

# VALUES IN NORDIC NEWSPAPER EDITOR DECISION-MAKING

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**ABSTRACT** The study shows that Nordic daily newspapers—like their American peers—will have to change their content to conform more to the tastes of readers or—at the very least—find a more reader-friendly way to present the news. The authors compare national surveys of Nordic and U.S. editors charged with the practical aspects of choosing, justifying, editing, and publishing the news. In a search for values that underlie decision-making styles, the study uncovers five style predictors: gender, newspaper size, and journalistic values. Audience-related values, although not significant predictors, do find a home among Nordic editors, in contrast to U.S. editors. The findings, while suggesting managerial tools that newspaper editors can use, also indicates no global, overarching management style would be appropriate in tackling industry ills.

**KEY WORDS:** management style, decision making, values, newspapers, Nordic region

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Audiences are changing the way they use newspapers. American shifts have been well-documented: Most U.S. newspapers continue to lose readers (Compaine & Gomery, 2000; Picard, 2008). Scholars and journalists fear that changes in competition increase advertising costs and, hence, the likelihood that advertisers will seek better values (and venues) for their money (Lacy & Martin, 2004) while advertising growth

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trends show more unpredictability (Picard, 2008). As the American public's news tastes have changed, so has the public's attitude toward public affairs news. Readers generally have tepid experiences with newspapers: News is less of a "something to talk about" experience. Newspaper managers tend to think readers have far more positive experiences than they actually did, suggesting that newspapers are not poised to do what it takes to improve that situation (Readership Institute, 2000; Pew Project, 2009).

But America does not own the problem. For example, one would think that Nordic newspapers, with some of the highest readerships in the world—four of every five Swedish and Danish adults read a newspaper on an average day, Norway averages 626 daily newspapers for every thousand adults (barely second on the globe to Japan), and the typical Finn spends twice as much time reading a newspaper than his American counterpart—would be immune (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a). However, not counting the flood of free dailies in Denmark, newspaper circulation also has declined in those countries. Even in Denmark, TV and the Internet are making inroads in the advertising market; ad revenues for paid-for dailies has declined 6 percent since 2001 (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a). Recruiting young readers has become a priority.

Indeed, on a global scale, many readers have judged newspapers out of touch, missing whole audience sectors and their news preferences. This has prompted many strategies, ranging from additional research to a technology-infused expansion of the number of publishing channels. In doing so, newspapers have transferred much control of audience dynamics to the audience itself (World Association of Newspapers, 2006b). But the transfer has not gone quickly or smoothly in Europe or America, one reason being that the producers of newspaper non-advertising content—journalists—have been slow to add the changing media landscape's demands for new skills and new audience understanding onto their professional competencies list (Bierhoff & Schmidt, 1997; Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002). Because of cultural and nationalistic differences, journalism schools are not united in how to approach the issue (Lönnroth, 1997; Huang *et al.*, 2006).

In particular, Nordic newspapers—if they are to attract more readers—will have to change their content to conform more to the tastes of readers or—at the very least—find a more reader-friendly way to present the news. That implies newsroom managers will have to think and edit differently—in short, their decision-making process will have to be examined and re-structured. And in an era where more and more companies seek economies of scale via merger or acquisition—Rolland's recent (2009) study of British telecom giant Mecom's takeover of Norway's Orkla Media suggested nationalist-nurtured managerial practices could come under scrutiny for possible change—one place to look involves these managers' values.

The present study examines the role of personal values in decision-making. It surveys Nordic newspaper editors and compares their responses to their American peers in hopes of furthering insights of a new line of research into newsroom decision-making approaches and their relationships to managers' personal values. Results will show whether those values align with current corporate and audience interests.

## THE ROLE OF VALUES

Heath (1976) initially argued that individual decision-making is complex, dependent upon, among other things, the adjustment of "value priorities" and how they mediate between social drives and individual decision:

Values form part of the assessment matrix which individuals use to define and evaluate their surroundings. Rather than simply existing as responses to situational stimuli, values, when structured into systems, serve as dynamic definitional and evaluative constructs (p. 326).

Since then, researchers see values largely as beliefs underlying attitudes—the application of a value—and in general argue that values predict behavior (Connor & Becker, 2003).

### *Values in Industry*

Many studies show relationships between values and decision-making of all kinds. For example, the Badr *et al.* (1982) correlation analysis of two cultures showed a positive relationship between a manager's personal values and his decision-making. American managers' theoretical, economic, political and religious personal values correlated with their choices of action. The study also found positive relationships between theoretical, social, political and religious personal values of an Egyptian group and its corresponding choices of action. But few studies establish values' influence *on* decision-making.

But values research continues, with studies examining, e.g., the relationship between personal values, organizational values, and organizational commitment—finding that values are multidimensional and that each value may affect behavior differently (Finnegan, 2000). For example, one study examined the role of the value of fairness regarding the causes of absence in supervisor disciplinary decisions and found that supervisors valuing fairness rendered more severe disciplinary decisions than supervisors who valued fairness less (Judge & Martocchio, 1995).

Although no consensus exists as to which values strongly influence organizations (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998, 358), more recent values research "strongly" corroborates effects of values on decisions—albeit without a clear view of the values-behavior relationship (372). Still, values

scholarship has value: How much a person values a style of behavior seems related to how he or she evaluates decisions and situations (383).

More recent studies have tried to define values' magnitude by using Williams' (2002) logic connecting values to organizational strategy. For example, Connor and Becker's (2003) survey of more than 160 state government managers found public managers' values disposed them to certain decision-making methods. A later study linked rational (systematic hunting for and rational assessing of options), dependent (looking to others for guidance and bearing) and avoidant (trying to evade decision-making) decision-making styles to self-esteem and action control (Thunholm, 2004). Even more recently, researchers connected managers' personal values (traditional, collectivistic work, self-transcendent, and self-enhancement values) to charismatic leadership, suggesting managers driven by traditional values or open to change display higher levels of charismatic leadership (Sosik, 2005).

