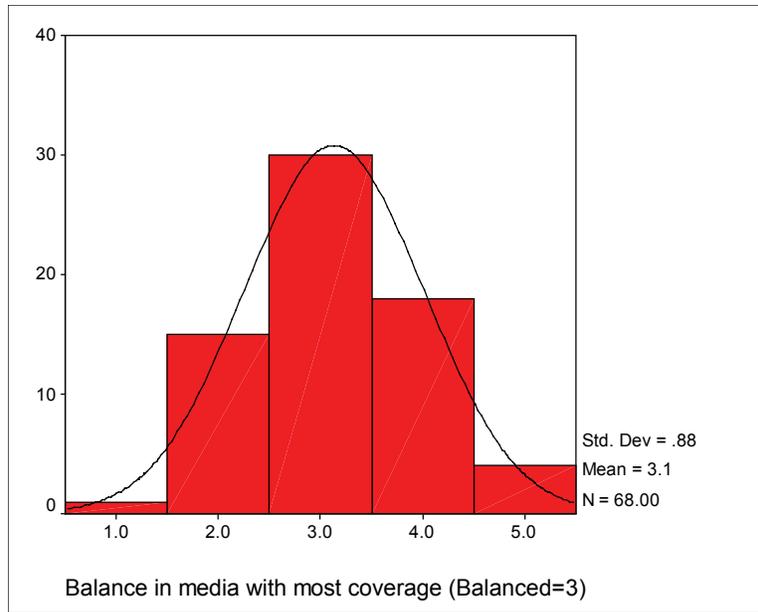


**Figure 6:** Bar chart of overall amount of news coverage

### Perceived balance of news coverage

Coverage was generally seen as balanced by facilitators and mediators. However, according to the “neutral” respondents, some stakeholder groups thought press coverage was biased against them. About 13% of government, business and environmental groups thought the press was very biased against them, whereas only 3% of community groups felt that way.

*Perceptions of “neutral” facilitators/mediators:* Responses from the facilitators and mediators revealed no pattern of perceived bias for or against one point of view. The perceptions of balance vs. imbalance in reporting produced an almost perfect normal curve as seen in Figure 7, below.



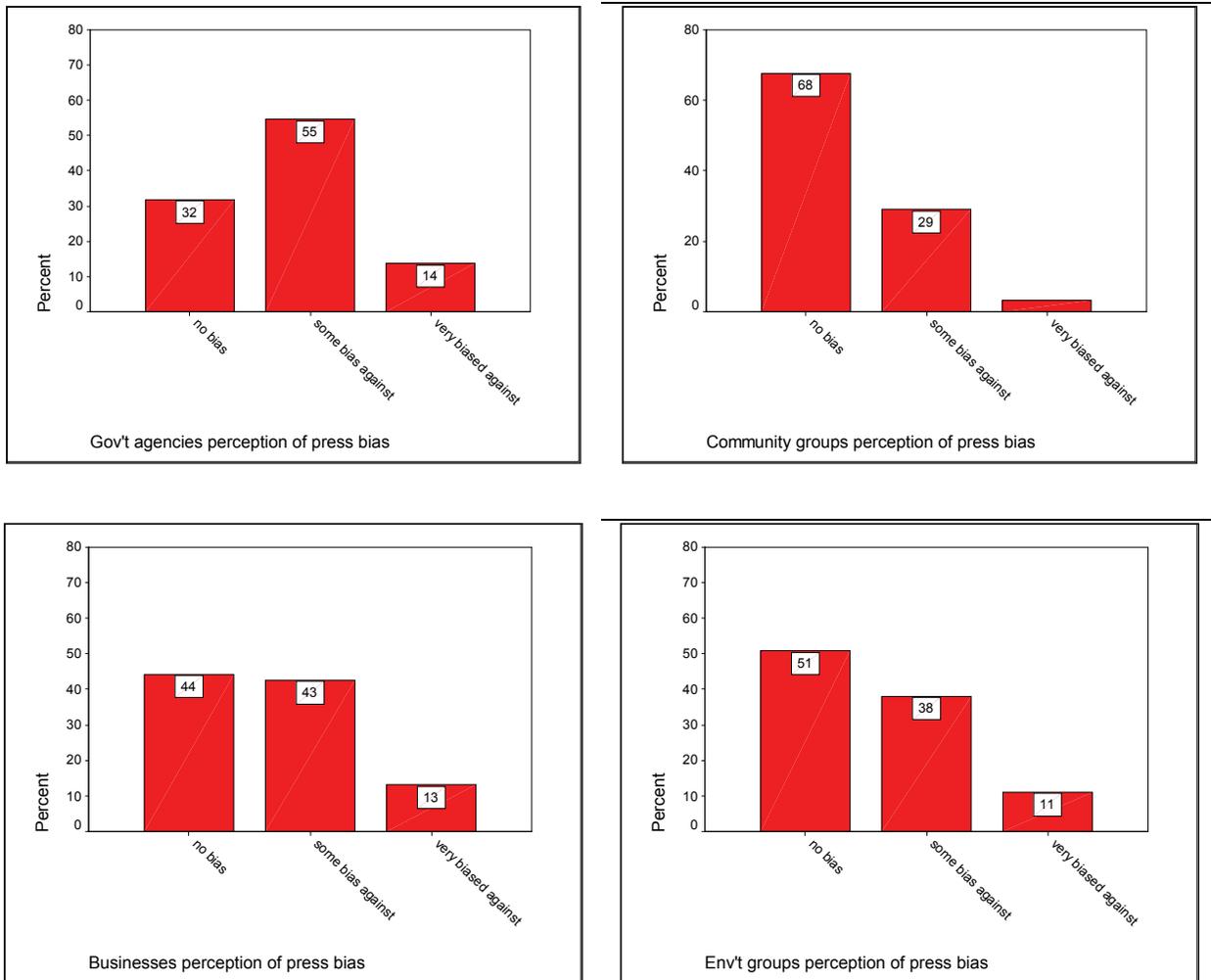
**Figure 7.** *Balance in news coverage as reported by facilitators/mediators*

*Perceptions of government agencies:* One interesting result was that government agencies reportedly had the strongest feeling that the press was against them. More than 2/3 of respondents stated that government agencies thought the press was biased against them. In 14% of the cases, government agencies thought the press was very biased against them (Figure 8 below).

*Perceptions of community groups:* Community groups had the most favorable opinion about news coverage, with 68% seeing no bias against them in the press, and a miniscule 3% thought the press was very biased against them (Figure 8 below).

*Perceptions of business organizations:* A solid majority of business groups (56%) thought the press was biased against them, but that still left a sizeable 44% of business groups perceiving no negative bias in the media (Figure 8 below).

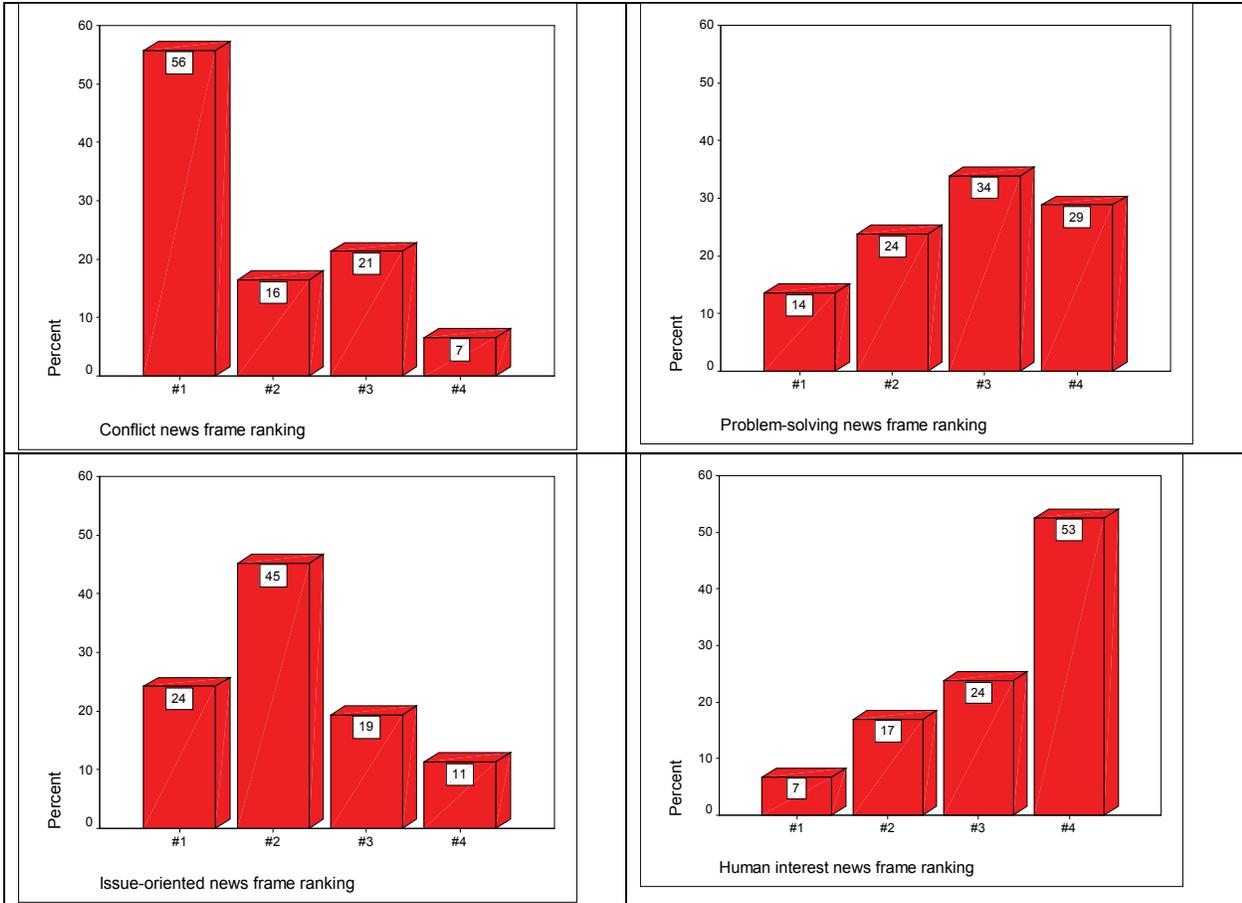
*Perceptions of environmental groups:* Environmental groups seem split pretty much down the middle when it comes to perceived negative press bias, with 51% seeing no bias and 49% believing that the press is biased against them (Figure 8 below).



**Figure 8.** *Press bias as perceived by government agencies, community groups, business organizations and environmental groups*

### How news stories are typically framed

Conflict was far and away the most common news frame. Of the four most typical news frames (conflict, issue-oriented, problem-solving, human interest) 58% of respondents identified “conflict” as the frame occurring most frequently in news coverage of their specific cases (Figure 9, below). The top two frames (conflict and issue-oriented), were ranked higher than the two lowest frames (problem-solving and human interest) by a statistically significant margin. The news frame ranked second most often was “issue-oriented” (46%), and given that most issues have at least two sides, this can actually be seen as a milder form of the conflict model or news frame where the conflict is more closely tied to the ideas at issue, instead of the personalities or interests. This similarity is borne out by a one-way ANOVA analysis and paired-samples T-test.



**Figure 9:** Bar charts ranking how news stories were framed

The news frame of “problem-solving” was most commonly ranked #3, just ahead of “human interest” which was ranked first by only 8% and ranked last at #4 by a convincing 46% of respondents.

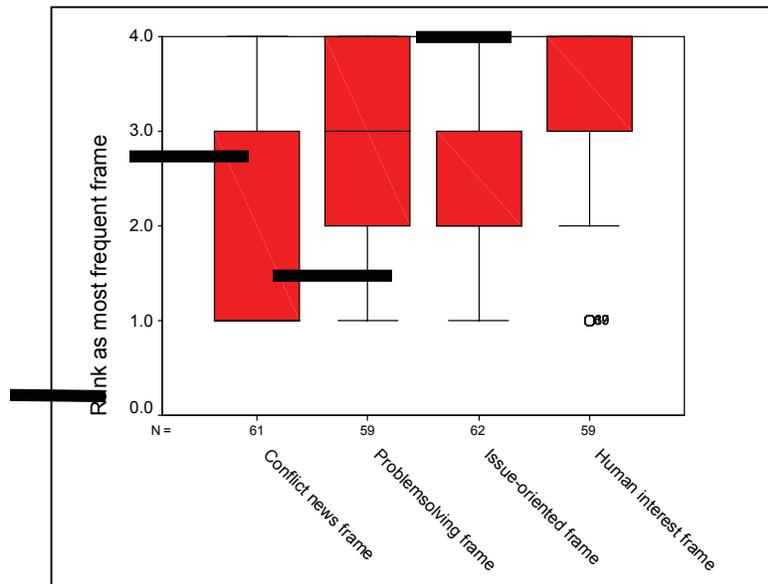
Differences in the rankings were not statistically significant for Conflict and Issue-oriented frames. Not surprisingly, differences in the rankings were not statistically significant for Problem-solving and Human interest, the two lowest-ranked frames (Pair 5 in table above), in the pairwise comparison conducted controlling for familywise error rate across the six tests at the .05 level, using the Holm’s sequential Bonferroni procedure. The smallest  $p$ -value was .000 for pair 1 (conflict and problem-solving), which is smaller than  $\alpha = .05/6 = .0083$ . The next smallest  $p$ -value was also .000 for pair 3 (conflict and human interest), which is smaller than  $\alpha = .05/5 = .01$ . The next smallest  $p$ -value was also .000 for pair 6 (issue-oriented and human interest), which is smaller than  $\alpha = .05/4 = .0125$ . The next smallest  $p$ -value was .001 for pair 4 (issue-oriented and problem-solving) which is smaller than  $\alpha = .05/3 = .0167$ . As noted above, pair 5

(problem-solving and human interest) the  $p$ -value was .041 which is larger than  $\alpha = .05/2 = .025$ , therefore not significant and pair 2 (conflict and issue-oriented)  $p$ -value was .124 which is larger than  $\alpha = .05/1 = .05$ , also not significant.

**Table 6.**

*Pairwise Samples Test Of News Frame Frequency*

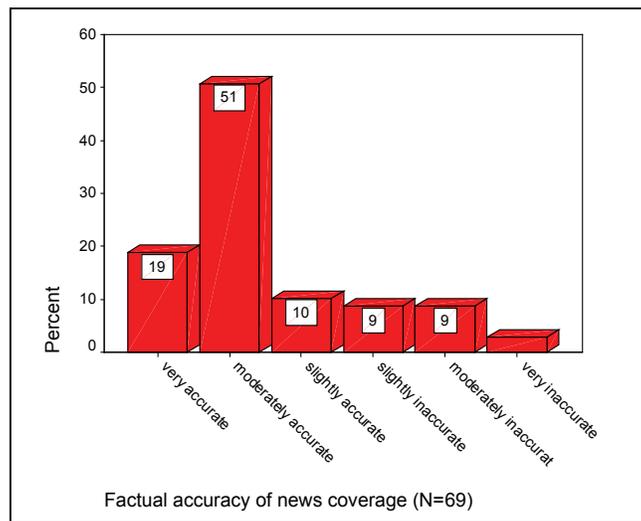
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Conflict news frame ranking - Problem-solving news frame ranking	-.9821	1.8537	.2477	-1.4786	-.4857	-3.965	55	.000
Pair 2	Conflict news frame ranking - Issue-oriented news frame ranking	-.3051	1.5000	.1953	-.6960	8.58E-02	-1.562	58	.124
Pair 3	Conflict news frame ranking - Human interest news frame ranking	-1.4138	1.4872	.1953	-1.8048	-1.0228	-7.240	57	.000
Pair 4	Problem-solving news frame ranking - Issue-oriented news frame ranking	.6379	1.4351	.1884	.2606	1.0153	3.385	57	.001
Pair 5	Problem-solving news frame ranking - Human interest news frame ranking	-.4545	1.6081	.2168	-.8893	-2.0E-02	-2.096	54	.041
Pair 6	Issue-oriented news frame ranking - Human interest news frame ranking	-1.0690	1.6635	.2184	-1.5063	-.6316	-4.894	57	.000



**Figure 10.** *Boxplots of News Frame Rankings*

### Perceived accuracy of news coverage

News outlets received relatively high marks for accuracy in reporting about environmental collaborations. Factual accuracy of news coverage was rated as moderately or highly accurate in 70% of cases. (Interestingly, this is an almost complete reversal of the assessment of the news media accuracy generally, as 67% of respondents agreed with the statement that news stories are often inaccurate.)



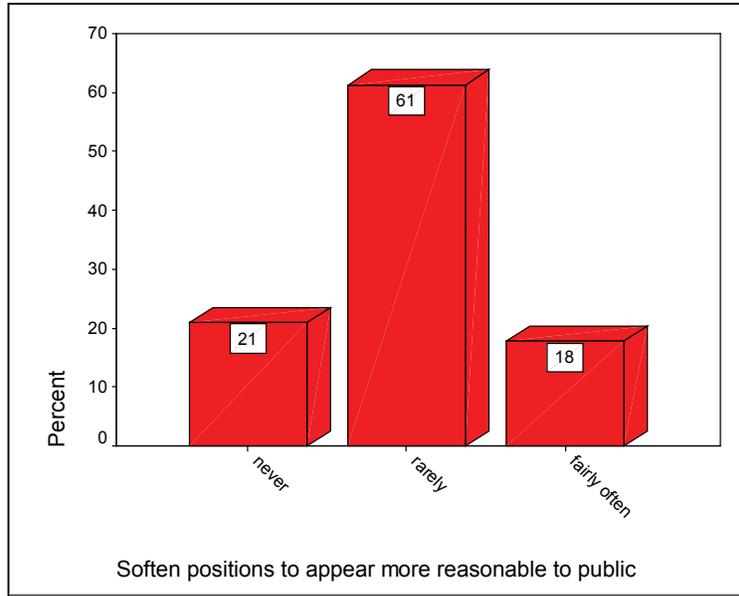
**Figure 11.** *Perceived accuracy of news coverage of cases*

## STAKEHOLDERS AND THE PRESS

### “Positive” actions as a result of press presence or coverage

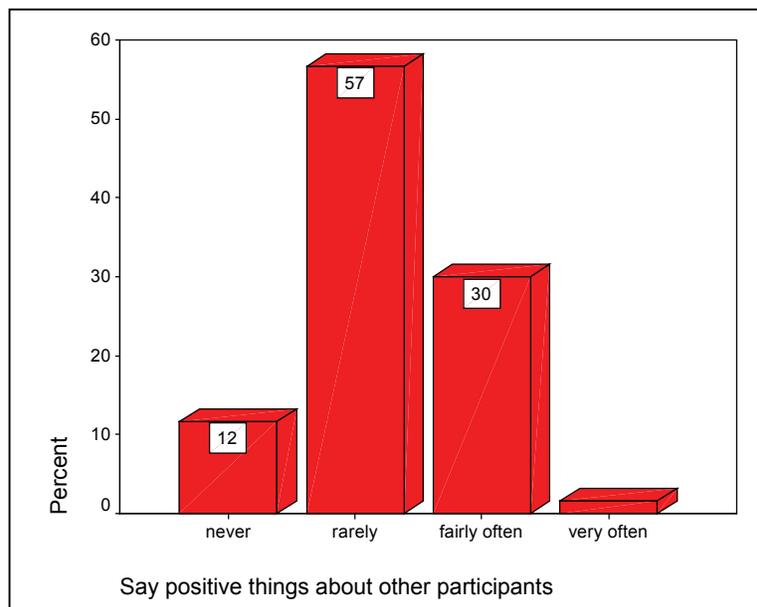
#### *Soften positions*

In their dealings with the news media, some stakeholders have reportedly softened their positions to appear more reasonable to the public. This rarely happened according to 61% of respondents, and 21% said it never happened. However, in almost one-fifth of cases (18%) this happened fairly often.



**Figure 12.** *Positive media-related activities – Soften public positions / Say positive things about other stakeholders*

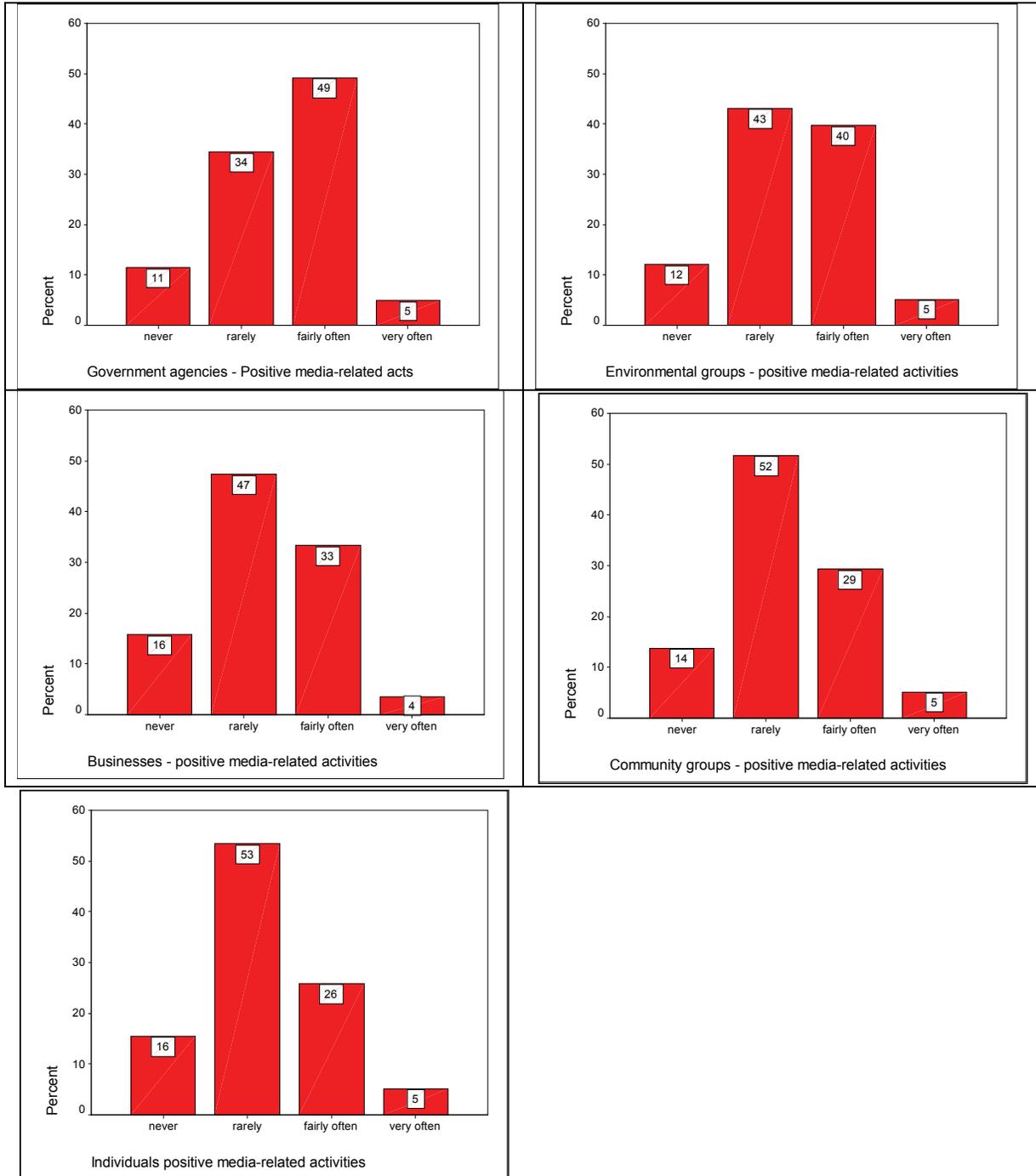
When talking to the media, stakeholders said positive things about other stakeholders in almost 1/3 of the cases (30% fairly often, 2% very often). Only 12% reported this never happened, but it still rarely happened in a majority of cases (57%).



**Figure 13.** *Positive media-related activities – Positive statements about others*

*Stakeholders who engaged in positive actions*

Government agencies most frequently engaged in positive media-related actions (54% fairly often or very often). Environmental groups were next with a reported 45%, compared to 37% for business organizations, 34 for community groups and 31% for individuals.



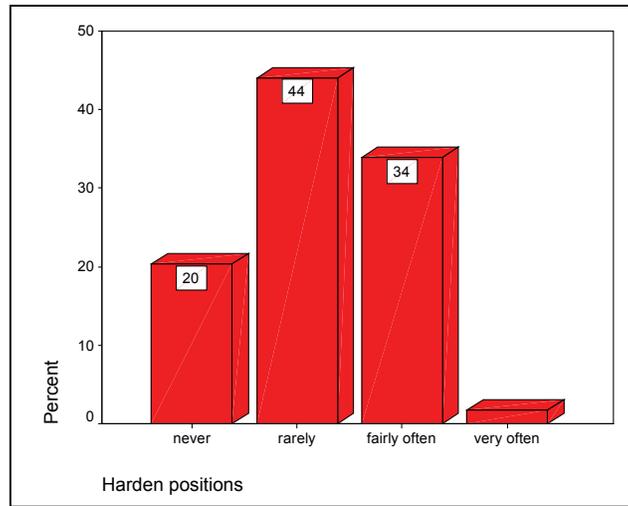
**Figure 14.** *Positive media-related activities – Participation of 5 stakeholder groups*

“Negative” actions as a result of press presence or coverage

Negative media-related actions occurred much more often than positive actions.

*Harden positions*

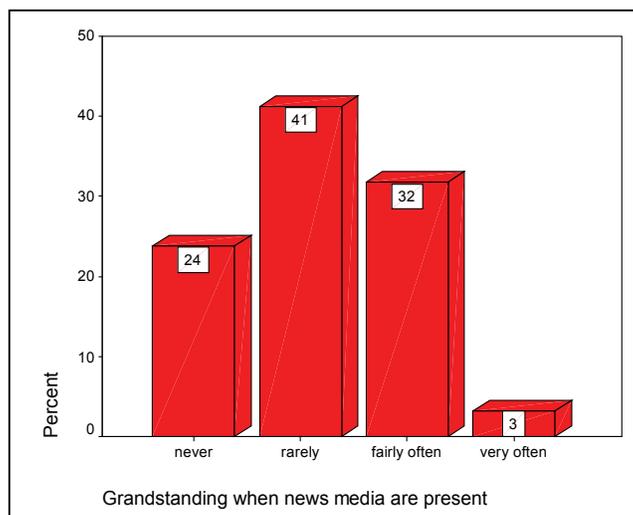
In their dealings with the news media, some stakeholders have reportedly hardened their positions to impress constituents, members or superiors. This was the most frequent negative behavior, happening fairly often or very often in 36% of the cases. That was twice as often as stakeholders reportedly softened positions to impress the public.



**Figure 15.** *Negative media-related activities – Hardening public positions*

*Grandstanding*

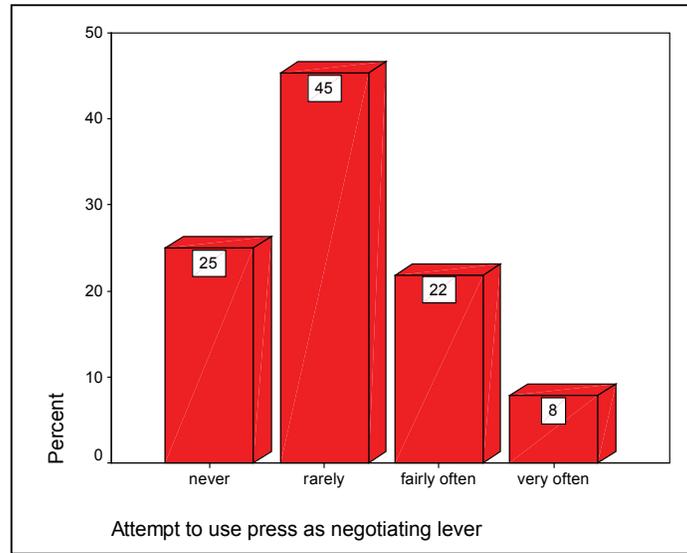
Grandstanding when the news media are present was the second most frequent negative behavior, occurring in 35% of the cases.



**Figure 16.** *Negative media-related activities – Grandstanding in front of press*

*Use press as a lever*

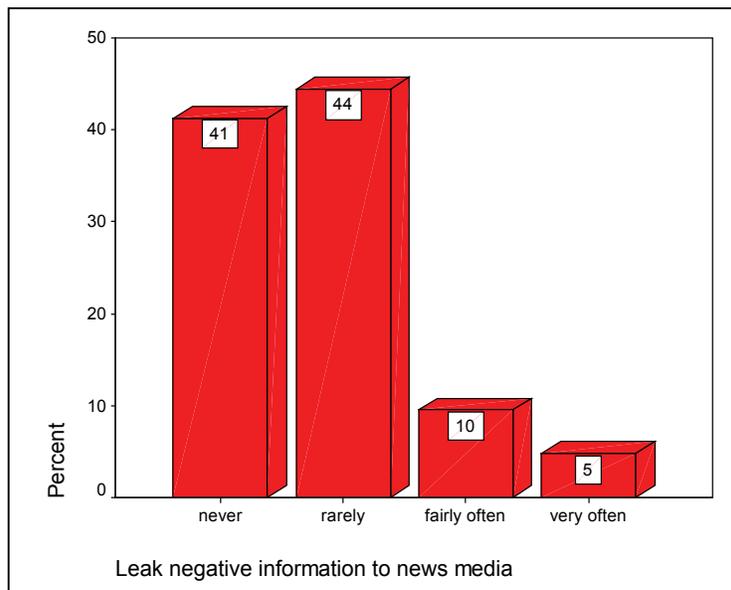
In 30% of the cases stakeholders attempted to use the press as a negotiating lever fairly often or very often.



**Figure 17:** *Negative media-related activities – Using press as negotiating lever*

*Leak negative information*

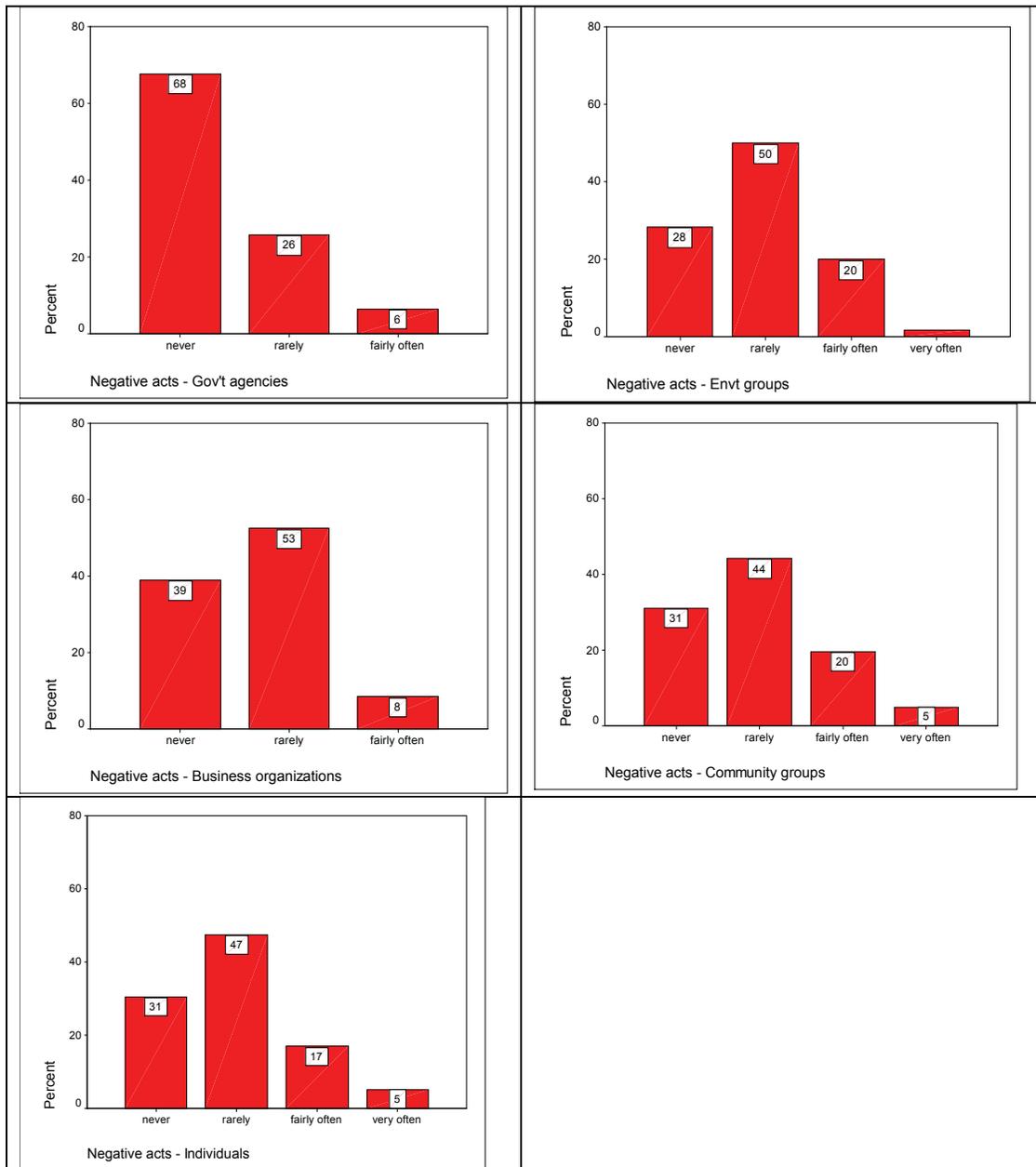
Leaking negative information was the least frequent negative activity reported, but it still happened fairly often or very often in 15% of the cases.



**Figure 18.** *Negative media-related activities – Leaking negative information to press*

*Stakeholders who engaged in negative actions*

Government agencies engaged in negative media-related actions *least* frequently (only 6.5% reported fairly often and 0% very often). Business organizations also had low levels of negative media-related actions, at just 8.5% fairly often and 0% very often. Environmental groups and individuals were much *more* likely to engage in negative activities, with 22% of cases reporting they did so fairly often or very often. Community groups reportedly engaged in negative media activity most (25%).



**Figure 19.** *Negative media-related activities – Frequency by stakeholder group*

## ROLES PLAYED BY THE NEWS MEDIA

The Public Education role garnered the highest mean score for impact on the collaboration process (2.5 or minor-to-moderate impact) and the highest mode score of 3. The nine roles split clearly into two groups.

**Table 7.**

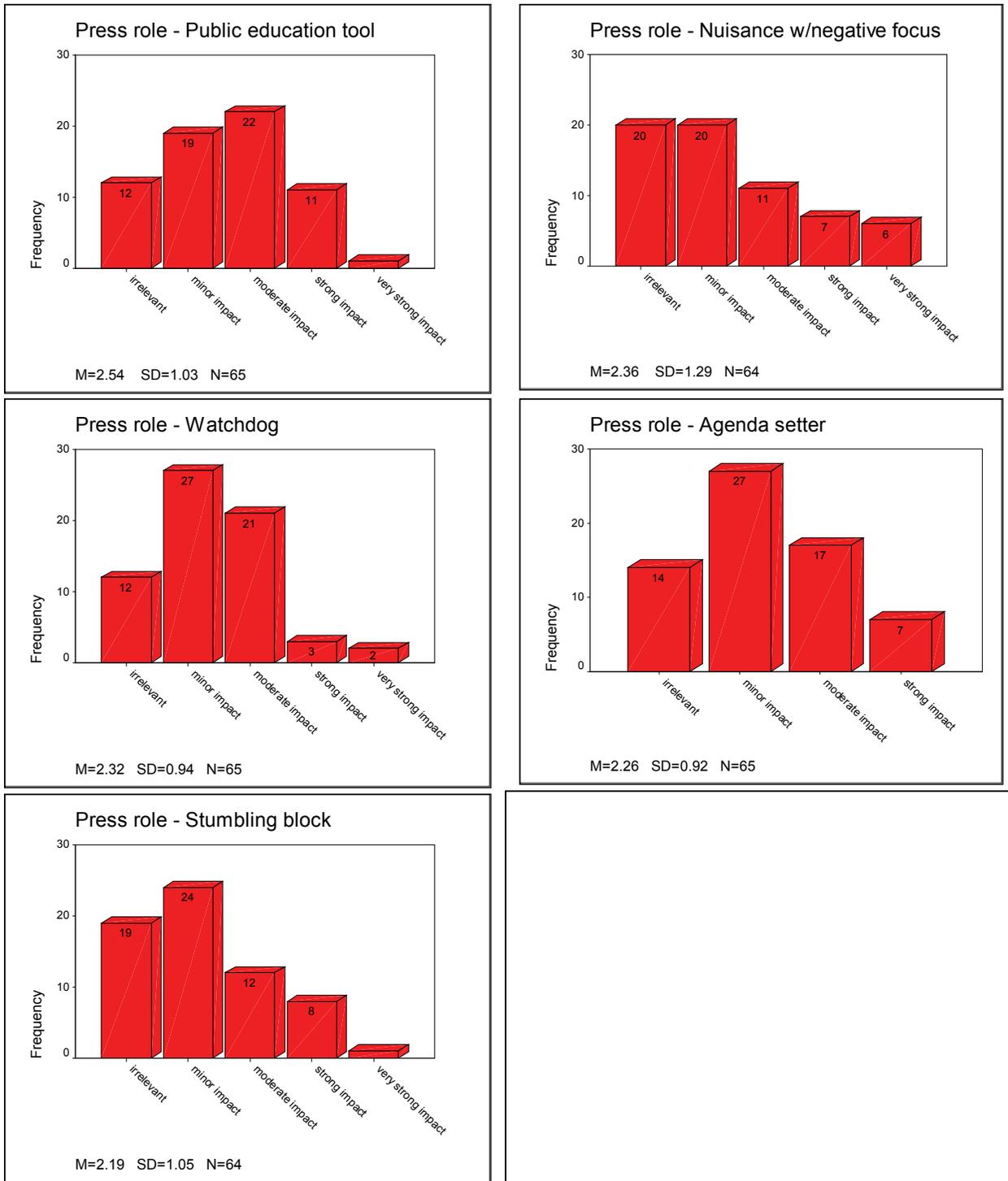
*Media Roles with the Most/Less Impact on Collaboration Processes*

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>
<b>Media Roles with Most Impact</b>	<b>Media Roles with Least Impact</b>
Public Education Nuisance Agenda-setter Watchdog Stumbling Block	Negotiating Lever Catalyst Policy Advocate Community Stakeholder

The big surprise was Negotiating Lever being in the least impact group. One of the most basic assumptions of public advocacy groups is that community and public interest groups with little economic or political power can use news coverage (or the threat of news coverage) as a lever to increase their power in an unequal adversarial relationship – and that assumption can be seen in the websites and materials of public interest groups that regularly engage in environmental collaborations. In pre-collaboration literature and practice, this use of the news media as a negotiating lever appeared to be conventional wisdom and was essentially taken as a given. In today’s collaboration milieu it would appear that this basic concept no longer has much currency.



**Figure 20.** *Press impact of various press roles – Means & Modes*

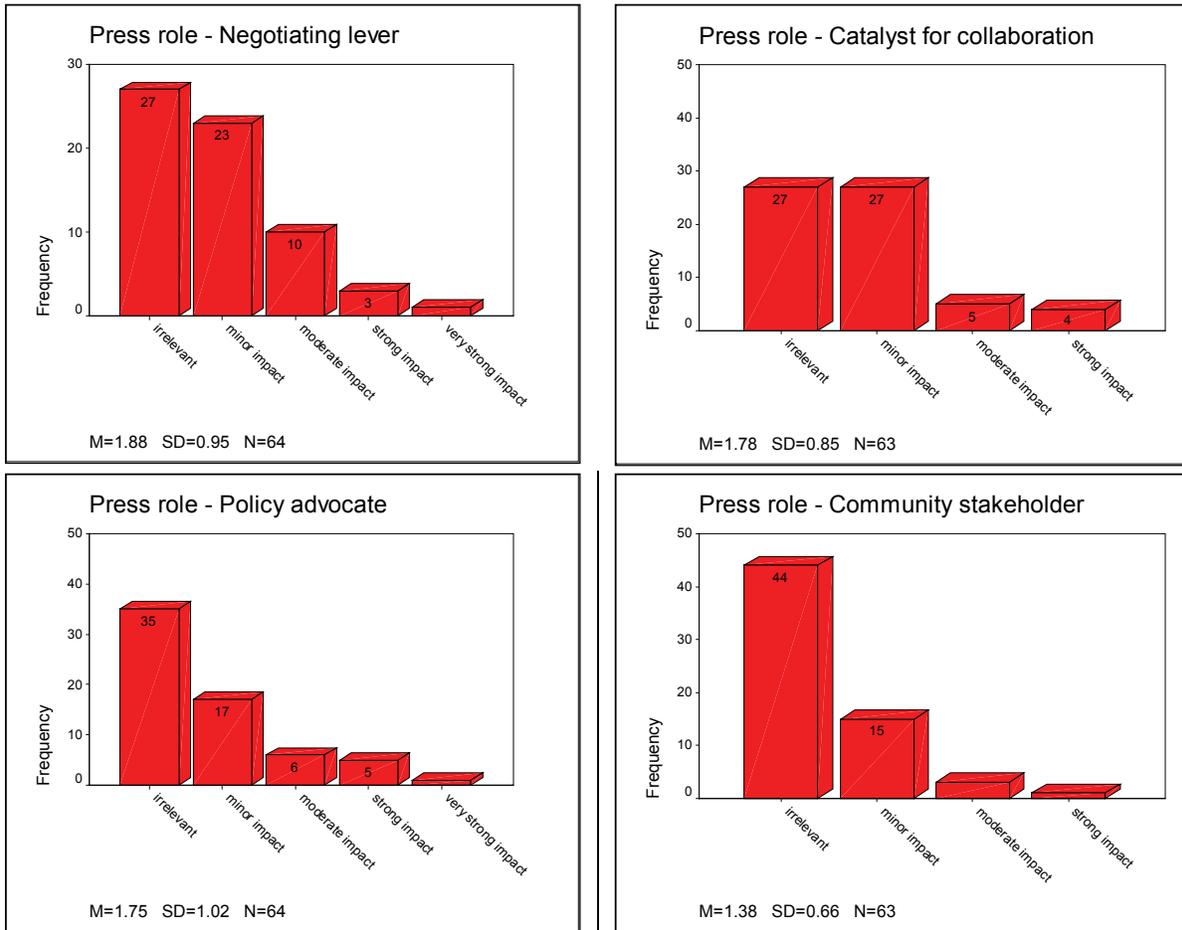


**Figure 21.** *Press impact: The 5 most important news media roles*

There was no statistically significant difference between the mean impact score of the Public Education role and the mean impact score for four other roles: Nuisance, Agenda-setter, Watchdog and Stumbling Block, but analysis of the distribution makes it clear that the Nuisance

mean was influenced by an uneven distribution of six very high scores of “very strong” effect. Most respondents (40) rated the Nuisance role as irrelevant or of minor impact.

The roles of Negotiating lever, Catalyst, Policy advocate and Community Stakeholder each had mean scores lower than 2 (between irrelevant and minor) and mode scores of 1 (irrelevant).



**Figure 22.** *Press impact: The 4 least important news media roles*

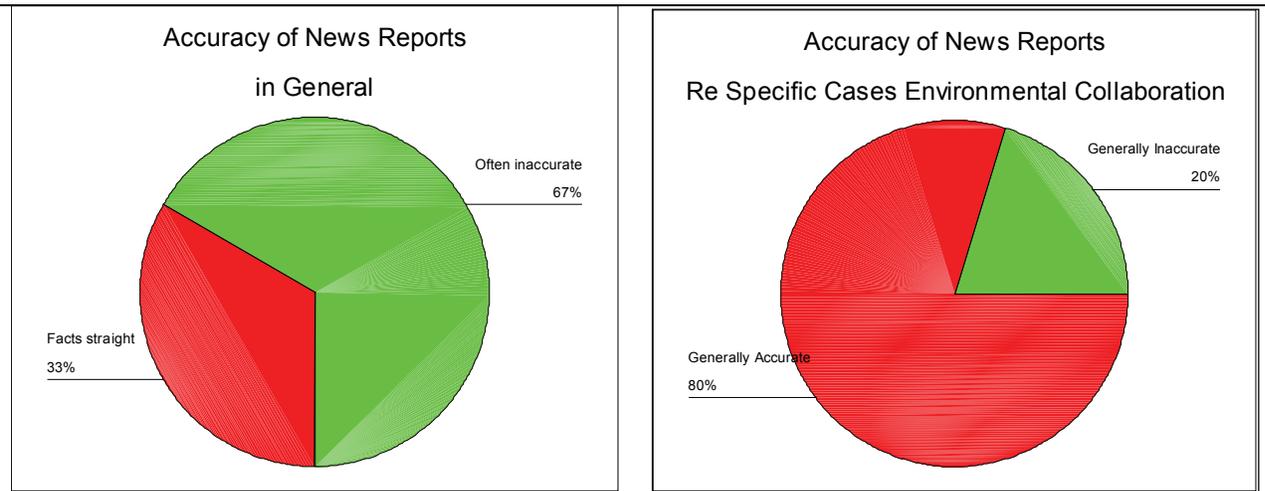
## GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PRESS

### Accuracy in news coverage

When asked generally about how well the news media reports the facts, 2/3 of respondents agreed that the press often gets the facts wrong. Only 33% felt the press does a good job of getting the facts straight, while 67% agreed that “Stories are often inaccurate.”

When it comes to reporting on specific environmental collaborations, opinions about news coverage accuracy improved dramatically. Four out of five respondents believed the press

got the facts right in the coverage of their particular collaboration process. The general vs. specific opinions are reflected in Figure 23 below.

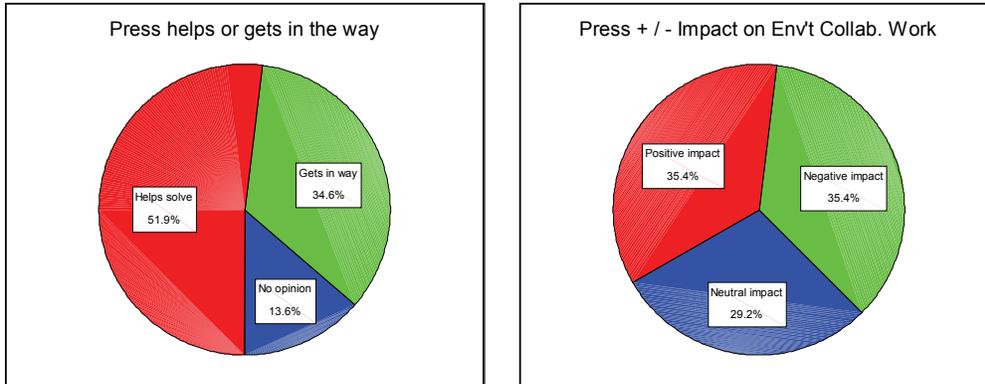


**Figure 23.** Accuracy of news coverage—General opinion vs. Specific cases assessments

### The news media and societal problem-solving

Despite a negative view of media accuracy, respondents had a generally positive view of the news media’s role in societal problem-solving. As noted in the literature review, the Pew Research Center has been asking Americans this exact same question since 1994 and a large majority of the public (up to 71%) consistently agree that the media get in the way of societal problem-solving. As Figure 24 shows, when given an either-or choice, only 35% of this study’s respondents thought “The news media gets in the way of society solving its problems.” A majority of 52% thought the news media helps society solve its problems.

When respondents to this survey were asked about the news media and the specific societal problem-solving process of environmental collaboration, the number reporting a negative press impact stayed the same at 35%. The positive impact response garnered only 35%, but in this question respondents were given an added choice of “no impact,” and a substantial number of respondents chose that, thereby dropping the positive media impact response rate.



**Figure 24.** *Press as help or hindrance in societal problem-solving*

### IMPACT OF THE NEWS MEDIA

#### Impact of media attention on day-to-day work and final outcomes of specific cases

A surprising result was seen in the data about the impact of press coverage and activities on the final outcome of individual cases. A plurality reported a positive impact overall. Only 27% reported a negative impact, and again, a substantial 34% reported no impact one way or the other.

**Table 8.**

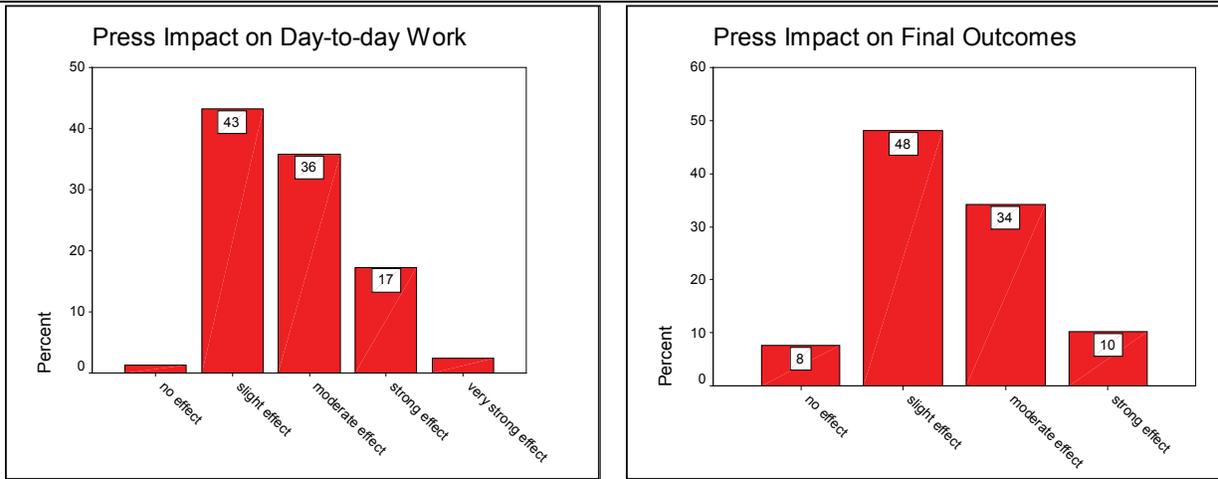
#### *Opinions About The Impact Of News Media: Positive Vs. Negative*

	<b>Societal problem-solving in general</b>	<b>Environmental collaboration in general</b>	<b>Day-to-day work of a specific environmental collaboration</b>	<b>Final outcome of a specific environmental collaboration</b>
<b>Positive</b>	52%	39%	35%	37%
<b>Negative</b>	35%	46%	35%	27%
<b>No impact / neutral</b>	16%	16%	29%	34%
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

About half the ECR professionals surveyed believe that press attention has a moderate or strong impact on environmental collaborations, but the press has significantly more impact on the day-to-day work of collaborations than on the final outcomes of the processes.

*APA Results Section – Comparing impact on day-to-day work vs. final outcomes*

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA test was conducted to compare the reported media impact on day-to-day work and final outcomes. The test indicated a significantly greater press impact on day-to-day work than on final outcomes, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .87$ ,  $F(1, 78) = 11.79$ ,  $p = .001$ .



**Figure 25.** General opinion of press impact on day-to-day work and final outcomes

On a scale of 1-to-5 (1=no effect and 5=very strong effect) the mean response for impact on the day-to-day work was 2.8 while the mean response for impact on the final outcomes was 2.5.

- For day-to-day work, a majority of 55% believe that the press has a moderate, strong or very strong effect, while 44% believe it has slight or no effect.
- For final outcomes, the majority opinion is essentially reversed, with a majority of 56% believing media attention has little or no effect, and 44% believing it has a moderate or strong effect.
- As seen above in Figure 25, the most frequent response in both instances was “slight effect”.

*Press impact on day-to-day work*

There was virtual unanimity (98.8%, N=81) that the press has some effect on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations:

- A majority of respondents (56%) reported that the press has a moderate to very strong effect on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.
- A very strong effect was reported by only 2 respondents.

- A sizeable minority of respondents (43%) believed the media have only a slight effect on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.

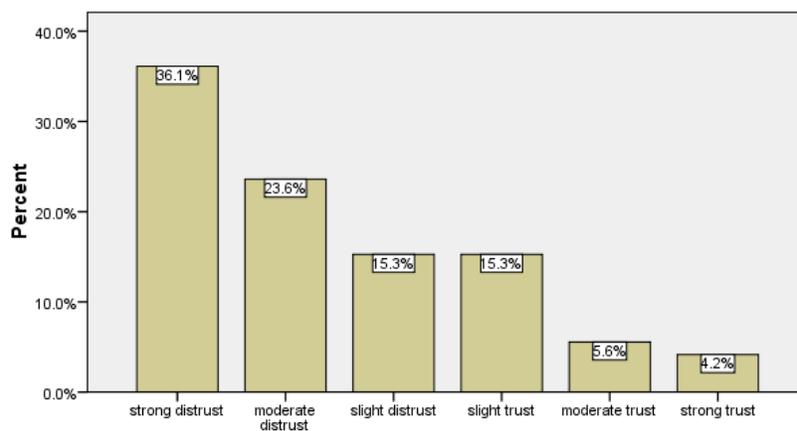
*Press impact on final outcomes of collaboration processes*

Of the 79 responses to this question, 8% reported that media attention had no impact at all on final outcomes. At the other end of the scale, 0% reported a very strong impact, making the overall media impact on final outcomes decidedly less severe than on the day-to-day work. This makes sense, because reporters can get in your way, eating up time and attention when you are trying to get things done, but when it comes to sitting down and making hard decisions in a group, those outside distractions often become less important.

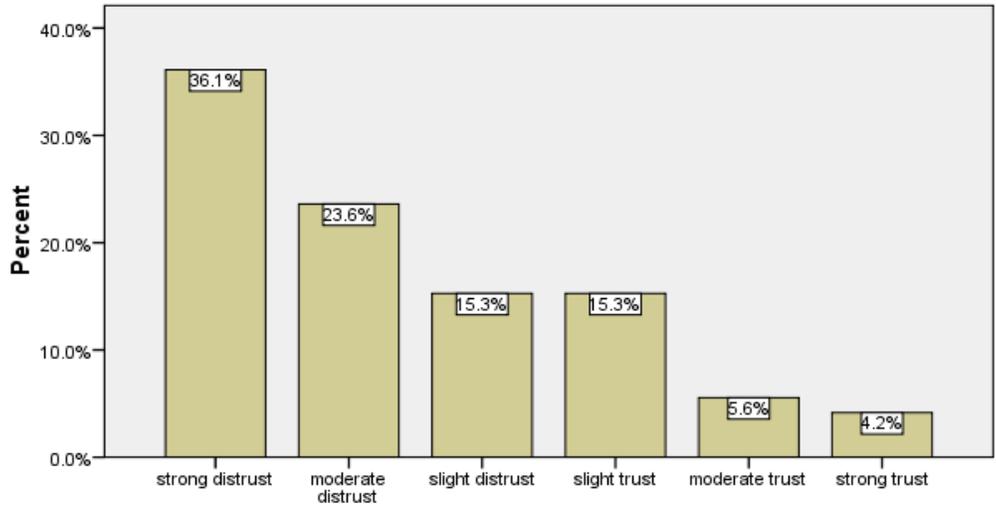
Impact of news media on trust among stakeholders

At the beginning of a majority of the collaborations, significant levels of distrust existed, as can be seen in Figure 26 below. In 60% of cases there was Moderate to Strong distrust among the non-governmental stakeholders. Distrust of the government agencies involved was even higher, with 74% of collaborations reporting moderate to high distrust of government agencies by non-government stakeholders. Most often, news coverage worsened the already mistrustful atmosphere.

News coverage or press activities had a reported effect on relationships among collaboration participants in slightly more than half the cases. That effect is most often negative, exacerbating an already distrustful environment among stakeholders and increasing stakeholders’ lack of trust in the participating government agencies.



**Figure 26.** *Stakeholder trust of each other at start of collaboration*



**Figure 27.** Stakeholder trust of government agencies at beginning of collaboration

Impact of pre-collaboration news coverage on collaborations

According to the survey data, news coverage was a moderately significant to highly significant factor in establishing a collaboration in the first place in 15 of the reported cases (Table 9, below). Interestingly, media impact was reported to be positive slightly more often than negative, but no generalizable conclusions can be reached based on the data, because the number of cases is too small.

Press coverage was primarily conflict-oriented in 10 of those cases and the pre-collaboration coverage in the remaining 5 cases had a negative problem-centered focus.

**Table 9.**

*Prior News Coverage Importance In Establishing Collaboration*

	Frequency	Percent
<b>not a factor</b>	37	52.9
<b>slightly significant</b>	18	25.7
<b>moderately significant</b>	5	7.1
<b>quite significant</b>	6	8.6
<b>highly significant</b>	4	5.7
<b>Total</b>	70	100.0

Of the 15 cases, 13 continued to attract moderate to heavy press coverage throughout the collaboration process, with a continued emphasis on conflict in the outlets that provided the most coverage.

**Table 10.**

*Media Impact On Cases Where Pre-Collaboration News Coverage A Factor In Establishing The Collaboration*

	Positive impact	Neutral Impact	Negative impact
Impact on day-to-day work	6 cases	2 cases	5 cases
Impact on final outcome	7 cases	2 cases	4 cases

The continued heavy news coverage appears to have no predictable impact on the day-to-day work of the collaboration, or on its final outcome.

Regarding day-to-day work, in 6 of the cases, the media coverage was reported to have a positive impact, while 5 cases reported a negative impact.

For final outcomes of the cases, media impact was also reported to be positive more often than negative. In 7 of the cases, the media coverage was reported to have a positive impact on the final outcome, with 2 of these reporting a strongly positive impact. Only 4 cases reported a negative impact, and none reported a strongly negative impact on the final outcomes. Again, the numbers are too small to make any generalizable conclusions.

#### Impact of the news media and compliance with Media Ground Rules

Failure to comply with MGRs accounted for 23% of the difference in negative press impact on day-to-day work, and 11% of the difference in negative press impact on final outcomes, according to independent samples *t*-tests. The tests were conducted to evaluate the hypotheses that good faith efforts to comply with Media Ground Rules are related to positive or negative press impact on (1) the day-to-day work of the collaboration and (2) the final outcome of the collaboration.<sup>1</sup> The test was significant in both instances.

For day-to-day work and positive/negative press impact,  $t(30) = -3.7, p = .001$ . A lack of good faith efforts to comply with media ground rules was strongly associated with negative media impacts on the day-to-day work of the collaboration. Cases reporting good faith efforts reported positive media impact ( $M = .36, SD = 1.33$ ) but cases not reporting good faith efforts reported, on average, negative media impact ( $M = -1.0, SD = 1.27$ ). The eta square index ( $t^2 \div t^2 + (N_1 + N_2 - 2)$ ) indicated that 23% of the variance of the media impact on day-to-day collaboration work was accounted for by the presence or absence of good faith efforts to comply with Media Ground Rules.

For final outcomes of the collaborations and positive/negative press impact,  $t(28) = -2.47, p = .02$ . A lack of good faith efforts to comply with media ground rules was strongly associated with negative media impacts on the final outcomes of the collaboration. Cases reporting good faith efforts reported positive media impact ( $\underline{M} = .40, \underline{SD} = 1.33$ ) but cases not reporting good faith efforts reported, on average, negative media impact ( $\underline{M} = -.59, \underline{SD} = 1.42$ ). The eta square index ( $t^2 \div t^2 + (N_1 + N_2 - 2)$ ) indicated that 11% of the variance of the media impact on final outcomes of collaborations was accounted for by the presence or absence of good faith efforts to comply with Media Ground Rules.

## WRITTEN COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY RESPONDENTS

Respondents who submitted written comments were overwhelmingly negative about the news media and their impact on environmental collaboration cases, in stark contrast to the generally positive assessment coming out of the data from the majority of respondents. Some of the comments are quite harsh, indeed, as can be seen in the tables on the following two pages. Reporters are accused of incompetence, ignorance, irresponsibility, stupidity, and bias. The news media are criticized for “fanning the flames of the conflict,” not acting in good faith and, in one instance, being “mean-spirited.”

These comments serve as a reminder that the world of Environmental Conflict Resolution is not homogenous. There are still classic old “environmental wars” cases out there, but they now seem to be a minority experience instead of the norm. That doesn’t mean that we can ignore those cases, however. Almost a quarter of the respondents felt strongly enough to take the time to formulate and submit some type of negative comment about how the news media covers environmental collaboration and the impact of that coverage.

Twenty-five respondents included a written comment. Only 4 were positive about the press, while 15 comments were negative. Even with this small number of cases, the results are statistically significant according to a chi-square analysis, with a chi-square (df 2) = 8.24,  $p = .016$ .