Age and gender also may have some direct relationship to values. In India, for example, scholars (Mellahi & Guermat, 2004) found that, despite institutional forces to defuse new managerial values' effects on managerial practices, young managers' values strongly influence managerial practices. In both age groups, the managers' values largely mediated their behaviors. Other research showed major differences in men's and women's values (Chusmir *et al.*, 1989) and that patterns counter to the stereotype (of female leaders using relationship-oriented management styles, encompassing collaborative, contributory and vicarious behaviors to accomplish tasks while male leaders use task orientation, competition, and power) exist (Robinson and Lipman-Blumen, 2003): Women were neither more collaborative, nor more contributory than men, who used relational behavior more frequently than women and were less task-oriented.

### **Values in Communication Spheres**

However, knowledge of the role of values in journalism is not as well-defined. For example, newspaper editors perceive themselves as forceful and important champions of journalism values while using modern, participatory managerial methods; editors with positive attitudes toward organizational integration perceived they had higher levels of organizational support (Gade, 2005). But mass communication and journalism scholars have tended to focus on ethical or market issues; few have sought to explore values and newsroom management. For example, one ongoing debate focuses on whether newspapers are businesses or agents of democracy and how to treat them accordingly (see, e.g., Cranberg *et al.*, 2001). "Values" in this debate tend to center on whether boardroom or newsroom attitudes prevail in a newspaper operation.

Too, scholars have tried a number of indirect ways to measure the status of that debate, examining particular value sets within certain contexts. Hollifield *et al.* (2001) compared "organizational" and

journalistic values' impact on hiring decisions to see if said decisions focused on marketing-oriented capabilities and considerations; the study found mixed support for the view that organizational culture dominates decision-making and that—while such influence increased over time—top news executives also placed a higher priority on core professional values when hiring news workers (110). Gade's (2002) newspaper editors survey revealed that two of the three "types" of managers regarding change and the encroachment of market-based values—the "critical skeptic," the "change agent," and the "resigned pragmatist"—recognized their own change management shortcomings and had reservations about profit impulses. Beam (1998) earlier sought whether senior editors at market-oriented papers still valued traditional journalistic values; but none of these studies focused on decision-making in general.

Voakes (1997) deviated from the behavior-content link and tried to link social influences to ethical decision-making: He theorized that social influences—individual, competition, small group, organizational, competition, occupational, extramedia, and legal—filtered values (22-26) and found the latter five particularly relevant. Berkowitz and Limor (2003) similarly found that one U.S. state's newspaper reporters' ethical decisions vary by context, and that their degree of professional confidence and experience made an important difference. Plaisance and Skewes (2003) did not explore newsroom managers' belief systems but built upon Viall's earlier (1992) proposal and tried to produce a "profile" of journalistic values. Their U.S. survey used sociologists' value-theory research and sought to link values to journalism's adversarial, disseminating, and interpretive functions; only the latter role provided a significant relationship.

Sylvie and Huang (2008) first sought to define how newsroom decisions are made within the American management context. They theorized that examining the thinking of mid-level editors—i.e., the newsroom's "infantry sergeants"—would lend insight on what drives content and management decisions because sub-editors help set the agenda of their superiors. This suggested that as departmental heads these sub-editors manage the conceptual frontlines, in terms of story development and selection, choice and evaluation of reporters, news packaging and budget determination.

The authors' 2005 national online survey to "mid-level editors" (defined as either the head or assistant to the head of a newsroom department) revealed the editors' four value systems, in the order of importance to editors: journalistic, audience, organizational and social values. Demographic and job-related variables significantly impacted the values an editor relied on for decision-making. For example, women were more likely than men to make decisions based on social, journalistic and audience values, and non-White editors were more likely than White editors to use organizational values. In terms of job-related influence, editors used organizational values to make decisions if they were more experienced, higher positioned, with a larger staff, or in a bigger

newspaper. Editors on average agreed they were more rational, intuitive and dependent, but less avoidant and spontaneous. The authors dropped the dependent scale from further analyses because of inadequate internal consistency.

The study effected decision-making styles by using the Scott and Bruce (1995) General Decision-making Style (GDMS) measure; there were five items—each measuring one of the five styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. A rational style posed statements such as “I usually double-check my information sources”; an intuitive style posed statements such as “I usually trust my inner feelings”; a dependent style posed statements such as “if I have the support of others, it is easier for me to make import decisions”; an avoidant style posed statements such as “I usually put off making many decisions because thinking about them makes me uneasy”; and a spontaneous style posed statements such as “I usually make quick decisions.”

The study also showed an intuitive style positively correlated with all four value systems; a rational decision-making style positively correlated with journalistic, organizational and audience values; and a spontaneous style positively correlated with social and audience values. An avoidant style positively correlated with only social values but negatively correlated with journalistic and organizational values; whereas other decision-making styles didn't have a negative relationship with any value systems. Controlling for other variables, the authors also found the editors' value systems as a whole significantly influenced their decision-making styles. After demographic- and job-related variables' effects are removed, the relationships between editors' value systems and decision-making styles still were statistically significant. The results confirmed Scott and Bruce's findings that “individuals do not rely on a single decision-making style ... individuals use a combination of decision-making styles in making important decisions” (829). For instance, results show that an editor who ranked high in journalistic values was more likely to report rational and intuitive decision styles and less likely to report an avoidant style.