**Table 11.**  
*Frequency Table: Positive vs. Negative Written Comments About News Media*

### Comments Positive or Negative to Press

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Negative about Press	15	60.0
	Neutral/Balanced	6	24.0
	Positive about Press	4	16.0
	Total	25	100.0

**Table 12.**

*Comments: Negative News Media Impact*

Case	Written Comments From Survey Respondents
# 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>News media should focus on fair, unbiased and equally weighted reporting of the conflict issues. Unfortunately, the media often times reports in a manner that encourages conflict. The media should focus on reporting the news, not making the news.</li> </ul>
# 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In this case, the press acted irresponsibly, never getting the real full story or presenting the situation as a problem to be solved.</li> </ul>
# 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This questionnaire does not allow the kind of nuanced responses that would accurately describe the role the press played in the case. Sort of like the role the press did play. Unable to capture and communicate the nuances.</li> </ul>
# 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press is almost always a negative influence. Collaboration usually requires compromise and the press reports that as conflict and defeat.</li> </ul>
# 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The news media presently exist as for-profit businesses. Their business is selling, and management recognizes that conflict sells, stories of cooperation does not. Stories are by-lined, so there is acknowledged editorial treatment of “news” stories. Reporters are often biased and not held to standards of accuracy; they are successful to the extent they can generate interest (i.e., controversy). In stories where i have first hand knowledge of events (e.g., as a participant in an event or subject of an interview), factual reporting is generally incorrect. Unless required as part of a contractual arrangement, I no longer deal directly with the news media.</li> </ul>
# 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the example I used, the press was involved more in the beginning, fanning the flames of the conflict. Once people began to collaborate, the press was not so interested. They did a story at the end, focusing only on the outcome, with no real mention of the process it took to get there.</li> </ul>
# 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conflict makes good news copy, collaboration does not. Drama and emotion make for captivating broadcast and print stories. It is an inherent problem in this exceptionally competitive business. (Emphasis on BUSINESS.)</li> </ul>
# 32	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I rarely see the media take a balanced, informative approach. The emphasis is almost always on conflict and they are usually biased towards stakeholders and against government. To a lesser extent, they are usually biased against business/industry. Successful collaborations receive 1% of the “ink” that the conflict does. There’s a reason for the old media saying “if it bleeds, it leads.”</li> </ul>
# 48	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mean-spirited editor of the daily news paper sought to insert himself into the process as a stakeholder and when this was not effective, he sought to discredit the process, its participants and their product to as great a degree as possible.</li> </ul>
# 55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In most instances, as with all others in a dispute, the Press respond similarly to how they are treated. If the rules are clear and relationships profession, the coverage is accurate and fare. The times the media were a problem was when they were treated as a nuisance</li> </ul>
# 59	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three things: Tribal Nations were central to this negotiation—you should include them in your list. Also, we had media ground rules but there were no ‘restrictions’ per se; all was voluntary. Also, in the public sector it is very hard procedurally to keep the media out of meetings; government collaborations almost always HAVE to occur ‘in the sunshine’ and this is as it should be. One can restrict access under certain conditions, but the bad blood created by this is often not worth the effort. Finally, you don’t offer a ‘pro’ bias choice. In the case I reported here, the media reported in a fashion that was very ‘pro’ industry.</li> </ul>
# 61	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It may be useful to examine how ‘elected officials’ use the media to help them move their own agenda forward in highly visible and politically sensitive environmental collaborations.</li> </ul>
# 62	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reporters are so ignorant about the issues and the process, that they are unable to craft reports that make sense. They seek mostly to find a salacious angle to make it sexy, dangerous, or unseemly in order to sell papers. I had one reporter sincerely ask me: “why is clean water important?” How can I answer that question without making her seem stupid? The facts in the report were wrong, misleading and did not adequately show the importance of the work the group is doing to improve water quality and environmental health.</li> </ul>
#64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In this case, the slight negative impact of the media wasn’t due to the content of the coverage but to the fact that 1 party leaked a draft document to manipulate others – so it wasn’t the media’s fault that there was a negative impact, but that stakeholder’s.</li> </ul>
# 72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In this instance, the news media was more concerned with highlighting the conflict - which hurt the situation - than spotlighting the improvements and benefits. I don’t believe that the individual reporters involved were fair, balanced or acting in good faith. I believe they had a position to posture in the public arena.</li> </ul>

**Table 13.**

*Comments: Positive News Media Impact*

Case	Written Comments From Survey Respondents
# 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• News media very important in keeping this issue on the agenda of all parties, particularly the government.</li><li>• The press can be a very positive tool in ECR. The participants should not fear the press if they are doing things right.</li><li>• The key to the positive impact of the media was that the parties agreed to clear, detailed ground rules (though GR not always followed).</li><li>• News media are exceptionally effective when they can be leveraged to prepare “Feature Stories” and/or print Op-Ed pieces. The printing of a feature story on a case, particularly in advance of a public participation event is far more effective in engendering interest and attendance than public outreach collateral pieces (e.g. flyers, PSAs).</li></ul>
# 57	
# 74	
# 75	

**Table 14.**

*Comments: Balanced or Positive/Negative News Media Impact*

Case	Written Comments From Survey Respondents
# 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is highly variable, specific to the issue, situation, and personalities, as well as the sophistication of the stakeholders and the press.</li><li>• In a complicated, multi-party, multi-year collaboration, the press can be both a blessing and a curse. The blessing is that they can turn the public’s attention back to the topic when it has become stale and forgotten. The negative is that they can over-simplify the issues and cause positions to harden in the public, making it more difficult for parties to find areas of negotiation that are publicly acceptable.</li><li>• Two papers covered the collaboration. A regional paper focused on the process of working out a solution. This coverage was positive and occurred early in the process. The local community paper was late in its coverage and focused on the conflict. Not all parties reached agreement. Once an agreement was reached by the majority of the parties, the local paper focused on issues where consensus was not reached and continued to highlight these issues as the dissenting parties attempted to overturn the decision.</li><li>• Having been a journalist for 20 years before getting into ecr, I observe that “problem solving” and “collaboration” do not make news; conflict does, triumph of human spirit/ingenuity does. It is also difficult for beat reporters to cover this type process: time, complexity, rules. The best “stories” come from individual stakeholders and participants who can tell in their own words what is happening, why, why they are committed to the ecr. A good convenor will spot these communicators early and steer the press to them. They will become the “voice” of the ecr process.</li><li>• I think it is important to consider the role of the mediator vis-a-vis the media.</li><li>• I have found that engaging the news media covering the collaboration about how they can impact the process, both positively or negatively, in advance is very helpful—even in a high stakes situation.</li></ul>
# 52	
# 53	
# 58	
# 65	
# 80	

The above comments demonstrate a great deal of anger and concern, as well as a lack of knowledge about what can be done to better these situations. Some of the findings and conclusions of this study may offer some help in this area. Clearly, there are still a lot of problems with the news media and environmental collaborations.

Not surprisingly, ANOVA results show that respondents who made negative comments about news coverage or press also reported statistically significant higher levels of negative media impact on day-to-day work,  $F(1,63) = 13.4$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2$  indicating moderate-to-strong

relationship with an and final outcomes of the collaboration cases,  $F(1,62) = 8.99$ ,  $p = .004$ , moderate relationship strength accounting for 13% of the variation. Interestingly, The only Facility Siting case in this study appears to fall into the old environmental wars category. Consider the following summary of the data from Case #16, the Facility Siting case:

*Case #16 - Part 1 responses:*

- The press generally gets in the way of society solving its problems, and often gets the facts wrong. The press usually has a strong and moderately negative effect on collaborations.

*Case #16 - Specific case description:*

- In this Northeastern U.S. collaboration, private sector stakeholders initially showed slight distrust for each other and strong distrust for the government agencies involved. Media coverage affected those trust levels negatively, and resulted in somewhat lower trust.
- Media ground rules were not discussed and none were put in place. News coverage was mainly from local newspapers, conflict-focused, and moderately inaccurate.
- News coverage had a moderate negative impact on day-to-day work of the collaboration and on its outcome. The ultimate results of the collaboration itself were rated as slightly negative.

*Case #16 – Respondent Written Comment:*

“In this case, the press acted irresponsibly, never getting the real full story or presenting the situation as a problem to be solved.”

Reading about this kind of case takes one straight back to the 1980s environmental wars when such talk was regularly heard from business executives, and Environmental Conflict Resolution generally took the form of take-no-prisoners litigation. It would be interesting to conduct future research investigating whether Siting cases are generally more contentious, and subject to more intense media scrutiny and/or more negative media impact.

## ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS – RQ1 & RQ2

### RQ1: Do the news media have a positive or negative impact on the ongoing work and/or final outcomes of environmental collaborations?

There were three major findings related in this area:

1. Surprisingly, a large majority of respondents (71%) say the news media overall have a positive or neutral impact on environmental collaboration outcomes. Only one in four (27%) report a negative impact on outcomes.
2. The press is apparently no longer seen as a major influence in environmental dispute resolution. The most common estimate of press impact was “slight”. The media’s impact on final outcomes, whether positive or negative, was reported as slight to moderate by 82% of respondents and 8% reported no press impact whatever. Only 10% reported a strong impact and 0% reported very strong.
3. Press impact on day-to-day work was reported higher than the impact on final outcomes, but even here a solid 65% report a positive to neutral effect, and 80% still reported only slight to moderate impact.

News coverage was still primarily conflict-oriented and accuracy of media stories was frequently still suspect, but the impact in 2008 was seen as less important and less negative.

Interestingly, the respondents who reported negative impacts submitted the overwhelming preponderance of written comments. These negative comments were much more strident in tone and content than the positive ones, and simply reading all the comments could produce a completely inaccurate picture of the press/collaboration relationship – a picture looking much more like 1988 than 2008. So, there are still cases out there like the old environmental wars disputes where the news media’s allegedly inaccurate and biased coverage inflames passions. If this research is actually descriptive of the real world, however, such cases now appear to be a distinct minority.

### RQ2: Do structural elements of environmental collaborations or characteristics of news coverage influence the impact of the news media?

#### *Research Sub-Question*

- Is there an association between positive or negative media impact and structural elements of collaborations (levels of government participating, size, geographic location, length of

time, type of issue involved, and adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media)?

The major findings here were that geographic location and adoption of written Media Ground Rules were the only two structural elements showing a statistical relationship with the size or direction of press impact.

1. Geographic location: Of the four locations, Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest the only statistically significant difference was between the Northwest and the Southwest (including California). The Northwest reported generally positive press impacts and the Southwest collaborations more often reported negative impacts.
2. Adoption of written Media Ground Rules: Of the cases *with* written MGRs, 74% reported that the press had a *positive* impact on the final collaboration outcome and only 23% reported a negative impact. Of the cases *without* written MGRs 60% reported a *negative* media impact (60%) on final outcomes. This is a statistically significant difference, indicating a clear association of positive press impact on outcomes and the existence of written MGRs. (No statistical relationship could be established between MGRs and the impact on day-to-day work.)
3. Other structural elements: The following structural variables appear to have no influence on the size or direction of press impact:
  - a) Type of environmental issue (may have some relationship regarding facility siting, but numbers are too small to generate statistically significant results)
  - b) Size of the collaboration
  - c) Levels of government participating
  - d) Length of time collaboration in existence.

At the outset of the study, Media Ground Rules were to be an important area of focus. The plan was to compare the efficacy of different MGRs and make recommendations about structuring MGRs for collaborations in the future. Unfortunately, this kind of analysis was not possible because too few collaborations provided detailed MGR information. A majority of cases with written MGRs reported positive press impacts on day-to-day, while cases without written MGRs more often reported a negative press impact on day-to-day work, but the difference was not statistically significant. However, there was sufficient data to find a statistically significant correlation between the simple existence of written Media Ground Rules and positive press

impact on collaboration outcomes, leading to the recommendation that all collaborations put at least some written MGRs in place.

Regarding the type of environmental issue, it appears there may be a correlation between press problems and facility siting cases, but the data are not sufficient to say for sure.

#### *Research Sub-Question*

- Is the amount or direction of media impact associated with specific characteristics of news coverage (amount of coverage, perceived tone, perceived bias, type of media outlet, kinds of press activities or coverage prior to establishing the collaboration)?

Three characteristics of news coverage are strongly associated with negative media impact:

1. Factual inaccuracy
2. Conflict-oriented news frames
3. Perception by government agencies that media is biased against them.

Surprisingly, the following aspects of press coverage have *no* significant relationship with the amount of impact or positive/negative impact:

1. Amount of coverage
2. Perceived tone of coverage
3. Newsgathering activities (TV in meetings, Reporters in meetings, Interviews of participants, Interviews of outsiders, Responses to press releases)
4. Nature of pre-collaboration coverage.

One of the goals of the study was to compare the impact of coverage by different types of news media, particularly television vs. print, but this was not possible because of a lack of data about non-newspaper outlets. Almost all collaborations reported that newspapers provided the most coverage. Only six cases reported that TV proved the most coverage. This would be an area for specifically-focused further research. Given the precarious health of the newspaper industry, the impact of other media may become a more important issue in the future.

Regarding the perception of media bias, it is worth remembering that in some collaborations there were stakeholder groups other than government agencies that apparently felt the press was biased somewhat against them, but these perceptions were not statistically associated with negative media impact. Positive media impact was associated with collaborations where media coverage was generally perceived as balanced.

The nature of press coverage and media activities reportedly lowered trust levels among the stakeholders in some collaborations, but this did not appear to have any measurable impact on the ultimate outcomes of the collaborations. According to the literature, trust among participants appears to be an important factor in the success of collaboration, but apparently press activities are not of any great effect in this area (even when trust levels were low to begin with).

*Research Sub-Question*

- Do media-related activities of collaboration stakeholders influence the impact of the news media on the collaboration processes?

Unsurprisingly, the positive impact of the news media increases when stakeholder participants engage in positive media-related activities such as saying positive things to the media about other stakeholders. Equally unsurprising is the finding that the negative impact of the news media increases when stakeholder participants engage in negative media-related activities such as grandstanding, hardening public positions, leaking information or using the press as a tool to coerce other stakeholders. It is probably not possible to identify statistically which variable has the strongest relationship to negative media impact, because they are highly correlated with each other.

Environmental groups and community organizations engaged in negative media-related activities “fairly often or very often” in 23.1% of cases – almost 3 times as often as the 7.5% reported for business and government organizations.

The big surprise was that using the press as a Negotiating Lever was being almost an irrelevancy.

*Research Sub-Question*

- Is there an association between the role that the press plays in relation to the environmental collaboration, and the amount and direction of media impact?

Regarding specific roles for the news media and their impact on environmental collaborations, only 2 roles were found to be statistically significant:

1. The Public Education role was rated positive, with a consistent impact rating of minor-moderate (Mean response: 2.5/5; Mode response: 3 – moderate).
2. The Nuisance role was rated negative but the impact was inconsistent – either irrelevant or strong impact (Mean response: 2.4/5; Mode response: 1 – irrelevant)

Perhaps the most interesting finding in this area related to the press roles as Watchdog and Agenda-Setter. The survey respondents basically reported that the Watchdog and Agenda-Setter roles were irrelevant to them. These roles had neither a positive or negative effect and their impact in either direction was minor.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

This section is an attempt to place the results in a larger context -- to explore some possible explanations for the study's findings; to extract possible lessons for environmental collaboration in 2015 and going forward; and to speculate about the wider applicability of the results as we grapple with other big issues in today's society.

### THE "NEW" MEDIA ROLE AND HOW THE COLLABORATION PROCESS CHANGED IT

Even though the *amount* of news coverage was generally reported as moderate, its *impact* was most frequently reported to be slight (48%). As noted above, any impact the press had was reported as positive by 71% of the cases. What was it about the collaboration processes that created this situation? It seems there were two basic elements that defined the new relationship. One involved conflict, the other involved control.

#### Control of collaboration processes alters media coverage

Control of the news media is not possible, of course, but controlling the collaboration players and process can strongly affect media coverage. Public conflict can be almost eliminated if stakeholders abide by the usual Media Ground Rules. Typical ground rules bar stakeholders from making negative comments about other stakeholders or their positions. That severely limits public conflict. Other typical ground rules bar stakeholders from characterizing other stakeholders' positions in any way. More conflict is reduced. Often, a single spokesperson is nominated to talk to the press on behalf of the collaboration. Again, there is no conflict potential. Press access to draft reports and subcommittee minutes are often restricted, so nascent disputes from these items cannot appear in the news. Of course, stakeholder compliance with the Media Ground Rules is important. In only 4 cases reported here stakeholders failed to comply with the ground rules, and although there is no way to know if there was any causal relationship, those cases were among the 27% reporting negative coverage and a negative press impact on the outcome. Cases in that 27% also generally gave the press bad ratings for factual inaccuracy and lack of balanced coverage. There was no data collected about sanctions or enforcement of Media Ground Rules, so it is not clear whether individual stakeholders suffered any negative consequences for breach of the rules.

Clearly, there are still some cases out there where the news media exacerbate conflict, become part of the problem, and get in the way of solutions. In their written comments, respondents accused reporters of incompetence, ignorance, irresponsibility, stupidity, and bias. The news media were criticized for “fanning the flames of the conflict,” not acting in good faith and, in one instance, being “mean-spirited.” These comments serve as a reminder that the world of Environmental Conflict Resolution is not homogenous. There are still classic old “environmental wars” cases out there, but they now seem to be a minority experience instead of the norm.

#### Reduced conflict means reduced news value

Conflict is one of the most basic criteria for newsworthiness, and effective collaboration reduces or removes public conflict. That, in turn, reduces or removes much of the media interest. There are other news values such as novelty, human interest, etc., but conflict is the bedrock news value for environmental, public policy or political news. Often, for journalists, if there is no conflict, there is no story worth reporting. Objectivity is a strong cultural value in the news business, and it manifests as an obligation to get both sides of a story. You can’t report both sides if there is no conflict. For cases in the study, conflict was still the #1 framing for news coverage, but that was only in about half the cases. The survey data don’t get to a level of detail that would tell us if the conflict framing lessened as public stakeholder conflict lessened. However, in one of the written comments, a respondent observed that the news media are usually there in force at the beginning of the process to report on the conflict, but once the actual collaboration begins the press basically go away, coming back only for a few status updates and then to cover the final report. Such a pattern effectively turns the press into a town crier sharing information, instead of a ringside announcer at fight. That would account for the general assessment that the news media had a positive effect overall, despite the significant number of conflict-framed stories. This may well be a fairly typical pattern for collaborations that have Media Ground Rules in place to control public stakeholder conflict.

It would appear to be no coincidence that where Media Ground Rules were in place and complied with, the media got relatively high marks for factual accuracy and balance and a positive impact. Generally, it would seem that when stakeholders comply with the ground rules the press has no major conflict to report on. The press is then left to report information about the process and its progress – with the positive impact result reported in 71% of this study’s cases.

### Lessons for media/collaboration relationships

From the perspective of collaboration stakeholders and facilitators working on environmental issues, the lessons are clear. To lessen the chance of media coverage getting in the way of collaborative success and to increase the utility of local media as an educational tool, among the first tasks of the collaboration should be:

1. Establish written Media Ground Rules
2. Establish effective expectations/enforcement mechanisms for the Media Ground Rules.

### ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES AND THE NEW MEDIA ROLE

In one sense, this study's results are good news. The basic structure of environmental collaboration processes appears to lead to reduced negative media influences and therefore, increased odds for a successful collaboration outcome for the participating stakeholders. This is good news in terms of efficacy.

In another sense, however, the news is potentially not so good for other members of society who may have an interest in the outcome, but not be in the room as participating stakeholders. When the media role is reduced, there is a reduction in the ability of all outsiders to monitor and evaluate what the collaboration is doing. This is not good news in terms of accountability.

The press have long been considered the eyes and ears of the public, and as seen in the Literature Review, the watchdog role is a bedrock belief of the journalism community. The watchdog role is not just to dig out and expose wrongdoing. That may be the exhilarating work of investigative journalists, but far and away the most important aspect of the watchdog role is to simply watch – and discourage wrongdoing by the simple act of observation. The character and function of environmental collaborations works against that ability to observe. This is particularly the case where Media Ground Rules are in place.

It is almost universally acknowledged that openness, transparency and information sharing are key elements for accountability. Echoing Coggins' and McCloskey's concerns about local interests hijacking the collaborative process, and citing numerous examples of good governance gone bad, Behn points out that a lack of openness creates a breeding ground for collusion and corruption. Behn warns that lack of public access to information and lack of

transparency could possibly turn collaborations into cabals that operate in their own self-interest, not the public interest. Clearly the media have a role to play in these critical areas. Limiting press access and discouraging press coverage limits this role.

Healy and Innes both stress the importance of information-sharing with stakeholder participants and non-participating interested parties, pointing to Habermas' and Dryzek's communicative rationality notions. As Healy points out (writing even before the existence of social media), networks of relationships and interests can create stakeholder interests that may be place-based but not physically proximate. Healy suggests expanding the universe of interested parties to include individuals in these networks. Moote et al. claim that true representation would include nonactivist, nonaligned members of the public, as well. It is through the press that such stakeholders can be kept informed. The collaboration mediators who participated in this study report that the news media, particularly daily newspapers, are important vehicles for public communication with all audiences, and are valuable in terms of raising the profile of environmental collaborations among those who are not actively participating. If the media can help inform non-participants about the process on the one hand, and on the other hand, if the stakeholder participants are influenced by their perception of public opinion, that would seem to inject an element of small-d democracy into the process. Where collaborations can limit the media role, it actually injects an anti-democratic element into the process.

#### PUBLIC DEBATE, AGENDA-SETTING AND THE NEW MEDIA ROLE

Social theorist Jurgen Habermas states that, "today newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere" (Habermas, 1974, 49). Habermas defined the term "public sphere" as a realm of social life in which citizens can come together as a rational body to debate issues of public concern, and in which public opinion is formed. Habermas would have to enlarge his list to include social media, today, but his observation about the media of the public sphere still appears to hold true. Coverage in the news media appears to be a crucial part of public discussion of social policy, including environmental policy collaborations. The media serve as a direct forum for public discourse about the issues being debated in other forums, such as congress, the courts or, in this instance, environmental collaborations.

Social science research indicates that the news media strongly influence agenda-setting for debates about public policy issues, i.e., there is a relationship between the relative emphasis given by the media to issues and the degree of salience these topics have for the general public or the political agenda. Dearing and Rogers (1996) and McCombs (2004) reviewed hundreds of published studies on media agenda-setting, the vast majority of which support the agenda-setting hypothesis.

#### SOCIAL FRAMING, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE NEW MEDIA ROLE

The media can act as an effective external accountability mechanism, as in the case of the *Washington Post*'s coverage of apparent collusion between some corporations and the Nature Conservancy (Stephenson, Jr. and Chavez, 2006). Stephenson and Chavez maintain that the media play a crucial role in social framing, which in turn has a large part to play in the accountability of the policy process. This social framing function, in conjunction with its watchdog and agenda-setting role, puts the news media in a position to ease somewhat the environmental justice issues raised by Foster and Mason, among others. By focusing attention on social justice aspects of environmental issues, the press can raise the profile of those issues on the public agenda -- and, in its external accountability role, the press can create an impetus for the collaboration to deal with some social justice issues that might not normally be brought forward by participating stakeholders. Here again, the ability of collaborations to essentially close the process to outsiders, including the press, could be problematic.

A RECOMMENDATION FOR LEGISLATION TO CLARIFY THE LOCUS OF  
DECISIONMAKING AUTHORITY, ENSURE OPENNESS AND IMPROVE  
ACCOUNTABILITY

Lindblom long ago advocated for a process of incremental changes to move our society forward. In that spirit, what follows is a proposal to tweak the existing legal framework in a small way; to acknowledge new realities regarding collaborative environmental decisionmaking; and to improve the openness, transparency, and accountability of collaborations where federal agencies are involved.

The recommendation

I propose relatively minor federal legislative changes that would allow a federal agency to participate in environmental collaboration:

- a) with the expectation, but not an absolute requirement, that the agency would adopt the consensus decision of the collaboration
- b) only on the condition that participating state agencies explicitly agree that the collaboration will act in compliance with state open meeting laws and freedom of information laws
- c) and, where any conflict exists between laws of different participating states, or between state and federal law, that conflict will be resolved in favor of more openness and more access to information.

At the federal level, such a change would probably require minor amendments to NEPA and FACA. As noted in the Literature Review, this would not be the first occasion where specific exceptions to these laws were enacted.

At the state level, no legislative changes would likely be needed, because the proposed federal change imposes no new duties or responsibilities on state agencies, beyond an acknowledgement that their collaboration activities will comply with their own existing state law. Conflicts of laws may arise where, for example, a law in State ‘A’ requires information to be kept secret, but a law in State ‘B’ allows release of that information. The State ‘A’ agency would not release the information, but it could legally be made public by the State ‘B’ agency or another representative of the collaboration. If a specific authorization were seen to be necessary,

a Uniform Act might be drafted by the Uniform Law Commission ([www.uniformlawcommission.org](http://www.uniformlawcommission.org)).

Private-sector collaboration stakeholders must simply go along with the openness/access provisions, as a condition of participation.

### The benefits

#### 1. *The proposal is simple, but effective.*

Most large-scale collaborations involve a federal agency. Without federal participation, such collaborations cannot effectively deal with the issues at hand. Making federal participation contingent on open meetings and public access to information will ensure a minimum level of transparency and accountability. This, in turn, will create the potential for more effective watchdog press coverage. Open meeting and freedom of information laws do not give the news media any special access rights beyond those given to any citizen, but journalists are the most frequent and aggressive users of these laws.

#### 2. *The proposal provides stability and continuity, but acknowledges the new reality.*

In an era of collaborative problem-solving the locus of decisionmaking needs to be clarified. This proposal would preserve the basic authority framework of state and federal agencies, as Wondolleck and others advocate. At the same time, it removes the “nod and a wink” aspect of current practice, in which the agencies devolve their decisionmaking authority to the collaboration *de facto*, while maintaining the *de jure* legal fiction that the agency is making the decision on its own, as decried by Weber, Coggins, and others. Decisions about environmental issues are among the most impactful public policy decisions we make as a society. Such decisions should not be made in a manner that skirts the law. Decisionmakers at federal agencies should not be forced to break one law in order to comply with another. Currently agencies are often boxed into a position where they must effectively disobey the Administrative Procedures Act that bans devolvement, simply to discharge the responsibilities imposed on them by other statutes.

## 2015 AND BEYOND

### Radical change for the news media

It appears that the press still has a role in environmental dispute resolution, but that role has been significantly reduced – at the same time that the news media industry itself is being significantly reduced as a social and financial force in our society. What are the implications of this reduced, but largely positive impact that the press has on environmental collaborations? It may not last, given the precipitous decline of daily newspapers in America.

#### *Newspapers' decline & environmental reporting*

According to this study's data, daily newspapers provide almost all the coverage of environmental collaborations, but dailies are closing all over the country. Even where newspapers survive, hundreds of environmental beat reporter positions are being lost and in January, 2013 the *New York Times* disbanded its environmental reporting desk, leaving only a dozen environmental reporters at the top five newspapers in the country (InsideClimateNews 2013); the Los Angeles Times fired half its reporting staff, and newspapers in major cities like Seattle are no longer printing hard copies, going digital only (Dawson, 2010). The New Yorker reported in March 2008, that even before the stock market crash, newspapers which had not already gone bust had lost more than 40% of their stock value. The Pew Report on the State of Journalism (2014) reported that newspapers lost another 6% of their value in 2013 alone, and the number of editorial employees in the industry was down by 40% in a decade, to about 35,000.

The loss of newspapers is felt in the coverage of all news outlets, because even the coverage of other media outlets, like TV news, is usually initially based on newspaper reports. This was certainly the author's experience in the world of television broadcast journalism, and was confirmed by Leonard Downie, Jr. and Michael Schudson in their 2009 Report on The Reconstruction of American Journalism (p12):

The shrinking metropolitan dailies has had a ripple effect because so much of the news that people find, whether on television or radio or on the Internet, still originates with newspaper reporting. And newspapers are the source of most local news reporting, which is why it is even more endangered than national, international, or investigative reporting that might be provided by other sources.

In the pre-internet business model and corporate structure of mainstream media outlets there was an invisible, but very real, wall between the business side and the news side of media

organizations. Those on the news side understood that advertising dollars paid everybody's salaries, but the news employees were allowed to act as if that were not the case. In fact, the news employees were *required* to collect and report the news with absolutely no regard for their employer's source of income. It was clear to newspeople and news consumers that the primary job of journalists was to get unbiased, objective information into print or on the air, and their primary loyalty was to the American public. This perceived journalistic objectivity engendered trust in the news media consumers, resulting in regular readers/viewers who could be delivered to advertisers, and generated advertising revenues to support the entire media operation.

Newspaper readers still paid for their physical copy of the paper, but the bulk of the newsgathering and production costs were paid for out of advertising revenue. For decades, this model worked because everybody won: News corporations were profitable; newspeople were employed; news consumers received relatively unbiased and accurate information; and advertisers got their messages to a huge number of potential customers in a cost-effective manner. Technological innovations had allowed the news media to build a system that could reach unprecedented numbers of people and generate unprecedented amounts of revenue, but new technological innovations would, in turn, bring that system down.

The system started to falter with the advent of cable TV, the 24-hour news cycle and the Fox News operation that challenged the traditional concept of journalistic objectivity. Then came the internet. Tens of millions of Americans now live where they can no longer get a local daily paper.

#### *Implications for collaborations and news coverage*

Where daily news is available, it is now frequently located behind a pay wall on a website. Many "news" websites are aggregators of information from other websites, not generators of news content. Consuming news on a website is a very different experience from reading a local newspaper. In a newspaper, a professional gate-keeping group of journalists cull and sift the news, producing a daily compilation offered for the readers' consideration. This can be a good thing or a bad thing, depending on your perspective, but at the least, a wide array of subjects and issues (including environmental collaboration news) passes in front of a news consumer's eyes. On a computer, news consumers can filter their own news, construct their own agenda for consumption, and say, "Don't bother me with the rest of that stuff." A potential exists

for news to become a private, personal, highly-limited self-directed aggregation of information -- instead of a publicly shared exploration of things of interest and importance in a public world.

In 2015, there are many reasons to mourn and fear the disappearance of America's daily newspapers, including the loss of the positive media influence on environmental collaborations. Remember that the overwhelming media coverage of environmental collaborations is by local daily newspapers – precisely the media outlets that are closing. Environmental collaborations are generally difficult attempts to work through complex and thorny issues that often have important effects beyond the local and state levels, with federal and even global significance. With the severe reduction in daily newspapers there will be a resulting lack of news coverage. Many of the positive aspects of news coverage that are described above may be lost, as well. In a call to action this year, the Society of Environmental Journalists issued this warning to its members:

Environmental issues become a bigger story each day, while the very foundation of journalism is shifting and, in some cases, crumbling. Newspapers cut back reporting staff, stop printing and opt for online new only, or fold altogether. Online journalism flourishes, but without bounds or structure. Credibility is lost and the public can often not tell the difference between sound reporting, industry spin or baseless speculation.

These developments could have substantial impact on the new governance regime coming out of the environmental collaboration experience. Just as decisionmaking becomes more decentralized and the power to decide is devolved *de facto* to local collaborative groups, one of the most important accountability mechanisms may be disappearing. Will this be radical change as Behn suggests or will we, like Lindblom suggests, incrementally muddle through?

In terms of future research, it would be interesting to explore the nature of news coverage of environmental collaborations where daily newspapers have ceased to exist. To investigate more deeply the issues of accountability and news coverage, perhaps a comparative case study could be done, including a content analysis of coverage comparing online coverage with newspaper coverage. Online news sources may provide more depth of coverage, with links to actual collaboration documents and videos. On the other hand, there may be no information available at all, if there is no perceived demand for it. Another area to explore might be a comparison of the coverage provided by local television with coverage by local newspapers,

given that when local newspapers fold, the principal public news source left is usually local television.

### Evolutionary changes in the world of collaboration

As a tool for addressing issues of public concern, collaboration is still a valuable tool for solving limited environmental issues like nutrient pollution in local lakes (Waterton 2015), but it has evolved well beyond its beginnings in the natural resources field, where it developed as an adjunct to adaptive management processes (Randolph 2012). Collaboration was quickly recognized as an effective way to incorporate social concerns into areas like forest management that were originally seen as essentially economic, technological or science-based issues (Moote et al. 1997). Collaboration's use dramatically expanded and it is now a tool used in almost every field of public policymaking in the United States and internationally.

#### *Varied contexts and multiple scales*

Collaboration's ability to help us "tame complexity" (Zellner 2012, p 55) by blending social concerns with technological solutions has led to its use in an enormous array of contexts and scales, at home and overseas. Collaboration has been used to deal with the full spectrum of social, technical and political issues. It helped more than 3,750 scientists in 130 countries generate consensus on the science of climate change (Randolph 2012). Collaborative processes have been used to address issues as varied as fisheries in the Mekong Delta, hurricane recovery in Mexico, forced relocations in South Africa and the Mt. Tabor reservoir in Oregon (Goldstein 2012). The scale of collaboration has evolved, as well. Multiple-scale processes have developed out of small-scale collaborations. Fire management 3-scale learning networks span the local, regional and national levels in the U.S. (Goldstein and Howard 2012). In England multi-scalar collaborations were created to propagate the local pollution solutions developed in one lake catchment area (Waterton 2015). In the Western Climate Initiative a series of multi-scale collaborations brought American and Canadian localities, counties, 7 states and 4 provinces to a soft law agreement on a cap and trade scheme for greenhouse gas emissions (Kazazis 2012).

#### *Growth in the range of outcomes*

The range of positive outcomes from collaboration has also evolved to include social learning, communicative planning, social capital, shared identity, resilient communities and learning networks.

Collaboration has been put forward as a way to generate the social capital needed to address local or global issues as varied as homelessness in Chicago (Zellner 2012) or climate change (Randolph 2012). Social learning and communicative planning can result from effective collaboration, as reported in dealings with risky technologies like the 3-Mile Island nuclear power plant (Ozawa 2012). In the most recent and dramatic evolutionary development, the use of collaboration by U.S. fire managers has led to the development of multi-scalar learning networks (Goldstein and Howard 2012). Collaboration has moved a long way from being seen as merely a tool for public participation in dealing with a specific environmental problem.

*Applicability of findings to larger issues*

Could the study's findings be useful in dealing with larger issues of 2015, such as relations between the police and the African-American community, cap-and-trade for greenhouse gases, immigration reform, health care, or ageing?

As discussed in the accountability section above, the findings of this study represent a kind of two-edged sword. The nature of a collaboration process often allows it to be as transparent or opaque as it wishes. A collaboration is unusual, in that it is essentially a closed system that is open to all. That is, anyone with a stakeholder interest can join, but collaborations themselves (as they are presently normally constituted) are comprised of a finite number of participants. Those participants have the ability to decide how much of their activity is visible to outsiders. This translates into a rare ability for a body dealing with public issues -- to control, manage, or manipulate news coverage; to encourage more coverage that can heighten the collaboration profile on the public agenda and promote public discourse about an issue; or to discourage coverage and basically proceed with deliberations behind closed doors.

Democratic societies generally acknowledge that efficacy and transparency are often at odds, and we need to strike a balance between the objective goal of efficiency and the normative goals of transparency and accountability. In the U.S. we generally believe it is better to err on the side of openness and we tolerate a certain amount of inefficiency and messiness because of it. However, there are times when secrecy in policy development is a good thing, and we also recognize that. An example would be the courts' recognition of executive privilege, so our elected senior executives can receive candid and honest advice on issues of public policy.

In some circumstances, it might be best for collaborations *not* to be open and transparent: for example, in a local collaborative effort to address the blue-on-black issue of police relations

with the African-American community. Finding common ground might be more likely out of the glare of the public spotlight. Media Ground Rules and stakeholder unity could improve the process and the result. Where consensus can be the decision rule and public passions might interfere with the ability of the participants to collaborate, then the findings regarding Media Ground Rules and openness might have some applicability. I would add the proviso that the results of the collaboration should be subjected to serious and strenuous public debate whatever a consensus decision is reached. Balance is important.

In other circumstances, openness would be better and media coverage could improve the process and result: for example, a cap-and-trade scheme for greenhouse gases was developed by a collaboration of 7 American states and 4 Canadian provinces, but it failed to be implemented because of a lack of public support (Kazazis 2012) – support that might have been there if the collaboration process had been more open and media coverage had been solicited and encouraged.

Big, national issues like health care and immigration reform are polarizing issues that would appear to require big, national debates, and the study's findings would not be particularly applicable in that large, open context. Closed-door collaboration in the health care context was actually tried back in the early 1990's by Hillary Clinton, but the resultant proposals went nowhere politically. Apart from a lot of ideological disagreement on the substance of the reforms, the secrecy of the process itself generated much disapproval. Mrs. Clinton's collaboration reached a consensus, but their solution could not be implemented without political action and the decision rule for political action is majority vote. At the political level, the system is pluralist – conflict, not collaboration is the heart of the decisionmaking process, and the press is a big part of the process. Everyone makes their best case, negotiates for support, and if there is no agreement then there is a vote to decide the winner and the loser. Immigration reform is an issue where a pluralist battle is likely and the media wars will continue unabated.

There may be big national issues that are not as polarizing, where consensus might actually be achieved, and where a series of open collaboration processes might bring forward some solutions – ageing, for example, where solutions might be found for the inter-generational problems caused by the greying of America.

In summary, it would seem that the applicability of the study's findings is not determined by the context of the dispute, the nature of the issue or the scale of the problem. Whether the

findings about collaboration and the press are useful seems to be determined by the decision rule: consensus vs. vote.

The primary goal of this research study was to explore the overall relationship between the press and environmental collaborations – to get a more general picture of the landscape in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is important to know more about the press / collaboration relationship because news coverage and the presence of reporters and cameras may have serious practical and theoretical implications for (a) how participants conduct their collaborations, (b) the outcomes of the collaborations and (c) public accountability of the process and its results.

The intersection of environmental issues, stakeholder collaborations, and the news media generates many extremely difficult questions, and remains a very complicated and intriguing area. It will be interesting, indeed, to follow the changing relationships as major changes take place in the world of the news media and collaboration. Fresh challenges will emerge in an era of new environmental, economic and social concerns. This present study may provide some valuable baseline data for future studies of these relationships.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

# **SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

## ***THE PRESS & COLLABORATIVE ENVIRONMENTAL DECISIONMAKING***

### **GOAL OF THE SURVEY**

This survey is intended to gather data for a doctoral dissertation studying the relationship between the news media and environmental collaborations. The study asks Environmental Conflict Professionals to report their judgments about press activities and influences that the press may have on the process.

### **WHO IS BEING SURVEYED?**

All registered members of the EPA'S *National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals*.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY OF RESPONSES**

All responses will be kept confidential, as will the individual names and affiliations of respondents. Data will be published only in aggregated non-individually-identifiable form.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE:**

Part I - General questions seeking your judgments about:

- A. How well the press does its job
- B. The overall relationship of the press and environmental collaborations.

Part II – Specific questions about one of your environmental collaboration experiences where there was news media coverage:

- A. Type of issue, size of project, geographic region, length of involvement, prior history
- B. Ground Rules regarding News Media
- C. Types of News Media and Press Activity; Amount of coverage, Accuracy and Tone of stories
- D. Press Influence on Participants' Attitudes and Actions
- E. Press Roles
- F. Press Overall Influence on Process & Outcomes

***[For this survey an environmental collaboration is any attempt by a representative sample of stakeholders, including government and/or private entities, to work on the problem.]***

**PART I**

1. Which of the following two statements do you agree with?
  - The news media helps society solve its problems.
  - The news media gets in the way of society solving its problems.
  - No opinion
  
2. In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?
  - Gets facts straight
  - Stories often inaccurate
  - No opinion
  
3. How many direct interactions have you personally had with members of the news media?
  - 0
  - 1-2
  - 3-5
  - 5-10
  - more than 10
  
4. How much impact does news media attention on the day-to-day workings of environmental collaborations?
  - No effect
  - Slight effect
  - Moderate effect
  - Strong effect
  - Very Strong effect
  
5. How much impact does news media attention on the eventual outcomes of environmental collaborations?
  - No effect
  - Slight effect
  - Moderate effect
  - Strong effect
  - Very Strong effect
  
6. On balance, does news media attention have a positive or negative effect on environmental collaborations?
  - Very Negative
  - Moderately Negative
  - Slightly Negative
  - None
  - Slightly Positive
  - Moderately Positive
  - Very Positive

***[Please select ONE of your environmental collaborations that had NEWS COVERAGE and answer all the rest of the survey questions about that one collaboration.]***

**PART 2**

7. Approximate number of groups/organizations represented, including government agencies: \_\_\_\_
  
8. Which best describes the category [check one]:
  - Natural Resource Management [includes Water Issues; Parks Use & Planning]
  - Development & Growth
  - Facility Siting
  - Environmental Cleanup
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Levels of Government involved [check all that apply]:
  - Municipal
  - County
  - State
  - Federal
  - International

**10.** Number of years of the collaboration's existence:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4 or more

**11.** Geographical location in the United States:

- North East
- South East
- Midwest
- North West
- South West
- California

**12.** At the beginning of the collaboration, how would you characterize the *non-governmental* participants' relationships *with each other*?

- Strong Distrust
- Moderate Distrust
- Slight Distrust
- Neither Trust nor Distrust
- Slight Trust
- Moderate Trust
- Strong Trust

**13.** At the beginning of the collaboration, how would you characterize the *non-governmental* participants' relationships *with the government agencies* involved?

- Strong Distrust
- Moderate Distrust
- Slight Distrust
- Neither Trust nor Distrust
- Slight Trust
- Moderate Trust
- Strong Trust

**14.** How did news coverage or press activities affect participants' trust levels?

- Much Lower    Somewhat Lower    No effect    Somewhat higher    Much higher

**15.** If you had to characterize the way news coverage was framed prior to the collaboration being established, which of the following would best describe it?

- Conflict-focused
- Problem-solving
- Issue-oriented
- Human interest
- Other/don't know

**16.** Was prior news coverage a significant factor in establishing the collaboration?

- Not a factor
- Slightly significant
- Moderately significant
- Quite significant
- Highly significant

17. What kind of ground rules for dealing with the news media were agreed to ?
- Formal written media ground rules
  - Informal, unwritten rules
  - General understandings, not rules
  - No ground rules established, but issue was discussed
  - No ground rules established and the issue was not discussed
18. Did all parties make good faith efforts to comply with the media ground rules?
- Yes                       No                       No opinion or N/A
19. Which of the following items did your media ground rules/understandings address? [Check all that apply.]
- reporters' access to meetings
  - TV cameras in meetings
  - press access to documents
  - restrictions on press access to participants for interviews
  - only designated spokespersons to speak for the collaboration as a whole
  - no characterizing of other groups' point of view to the media
  - other restrictions on what kind of remarks can be made to the media
  - restrictions on participants' "posturing" for media attention
  - N/A
20. Which of these news media organizations covered this collaboration? [Check all that apply]
- Local TV news
  - Local newspapers
  - Local radio
  - Cable TV news
  - Network TV news
  - Major national newspapers
  - Public radio
  - Talk radio
  - Internet news blogs
21. Which one of the following news media outlets provided the *most* coverage?
- Local TV news
  - Local newspapers
  - Local radio
  - Cable TV news
  - Network TV news
  - Major national newspapers
  - Public radio
  - Talk radio
  - Internet news blogs
22. Which of the following activities did the press engage in [check all that apply]?
- Reporters at collaboration meetings
  - TV Cameras at collaboration meetings
  - Reporters interviewed collaboration participants
  - Reporters interviewed non-participants about collaboration issues
  - News organizations responded to press releases

23. Given that the level of press interest in a subject often varies dramatically over time, how would you characterize the amount of news coverage, overall?

- Virtually none    Very little    Moderate    Heavy    Very heavy

24. How would you characterize overall factual accuracy of news coverage of this collaboration?

- Very accurate    Moderately accurate    Slightly accurate    Slightly inaccurate    Moderately inaccurate    Very inaccurate

25. Please rate the balance in the stories of the media outlet with the most coverage:

- Very Positive to one point of view    Somewhat Positive to one point of view    Balanced    Somewhat Negative to one point of view    Very Negative to one point of view

26. Did any of these groups perceive the news coverage as biased *against* them?

1. Government Agencies --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against
2. Business Organizations --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against
3. Environmental Groups --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against
4. Community Members --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against

27. Please rank each of the following news story “frames” according to how frequently they were the main focus of news stories about your collaboration. Please rank the most frequently appearing frame as number 1 by checking the appropriately number, etc.

Conflict	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Problem-solving	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Issue-oriented	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Human interest	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Other _____	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___

28. How often did stakeholder participants engage in these positive media-related activities:

1. Soften positions to appear more reasonable to the public  
 Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often
2. Say positive things to the media regarding other stakeholder participants  
 Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often

29. Of these stakeholder groups, indicate how often their representatives engaged in positive media-related activities:

1. Government agencies:  Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often
2. Business organizations:  Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often
3. Environmental organizations:  Very Often    Rarely    Fairly Often    Never
4. Community groups:  Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often
5. Individual stakeholders:  Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often

30. How often did stakeholder participants engage in these negative media-related activities:

1. Harden positions to impress their constituents, members or superiors  
 Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often
2. "Grandstand" when press representatives were present  
 Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often
3. Attempt to use the press as a negotiating lever to coerce other stakeholders  
 Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often
4. Leak information to the news media that put other stakeholder(s) in a bad light  
 Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often

**31.** Of these stakeholder groups, indicate how often their representatives engaged in negative media-related activities:

- 1. Government agencies:  Never  Rarely  Fairly Often  Often
- 2. Business organizations:  Often  Rarely  Fairly Often
- 3. Environmental organizations:  Never  Rarely  Fairly Often
- 4. Community groups:  Never  Rarely  Fairly Often
- 5. Individual stakeholders:  Never  Rarely  Fairly Often

**32.** The news media might play many different roles, even changing roles from time to time. For each of the 9 roles described below, please indicate how much impact it had, if it was relevant:

- 1. Press as Watchdog -- to ensure the public's interests are not jeopardized  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 2. Press as Public Education Tool -- allowing collaboration process to communicate with the public  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 3. Press as Stumbling Block -- press presence inhibiting honest stakeholder negotiation and discussion  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 4. Press as Catalyst -- changes in stakeholder positions caused by feared or perceived reactions to news  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 5. Press as Negotiating lever -- used by participants as a threat or a club to get cooperation or concessions  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 6. Press as Policy Competitor -- pushing for one approach/solution  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 7. Press as Stakeholder -- participating as a member of the community  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 8. Press as Public Agenda-setter -- focusing public attention on the issue  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact
- 9. Press as Nuisance -- focusing on negative aspects of conflict, personalities and dirt  
 Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**33.** Overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of the process?  
 Hurt a great deal  Hurt moderately  Hurt slightly  Neutral  Helped slightly  Helped moderately  Helped a great deal

**34.** Overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?  
 Hurt a great deal  Hurt moderately  Hurt slightly  Neutral  Helped slightly  Helped moderately  Helped a great deal

**35.** Overall, how would you characterize the outcome(s) of this environmental collaboration?  
 Very positive  
 Slightly positive  
 Neutral  
 Slightly negative  
 Very Negative

**36.** Do you have any additional comments about the relationship between the news media and collaborations for environmental conflict resolution? [USE BACK FOR MORE SPACE]?

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***THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY.***

## **APPENDIX B**

# **Hypotheses Linkage to Survey Questions & Testing for Consistency with Survey Data**

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**RESEARCH QUESTIONS, RESEARCH SUB-QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES**

*Research Question 1 -- Do the news media have a positive or negative impact on the ongoing work and/or final outcomes of environmental collaborations?*

*Research Question 2 -- Do structural elements of environmental collaborations or characteristics of news coverage influence the impact of the news media on environmental collaborations?*

*Research Sub-Questions*

- Is there an association between positive or negative media impact and structural elements of collaborations (levels of government participating, size, geographic location, length of time, type of issue involved, and adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media)?
- Is the amount or direction of media impact associated with specific characteristics of news coverage (amount of coverage, perceived tone, perceived bias, type of media outlet, kinds of press activities or coverage prior to establishing the collaboration)?
- Do media-related activities of collaboration stakeholders influence the impact of the news media on the collaboration processes?
- Is there an association between the role that the press plays in relation to the environmental collaboration, and the amount and direction of media impact?

## 21 Hypotheses

Hypothesis #1a. The percentage of facilitators and mediators of environmental collaborations who agree that the news media gets in the way of society solving its problems, will exceed the percentage of members of the general public who hold that opinion.

Hypothesis #1b. A large majority of respondents who report direct interactions with the media will share the opinion that news stories and reports are often inaccurate.

Hypothesis #1c. A majority of respondents will agree the news media have a negative impact on the ongoing work of environmental collaborations, more often than a positive impact.

Hypothesis #1d. A majority of respondents will agree the news media have a negative impact on the final outcomes of environmental collaborations, more often than positive.

Hypothesis #1e. A majority of respondents will agree that, on balance, news media attention has a negative impact on environmental collaborations.

Hypothesis #2a(i). Ratings of positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the size of the collaboration, but will have no statistically significant relationship with Hypothesis #2a(ii) type of issue involved, Hypothesis #2a(iii) levels of government participating, Hypothesis #2a(iv) geographic location, or Hypothesis #2a(v) length of time.

Hypothesis #2b. The positive media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media.

(Corollary: negative media impact will be significantly higher in collaborations without media ground rules.)

Hypothesis #2c. The negative impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in negative media-related activities such as grandstanding, hardening public positions, leaking information or using the press as a tool to coerce other stakeholders.

Hypothesis #2d. Stakeholder groups that generally perceive themselves as less powerful (environmental groups, community organizations) will engage in negative media-related actions most often.

Hypothesis #2e. The positive impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in positive media-related activities such as softening positions to appear more reasonable to the public or saying positive things to the media about other stakeholders.

Hypothesis #2f. Collaborations that adopt media ground rules will report fewer instances of negative media-related activity by stakeholders.

Hypothesis #2g. The amount of media coverage will act as an intensifier, with the perceived amount of media impact increasing—negative or positive—as the amount of media coverage increases.

Hypothesis #2h. Positive media impact will be associated with collaborations where respondents perceive media coverage as balanced.

Hypothesis #2i. Strong negative media impact will be associated with collaborations where one or more groups perceive that media coverage is biased against them.

Hypothesis #2j. The perceived impact of the media will be higher where local TV news provides the most coverage.

Hypothesis #2k. Factual inaccuracy of news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact.

Hypothesis #2l. Where prior news coverage was a moderately to highly significant factor in establishing the collaboration, the continued heavy news coverage will have a negative impact.

Hypothesis #2m. Of all press activities, the presence of TV cameras will have the greatest association with negative media impact.

Hypothesis #2n. Conflict-oriented news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact.

Hypothesis #2o. Collaborations reporting that press activities lowered trust levels will also report generally negative outcomes.

Hypothesis #2p. (i) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the *amount* of media impact on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations and (ii) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the amount of *positive/negative impact* the media have on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.

## LINKAGE TO SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following sections are organized to demonstrate the linkage between Research Questions, Sub-questions, Hypotheses and Survey Instrument Questions.

Part 1 questions are general questions seeking judgments about how well the press does its job and the relationship of the press to environmental collaborations. Part 2 questions relate to a single case selected by each respondent where there was media coverage.

**Research Question 1:** Do the news media have a positive or negative impact on the ongoing work and/or final outcomes of environmental collaborations?

### **Hypothesis #1a**

The percentage of facilitators and mediators of environmental collaborations who agree that the news media gets in the way of society solving its problems, will exceed the percentage of members of the general public who hold that opinion.

#### Survey Instrument Question(s) re Hypothesis #1a

[replicated from the Pew Research Center for The People and The Press poll]

##### **Part 1**

1. Which of the following two statements do you agree with?

- The news media helps society solve its problems.
- The news media gets in the way of society solving its problems.
- No opinion

### **Hypothesis #1b**

A large majority of respondents who report direct interactions with the media will share the opinion that news stories and reports are often inaccurate.

#### Survey Instrument Question(s)

[replicated from the Pew Research Center for The People and The Press poll]

##### **Part 1**

2. In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?

- Gets facts straight     Stories often inaccurate     No opinion

**Hypothesis #1c**

A majority of respondents will agree the news media have a negative impact on the ongoing work of environmental collaborations, more often than a positive impact.

**Survey Instrument Question(s)**

**Part 1**

4. How much impact does news media attention have on the day-to-day workings of environmental collaborations?

- Very Negative
- Moderately Negative
- Slightly Negative
- None
- Slightly Positive
- Moderately Positive
- Very Positive

**Part 2**

41. In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

- Hurt a great deal
- Hurt moderately
- Hurt slightly
- Neutral
- Helped slightly
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal

**Hypothesis #1d**

A majority of respondents will agree that the news media have a negative impact on the final outcomes of environmental collaborations, more often than positive.

**Part 1**

5. How would you rate the impact of news media attention on the eventual outcomes of environmental collaborations?

- Very Negative
- Moderately Negative
- Slightly Negative
- None
- Slightly Positive
- Moderately Positive
- Very Positive

**Part 2**

42. In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt a great deal
- Hurt moderately
- Hurt slightly
- Neutral
- Helped slightly
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal

**Hypothesis #1e**

A majority of respondents will agree that, on balance, news media attention has a negative impact on environmental collaborations.

**Survey Instrument Question(s)**

**Part 1**

6. On balance, does news media attention have a positive or negative effect on environmental collaborations?

- Very Negative
- Moderately Negative
- Slightly Negative
- None
- Slightly Positive
- Moderately Positive
- Very Positive

## Linkage of RQ #2, relevant Hypotheses and Survey Questions

**Research Question 2:** Do structural elements of environmental collaborations or characteristics of news coverage influence the impact of the news media on environmental collaborations?

### Sub RQ

- **Is there an association between positive or negative media impact and structural elements of collaborations (levels of government participating, size, geographic location, length of time, type of issue involved, and adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media)?**

### Hypothesis #2a

Hypotheses #2a(i) - #2a(v).

#2a(i) Ratings of positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the **size** of the collaboration.

#2a(ii) Ratings of impact will have **no** statistically significant relationship with **type of issue** involved.

#2a(iii) Ratings of impact will have **no** statistically significant relationship with **levels of government** participating.

#2a(iv) Ratings of impact will have **no** statistically significant relationship with geographic **location**.

#2a(v) Ratings of impact will have **no** statistically significant relationship with length of **time** the collaboration exists.

### Survey Question(s) **Part 2**

8. *Which category best describes this collaboration?*

- Natural Resource Management [includes Water Issues; Parks Use & Planning]*
- Development & Growth*
- Facility Siting*
- Environmental Cleanup*
- Other* \_\_\_\_\_

7. *Approximate number of participating groups and organizations, including government agencies?* \_\_\_\_\_

9. *Levels of Government involved (check all that apply)*

- Municipal*
- County*
- State*
- Federal*
- International*

10. *Number of years of the collaboration's existence?*

- 1*
- 2*
- 3*
- 4 or more*

**11. Geographic location in the U.S.**

- North East
- South East
- Midwest
- North West
- South West
- California

**41** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

- Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**42.** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**Hypothesis #2b**

The positive media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media. (Corollary: negative media impact will be significantly higher in collaborations without media ground rules.)

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

**17.** What kind of ground rules for dealing with the news media were agreed to?

- Formal written media ground rules
- Informal, unwritten rules
- General understandings, not rules
- No ground rules established, but issue was discussed
- No ground rules established and the issue was not discussed

**[If no ground rules, skip to Question # 20]**

**18.** Did all parties make good faith efforts to comply with the media ground rules?

- Yes
- No
- No opinion

**19.** Which of the following items did your media ground rules / understandings address?

1. reporters' access to meetings     All meetings     Most     Some     None
2. TV cameras in meetings     All meetings     Most     Some     None
3. press access to documents     All documents     Most     Some     None
4. unrestricted press access to participants for interviews     Yes     No
5. restrictions on participants' "posturing" for media attention     Yes     No
6. only designated spokespersons to speak for the collaboration as a whole     Yes     No
7. no characterizing of other groups' point of view to the media     Yes     No
8. other restrictions on what kind of remarks can be made to the media     Yes     No

41 In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

42. In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**Sub RQ**

**Do media-related activities of collaboration stakeholders influence the impact of the news media on the collaboration processes?**

**Hypothesis #2c**

The negative impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in negative media-related activities such as grandstanding, hardening public positions, leaking information or using the press as a tool to coerce other stakeholders.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

30. How often did stakeholder participants engage in these negative media-related activities:

1. Harden positions to impress their constituents, members or superiors

Never     Rarely     Fairly Often     Very Often

2. "Grandstand" when press representatives were present

Never     Rarely     Fairly Often     Very Often

3. Attempt to use the press as a negotiating lever to coerce other stakeholders

Never     Rarely     Fairly Often     Very Often

4. Leak information to the news media that put other stakeholder(s) in a bad light

Never     Rarely     Fairly Often     Very Often

41. Overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of the process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

42. Overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**Hypothesis #2d**

Stakeholder groups that generally perceive themselves as less powerful (environmental groups, community organizations) will engage in negative media-related actions most often.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

**31.** *Of these stakeholder groups, indicate how often their representatives engaged in negative media-related activities:*

- 1. Government agencies:  Never
- 2. Business organizations:  Never
- 3. Environmental organizations:  Never  Rarely  Fairly Often  Very Often
- 4. Community groups:  Never  Rarely  Fairly Often  Very Often
- 5. Individual stakeholders:  Never

**Hypothesis #2e**

The positive impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in positive media-related activities such as softening positions to appear more reasonable to the public or saying positive things to the media about other stakeholders.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

**28.** *How often did stakeholder participants engage in these positive media-related activities:*

- 1. Soften positions to appear more reasonable to the public  
 Never  Rarely  Fairly Often  Very Often
- 2. Say positive things to the media regarding other stakeholder participants  
 Never  Rarely  Fairly Often  Very Often

**29.** *Of these stakeholder groups, indicate how often their representatives engaged in positive media-related activities:*

- 6. Government agencies:  Never
- 7. Business organizations:  Never
- 8. Environmental organizations:  Never
- 9. Community groups:  Never  Rarely  Fairly Often  Very Often
- 10. Individual stakeholders:  Never

**41.** *Overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of the process?*

- Hurt a great deal     Hurt moderately     Hurt slightly     Neutral     Helped slightly     Helped moderately     Helped a great deal

**42.** *Overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?*

- Hurt a great deal     Hurt moderately     Hurt slightly     Neutral     Helped slightly     Helped moderately     Helped a great deal

### **Hypothesis #2f**

Collaborations that adopt media ground rules will report fewer instances of negative media-related activity by stakeholders.

#### **Survey Question(s) Part 2**

17. What kind of ground rules for dealing with the news media were agreed to ?

- Formal written media ground rules
- Informal, unwritten rules
- General understandings, not rules
- No ground rules established, but issue was discussed
- No ground rules established and the issue was not discussed

30. How often did stakeholder participants engage in these negative media-related activities:

1. Harden positions to impress their constituents, members or superiors

- Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often

2. "Grandstand" when press representatives were present

- Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often

3. Attempt to use the press as a negotiating lever to coerce other stakeholders

- Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often

4. Leak information to the news media that put other stakeholder(s) in a bad light

- Never    Rarely    Fairly Often    Very Often

### **Sub RQ**

**Is the amount or direction of media impact associated with specific characteristics of news coverage, such as amount of coverage, perceived tone, perceived bias, type of media outlet, kinds of press activities or coverage prior to establishing the collaboration?**

#### **Survey Questions Part 2**

41. Overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of the process?

- Hurt    Hurt    Hurt    Neutral    Helped    Helped    Helped  
a great deal   moderately   slightly   slightly   moderately   a great deal

42. Overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt    Hurt    Hurt    Neutral    Helped    Helped    Helped  
a great deal   moderately   slightly   slightly   moderately   a great deal

### **Hypothesis #2g**

The amount of media coverage will act as an intensifier, with the perceived amount of media impact increasing—negative or positive—as the amount of media coverage increases.

#### **Survey Question(s) Part 2**

23. Given that the level of press interest in a subject often varies dramatically over time, how would you characterize the amount of news coverage, overall?