Finally, the study found that gender predicts avoidant and spontaneous styles; experience predicts intuitive and spontaneous styles; the editors' social value systems predict all four styles; a journalistic value system is good at predicting rational and avoidant styles; and the organizational value system is a predictor of rational, avoidant, and spontaneous styles. In a counter-stereotypical pattern, male editors in U.S. newsrooms were significantly related to more avoidant and more spontaneous decision-making. U.S. editors who ranked high on “social values”—many of them culture-based—were more likely to report they have an intuitive, avoidant or spontaneous decision-making style and to say they do not have a rational style. Age and ideology had no impact in the study, and questions remained as to whether the study had international ramifications.

## VALUES AND EUROPEAN NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT

In Europe, for example (as in America), newspapers contend with a host of challenges, including current business models: The Internet's arrival and the free availability of news online—mixed with trepidation over well-established trends of waning circulation, a declining advertising market share and high newsprint prices—have prompted calls for transformation (e.g., Casagrande, 2009). Although newspaper industry economic trend “tend to lag slightly behind in Europe...commercial developments in the United States serve as a bellwether” (Picard, 2008; 704). Daily European newspapers also face serving increasingly disparate and split audiences; younger readers seem more interested in Internet-based searching permitting personalized reading (European Commission, 2003)—a situation similar to but not as dire as that in America, but without the large, broadly heterogeneous market permitting U.S. publishers to domestically recover much of their investment and, thus, offer high-value content at relatively low prices (32).

But European newspapers still struggle. As advertisers take advantage of the increasing number of media selections (and the Internet's share of classified ads grows) while getting more serious about proof of impact (CEPIPRINT, 2004), the emergence of free commuter dailies have “served notice to the paid dailies that they were underserving significant portions of the market and that their claims to represent a mass audience were, in some respects, false” (CEPIPRINT, p. iii); European daily newspapers' circulation has fell by 14 million from 1995-2006 (Bakker, 2008). The fact that new, younger readers with little prior newspaper reading experience are likely to read such publications (Bakker, 2002), and that Europe's consistently reading population continues to age (Casagrande, 2009) adds to the quandary. Free dailies constitute 23 percent of the European newspaper circulation (World Association Of Newspapers, 2008), and whereas readership was up in the most of the non-American world, 2007 circulations sales also were down nearly 2 percent in Europe in 2007 (World Association Of Newspapers, 2008).

Adequately approaching this dilemma requires good productivity, which “depends on the value of a nation's products and services, measured by the prices they can command in open markets and the efficiency with which they can be produced” (European Commission, 5). European productivity varies by country because of such factors as economies of scale; differences in work practices, technological difficulty, and the product mix; and levels of investment, capital, and capacity. Nordic countries “consistently score lower” on productivity (8), primarily because of their book and magazine publishing sectors. Sweden, Finland, and Denmark—no Norway data were provided as Norway is not an EU

member—rank medium-to-low among EU countries for productivity (43). While productivity can be underestimated, Nordic countries' newspaper industries consistently form the bottom of EU rankings in labor productivity; there also is a positive relationship between productivity and investment per employee (59, 75).

In addition, concern exists about European newspapers' competitiveness and innovative capabilities. As publishers increasingly turn their attention toward how to reinvent their business models, they also must re-examine how they manage their core competencies and functions since many signs suggest news stories are “not a must-have” in the future (European Commission, 154). In short, the more than 2000 European daily newspapers appear to be managing with one arm tied behind their collective backs. As a wide variety of new job roles continues to emerge, newspaper managers will have to address the accompanying complaints about more workload, disintermediation, and reduced autonomy (144) —a task they seem reluctant to address via additional training (145).

### ***The Nordic Newspaper Market***

Scandinavia represents a microcosm of the European situation. In the 1990s, Nordic media companies' structures were similar, with the daily press wholly owned by domestic companies. Since then, newspaper ownership structure has shifted to include a modicum of foreign interests; still Nordic-owned media companies control most Nordic media markets (Sundin, 2003). As a result, many researchers usually regard Scandinavian countries as a whole; their similarities in speech, pasts, and locale facilitate this approach (Hofstede, 1980; Wilberg, 2003). The newspaper markets themselves are very competitive, with local and regional newspapers often taking a bite out of the circulations of their larger, more prestigious peers (e.g., see Gustafsson, 1996). And concern exists for the current Nordic media models, in which the countries' regulated structure provides subsidies via taxation (Flisen, 2007). Development of the Internet has created legal challenges and doubts as to what constitutes freedom of speech when the very medium is partially subsidized by the state and as to whether the variety and diversity in voices provided by state funding merit the state's involvement in a declining industry. The models also have not prevented declining newspaper readership (Picard, 2007).

While newspaper editors and publishers list stable and reliable distribution, product development, employee motivation, and employee development as their main priorities (Wilberg, 2007), country by country, Scandinavian newspapers face additional problems. Although all the countries have extremely high readership per capita, circulation declines for paid newspapers have started to become more noticeable and audiences have started to fragment in various ways, especially with the growth of commercial television (Woolgar, 2000). Despite Scandinavian

Europe having the highest daily paid circulation as a percentage of its total population of any region (Wilkinson, 2006) and Nordic newspapers' renowned ability to adapt and innovate (Halfnight, 2008), the newspapers face a myriad of competitive concerns, as illustrated by a 12 percent decline in the total of daily newspapers from 1997 and 2007, with Sweden (18 percent) and Denmark (17 percent) hardest hit (NORDICOM, 2009b).

Denmark's press has seen advanced reader interest in national and international news and the papers that provide it, causing local and regional papers' circulations to suffer (Jauert & Prehn, 2000; Søllinge, 1999). Although total newspaper circulation increased (Bakker, 2002) by more than half a million—thanks largely to an influx of free dailies—and between 70 and 80 percent of Danes daily read a newspaper, that figure has fallen 10 percentage points since 1997 (NORDICOM, 2009a; World Association of Newspapers, 2006a). As newspapers expanded, they phased out local editions to cut costs, meaning several towns no longer have publications (Søllinge, 1999). Desertion of the less-educated reader and the rise of more entertaining, competing media have caused official Danish concern (69-71); paid daily newspaper penetration has declined some 30 percent from 1997-2007 (NORDICOM, 2009a).