- Virtually none    Very little    Moderate    Heavy    Very heavy

**41** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**42.** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**Hypothesis #2h**

Positive media impact will be associated with collaborations where respondents perceive media coverage as balanced.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

**25.** Please rate the balance in the media outlet that paid the most attention to your work:

Very Positive to       Somewhat Positive to       Balanced       Somewhat Negative to       Very Negative to  
one point of view      one point of view      one point of view      one point of view      one point of view

**41** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**42.** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**Hypothesis #2i**

Strong negative media impact will be associated with collaborations where one or more groups perceive that media coverage is biased against them.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

**26.** Do you think any of these groups thought the news coverage was biased against them?

- 5. Government Agencies --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against
- 6. Business Organizations --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against
- 7. Environmental Groups --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against
- 4. Community Members --  No bias  Some bias against  Very biased against

**41** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**42.** In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

Hurt       Hurt       Hurt       Neutral       Helped       Helped       Helped  
a great deal      moderately      slightly      slightly      moderately      a great deal

**Hypothesis #2j**

The perceived impact of the media will be higher where local TV news provides the most coverage.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

20. Which of these news media organizations covered this collaboration? [Check all that apply]

- Local TV news
- Local newspapers
- Cable TV news
- Network TV news
- Major national newspapers
- Public radio
- Talk radio
- Internet news blogs

21. Which of the following news media organizations provided the most coverage?

- Local TV news
- Local newspapers
- Cable TV news
- Network TV news
- Major national newspapers
- Public radio
- Talk radio
- Internet news blogs

41 In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

- Hurt a great deal   
  Hurt moderately   
  Hurt slightly   
  Neutral   
  Helped slightly   
  Helped moderately   
  Helped a great deal

42. In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt a great deal   
  Hurt moderately   
  Hurt slightly   
  Neutral   
  Helped slightly   
  Helped moderately   
  Helped a great deal

**Hypothesis #2k**

Factual inaccuracy of news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

24. How would you characterize the factual accuracy of news coverage, overall?

- Very accurate   
  Moderately accurate   
  Slightly accurate   
  Slightly inaccurate   
  Moderately inaccurate   
  Very inaccurate

41 In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

- Hurt a great deal   
  Hurt moderately   
  Hurt slightly   
  Neutral   
  Helped slightly   
  Helped moderately   
  Helped a great deal

42. In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt a great deal   
  Hurt moderately   
  Hurt slightly   
  Neutral   
  Helped slightly   
  Helped moderately   
  Helped a great deal

**Hypothesis #2l**

Where prior news coverage was a moderately to highly significant factor in establishing the collaboration, the continued heavy news coverage will have a negative impact .

Survey Question(s) **Part 2**

16. Was prior news coverage a significant factor in establishing the collaboration?

- Not a factor
- Slightly significant
- Moderately significant
- Quite significant
- Highly significant

15. If you had to characterize news coverage prior to the collaboration being established, which of the following would best describe it?

- Conflict-focused
- Problem-solving
- Issue-oriented
- Human interest
- Other/don't know

23. Given that the level of press interest in a subject often varies dramatically over time, how would you characterize the amount of news coverage, overall?

- Virtually none
- Very little
- Moderate
- Heavy
- Very heavy

41 In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

- Hurt a great deal
- Hurt moderately
- Hurt slightly
- Neutral
- Helped slightly
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal

42. In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt a great deal
- Hurt moderately
- Hurt slightly
- Neutral
- Helped slightly
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal

**Hypothesis #2m**

Of all press activities, the presence of TV cameras will have the greatest association with negative media impact.

Survey Question(s) **Part 2**

22. Which of the following activities did the press engage in [check all that apply]?

- Reporters at collaboration meetings
- TV Cameras at collaboration meetings
- Reporters interviewing collaboration participants
- Reporters interviewing non-participants about collaboration issues
- News organizations response to press releases (if any)

41. Overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of the process?

- Hurt a great deal
- Hurt moderately
- Hurt slightly
- Neutral
- Helped slightly
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal

42. Overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt a great deal
- Hurt moderately
- Hurt slightly
- Neutral
- Helped slightly
- Helped moderately
- Helped a great deal

**Hypothesis #2n**

Conflict-oriented news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact.

Survey Question(s) **Part 2**

27. Please rank the following 4 news frames by checking #1, #2, etc., to indicate which frames occurred most frequently in the news coverage of this collaboration.

Conflict	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Problem-solving	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Issue-oriented	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Human interest	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___
Other _____	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	4 ___	5 ___	N/A ___

41 In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the day-to-day work of this process?

- Hurt a great deal   
 Hurt moderately   
 Hurt slightly   
 Neutral   
 Helped slightly   
 Helped moderately   
 Helped a great deal

42. In this particular case, overall, did the news hurt or help the outcomes of the process?

- Hurt a great deal   
 Hurt moderately   
 Hurt slightly   
 Neutral   
 Helped slightly   
 Helped moderately   
 Helped a great deal

**Hypothesis #2o**

Collaborations reporting that press activities lowered trust levels will also report generally negative outcomes.

Survey Question(s) **Part 2**

12. At the beginning of the collaboration, how would you characterize the non-governmental participants' relationships with each other?

- Strong Distrust
- Moderate Distrust
- Slight Distrust
- Neither Trust nor Distrust
- Slight Trust
- Moderate Trust
- Strong Trust

13. At the beginning of the collaboration, how would you characterize the non-governmental participants' relationships with the government agencies involved?

- Strong Distrust
- Moderate Distrust
- Slight Distrust
- Neither Trust nor Distrust
- Slight Trust
- Moderate Trust
- Strong Trust

14. How did press activities or news coverage affect participants' trust of each other?

- Much Lower   
 Somewhat Lower   
 No effect   
 Somewhat higher   
 Much higher

43. Overall, how would you characterize the outcome(s) of this environmental collaboration?

- Very positive   
 Slightly positive   
 Neutral   
 Slightly negative   
 Very Negative

**Sub RQ**

**Is there an association between the role that the press plays in relation to the environmental collaboration, and the amount and direction of media impact?**

**Hypothesis #2p(i) & #2p(ii).**

#2p(i) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the *amount* of media impact on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.

#2p(ii) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the amount of *positive/negative impact* the media have on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.

**Survey Question(s) Part 2**

*The news media might play many different roles, even changing roles from time to time. For each of the 9 roles described below, please indicate how much impact it had, if it was relevant:*

**32. Press as Watchdog -- to ensure the public's interests are not jeopardized**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**33. Press as Public Education Tool—allowing collaboration process to communicate with the public**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**34. Press as Stumbling Block—press presence inhibiting honest stakeholder negotiation and discussion**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**35. Press as Catalyst -- changes in stakeholder positions caused by feared or perceived reactions to news**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**36. Press as Negotiating lever—used by participants as a threat or a club to get cooperation or concessions**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**37. Press as Policy Competitor -- pushing for one approach/solution**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**38. Press as Stakeholder—participating as a member of the community**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**39. Press as Public Agenda-setter—focusing public attention on the issue**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

**40. Press as Nuisance—focusing on negative aspects of conflict, personalities and dirt**

Irrelevant  Minor impact  Moderate impact  Strong impact  Very Strong impact

## **TESTING FOR CONSISTENCY WITH SURVEY DATA**

### *Hypotheses Summary & Detailed Statistical Analysis*

The detailed statistical analysis of the data pertaining to each hypothesis follows the summary list below.

Hypothesis #1a. The percentage of facilitators and mediators of environmental collaborations who agree that the news media gets in the way of society solving its problems, will exceed the percentage of members of the general public. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis 1b. A large majority of respondents who report direct interactions with the media will share the opinion that news stories are often inaccurate. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis 1c. A majority of respondents will agree the news media have a negative impact on the ongoing day-to-day work of environmental collaborations, more often than a positive impact. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #1d. A majority of respondents will agree the news media have a negative impact on the final outcomes of environmental collaborations, more often than positive. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #1e. A majority of respondents will agree that, on balance, news media attention has a negative impact on environmental collaborations. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2a(i). Ratings of positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the size of the collaboration. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis 2a(ii). Positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have no statistically significant relationship with the type of issue involved. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis 2a(iii.) Positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have no statistically significant relationship with the levels of government participating. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis 2a(iv.) Positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have no statistically significant relationship with geographic location. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2a(v.) Positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have no statistically significant association with the length of time the collaboration is in existence.

(Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2b. The positive media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media.

(Corollary: negative media impact will be significantly higher in collaborations without media ground rules.) (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2c. The negative impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in negative media-related activities such as grandstanding, hardening public positions, leaking information or using the press as a tool to coerce other stakeholders. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2d. Stakeholder groups that generally perceive themselves as less powerful will engage in negative media-related actions most often. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2e. The positive impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in positive media-related activities such as softening positions to appear more reasonable to the public or saying positive things to the media about other stakeholders. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2f. Collaborations that adopt media ground rules will report fewer instances of negative media-related activity by stakeholders. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2g. The amount of media coverage will act as an intensifier, with the perceived amount of media impact increasing—negative or positive—as the amount of media coverage increases. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2h. Positive media impact will be associated with collaborations where respondents perceive media coverage as balanced. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2i. Strong negative media impact will be associated with collaborations where one or more groups perceive that media coverage is biased against them. (Consistent with results for government, Not consistent with results for others)

Hypothesis #2j. The perceived impact of the media will be higher where local TV news provides the most coverage. (insufficient data)

Hypothesis #2k. Factual inaccuracy of news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2l. Where prior news coverage was a moderately to highly significant factor in establishing the collaboration, the continued heavy news coverage will have a negative impact. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2m. Of all press activities, the presence of TV cameras will have the greatest association with negative media impact. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2n. Conflict-oriented news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact. (Consistent with results)

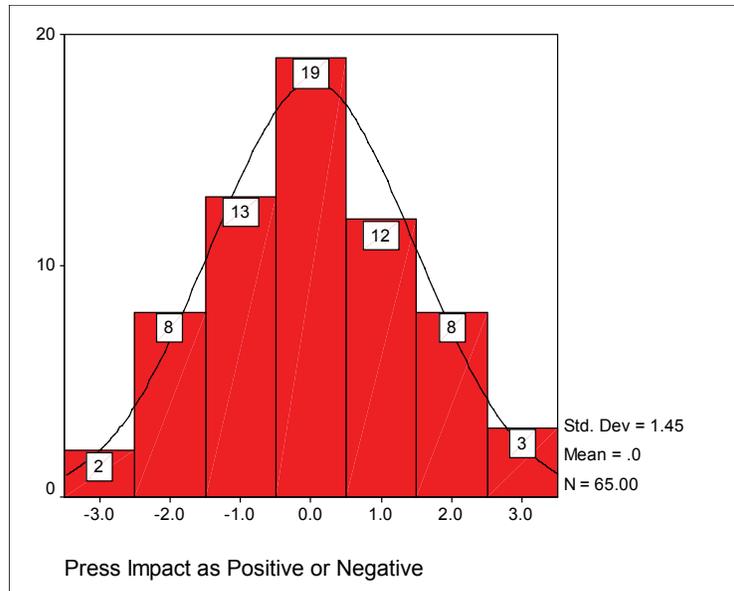
Hypothesis #2o. Collaborations reporting that press activities lowered trust levels will also report generally negative outcomes. (Not consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2p(i) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the *amount* of media impact on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations. (Consistent with results)

Hypothesis #2p(ii) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the amount of *positive/negative impact* the media have on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations. (Not consistent with results)

**Note re choice of variable for Positive/Negative Media Impact in hypothesis analysis:**

The variable “*Positive or Negative Press Impact on Day-to-Day Work of the Collaboration*” was used for hypothesis analyses involving positive or negative media impact. The variable was selected over two other possible variables: (1) *Overall Positive/Negative Impact* and (2) *Positive/Negative Impact on Final Outcome* because (a) respondents answered this question at the end of the survey, so the 65 responses represent the opinions of those who provided the most data by answering the most questions, and (b) the mean is the same for all three variable choices (0 or neutral) but the “day-to-day” variable has a more normal distribution than the other two, as can be seen in its almost perfect histogram (Figure 28, below).

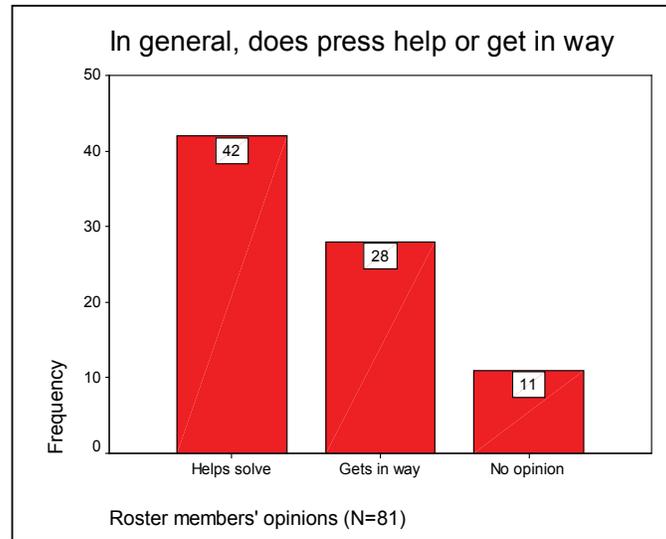


**Figure 28.** Histogram of Variable “Press Impact as Positive or Negative”

Hypothesis #1a. The percentage of facilitators and mediators of environmental collaborations who agree that the news media gets in the way of society solving its problems, will exceed the percentage of members of the general public.

**Hypothesis #1a is not consistent with results.** *The percentage of facilitators and mediators of environmental collaborations who agree that the news media gets in the way of society solving its problems (28%), is actually lower than the percentage of the general public (59%).*

Contrary to expectations, facilitators and mediators of environmental collaborations have a positive view of the role the news media play in attempts to solve societal problems. Only 28% of survey respondents believe that, in general, the press gets in the way of society’s attempts to solve its problems (Figure 29. below). According to the 2004 Pew Research Center for The People and The Press opinion poll, 59% of Americans believe that the press gets in the way of society solving its problems.



**Figure 29.** *Roster Member opinions of news media role in societal problem-solving*

Facilitators with the most experience dealing directly with the news media reported 2:1 that the press often gets the facts wrong, but even a slight majority of this group believes that the press helps society solve its problems. This also flies in the face of conventional wisdom, according to Pew Center research, that indicates people who have a lot of direct interaction with the press and who think the press often get their facts wrong have the most negative opinion about the role of news coverage.

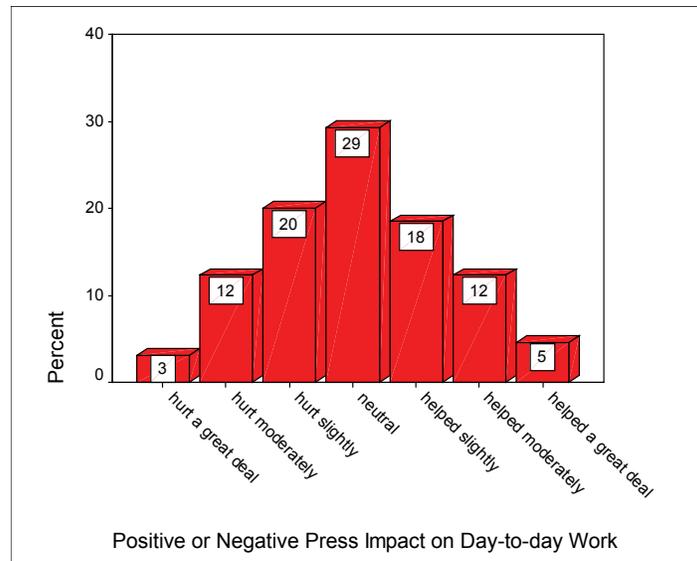
Hypothesis 1b. A large majority of respondents who report direct interactions with the media will share the opinion that news stories are often inaccurate.

**Finding: Hypothesis #1b is consistent with results.** *A large majority of respondents (61%) who have had direct interactions with the media believe that news stories are often inaccurate.*

An interesting finding was that the opinion about press accuracy did not vary with the amount of contact. When the analysis was restricted to the opinions of 64 respondents with a great deal of press contact (5 or more direct contacts), the same percentage (61%) thinks that news stories are often inaccurate.

Hypothesis 1c. A majority of respondents will agree the news media have a negative impact on the ongoing day-to-day work of environmental collaborations, more often than a positive impact.

**Finding: Hypothesis 1c is not consistent with results.** Only 35% of respondents agree the news media have a negative impact on the ongoing work of environmental collaborations, more often than a positive impact.



**Figure 30.** Press impact on day-to-day work of collaborations - Positive or Negative

Slightly more than a third of the respondents reported negative press impact (35%) on the day-to-day work of the collaboration, with the same reporting positive impact (35%) and slightly less than a third reporting neutral impact. Geographically, the Northeast, Southeast and Southwest regions showed no statistically significant differences, but the Northwest cases were reported significantly more positive press impact (50% - See Hypothesis 2a(iv), below). Results varied somewhat depending on the type of issue, with environmental cleanup cases more often reporting negative press impact.

- Environmental cleanups were only 11 of the cases involved, but more than half of them reported negative media impact (55%) on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations. Only 2 of the environmental cases reported positive media impact (18%).
- Natural resources and development together comprised 54 of the cases. A positive media impact was reported 39% of the time, more than double the rate of environmental cleanup

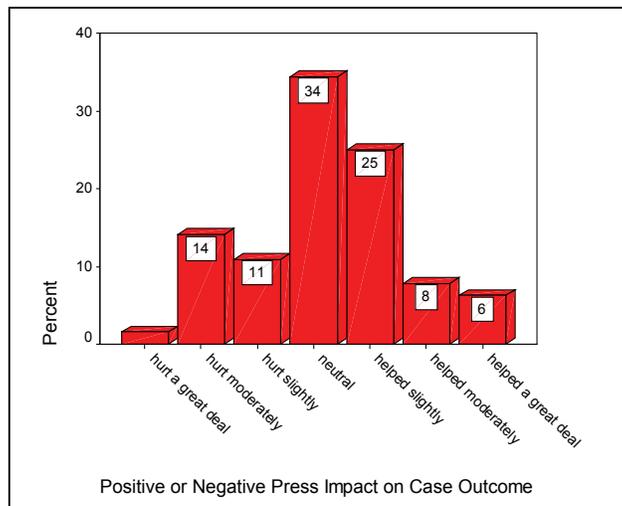
cases. A negative impact was reported in only 22% of the cases. Natural resource cases most often reported a neutral media effect on day-to-day operations (38%).

- Development cases reporting the lowest rate of neutral impact (15%), with the rest closely split between negative impact (45%) and positive impact (40%).

The numbers are small, but the data indicate that the press has the most day-to-day impact (negative or positive) on development & growth cases (85%) and the least day-to-day impact on natural resources cases (62%). The data also indicate that the negative impact is reported twice as often in environmental cleanup cases (55%) as in natural resource cases (27%), with development cases falling between the two extreme experiences (40%). This is an area for further study.

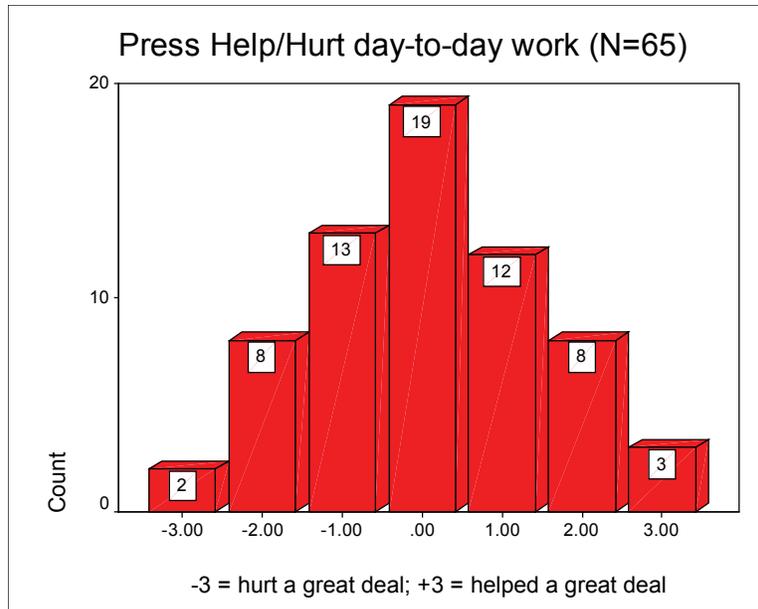
Hypothesis #1d. A majority of respondents will agree the news media have a negative impact on the final outcomes of environmental collaborations, more often than positive.

**Hypothesis 1d is not consistent with results.** *Only 26% of respondents will agree the news media most often have a negative impact on the final outcomes of environmental collaborations.*



**Figure 31.** *Positive or negative press impact on case outcomes Impact on Day-to-day work vs. Final outcomes.*

There was no statistical difference between the mean scores of the impact on day-to-day work vs. outcomes. Respondents rated the positive or negative impact of the news media on day-to-day work and final outcomes of the collaborations, using a scale from -3 (very negative) to +3 (very positive). The scores were relatively evenly distributed (Figure 32, below).

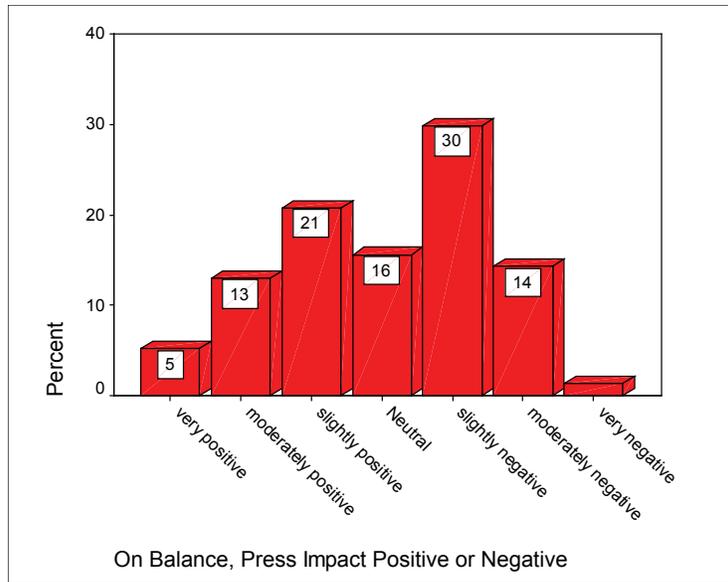


**Figure 32.** *Impact of news on day-to-day work of collaborations (Frequency count)*  
*APA Results Section - paired samples t-test*

A paired samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether respondents believe the positive or negative impact of the news media on the day-to-day work of the collaboration is different than the impact on the final outcomes. The results indicated that the mean impact on day-to-day work ( $M=.047$ ,  $SD=1.45$ ) was not significantly different from the mean impact on final outcomes ( $M=.156$ ,  $SD=1.39$ ),  $t(63)=-1.154$ ,  $p=.253$ . The mean difference was  $-.1094$  points on a 7-point Likert rating from -3 to +3.

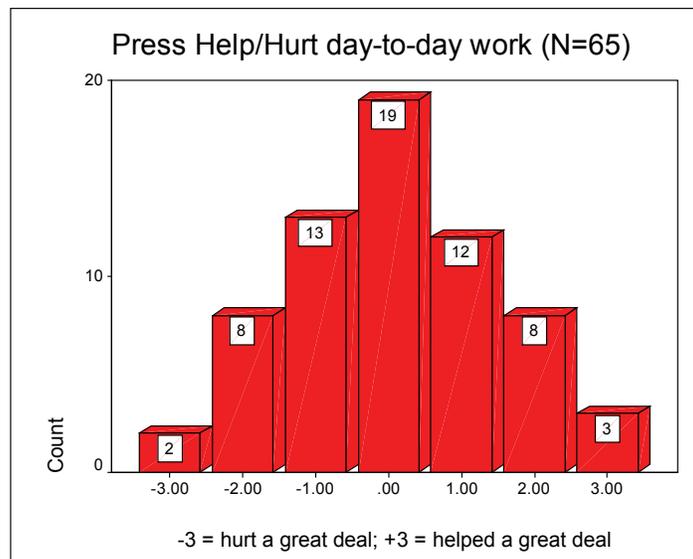
Hypothesis #1e. A majority of respondents will agree that, on balance, news media attention has a negative impact on environmental collaborations.

**Hypothesis 1e is not consistent with results.** *Only 45.4% of respondents agreed that the press have a negative impact overall on environmental collaborations. Thirty-nine percent reported positive effects overall, and 16% said there was neither a positive or negative effect on final outcomes.*



**Figure 33.** Overall positive or negative press impact

**A Hypothesis 2a methods note:** For Hypothesis 2a analyses, the data on day-to-day impact were used to assess the relationship between structural factors and media impact. The variable’s distribution was closest to a perfect normal distribution (Figure 34, below). There was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of press impact on day-to-day work vs. outcomes, so either could have been used. Respondents rated the positive or negative impact of the news media on day-to-day work and final outcomes of the collaborations, on a scale from -3 (hurt a great deal) to +3 (helped a great deal).



**Figure 34.** Impact of news media on day-to-day work of collaborations

A paired samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether respondents believe the positive or negative impact of the news media on the day-to-day work of the collaboration is different than the impact on the final outcomes. The results indicated that the mean impact on day-to-day work ( $M=.047$ ,  $SD=1.45$ ) was not significantly different from the mean impact on final outcomes ( $M=.156$ ,  $SD=1.39$ ),  $t(63)=-1.154$ ,  $p=.253$ . The mean difference was  $-.1094$  points on a 7-point Likert rating from -3 to +3.

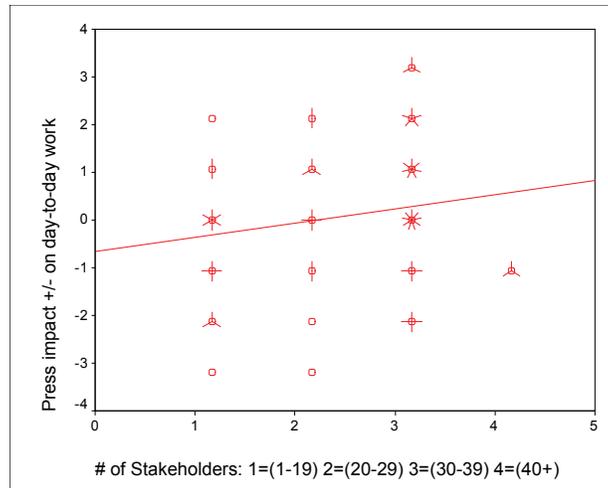
Hypothesis #2a(i). Ratings of positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the size of the collaboration.

**Hypothesis 2a(i) is not consistent with results.** *Positive or negative media impact on collaborations does not have a statistically significant association with the size of the collaboration.*

#### *APA Results Section*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between size of collaborations and positive/negative impact of the news media. The independent variable, size, included 4 levels: 1-19 groups, 20-29 groups, 30-39 groups and 40+ groups. The dependent variable was the positive or negative impact of the news media on the day-to-day work of the collaboration cases. The ANOVA was not significant.,  $F(3,61)=2.34$ ,  $p=.082$ . In a pairwise comparison, according to a Dunnett's C post hoc test, there was a significant difference in the means reported by collaborations with 30-39 groups and those with 40+ groups. However, there were only three collaborations with 40+ groups, compared with more than 30 collaborations with 30-39 groups, so it would seem to be unwise to make any general conclusions based on these data. This is an area where more research could profitably be carried out.

The scatterplot and relatively horizontal goodness-of-fit line in Figure 35, below, confirm the lack of any strong relationship between the number of groups in the collaboration and the positive or negative impact the news media have.



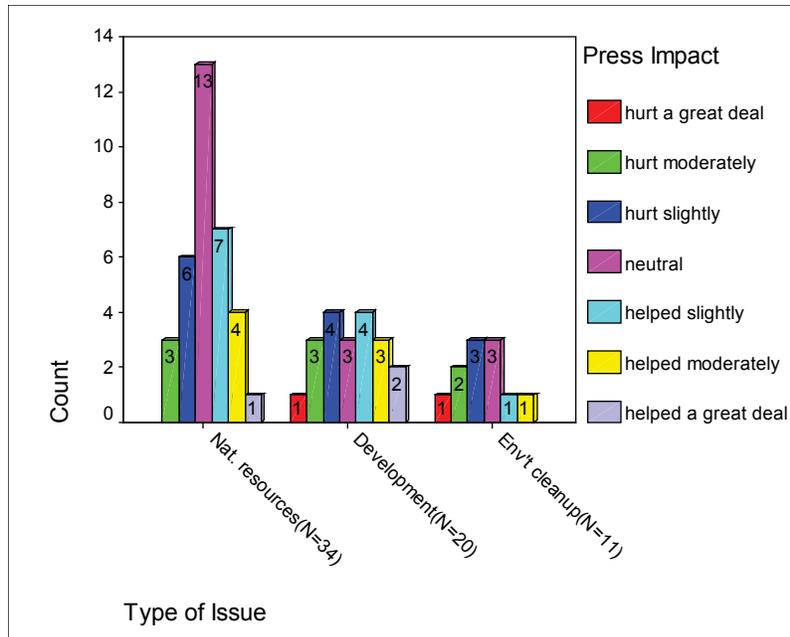
**Figure 35.** Scatterplot of Positive/negative press impact and Size of collaboration

Hypothesis 2a(ii). Positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have no statistically significant relationship with the type of issue involved.

**Hypothesis #2a(ii) is consistent with results.** *Positive or negative media impact on collaborations have no statistically significant association with the type of issue involved.*

*APA Results section*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the type of environmental issue and positive/negative impact of the news media on environmental collaborations. The independent variable, type of issue, included 3 levels: Natural resources, Development & growth, and Environmental cleanup. The dependent variable was the positive or negative impact of the news media on the day-to-day work of the collaboration cases. The ANOVA was not significant.,  $F(2,62) = 1.429$ ,  $p = .247$ .



**Figure 36.** Crosstabulation bar chart: Type of Issue and Press Impact

Hypothesis 2a(iii.) Positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have no statistically significant relationship with the levels of government participating.

**Hypothesis 2a(iii) is consistent with results.** *Positive or negative media impact on collaborations have no statistically significant relationship with the levels of government participating.*

Tests were conducted to determine whether state agency involvement or federal agency involvement affected the positive or negative impact of news media. The data showed no significant difference between collaborations that had federal government participation and those that did not. Nor was there any significant difference between collaborations that had state government participation and those that did not.

*APA Results section – federal participation*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the participation of the federal government and positive/negative impact of the news media on environmental collaborations. The independent variable, federal participation, included 2 levels: federal involvement (N=48) and no federal involvement (N=17). The dependent variable was the positive or negative impact of the news media on the day-to-day work of the collaboration cases. The ANOVA was not significant.,  $F(1,63) = .239, p = .626$ .

*APA Results section – state participation*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the participation of the state government and positive/negative impact of the news media on environmental collaborations. The independent variable, state participation, included 2 levels: state involvement (N=55) and no state involvement (N=10). The dependent variable was the positive or negative impact of the news media on the day-to-day work of the collaboration cases. The ANOVA was not significant.,  $F(1,63) = 1.61, p = .210$ .

Hypothesis 2a(iv.) Positive or negative media impact on collaborations will have no statistically significant relationship with geographic location.

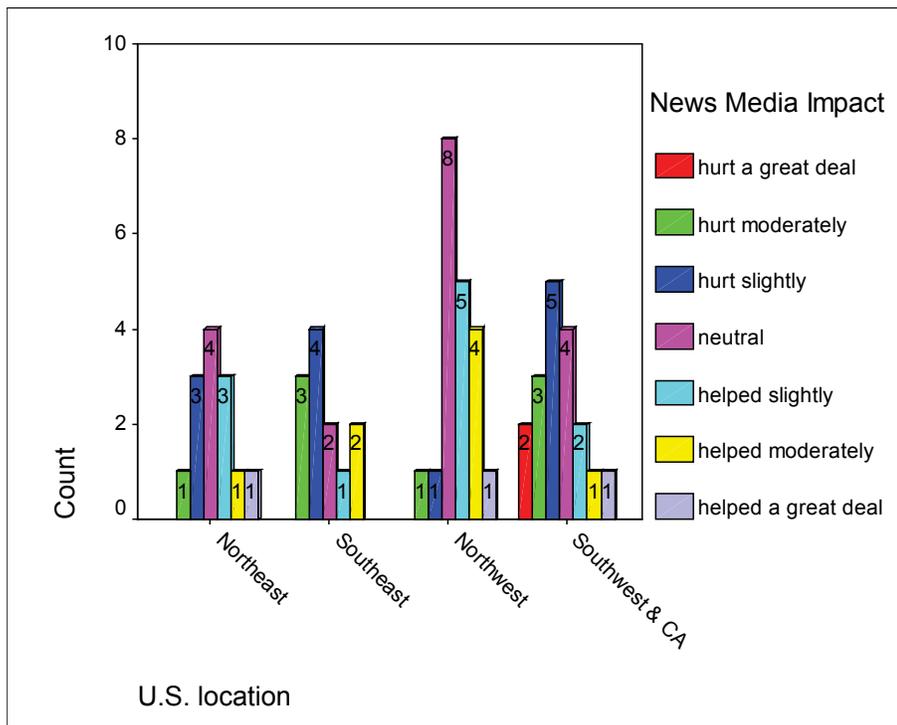
**Hypothesis #2a(iv) is not consistent with results.** *Positive or negative media impact on collaborations has a statistically significant association with geographic location.*

The reported news media impact on collaborations in the Northwest is statistically different from the Southwest (including California), with the Northwest reporting generally positive impacts and the Southwest collaborations reporting negative impacts more often. This result seems counterintuitive in that the Northwest is the scene of vicious battles over snowy owls & lumber, salmon fishing and loggers, etc., while California's image is a media loving, media-driven area.

#### *APA Results section*

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to evaluate the relationship between U.S. location and positive/negative impact of the news media on environmental collaborations. The independent variable, location, included 4 levels: Northeast, Southeast, Northwest and Southwest (including California). The dependent variable was the positive or negative impact of the news media on the day-to-day work of the collaboration cases. The ANOVA was significant.,  $F(3,59) = 2.84, p = .046$ . The strength of the relationship between location and positive/negative press impact, as assessed by  $\eta^2$  was medium, with location accounting for 13% of the variance of the dependent variable.

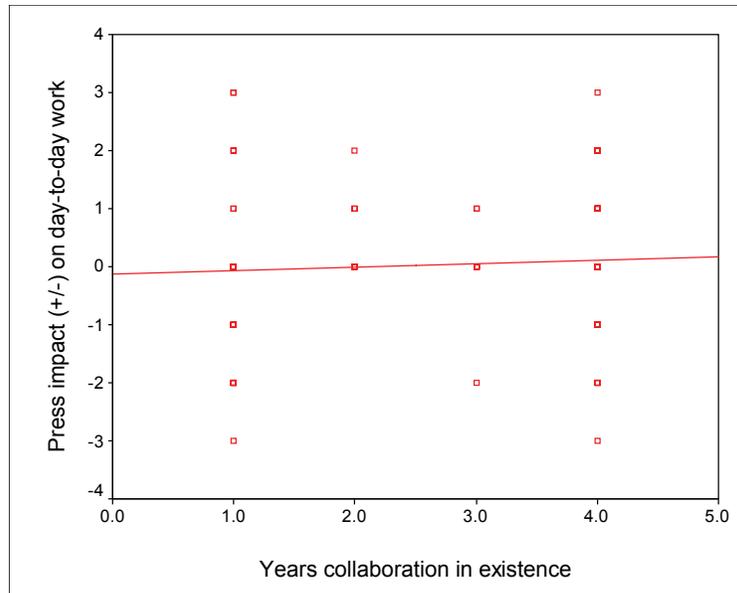
Followup tests were conducted to evaluate the pairwise differences among the means. Because the variances among the groups were relatively homogeneous (range of 1.4 to 2.1) post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test were conducted. The pairwise comparisons indicated a mean difference of 1.2056 between the Northwest and Southwest groups, significant at .050, but no significant differences between the other groups.



**Figure 37.** *Crosstabulation Bar Chart: Location and News media impact*

**Hypothesis #2a(v) is consistent with results.** *Positive or negative media impact on collaborations have no statistically significant association with the length of time the collaboration is in existence.*

There is no apparent relationship between the number of years in existence and the positive or negative impact the news media have on environmental collaborations, as evidenced by the scatter plot and virtually horizontal goodness-of-fit line in Figure 38.



**Figure 38.** Scatterplot of Positive/negative press impact and Years of collaboration

Hypothesis #2b. The positive media impact on collaborations will have a statistically significant association with the adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media. (Corollary: negative media impact will be significantly higher in collaborations without media ground rules.)

**Hypothesis #2b is consistent with results.** *The positive media impact on collaborations has a statistically significant association with the adoption of ground rules for dealing with the news media, and the negative media impact is higher in collaborations without media ground rules.*

Cases with written MGRs report a statistically significantly difference in positive/negative media impact on the outcomes of the cases. It would appear that the key element is whether the Media Ground Rules are written down and agreed to. Of those *with* written MGRs, 74% reported the press had a *positive* impact on the final collaboration outcome and only 23% reported a negative impact. A majority of the cases *without* written MGRs reported a *negative* media impact (60%). (Note: Some respondents reported cases where some media ground rules were allegedly understood by participants, but not actually written down. Those cases showed no statistically significant difference in media impact from cases where no media ground rules whatever were in place.)

*APA results section:*

A two-way contingency table analysis was conducted to evaluate whether collaborations without written MGRs reported more negative media impact on the final outcomes of the collaborations. The two variables were written MGRs (present or not present) and media impact on outcomes (positive or negative). MGRs and media impact on outcome were found to be significantly related, Pearson Chi-square (1, N = 42) = 4.369,  $p = .037$ .

Hypothesis #2c. The negative impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in negative media-related activities such as grandstanding, hardening public positions, leaking information or using the press as a tool to coerce other stakeholders.

**Hypothesis #2c is consistent with results.** *The negative impact of the news media increases when stakeholder participants engage in negative media-related activities such as grandstanding, hardening public positions, leaking information or using the press as a tool to coerce other stakeholders.*

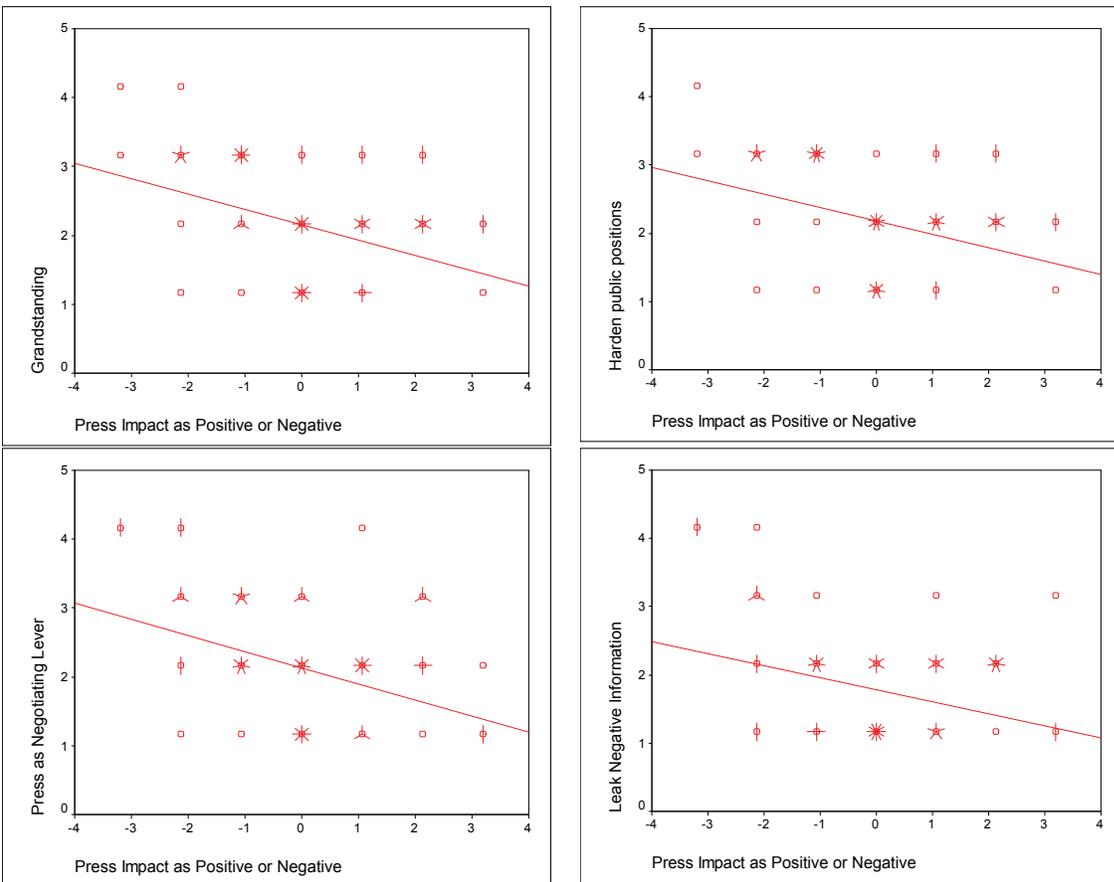
Negative media-related acts have a significant direct relationship with positive/negative media impact, accounting for about 10% of the variance. It is not possible to identify statistically which variable has the strongest relationship to negative media impact, because the negative action variables are highly correlated with each other. Correlation coefficients among the variables range from .545 to .807.

The scatterplots as shown in Figure 39, indicate that each negative media-related action variable is linearly related to the positive/negative impact of the press. The negative impact of the news media increases as the stakeholders increase their frequency of Grandstanding, Hardening public positions to impress constituents, Leaking information to the press or Using the press as a negotiating lever to coerce other stakeholders.

*APA Results Section*

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well negative media impact will be predicted by negative media-related actions by stakeholders. The predictors were (a) stakeholders grandstanding when news media are present, (b) stakeholders hardening public positions to impress their constituents, (c) leaking information to the news media, and (d) using the news media as a negotiating lever to coerce other stakeholders. The criterion was the positive/negative impact of the press on the day-to-day work of the collaboration. The linear

combination of negative media-related actions was significantly related to the positive/negative impact of the press.,  $F(4, 53) = 2.61, p = .046$ . The multiple correlation coefficient was .41, indicating that approximately 17% of the variance of the positive/negative press impact can be accounted for by the linear combination of negative media-related actions; however, the adjusted  $r^2$  was .102 indicating only 10% of the variance is attributable to them. It is impossible to identify what portion of the 10% is attributable to a specific negative media-related action, because the zero order correlations with positive/negative media impact were almost identical for each kind of negative media-related action (-.365, -.369, -.338, -.334), indicating that, statistically, each variable by itself could account for all of the variance.



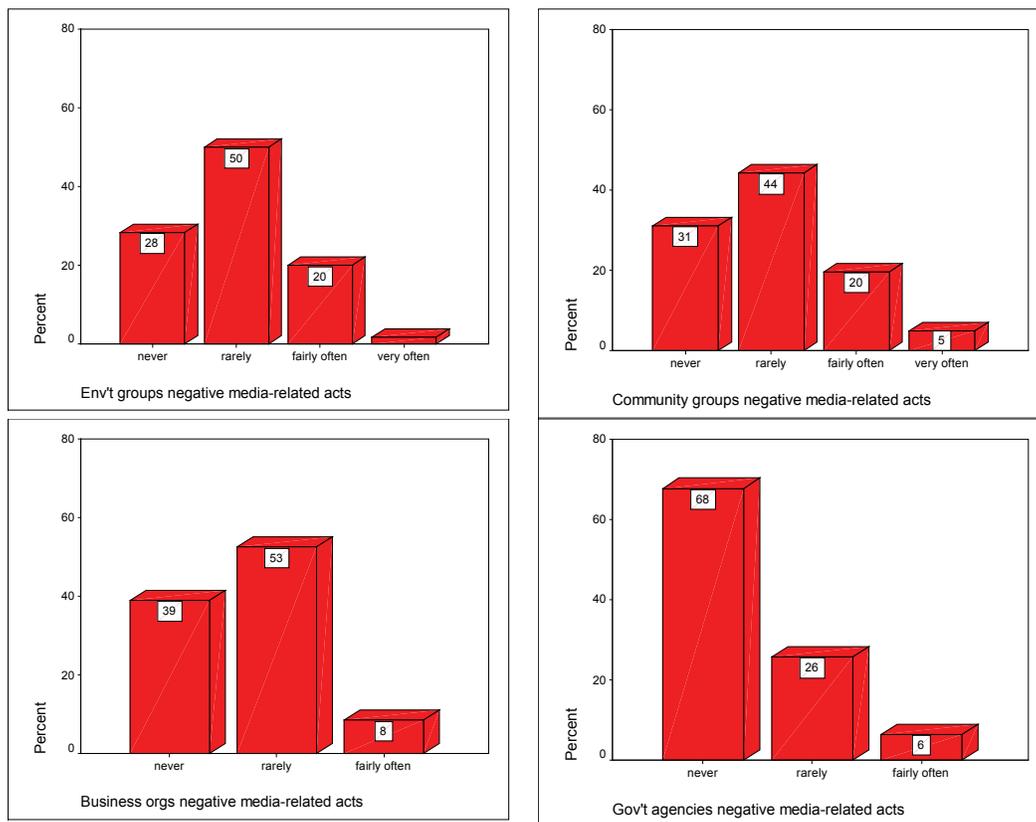
**Figure 39.** Scatterplots: Negative media-related stakeholder actions & Press impact

Hypothesis #2d. Stakeholder groups that generally perceive themselves as less powerful will engage in negative media-related actions most often.

**Hypothesis #2d is consistent with results.** *Stakeholder groups that generally perceive themselves as less powerful engage in negative media-related actions most often.*

Negative media-related behavior was higher for environmental groups and community organizations—stakeholder groups that generally perceive themselves as less powerful—by statistically significant amounts over government agencies (large effect values of  $-.72$  and  $-.79$ ), and business organizations (moderate effect values of  $-.28$  and  $-.34$ ). Environmental groups and community groups engaged in negative media-related activities “fairly often or very often” in 23.1% of the cases reported—almost 3 times as frequently as the 7.5% reported for business and government organizations.

There were no reported cases where government and business organizations engaged in negative activities “very often,” but in 4.9% of the cases, community groups engaged in negative media-related activity “very often.” There was only 1 reported case where environmental groups engaged in negative media-related activity “very often.”



**Figure 40.** Bar charts of Stakeholder groups & Negative media-related acts

### *APA Results Sections*

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether government agencies engaged in negative media-related activity more or less often than any other stakeholder group. All mean differences were negative numbers, indicating that the second pair member had a higher mean score because it engaged in more negative activity.

- Business organizations: The results indicated that the mean for negative media-related acts by government (M=1.32, SD=.540) was significantly lower than the mean for business organizations (M=1.67, SD=.62),  $t(58) = -3.87$ ,  $p = .000$ . The standardized effect size index,  $d$  was  $-.50$  a moderate value. The mean difference was  $-.37$  points between the two 4-point Likert ratings.
- Environmental groups: The results indicated that the mean for negative media-related acts by government (M=1.33, SD=.542) was significantly lower than the mean for environmental groups (M=1.95, SD=.746),  $t(59) = -6.10$ ,  $p = .000$ . The standardized effect size index,  $d$  was  $-.79$ , a large value. The mean difference was  $-.62$  points between the two 4-point Likert ratings.
- Community groups: The results indicated that the mean for negative media-related acts by government (M=1.36, SD=.578) was significantly lower than the mean for community groups (M=1.37, SD=.846),  $t(60) = -5.661$ ,  $p = .000$ . The standardized effect size index,  $d$  was  $-.72$ , a large value. The mean difference was  $-.62$  points between the two 4-point Likert ratings.

Controlling for familywise error rate across the three tests at the .05 level, using the Holm's sequential Bonferroni procedure (dividing  $>.05$  by 3, 2 and 1 ), all  $p$ -values of .000 are significant.

A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to evaluate whether business organizations engaged in negative media-related activity more or less often than environmental groups and community groups. All mean differences were negative numbers, indicating that the second pair member had a higher mean score because it engaged in more negative activity.

- Environmental groups: The results indicated that the mean for negative media-related acts by business organizations (M=1.69, SD=.623) was significantly lower than the mean for environmental groups (M=1.93, SD=.740),  $t(58) = -2.59$ ,  $p = .012$ . The standardized

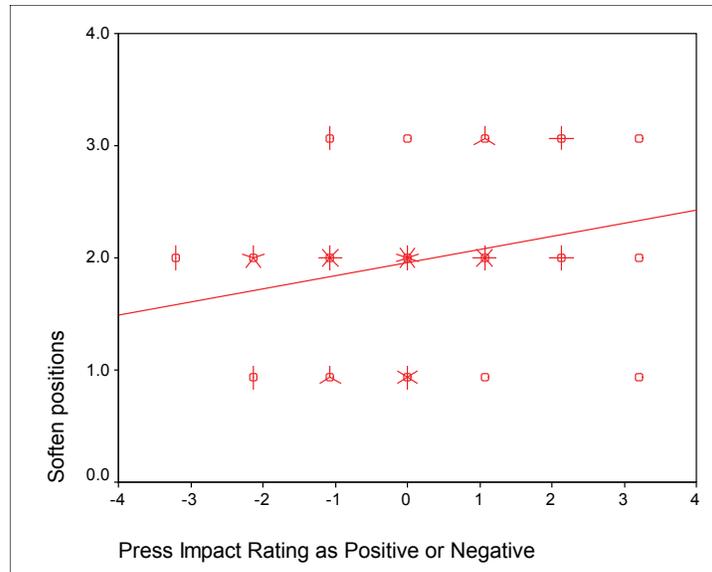
effect size index,  $d$  was  $-.34$ , a moderate value. The mean difference was  $-.24$  points between the two 4-point Likert ratings.

- Community groups: The results indicated that the mean for negative media-related acts by business organizations ( $M=1.69$ ,  $SD=.623$ ) was significantly lower than the mean for community groups ( $M=1.97$ ,  $SD=.850$ ),  $t(58) = -2.27$ ,  $p=.034$ . The standardized effect size index,  $d$  was  $-.28$ , a moderate value. The mean difference was  $-.27$  points between the two 4-point Likert ratings.

Hypothesis #2e. The positive impact of the news media will increase when stakeholder participants engage in positive media-related activities such as softening positions to appear more reasonable to the public or saying positive things to the media about other stakeholders.

**Hypothesis #2e is consistent with results.** *The positive impact of the news media increases when stakeholder participants engage in positive media-related activities such as softening positions to appear more reasonable to the public or saying positive things to the media about other stakeholders.*

The simple act of saying positive things about other stakeholders appears to have the most significant direct relationship with positive or negative media impact, accounting for about 13% of the variance. The scatterplots as shown in Figure 41, indicate that both positive media-related action variables are linearly related to the positive/negative impact of the press. As the stakeholders increase their frequency of positive comments to the media about other stakeholders, or increase their frequency of softening positions to appear more reasonable in public, then the positive impact of the news media increases.



**Figure 41.** Scatterplot: Softening positions & Press impact  
*APA Results Section*

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well positive media impact will be predicted by positive media-related actions by stakeholders. The predictors were (a) stakeholders making positive comments to the media about other stakeholders and (b) stakeholders softening positions to appear more reasonable in public. The criterion was the positive impact of the press. The linear combination of positive media-related actions was significantly related to the positive/negative impact of the press.,  $F(2, 57) = 6.07, p = .004$ . The multiple correlation coefficient was .42, indicating that approximately 18% of the variance of the positive/negative press impact can be accounted for by the linear combination of positive media-related actions; however, the adjusted  $r^2$  was .147 indicating only 15% of the variance is attributable to them. Only the variable “saying positive things about other stakeholders” was statistically significant ( $p = .005$ ), accounting for 13% of the variance when “softening positions” was controlled for. It is tempting to credit essentially all the variance to “saying positive things” but the two predictors are correlated (.352) so it is difficult to separate out the effects of each, and separate regression analyses generate statistically significant results for each.

Hypothesis #2f. Collaborations that adopt media ground rules will report fewer instances of negative media-related activity by stakeholders.

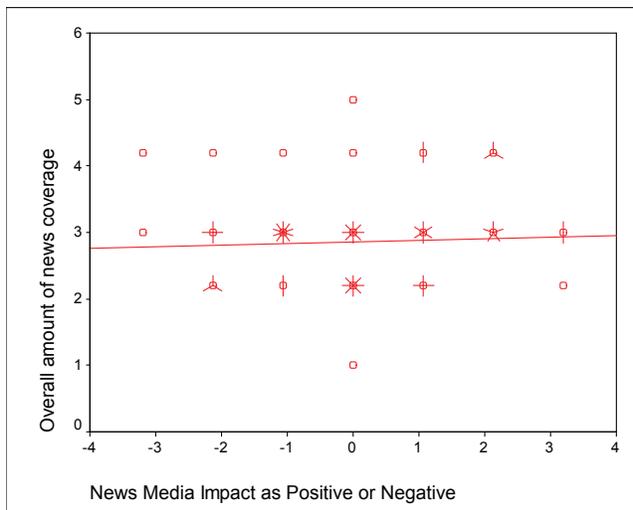
**Hypothesis #2f is consistent with results.** *Collaborations that adopt media ground rules report fewer instances of negative media-related activity by stakeholders.*

Collaborations with MGRs report fewer instances of all types of negative media-related behavior; however, the differences are not statistically significant when ANOVA analyses are run comparing the mean scores of the groups with MGRs and without MGRs on the variables Grandstanding, Hardening positions to impress constituents, Using the press as a negotiating lever, and Leaking negative information.

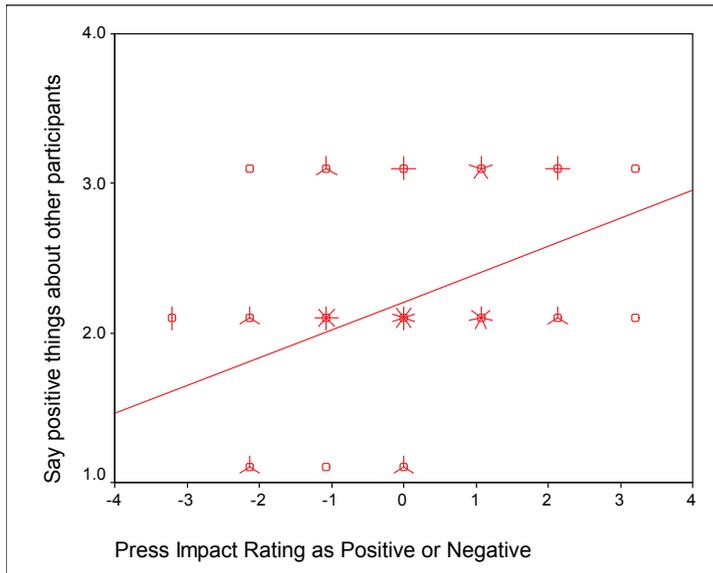
Hypothesis #2g. The amount of media coverage will act as an intensifier, with the perceived amount of media impact increasing—negative or positive—as the amount of media coverage increases.

Hypothesis #2g is not consistent with results. *The amount of media coverage did not act as an intensifier. There was no statistical relationship between the perceived negative or positive media impact and the amount of media coverage (Figure 42 below).*

A regression analysis confirmed the non-relationship of amount coverage and positive/negative nature of the impact of that coverage ( $p = .70$ ).



**Figure 42.** *Scatterplot of Amount of news coverage and Positive/Negative impact*

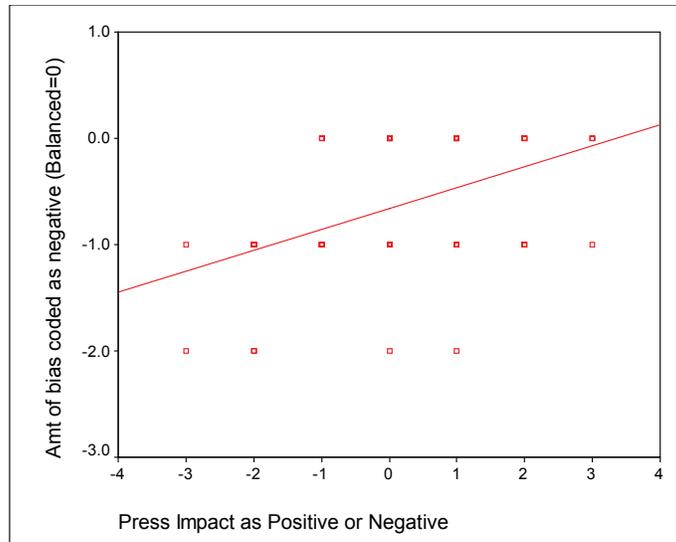


**Figure 43.** Scatterplot: *Saying positive things of other stakeholders & Press impact*

Hypothesis #2h. Positive media impact will be associated with collaborations where respondents perceive media coverage as balanced.

**Hypothesis #2h is consistent with results.** *Positive media impact is associated with collaborations where media coverage is perceived as balanced.*

As the perception of bias increases, the negative impact of the press increases. Conversely, the less biased the coverage (i.e., more balanced), the higher the positive rating given to the impact of the media.



**Figure 44.** Scatterplot of Bias in news coverage and Positive/Negative impact  
*APA Results Sections*

A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of positive or negative media impact from the amount of bias reported in the media outlet with the most coverage of a collaboration. The scatterplot of the two variables, as shown in Figure 44, indicates that the two variables are linearly related such that as the amount of bias decreases, the positive impact of the news media increases, or phrased another way, the more the coverage is balanced, the more positive is the reported impact. The regression equation for predicting the positive media impact is

$$\text{Positive/Negative media impact} = -1.082 \text{ Amount of bias} + 1.817$$

As hypothesized, Positive media impact is associated with collaborations where media coverage is perceived as more balanced (less biased). Collaboration reports of positive impact of media coverage are statistically associated with decreases in perceived bias in the news coverage. Conversely, an increase in perceived media bias is associated with reports of higher negative media impact. The correlation between the two variables was  $-0.461$ ,  $t(61) = -4.06$ ,  $p = .000$ . Approximately 21% of the variance of the positive/negative media rating was accounted for by its linear relationship with the amount of perceived bias in news coverage.

Hypothesis #2i. Strong negative media impact will be associated with collaborations where one or more groups perceive that media coverage is biased against them.

**Hypothesis #2i is consistent with results with regard to government agencies' perception of bias, but not for other groups.** *Strong negative media impact is associated with collaborations where government agencies perceive that media coverage is biased against them.*

This hypothesis was only found to be consistent with results in the case where the most bias was perceived—by government agencies. Government agencies reportedly had the highest level of perceived bias against them with 68% perceiving the press as having some bias against them or being very biased against them. This bias perception was linearly associated negative media impact, such that as the perceived bias increased, so did the reported negative media impact on the collaboration, accounting for 10% of the variance in positive/negative media impact on the day-to-day work of the collaboration.

A substantial number of collaborations reported that other stakeholder groups reported some perception of media bias against them, but there was no statistically significant association with reports of negative media impact on the collaborations. (See scatterplots in Figures 45, 46, 47, and 48, below.) A majority of collaborations reported that businesses thought the media was biased against them and there was a small, but statistically *insignificant* association with reported negative media impact, with a regression analysis producing a non-significant *p* of .456.

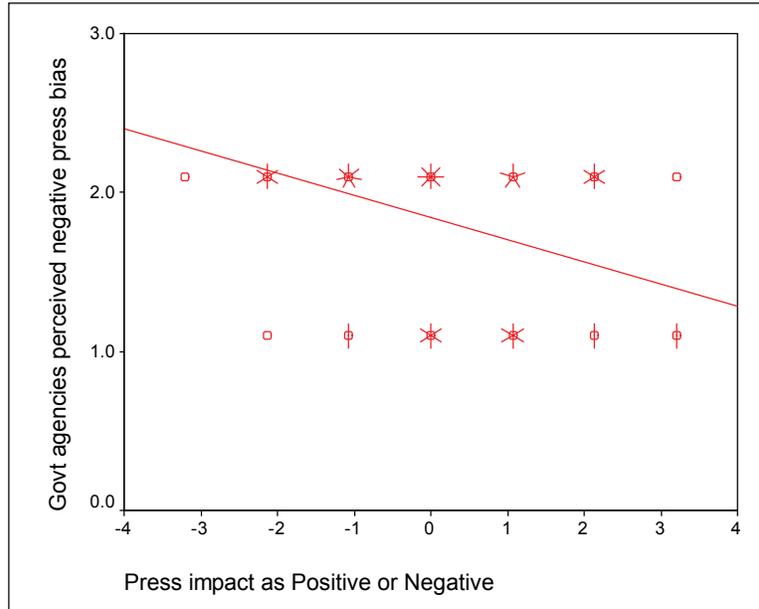
About half of the collaborations (49%) reported that environmental groups perceived the media as biased against them, and only 32% reported that community groups or members perceived the media as biased against them. In neither case was the perception of media bias significantly associated with negative media impact.