In Sweden, local dailies remain relatively strong, but at the expense of national publications and evening newspapers; single people are beginning to abandon newspaper reading in increasing numbers (Weibull & Jönsson, 2000; Hadenius & Weibull, 1999), and latest statistics (NORDICOM, 2009a) show readership declined 5 percentage points from 1997-2007. Newspapers are mainly local or regional with virtually all sold via subscription. Most have experienced circulation declines since the 1980s, but none heavier than the afternoon-oriented, metropolitan single-copy sale newspaper (Weibull & Jönsson, 2000). In Sweden, most households—3 out of every 4—subscribe to a newspaper. A high living standard, political awareness, a well-educated populace and good journalism all work toward that end. But increased subscription rates, a sluggish Swedish economy and single persons' lack of an established reading habit present problems to this day (Hadenius & Weibull, 1999). Free newspapers increased their market share and non-dailies increased circulation (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a), while paid daily newspaper penetration declined some 13 percent from 1997-2007 (NORDICOM, 2009a).

Declining newspaper share of advertising revenue at one time made the downward spiral of Norwegian circulation less of a concern. A high number of newspaper titles, the world's highest newspaper readership—600 daily copies per 1,000 inhabitants (Østbye, 2000)—and government policy to preserve traditional, scattered residential patterns contributed to a large number of exclusively local newspapers (Høst, 1999); in fact, most Norwegian papers distribute locally or regionally (Allern, 2005). But statistics show Norwegian readership declined from 84 percent to 72

percent and paid daily newspaper penetration declined some 19 percent from 1997-2007 (NORDICOM, 2009a).

In contrast, Finland's newspaper market is relatively stable, but with not much growth potential and nearly saturated markets (Jyrkiäinen, 2000). High unemployment and expanding electronic media forced circulation losses in the major Finnish dailies, which—along with all Finland's newspapers—retreated to their core circulation districts and cut back on national and international coverage (Salokangas, 1999). Although young Finns are avid newspaper readers (World Association of Newspapers, 2006a), latest statistics show readership declined 91 percent to 79 percent and paid daily newspaper penetration declined 9 percent from 1998-2007 (NORDICOM, 2009a).

### **Nordic Newsrooms**

As Nordic newspaper markets – with the rest of the world – face change, their newsrooms face increasing pressures as well, especially in operations. Training heads the list: A global survey (World Association of Newspapers, 2007) showed that the largest group (36 percent) of editors—asked how they would invest in editorial quality—said they would train their staff in new media. But, possibly reflecting their more stable markets, Western European editors said they would recruit more reporters first and train staff in new media second.

Despite that preference, however, the likely vacuum in training in Nordic newsrooms still poses obstacles. Journalists normally work in their national language, directing themselves to audiences that speak that language. As journalism education has been nation-oriented, its contents differ by country while the technological developments make one language insufficient (Holm, 1997). In Sweden, journalism training has made Swedish journalists “more homogeneous in their values” (Melin-Higgins, 1996: 14). In contrast to current media innovations and developments, which tend to be global, European journalism training occurs within national contexts (Bierhoff *et al.*, 2000).

And in a time that values diversity training (in the newsroom and for the benefit of attracting diverse audiences), in Nordic countries, women editors are rare. In Norway, only 1 of every 5 managers is a woman (van Eijk, 2005b). In Finland, women journalists feel less independent on the job than men (Heinonen, 1998). In Denmark, not one major newspaper in 2005 had a female editor (van Eijk, 2005a).

Coping with change will mean Scandinavian editors and managers will need to become more innovative (Bierhoff *et al.*, 2000). Some newsrooms have begun to re-organize to better integrate digitized products (15). But a “generation gap” also is emerging: Younger journalists appear more willing and suited to use new technologies than do their older peers (10). Although Swedish newspapers are ahead of most in the EU in terms of Web edition production, editors are “uncertain” as to future directions and how to use current staff (20). And

as a relatively new member of the EU, Sweden requires new language skills and knowledge in legal, political and economic spheres (23). But cooperation on journalism education will require time and complex negotiations. Scandinavian newsrooms, meanwhile, will need to closely scrutinize their decision-making processes and come to grips—more than they currently appear to be (see, e.g., Jarvis, 2007; World Association of Newspapers, 2007)—with the coming importance of new media.

Although few studies explore Scandinavian newsrooms' common traits, they do illustrate parts of the puzzle. In Finland, for example, what was considered an autonomous, lifelong job is slowly changing, thanks to adjustable hours, the growth of specialization, working in groups, and more corporate, professional-style planning by editors (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2005). At the turn of the century, as with their U.S. peers, Finnish journalists faced market-driven pressures—i.e., to make journalism more appealing to readers, as well as encouraging citizenship (Hujanen, 2006). Journalism, in the eyes of interviewed Finnish journalists, increasingly is about private infotainment and entertainment but, interestingly, also about private and public empowerment (17) and these journalists say that top editors' values would play a large part in guiding the shape of Finland's news in the future (18-19).

Study of those values in Nordic countries has been scarce and, to date, focused on Norwegian and Swedish newspaper executives, because of the similar cultures, heritage, language and geographical proximity (Hofstede, 1980). Wilberg (2003) studied the leadership and performance of Norwegian and Swedish newspapers by surveying higher level managers and comparing their reported behaviors to performance data. Though not examining mid-level, newsroom-based editors, the study found no differences in leadership practices between Swedish and Norwegian newspapers (120-122), and that motivation and appreciation for employees stood out when examining performance differences (113-115). The study did not focus on goals, values and beliefs, but noted that they are "more or less clear" and "carried forward via stories, myths, and rituals" (147); Wilberg recommended additional research areas, including "organizational change and how leaders and managers deal with that" (169).