#### *APA Reporting Section*

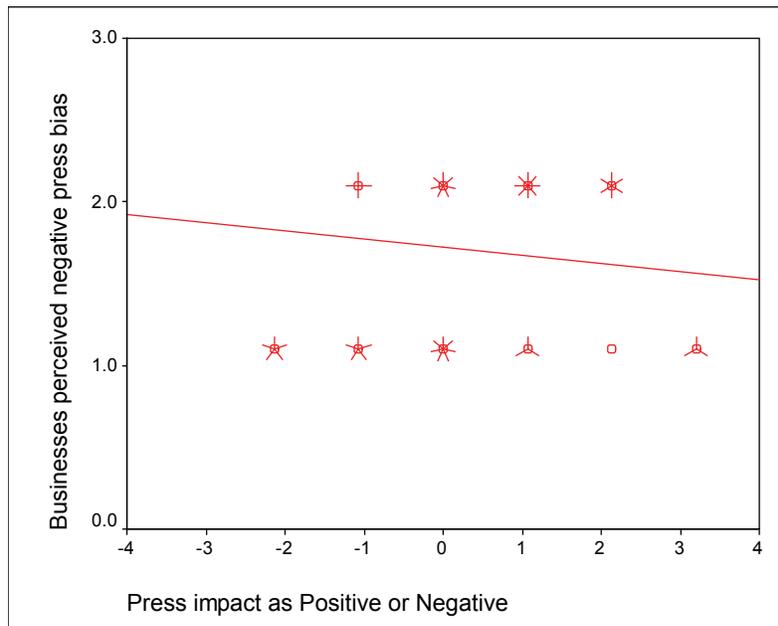
A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of negative media impact from the level of perceived media bias by government agencies. The scatterplot of the two variables, as shown in Figure 45, indicates that the two variables are linearly related such that as the score for media bias increases, the score for negative media impact also increases. Conversely, as the rating of media bias decreases, the reported positive media impact on the process increases. The regression equation for predicting the positive or negative media impact is

$$\text{Perception of media bias} = 1.339 \text{ Positive/Negative media impact} = -.702$$

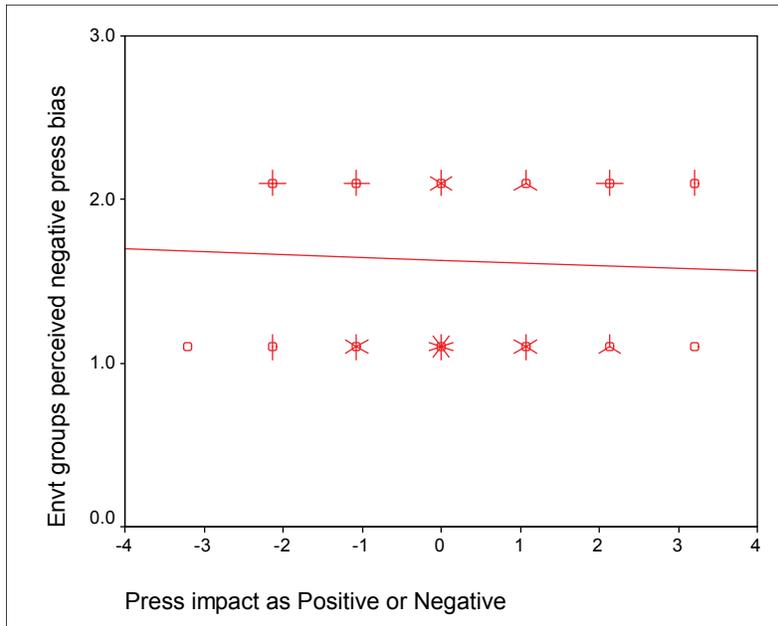
As hypothesized, perceived bias in news coverage by government agencies is strongly associated with negative media impact on the collaboration process. The correlation between the two variables was  $-.313$ ,  $t(60) = -2.550$ ,  $p = .013$ . Approximately 10% of the variance of the positive/negative media rating was accounted for by its linear relationship with the level of perceived media bias perceived by government agencies.



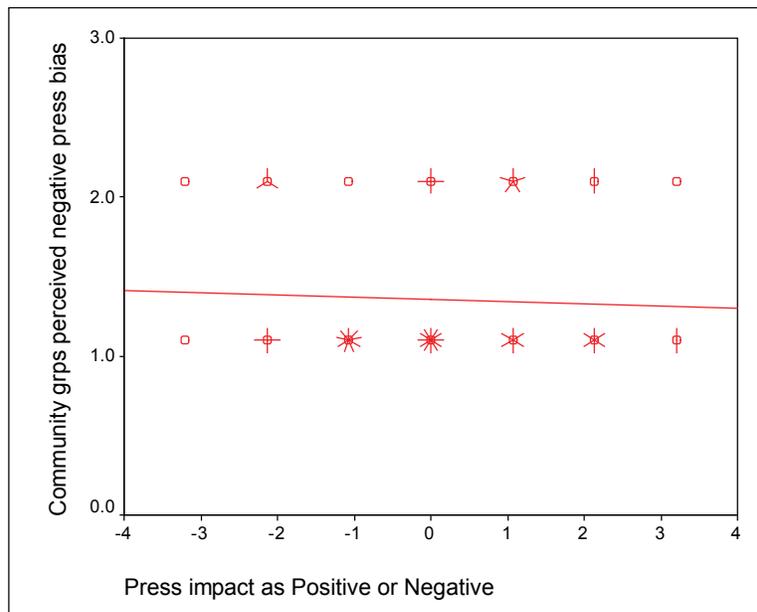
**Figure 45.** Scatterplot of Government agencies' perceived media bias & Positive/negative media impact



**Figure 46.** Scatterplot of Business organizations' perceived media bias & Positive/negative media impact



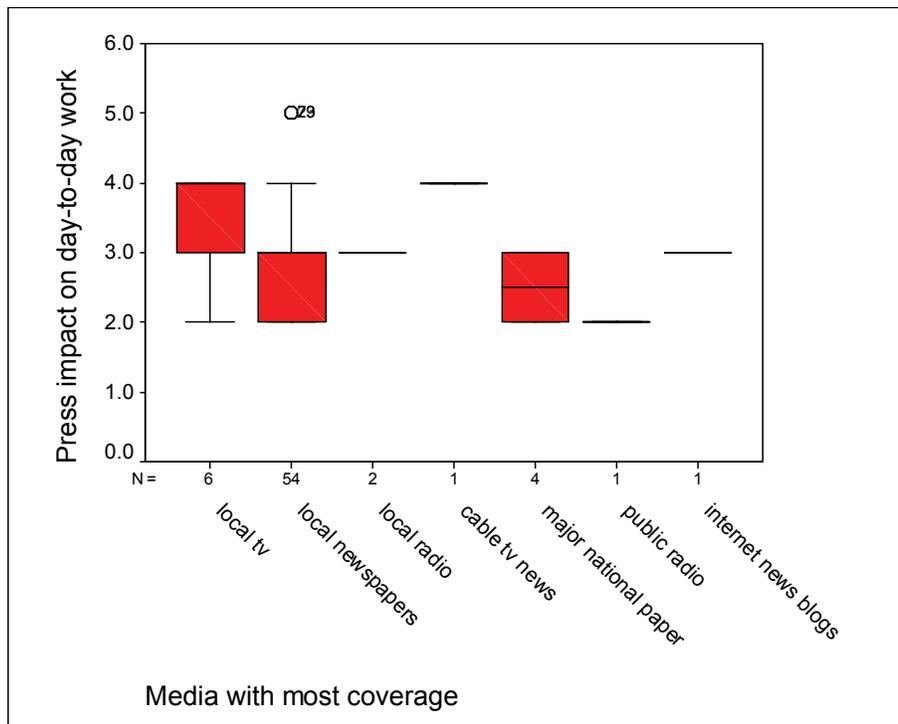
**Figure 47.** Scatterplot of Environmental groups' perceived media bias & Positive/negative media impact



**Figure 48.** Scatterplot of Community members' perceived media bias & Positive/negative media impact

Hypothesis #2j. The perceived impact of the media will be higher where local TV news provides the most coverage.

**Hypothesis #2j could not be tested because of insufficient data.** The perceived impact of the media was higher where local TV news provides the most coverage, but that reflects data from only 6 cases that reported TV provided the most coverage. Of the 69 cases for which data are available, 54 reported that local newspapers provided the most coverage. For the TV cases, the mean score for impact was 3.5 (moderate-strong effect), while for newspaper cases the mean score was 2.7 (slight-moderate). The most common score for TV cases was 4 (strong effect) and was reported by 4 of the 6 cases. The most common score for newspaper cases was 3. The boxplots in Figure 49 give a sense of the comparative numbers, but no reliable statistical conclusions can be made in this area.

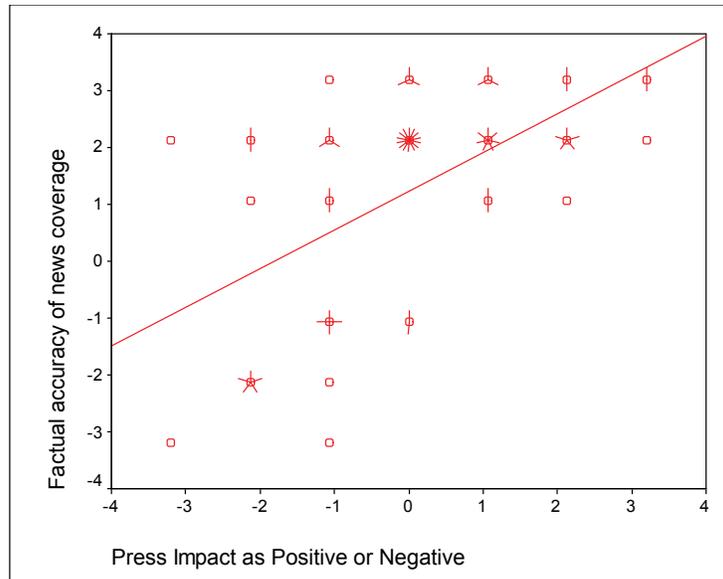


**Figure 49.** Boxplots comparing the impact of media outlets with the most coverage

Hypothesis #2k. Factual inaccuracy of news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact.

**Hypothesis #2k is consistent with results.** *Factual inaccuracy of news coverage is strongly associated with negative media impact accounting for 34% of the variance in media impact (See scatterplot in Figure 50, below).*

The more surprising finding here, however, is the degree to which the flip side is true – that positive media impact is very strongly associated with factual accuracy. Interestingly, the rating for factual accuracy was overall quite positive, despite the oft-heard criticism of the press for getting its facts wrong. The most frequent rating, or mode response, was 2 for moderately accurate. Only 20% of respondents found the press generally inaccurate to some degree.



**Figure 50.** *Scatterplot of Accuracy of news coverage and Positive/Negative impact*  
*APA Results Section - regression analysis*

A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of negative media impact from the level of factual inaccuracy in news coverage. The scatterplot, as shown in Figure 58, indicates that the two variables are linearly related such that as the score for accuracy gets more negative, the score for media impact also becomes more negative. Conversely, as accuracy increases, the reported positive media impact also increases. The regression equation for predicting the positive or negative media impact is

$$\text{Accuracy of media coverage} = -.579 \text{ Positive/Negative media impact} + .494$$

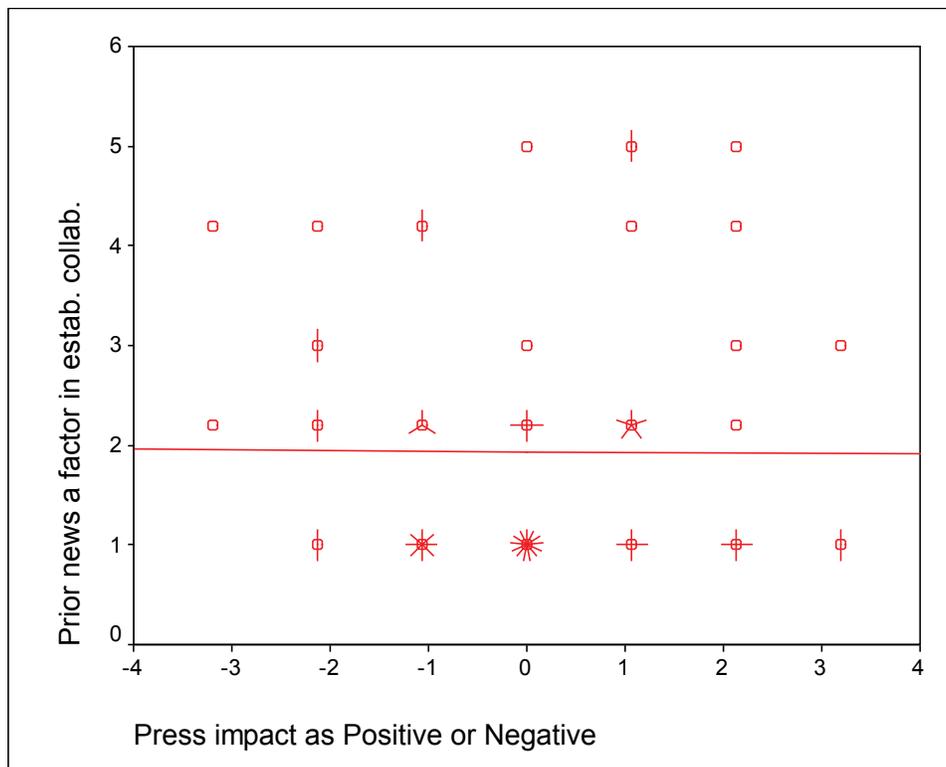
As hypothesized, factual inaccuracy in news coverage is strongly associated with negative media impact on the collaboration process. The correlation between the two variables was  $.579$ ,  $t(62) =$

5.596,  $p = .000$ . Approximately 34% of the variance of the positive/negative media rating was accounted for by its linear relationship with the level of factual accuracy in news coverage.

Hypothesis #21. Where prior news coverage was a moderately to highly significant factor in establishing the collaboration, the continued heavy news coverage will have a negative impact.

**Hypothesis #21 is not consistent with results.** *Where prior news coverage was a moderately to highly significant factor in establishing the collaboration, the continued heavy news coverage will have a negative impact.*

Only 15 cases reported that prior news coverage was a moderately significant, quite significant or highly significant factor in establishing the collaboration. There was no statistical association generally between the rating of prior news coverage as a factor in establishing the collaboration and the positive or negative effect of press coverage (Figure 51 scatterplot, below).



**Figure 51.** *Scatterplot: Prior news coverage as factor in establishing collaboration and Press impact as positive/negative*

Hypothesis #2m. Of all press activities, the presence of TV cameras will have the greatest association with negative media impact.

**Hypothesis #2m is not consistent with results.** *Negative media impact was not associated with the presence of TV cameras any more than it was associated with any other press activity.*

A one-sample *t*-test compared the mean scores of positive/negative press impact for each of the five press activity variables: 1. TV cameras in meetings, 2. Reporters in meetings, 3. Press interviews of collaboration participants, 4. Press interviews with outsiders not participating in the collaboration and 5. Press responses to press releases from the collaboration.

Hypothesis #2n. Conflict-oriented news coverage will be strongly associated with negative media impact.

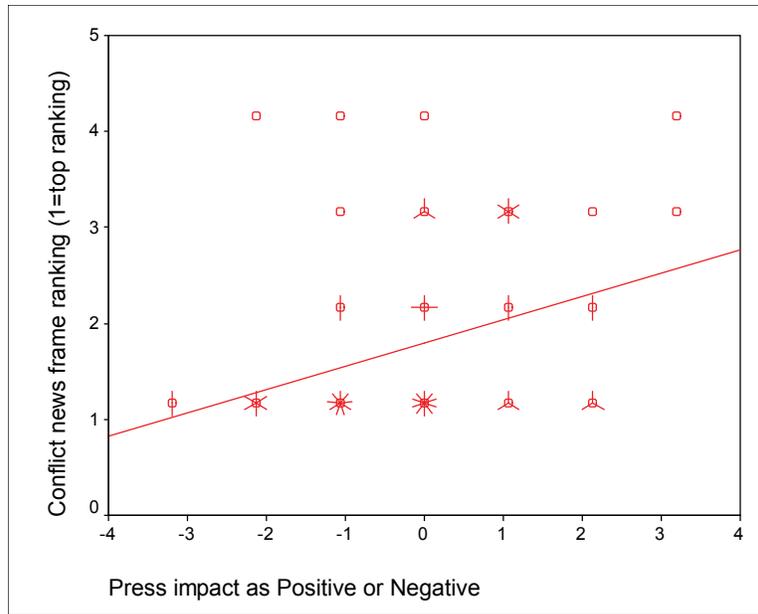
**Hypothesis #2n is consistent with results.** *Conflict-oriented news coverage is strongly associated with negative media impact.*

Of the 59 cases that ranked news frames in their news coverage, 33 (56%) ranked conflict as the most frequent news frame and 17 of those cases reported a negative media impact on the day-to-day work of the collaboration. A regression analysis showed the association of conflict ranking and negative media impact to be significant ( $p = .009$ ) and account for 11% of the variance in positive/negative media impact.

A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of negative media impact from the ranking of conflict as a news frame in media coverage. The scatterplot of the two variables, as shown in Figure 52 indicates that the two variables are linearly related such that as the ranking for the conflict news frame gets higher (highest rank=1), the score for media impact also becomes more negative. Conversely, the as the ranking of conflict as a news frame decreases, the reported positive media impact on the process increases. The regression equation for predicting the positive or negative media impact is

$$\text{Conflict news frame ranking} = -.898 \text{ Positive/Negative media impact} = .466$$

As hypothesized, conflict as a news frame is strongly associated with negative media impact on the collaboration process. The correlation between the two variables was .336,  $t(57) = 2.698$ ,  $p = .009$ . Approximately 11% of the variance of the positive/negative media rating was accounted for by its linear relationship with conflict as a news frame in media coverage.



**Figure 52.** Scatterplot: *Conflict news frame & Press impact as positive/negative*

Hypothesis #2o. Collaborations reporting that press activities lowered trust levels will also report generally negative outcomes.

**Hypothesis #2o is not consistent with results.** *Collaborations reporting that press activities lowered trust levels did not report generally negative outcomes.*

The data definitely did not support the conclusion. Of the respondents who reported that press coverage lowered trust levels among collaboration stakeholders, 81% still reported a positive or neutral outcome for the collaboration overall. Respondents were not asked to speculate whether the outcomes would have been better if press coverage had not impaired stakeholder trust.

Only 9.7% (6 respondents out of 62) reported negative overall outcomes for their collaborations. Five of the 6 respondents who reported a negative overall outcome also reported that press coverage lowered trust levels, but that would appear to simply be another negative aspect to an overall negative collaborative experience.

Hypothesis #2p. (i) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the *amount* of media impact on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations and (ii) There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and

the amount of *positive/negative impact* the media have on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.

**Hypothesis #2p(i) is consistent with results.** *There is no statistically significant association between the role of the press and the amount of media impact on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.*

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well the importance of press roles predicted the amount of impact that the press would have on the work of environmental collaborations. The predictors were the nine press roles and the criterion was the amount of impact the media had on the day-to-day work of the collaboration. The linear combination of press roles was not significantly related to the amount of impact the press had on the day-to-day work of the collaborations,  $F(9,52) = 1.24, p = .292$ .

**Hypothesis #2p(ii) is not consistent with results.** *There is a statistically significant association between two roles of the press (Public Education Tool & Nuisance) and the positive/negative impact the media have on the day-to-day work of environmental collaborations.*

One surprising result was the positive correlation between the positive/negative impact of the press and its traditional roles of Agenda setter and Public watchdog, but even more startling was almost non-existent *amount* of impact these two traditional roles reportedly have. These roles were statistically insignificant and accounted for virtually 0% of the variation in positive/negative media impact.

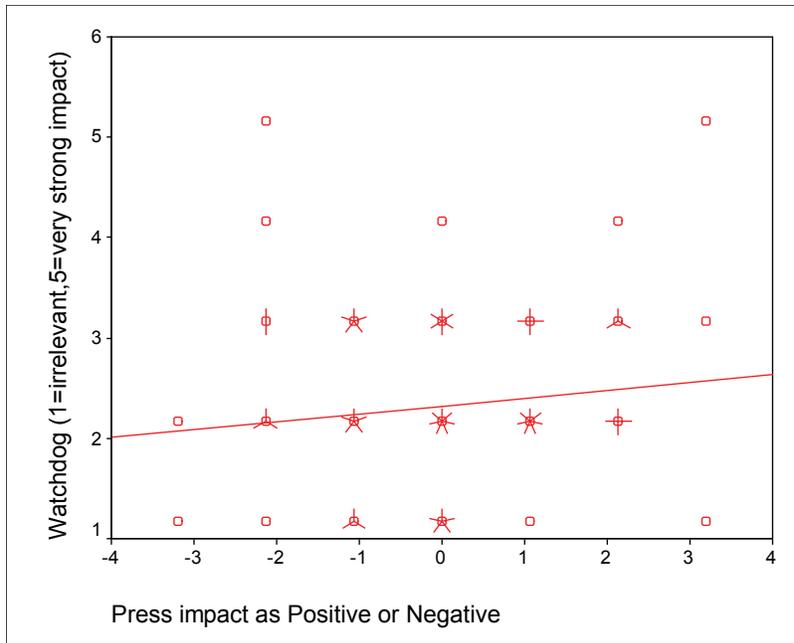
The Press Roles with the most impact were roles that the news media themselves would not be proud to acknowledge – the Nuisance role accounting for 20% of the variance in positive/negative impact and the Public Information Tool role accounting for 18% of the variance. While members of the press are proud of their role of informing the public about public issues, the media do not like to think of themselves as public education vehicles used by government or non-government bodies. That smacks too much of an uncritical mouthpiece role. As for the Nuisance role, press people have no problem being unpopular with organizations they report on, but the media would be deeply unhappy to be dismissed as bothersome nuisances. Members of the news media think their role in public debate is immensely important.

*APA Results Section*

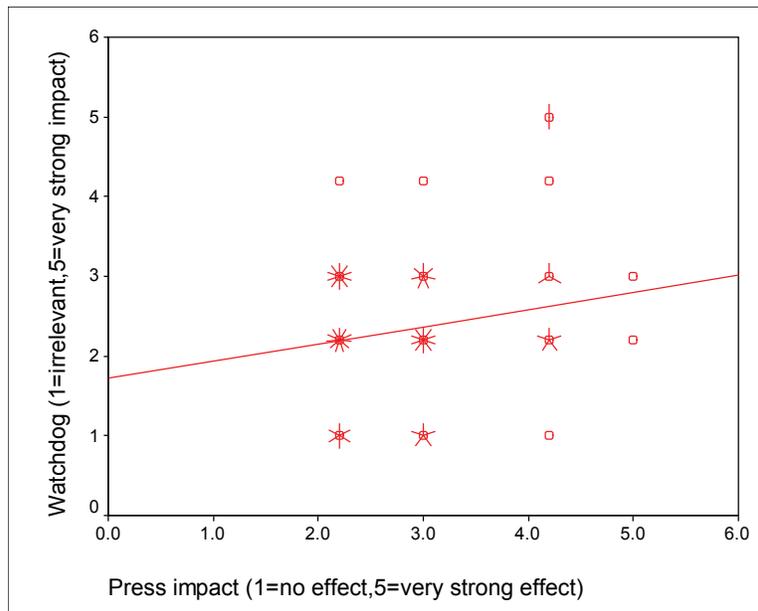
A multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how well the importance of press roles predicted the amount of positive/negative impact that the press would have on the work of environmental collaborations. The predictors were the nine press roles and the criterion was the amount of positive/negative impact the media had on the day-to-day work of the collaboration. The linear combination of press roles was significantly related to the amount of positive/negative impact the press had on the day-to-day work of the collaborations,  $F(9,52) = 8.96, p = .000$ . The multiple correlation coefficient was .78 with an  $r^2$  of .61 and an adjusted  $r^2$  of .54 indicating that 54% of the variance of positive/negative press impact can be accounted for by the linear combination of press roles. When all other predictors were controlled for, most of variance was accounted for by the negative Nuisance role (-.45 correlation or 20% of variance) and the positive Public Education Tool role (+.42 correlation or 18% of variance). The other press roles of Watchdog, accounted for about 1% of the variance each, with the exception of the Community stakeholder role which accounted for a very minor 3% (-.16 correlation).

Only the roles of Public Education Tool and Nuisance were statistically significant. Not surprisingly, the bivariate correlation between the press role as Public Education Tool and positive/negative impact was positive. Also unsurprisingly, the bivariate correlation between the press role as Nuisance and positive/negative impact was negative. The correlations were also negative for the predictor press roles of Stumbling block, Negotiating lever, Catalyst, Policy Advocate, and Community stakeholder, so that as the importance of these media roles increase, the impact of the media became more negative.

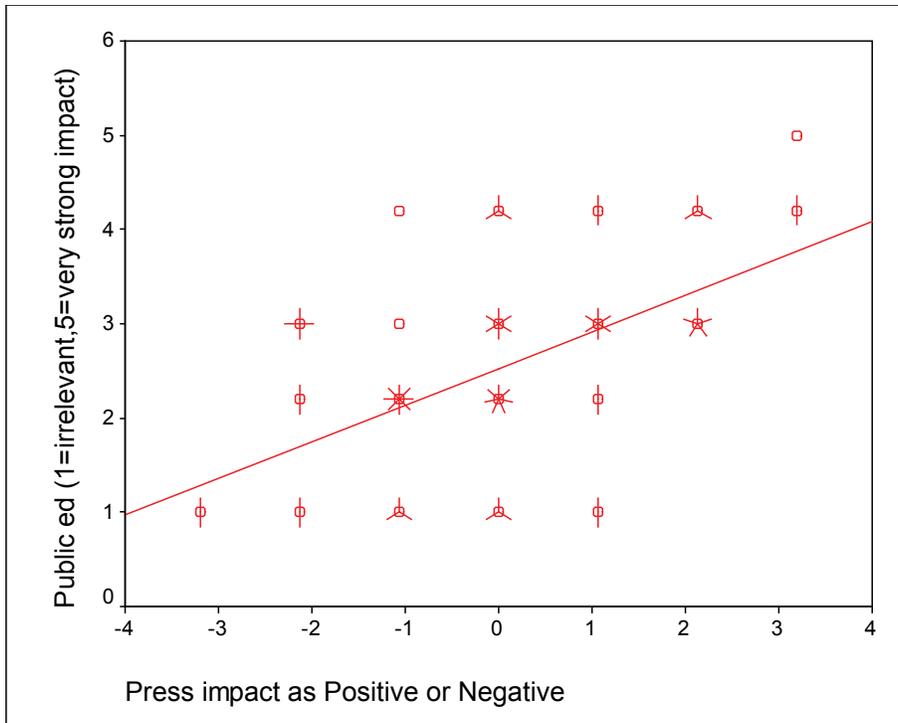
To provide some perspective on the ratings of the press roles, scatterplots are reproduced below of the linear relationships between the variables measuring the reported impact of the various roles and the amount/direction of press impact on the day-to-day work of the collaboration processes.