But scholars largely have ignored the organizational context of newspapers, despite the widely acknowledged notion that there are direct, organizational, social and cultural influences on media content as well (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The Sylvie and Huang (2008) study, as mentioned earlier, is rare in this context. Many newspaper managers approaching change try to surmount and outwit resistance to it, creating resistant employees who threaten the organization's long-term performance, lifespan, and flexibility as well as employees constituting the "constructive" culture (e.g., see Sylvie & Moon, 2007). So the approach to change requires careful thought; many newsroom team efforts still get categorized as managerial control efforts, rather than

exercises in interdependence. Journalists—because of culturally based notions of how journalism should be performed—resist change, view it as either disruptive or inefficient, or, after a short time of openness and anticipation, fail to grasp management's message (Argyris, 1967; Neuzil *et al.*, 1999; Readership Institute, 2000; Daniels & Hollifield, 2002; Sylvie & Witherspoon, 2002; and Gade & Perry, 2003).

Rectifying such views is especially important considering that one U.S. industry study found that newspaper culture is connected to readership: Newspapers with "constructive" cultures tended to have higher readership (Readership Institute, 2000). Newspapers tended to fall into two basic culture types: defensive and constructive. More than 80 percent of the newspapers studied had defensive cultures. Constructive cultures lean toward looking outward, responding to market and technological change; they expect collaboration and coordination across departments. They perform at higher levels and have more satisfied customers and employees. By comparison, defensive cultures resist change. Employees are individual- rather than group-centered. They work in departments that build walls between themselves and other departments. In particular, the study identified an aggressive-defensive culture in newspapers. Employees are persistent and hard working, but generally feel they must avoid mistakes, monitor everything and work long hours to meet restricted objectives. In addition, newspapers feature confrontational styles that focus on avoiding mistakes rather than improving; forfeiting quality in some areas for improbable quality levels in others; and making supervisors—rather than staff—accountable for quality. The culture also tends to be fast-paced, often requiring people to decide quickly.

So scholars need to define how managers make decisions within that context, so that they can further analyze that decision-making process for changes resulting in more desirable content. By examining the thought processes of Nordic mid-level editors—the newsroom's "infantry sergeants," if you will—scholars can better understand what drives content and management decisions. In addition, scholars can further examine what generic – news ideology, environmental, task-oriented, or individual—factors affect or influence that process. Finally—and just as important—scholars can add to a growing body of knowledge in this area. With their high-but-declining newspaper readerships, Nordic editors pose just as interesting a case study.

### **Preliminary Study**

To better prepare for such a study, one of the current study co-authors conducted preliminary interviews with key personnel in several Nordic newsrooms. The co-author chose interviewees based on availability during the author's fall 2006 visit to Europe. The co-author's personal contacts and hosts helped produce 24 interviews with top- and mid-level editors at various Nordic newspapers. Interviewees had anonymity in

exchange for their cooperation, responses to questions and the pilot test of the Q-sort questionnaire. Men dominated; five—or slightly more than 1 in every 5—were females. The average number of years experience was nearly 19 years, with an average of slightly less than 12 years' experience as a manager. Most (16) worked in Sweden or Finland (9 and 7, respectively), while 3 were Norwegian and 5 were Danish.

Not surprisingly, asking their strengths as a manager revealed a common (14 of 24) employee- or subordinate-related thread. Whether listening, delegating, coaching, motivating, or helping reporters, editors said relationships with reporters were key. The second-most common (7 of 24) pattern involved tasks of some sort: planning, structuring, decision-making, or analysis. Weaknesses routinely were cited as an over-abundance (or lack) of one thing or another—patience, listening, control, organization, focus, or planning, among others. Closer inspection revealed such weaknesses often reflected a perceived lack of control. From an inability to focus and organize, to caring too much, to an inability to motivate, to being overly cautious, to overworking, 13 of the 24 editors felt as if they did not do their best to lead their staffs.

Not surprisingly, the editors took pleasure in accomplishing and producing things as well as relishing their working relationships. People-related factors and worthwhile contributions constituted almost two-thirds (15) of the responses to this question, with task variety a distant third (4 responses). As to dislikes, time and its effect on tasks proved the prime culprit. Responses tended toward mentions of long hours and time scarcity, but they also included such things as “all the meetings,” “fast changes,” “meeting fewer people,” “missing the chance to write,” monotonous routines, and working weekends—or so 15 of the editors believed.

The editors' Q-sort of 65 values from least influential (-5) to most influential (+5) showed “readers” as the most important value: 54 percent ranked it most influential value when making decisions. “Ethics” ranked second; rounding out the top five were: “newsworthiness,” (a mean rating of 3.63, “scoop” (3.58), and “humor” (3.42). The five lowest-rated values (in increasing order) were “conservative,” “consensus,” “price,” “advertising,” and “job status.”

With the aid of SPSS, the 65 values underwent principal components analysis (PCA). Six components stood out for further investigation, explaining nearly 67 percent of the variance. To derive a factor model between variables and components, factor loadings were set at  $\geq .30$  in absolute value and used a Varimax rotation technique. This process reduced 22 variables into six components labeled, respectively, as “ultimate,” “intrinsic,” “gauge,” “collaborative,” “respected,” and “market-centric.”

An independent-samples *t* test for gender and education helped to discover the relationship between value groups and demographic variables, as did Pearson correlations for years experience and years as a manager. The fewer years experience an editor had, the more value the

editor placed on organizational needs, diversity and control ( $p < .01$ ). In general, then, demographics played little role as to whether the pilot group placed emphasis on the decision-making value groupings. In short, the U.S. editors reported a more professional, journalistic influence and tended to report more influences than the Nordic group.

So preliminary study showed Nordic values appearing to correspond to those in America, with subtle differences. Whereas American editors shared managerial approaches based on gender differences and experience, the Scandinavian editors tended to gravitate toward more functional points of reference. They had a propensity to group disparate, almost-polar values into one, utilitarian label or spectrum (e.g., professionalism and controversy, control and diversity, and objectivity and price). They also revealed a common, employee- or subordinate-related thread in their self-reported management tendencies (e.g., listening, delegating, coaching, motivating, or helping reporters) while perceiving their main weakness as a lack of control (ranging from lack of focus to overworking). And while they reported being influenced by values similar to those influencing their American counterparts, they showed being influenced by as fewer values than did the Americans. In essence, they tended to say more values *do not* influence their decision-making.

### **Hypothesis & Research Questions**

The preliminary study begs a more thorough examination. Particularly of interest would be whether and how Nordic newspaper management thinking and practice presages managers' ability to capably function and make good marketplace decisions. To find answers, we developed the following arguments and hypothesis to clarify to what extent the editors in Nordic countries—since they are experiencing newspaper market uncertainty on a par with American newspapers—compare with American editors.

Recall that Sylvie & Huang (2008) looked at five items – each measuring one of the five styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous. The American editors were more rational, intuitive and dependent, but less avoidant and spontaneous (for reliability reasons, the “dependent” scale was later dropped from further analyses); also the most influential values were quite similar. Given that American and Scandinavian newspapers are experiencing significant change, and because the Nordic pilot study showed corresponding values, one might predict no significant difference in American and Nordic ratings of the four remaining styles. But given that Meglino and Ravlin's (1987) literature review deducted that values have some influence over decision-making, we predict: Significant differences would be found in American and Nordic ratings of the four remaining styles: rational, intuitive, avoidance, and spontaneous; i.e., a preponderance of the evidence will show statistically significant differences.

Also recall that Sylvie & Huang (2008) found that American mid-level editors' value systems significantly correlated with their decision-making styles after controlling for demographic and job-related variables. Four of the five significant decision-making style predictors alluded to earlier were found to play a role. Gender predicted avoidant and spontaneous styles; experienced predicted intuitive and spontaneous styles; the editors' social value systems predicted all four styles; a journalistic value system was good at predicting rational and avoidant styles; and the organizational value system predicted rational, avoidant, and spontaneous styles. Similar to previous findings of a counter-stereotypical pattern, male editors in U.S. newsrooms were significantly related to more avoidant and more spontaneous decision-making. As to the dominance of organizational culture on decision-making, the U.S. study showed editors who ranked high on "social values"—many of them culture-based—were more likely to report they have an intuitive, avoidant or spontaneous decision-making style and to say they do not have a rational style. So this study offers the following research questions:

*RQ1:* To what degree do the value systems predict newspaper editors' decision-making styles, after controlling for demographic and job-related effects?

*RQ2:* What are the relationships between decision-making styles and demographics, job-related variables, and value systems?

*RQ3:* Which of the value systems have a greater effect on each decision-making style, after controlling for demographic and job-related effects?

## METHODS AND RESULTS

### *Data Collection*

To examine Nordic front-line editors' decision processes and thus better understand what impetus drives content and management decisions, we conducted a survey of editors at daily newspapers in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. We used a Web-based survey model to test the Q-sort method previously discussed. To provide adequate replication of Sylvie and Huang's (2008) American study, the survey used the same measures and question wording as before, although with an invitation tailored to attract the interest of Nordic journalists. Because of the high rate of English-speaking in the Nordic region—in particular that among journalists and other professionals—the survey's invitation and questionnaire were in English.<sup>1</sup> To make comparisons to American

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<sup>1</sup> Only a mere handful of respondents said they could not complete the survey because they lacked sufficient competency in English.

editors, we used data from the American editors surveyed by Sylvie and Huang (2008).

But unlike the previous study (Sylvie & Huang, 2008), which relied on a stratified random sample of U.S. dailies to reach a representative group of American editors, this follow-up work sought to obtain a census of e-mail addresses for front-line editors at the 230 daily newspapers in the Nordic region (80 in Sweden, 65 in Norway, 52 in Finland, and 33 in Denmark), as of summer 2007.<sup>2</sup> Obtaining a precise census of every e-mail address for every editor in the region proved difficult; with the exception of Finland, none of the Nordic countries' press associations compile regularly updated lists of contact information for newspaper personnel. So the authors visited the Web sites (where available) of every daily newspaper in the region and manually searched for the names and e-mail addresses of mid-level editors of all editorial departments. Before conducting this search, the authors consulted native speakers of Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and Finnish to compile a list of translations for key journalistic terms and phrases, thus enabling them to understand the nuances in newspaper job titles among the four countries. Where individual e-mail addresses were not apparent on the Web site, the authors sent e-mails to the newspapers' top editors or personnel directors for staff contact information. In the rare case when such efforts failed to gather personal e-mail addresses for editors, survey invitations were sent to general department e-mail accounts (e.g., [picture.desk@lahtikuva.fi](mailto:picture.desk@lahtikuva.fi)).