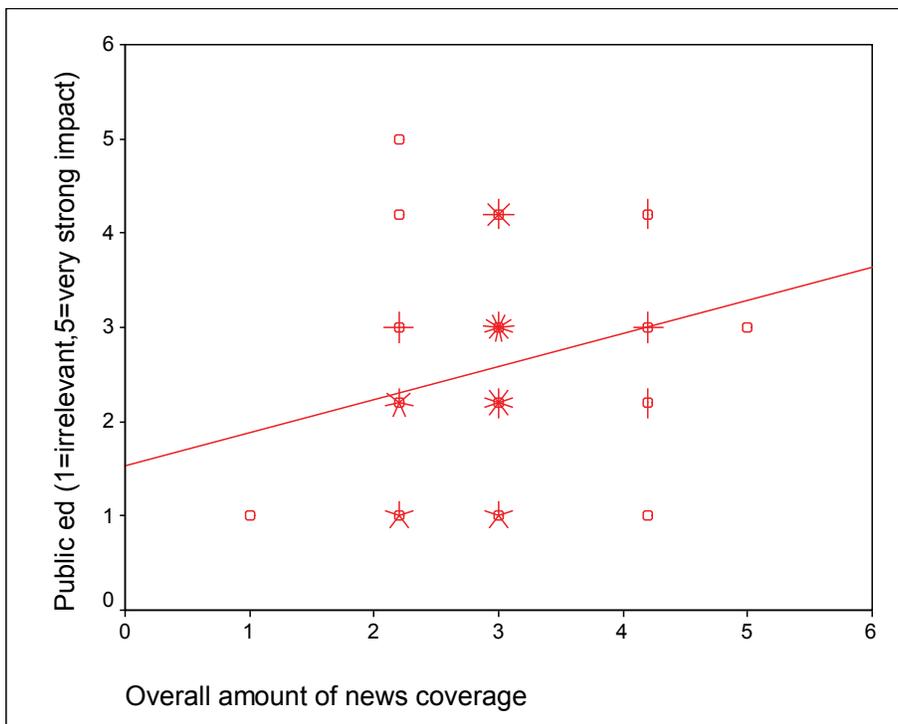
**Figure 53.** Scatterplot: Public Watchdog press role and Press impact positive/negative



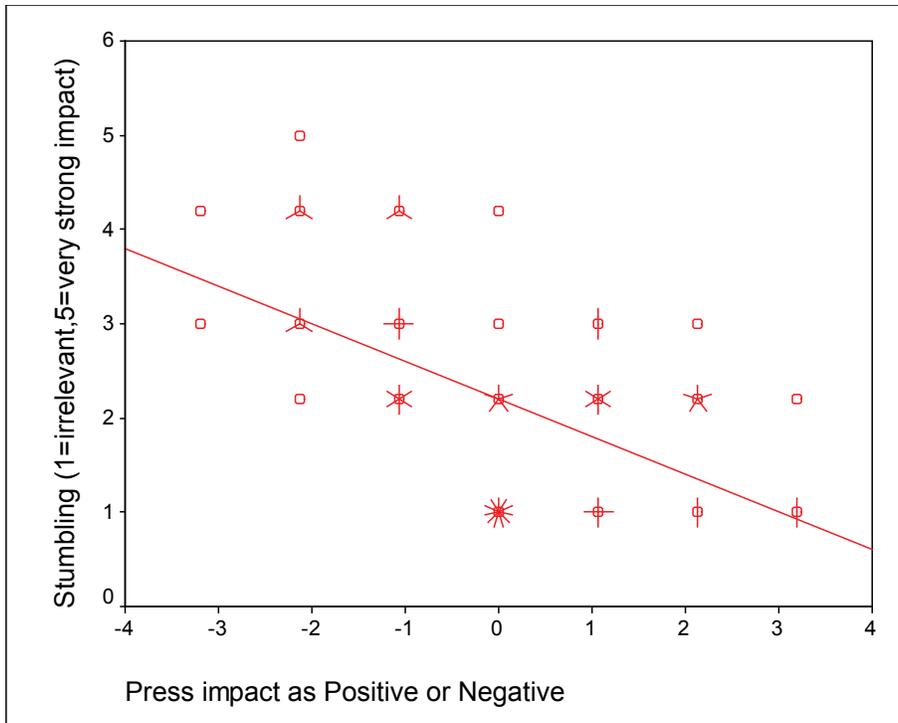
**Figure 54.** Scatterplot: Public Watchdog press role and Amount of press impact



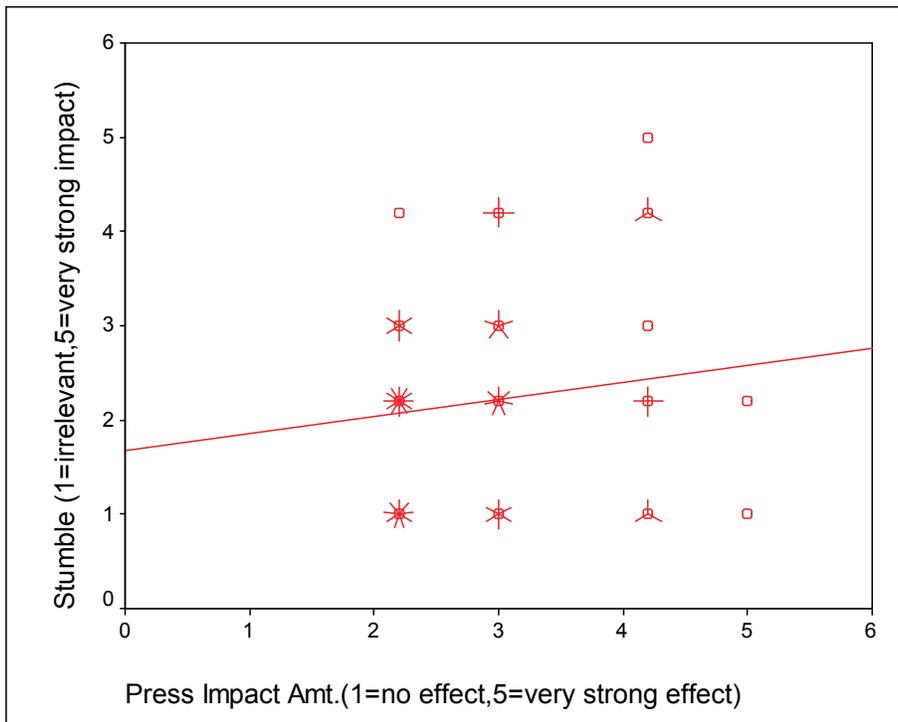
**Figure 55.** Scatterplot: Public Education Tool press role and Press impact positive/negative



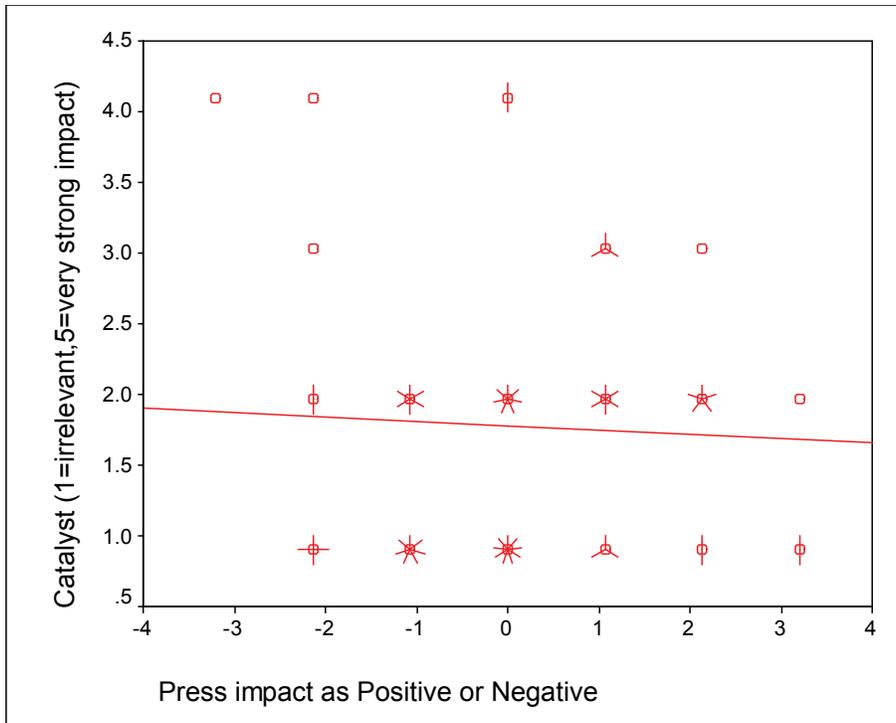
**Figure 56.** Scatterplot: Public Education Tool role and Amount of media impact



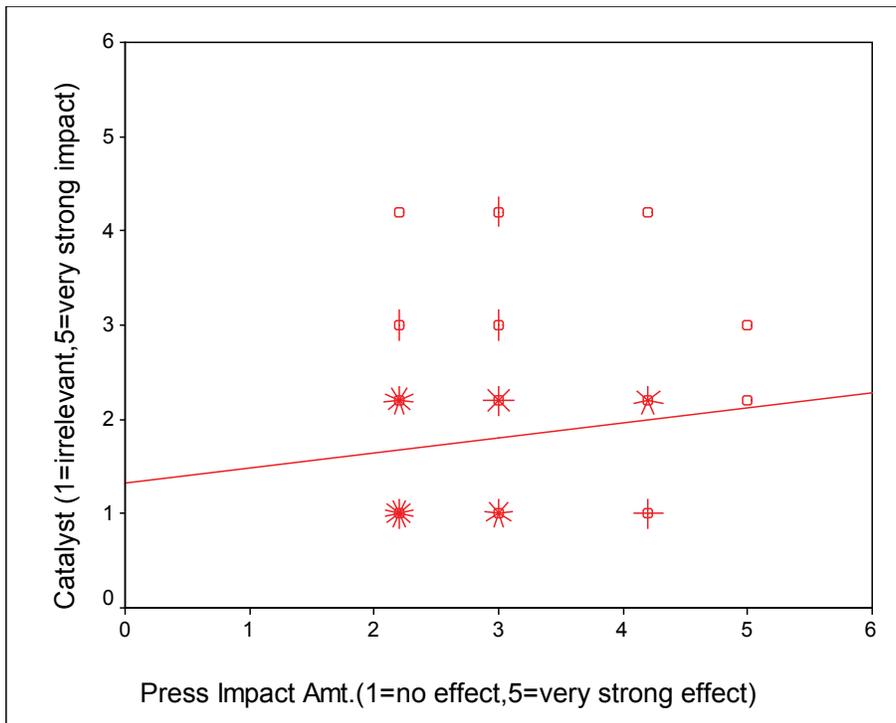
**Figure 57.** Scatterplot: Stumbling Block press role and Press impact positive/negative



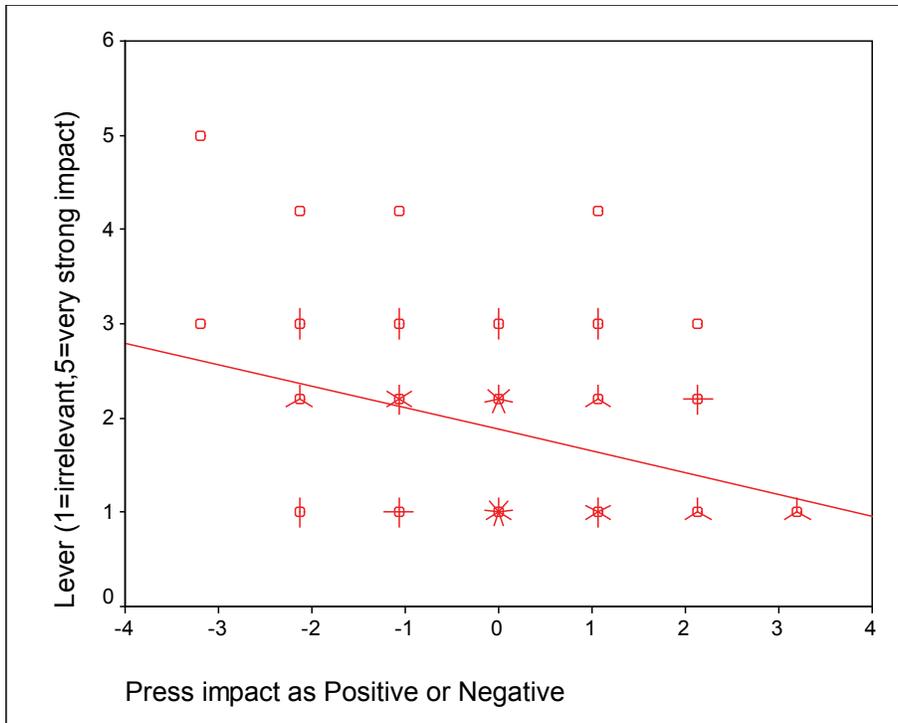
**Figure 58.** Scatterplot: Stumbling Block role and Amount of media impact



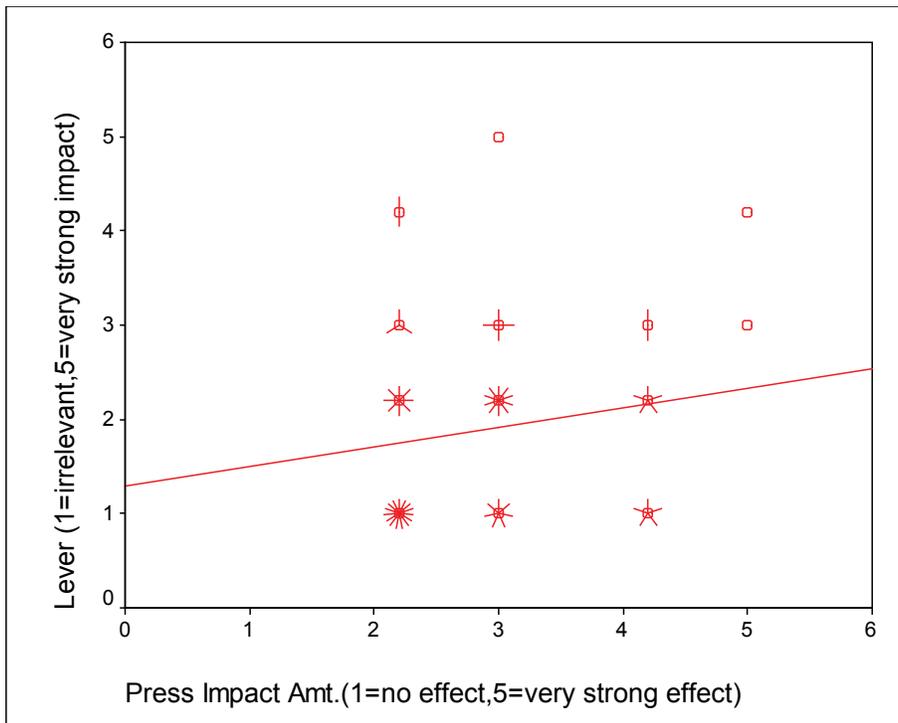
**Figure 59.** Scatterplot: Catalyst press role and Press impact positive/negative



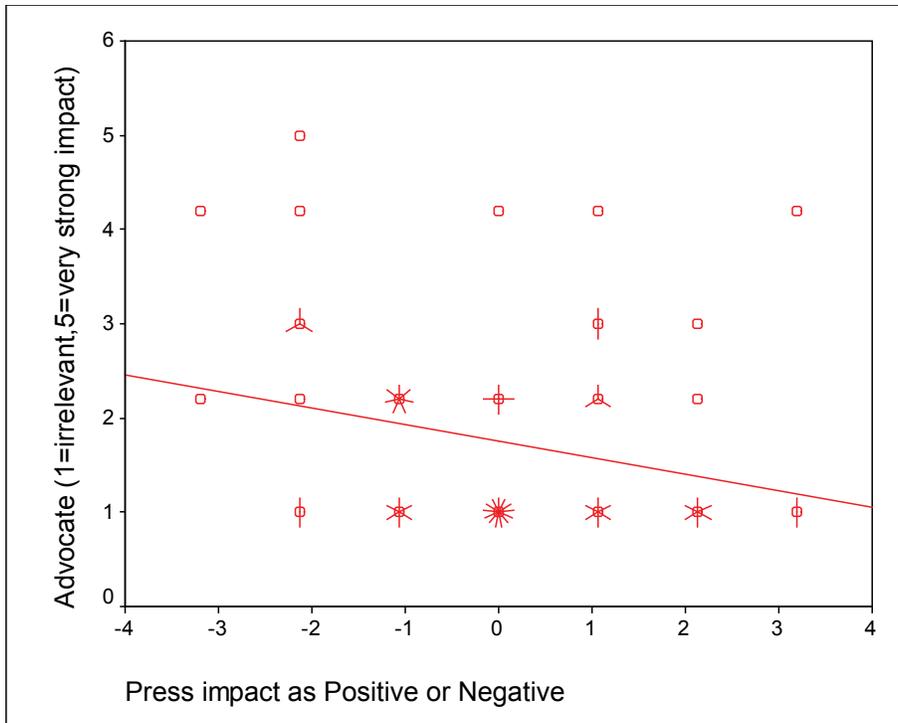
**Figure 60.** Scatterplot: Catalyst role and Amount of media impact



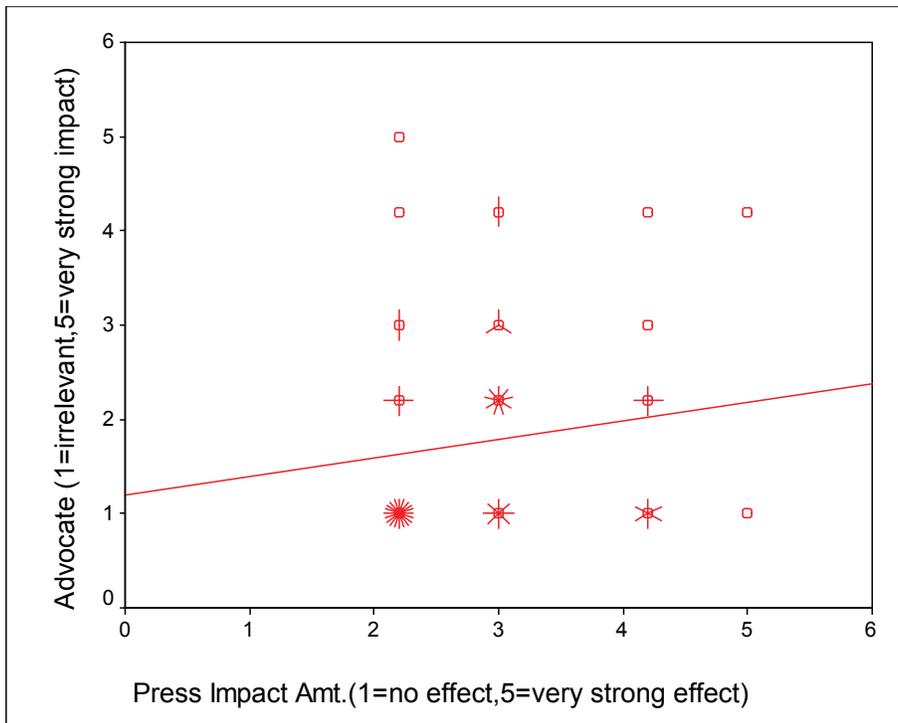
**Figure 61.** Scatterplot: Negotiating Lever press role and Press impact positive/negative



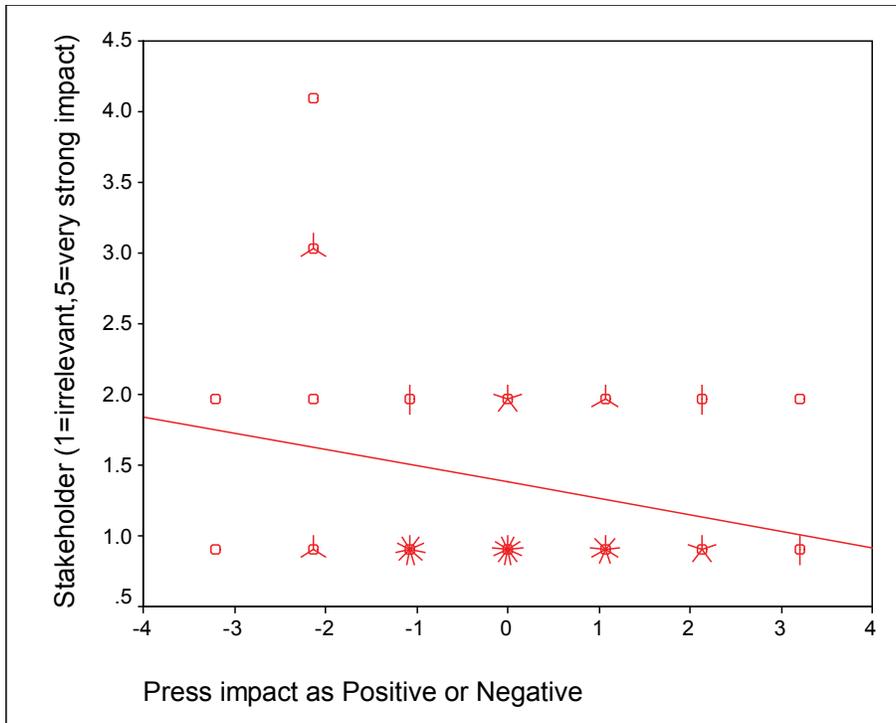
**Figure 62.** Scatterplot: Negotiating Lever role and Amount of media impact



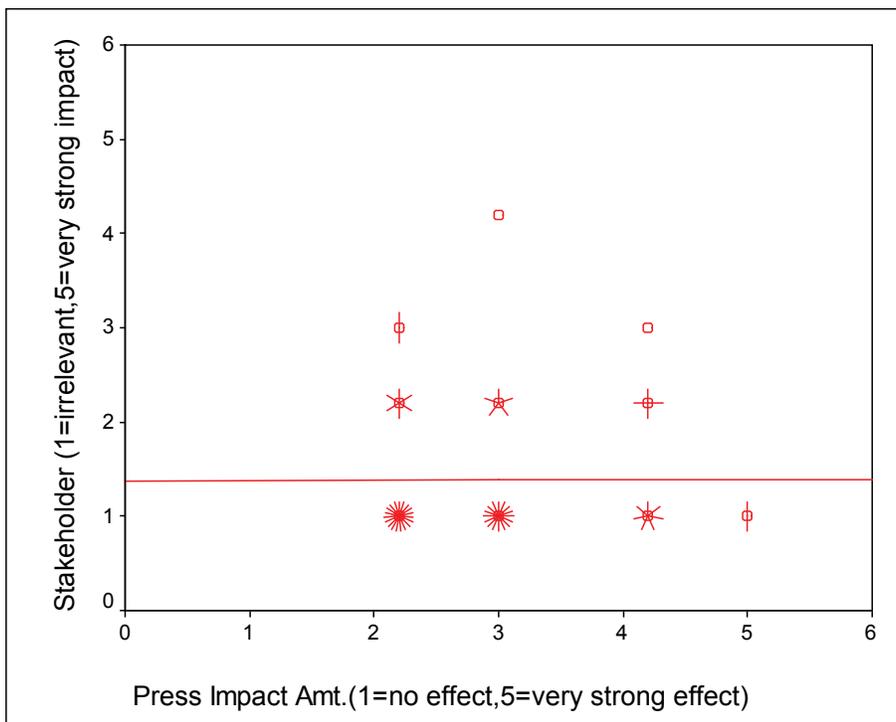
**Figure 63.** Scatterplot: Policy Advocate press role and Press impact positive/negative



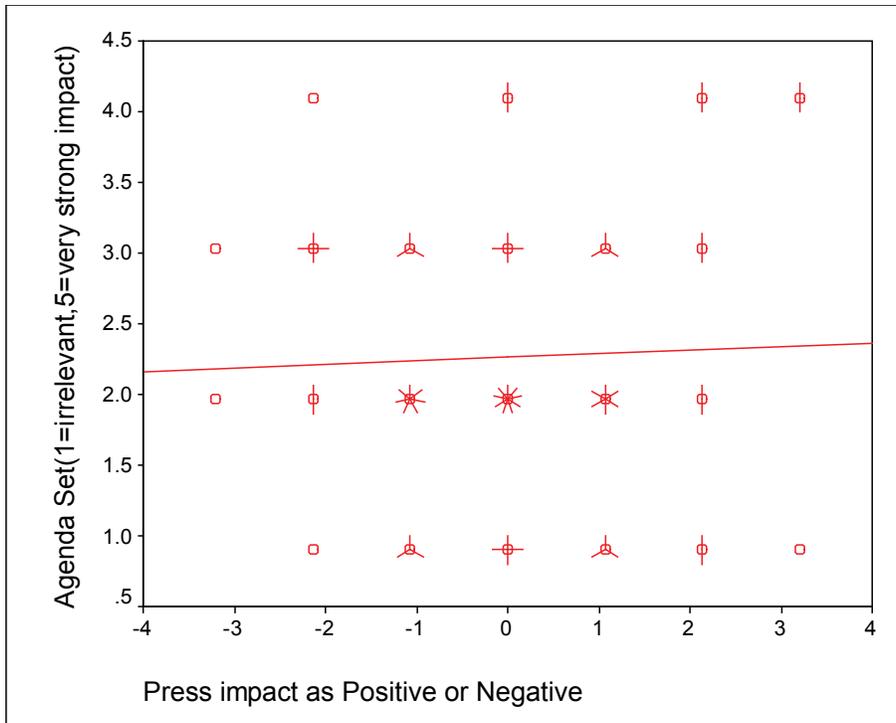
**Figure 64.** Scatterplot: Policy Advocate role and Amount of media impact



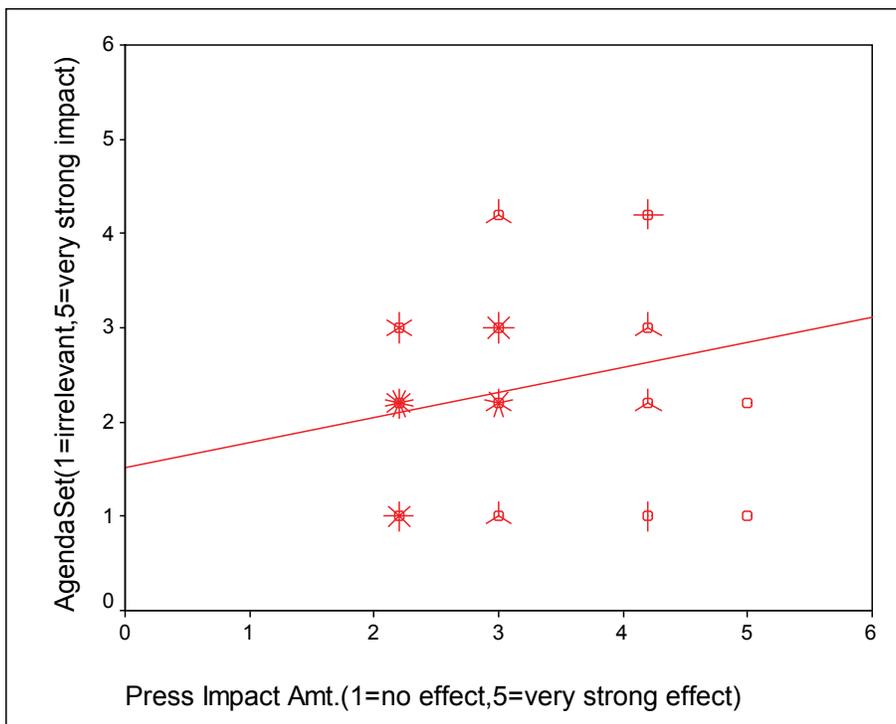
**Figure 65.** Scatterplot: Community Stakeholder press role and Press impact positive/negative



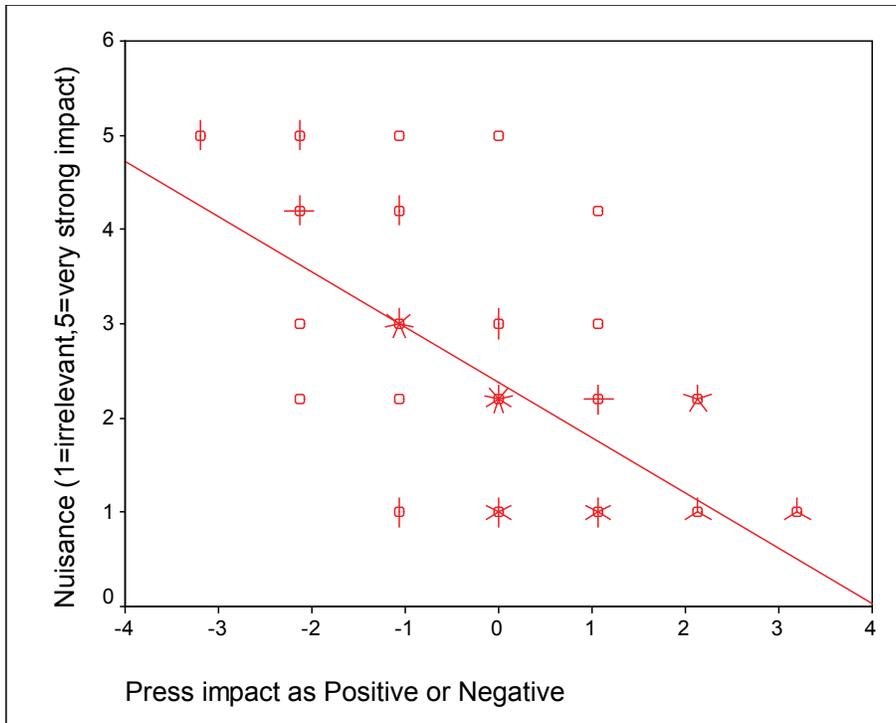
**Figure 66.** Scatterplot: Community Stakeholder role and Amount of media impact



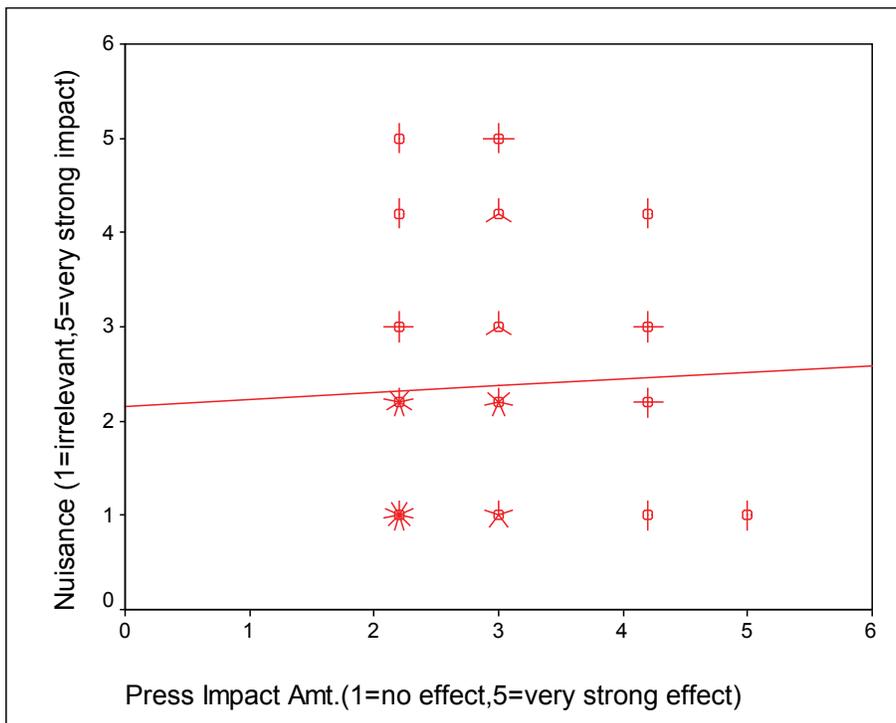
**Figure 67.** Scatterplot: Agenda Setter press role and Press impact positive/negative



**Figure 68.** Scatterplot: Agenda Setter role and Amount of media impact



**Figure 69.** Scatterplot: Nuisance press role and Press impact positive/negative



**Figure 70.** Scatterplot: Agenda Setter role and Amount of media impact

**APPENDIX C**  
**IRB DOCUMENTATION**

**Invent the Future**

**Office of Research Compliance**

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E-mail: [ctgreen@vt.edu](mailto:ctgreen@vt.edu)  
[www.irb.vt.edu](http://www.irb.vt.edu)

cc: File

DATE: May 12, 2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Randolph

Timothy Brown

FROM: Carmen Green

**IRB Exempt Approval:** “The Impact of the News Media on Environmental Collaborations (as Perceived by Experienced Environmental Facilitators and Mediators): A Survey of the EPA’s National Roster of Environmental Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building Professionals” , IRB # 08-295

I have reviewed your request to the IRB for exemption for the above referenced project. The research

falls within the exempt status. Approval is granted effective as of May 12, 2008.

As an investigator of human subjects, your responsibilities include the following:

1. Report promptly proposed changes in the research protocol. The proposed changes must not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects.
2. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY AND STATE UNIVERSITY

SUBJECT:

FWA00000572( expires 1/20/2010)  
IRB # is IRB00000667

**Office of Research Compliance**

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