In all, our efforts resulted in a sampling frame of 1,365 e-mail addresses representing mid-level editors (or their departments) at all 230 daily newspapers in the Nordic region. In the previous study of American editors, the sample was stratified such that bigger newspapers were oversampled because they tend to have a larger pool of editors from which to select, thus helping to ensure variation in responses. Such weighting was not possible in this case, but nor was it necessary given that we had a census—or perhaps a “semi-census,” given the imprecise nature of the sampling frame. Moreover, as it turned out, the number of editors per newspaper invited to participate in this study was relatively consistent with circulation size—i.e., the larger newspapers had greater representation in the sampling frame. We sent e-mail invitations to take part in the survey in November 2007 and January/February 2008. Where possible, we replaced “bounce backs” with corrected versions of e-mail addresses, or otherwise dropped them from analysis, leaving a total of 1,136 editors invited to participate, including 479 in Sweden, 298 in Norway, 293 in Finland, and 266 in Denmark. Overall, 160 surveys of

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<sup>2</sup> The total number of daily newspapers in each country is based on circulation figures obtained through press associations of the respective countries.

the 1,136 valid deliveries were completed for a response rate of 14.1 percent (within-country response rates were as follows: Norway, 15.7; Denmark, 13.9; Finland, 11.6; and Sweden, 8.8). Given that survey response rates today often average as low as 15% (Dillman, 2007), the return rate of this study was not ideal but acceptable under the circumstances.

### **Dependent Measures**

This sought to examine two facets of the decision-making process of Nordic newspaper editors: their value systems and their decision-making styles.

**Value Systems** We assessed these with a series of 48 value statements (e.g., accuracy, ethics, job level, etc.; see Table 1 for the complete list); respondents were asked to Q-sort the values from least influential (-3) to most influential (+3). “Readers,” with a mean rating of 2.45, was ranked the most influential decision-making value, followed by “newsworthiness” (2.41), “professionalism” (2.19), deadline (2.13), and “scoop” (2.01). The five lowest-rated values (in increasing order) were “conservative,” “personal ties,” “tradition,” “politics,” and “pride.”

These value statements were further analyzed via principal component analysis (oblique rotation) to look for underlying dimensions of value systems (see Table 2), as was done in Sylvie and Huang (2008) for the American frontline editors.

**Decision-Making Styles.** We operationalized decision-making styles via Scott and Bruce’s (1995) GDMS framework using 25 statements, or 5 for assessing each of the five decision-making styles: rational, intuitive, dependent, avoidant, and spontaneous<sup>3</sup> (for details on each, see the examples above, as well as the Appendix). We recoded responses to the 25 decision-making statements such that 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree.

**Control Measures** To better assess the relationship between personal values and decision-making styles among newspaper editors, we introduced control variables in the analysis. We used four standard demographic variables an initial control block in our hierarchical regression model: respondents’ *age* (range: 22-65; average: 45), *gender* (72.5 percent male), *education* (from 1=less than high school graduate to 5=postgraduate training; 71 percent were college graduates), and *political ideology* (from 1=very conservative to 5=very liberal; the average

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<sup>3</sup> For full list of questions, please see p. 76 of Sylvie, G., and Huang, J.S. (2008). Value systems and decision-making styles of newspaper front-line editors. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 85(1): 61-82.

was 3.8); *race* was not measured because of the racial homogeneity of the Nordic region. Furthermore, in the second block of our regression model,

Table 1: Personal Values Means of Frontline Newspaper Editors

PERSONAL VALUE	NORDIC	UNITED STATES
Accuracy	1.82	2.75***
Attitudes	1.01	1.03
Audience Demand	0.91	1.30***
Autonomy	1.04	0.33***
Beliefs	0.64	0.98**
Budget Meeting	0.95	0.75
Company Goals	1.56	1.27**
Competition	1.68	1.43**
Conservative	-0.90	-0.49**
Control	0.28	0.03*
Coordination	1.08	1.11
Culture	0.81	0.87
Deadline	2.13	2.06
Diversity	1.10	1.16
Ethics	1.97	2.52***
Experience	1.71	1.95*
Fairness	1.82	2.55***
Group Conflict	0.26	0.28
Humor	1.34	0.55***
Impact	1.34	2.03***
Job Level	0.56	0.19***
Libel	0.12	2.29***
Liberal	0.40	-0.50***
Loyalty	1.00	0.50***
Marketing	0.15	0.01
Motivation	1.84	0.96***
My Role	0.92	0.86
Newsworthiness	2.41	2.66***
Objectivity	1.89	2.28***
Organizational Norms	0.30	0.28
Peers	0.02	0.10
Personal Ties	-0.45	-0.74*
Planning	1.10	1.27
Politics	-0.27	-0.56*
Pride	-0.24	0.31***
Professionalism	2.19	2.15
Readers	2.45	2.61**
Responsibility	1.98	2.29***
Routine	-0.09	-0.36*
Satisfaction	1.10	1.11
Scoop	2.01	1.84
Sourcing	0.90	1.84***
Space	0.45	1.19***
Supervisor	0.00	0.87***
Timeliness	0.62	2.13***
Tradition	-0.45	0.17***
Values	1.18	1.53**
Visual Appeal	1.32	1.57*

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

TABLE 2: FACTOR ANALYSIS OF NORDIC EDITORS' VALUE SYSTEMS

Value	FACTORS			
	1 Journalistic Elements	2 Collective Culture	3 Intrinsic Values	4 Corporate Ideals
Newsworthiness	<b>.657</b>	.019	-.059	.033
Scoop	<b>.626</b>	.147	-.031	.052
Professionalism	<b>.582</b>	-.025	.192	.105
Accuracy	<b>.543</b>	-.030	.042	-.066
Impact	<b>.514</b>	.125	.070	.237
Ethics	<b>.441</b>	.036	.384	-.019
Autonomy	<b>.437</b>	.033	.051	-.008
Objectivity	<b>.419</b>	.164	-.131	.217
Coordination	<b>.417</b>	.229	.143	.108
Responsibility	<b>.413</b>	.193	.272	.242
Personal Ties	-.229	<b>.624</b>	.069	.040
Tradition	-.038	<b>.600</b>	.255	-.224
Peers	.169	<b>.567</b>	.185	.037
Timeliness	.210	<b>.566</b>	-.122	.010
Supervisor	-.127	<b>.501</b>	-.094	.343
Planning	.353	<b>.498</b>	.016	.160
Conservative	-.213	<b>.480</b>	.148	.102
Organizational Norms	.101	<b>.462</b>	.261	.165
Space	.172	<b>.454</b>	-.107	.058
Job Level	.258	<b>.409</b>	.244	-.063
Attitudes	-.061	.165	<b>.610</b>	.058
Motivation	.302	-.035	<b>.598</b>	.136
Liberal	.132	.112	<b>.556</b>	.049
Humor	.162	-.005	<b>.532</b>	.144
Beliefs	-.158	.066	<b>.518</b>	.128
Culture	.121	.324	<b>.483</b>	-.083
Values	.170	.353	<b>.444</b>	.253
Fairness	.349	-.105	<b>.412</b>	.113
Politics	-.170	.159	<b>.403</b>	-.262
Company Goals	-.020	-.009	.027	<b>.807</b>
Budget Meeting	.029	.132	.156	<b>.632</b>
Readers	.320	.004	.048	<b>.557</b>
Marketing	.024	.223	.115	<b>.525</b>
Competition	.096	-.078	.038	<b>.524</b>
Loyalty	.082	.298	.363	<b>.484</b>
Audience Demand	.082	-.034	-.025	<b>.413</b>
Eigenvalues	4.27	4.24	3.63	3.17

% of Total Variance Explained	8.90	8.83	7.56	6.61
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we controlled for the impact of job-related variables: *experience* (1 = “5 years or less” to 7= “31 years or more”; the median group had 16-20 years of experience); *position* (from 1 = “assistant section editor” to 4 = “managing editor”; section editors, with 43%, were the dominant group); newspaper *circulation* (from 1 = “under 50,000 to 4 = over 250,000; 51 percent were 50,000 or less); and staff size (from 1 = “under 50” to 4 = “over 250”; 51 percent were 50 staffers or fewer).

### **Independent Measures**

This study considered differences at the regional (i.e., Nordic vs. U.S.) level, and their comparative influences on the decision-making values of newspaper editors. Furthermore, in line with Sylvie and Huang (2008), we used hierarchical multiple regression to predict decision-making styles (rational, intuitive, and avoidant). This approach allowed us to assess the relationship between values and decision-making styles after controlling for demographic and job-related variables.

## **RESULTS**

### **Hypothesis**

We hypothesized that there would be significant differences in American and Nordic ratings of the four remaining styles: *rational*, *intuitive*, *avoidance*, and *spontaneous*. In other words, a preponderance of the evidence will show statistically significant differences. Results (Table 3) show that the American and Nordic editors’ groups significantly differ on three of the four management styles. So the hypothesis was largely supported. American editors reported using a more *rational* style while Nordic editors reported using more *avoidant* and *spontaneous* styles.

Table 4 presents descriptive (mean and standard deviation) and internal consistency reliability statistics (Cronbach’s alpha coefficient) for the four values systems and the five GDMS scales. In general, the respondents ranked *journalistic elements* as most important when making decisions; on a scale ranging from -3 to +3, the mean score for *journalistic elements* was 1.77. Conversely, the *collective cultural* values were reported as relatively least important; the mean score for *collective*

TABLE 3: MANAGEMENT STYLE MEANS OF FRONTLINE NEWSPAPER EDITORS

MANAGEMENT STYLE	NORDIC (n = 160)	UNITED STATES (n = 341)
Rational	3.62	3.92***
Avoidant	2.43	2.13***

Intuitive	3.39	3.44
Spontaneous	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.63***</b>
* $p < .05$ , ** $p < .01$ , *** $p < .001$		

*culture* values is .012, illustrating neither negative nor positive impact on decision-making. In terms of dispersion, *journalistic elements* were least varied among respondents ( $sd = .56$ ), whereas *corporate ideals* were most varied ( $sd = .76$ ); i.e., there was more consensus on *journalistic elements'* importance and less on corporate values. With regard to decision-making styles, the respondents, on a scale of 1 to 5, were more likely to adopt *rational, intuitive, dependent, and spontaneous* decision-making styles, but less likely to perform an *avoidant* style when compared to the scale's midpoint (2.5)—a tendency identical to that found in Sylvie and Huang's report on American editors.

To verify that all items were adequate to compose reliable scales, we checked internal consistency reliabilities (see Table 4). Since Cronbach's alpha coefficient ideally should exceed .70, all scales are adequate except the *dependent* and the *spontaneous* scales (.57), too low to consider reliable with the sample; i.e., the composite scale cannot reliably capture the *dependent* and *avoidant* decision makers. Although scale developers Scott and Bruce acquired an average alpha of .79 for the *dependent* style with their four samples, subsequent studies had problems obtaining as high an alpha for that scale as Scott and Bruce ( $\alpha = .62^4$ ;  $\alpha = .70^5$ ). As a result, we will not use those styles in any further analysis.

TABLE 4: DESCRIPTIVE AND RELIABILITY STATISTICS FOR THE NORDIC VALUE SYSTEMS AND THE DECISION-MAKING STYLES

Scale	Mean	Std. deviation	Cronbach's alpha
<b>Value Systems<sup>a</sup></b>			
Journalistic Elements	1.77	.56	.74
Corporate Ideals	1.24	.76	.72
Intrinsic Values	0.97	.68	.70
Collective Culture	0.12	.68	.75
<b>Decision-Making Styles<sup>b</sup></b>			
Rational	3.62	.68	.78
Intuitive	3.40	.68	.74
Dependent	3.35	.67	.57*
Spontaneous	3.00	.57	.57*
Avoidant	2.43	.81	.81

N=160

<sup>4</sup> Robert Loo, "A psychometric evaluation of the General Decision-Making Style Inventory," *Personality and Individual Differences* 29 (November 2000): 895-905.

<sup>5</sup> Thunholm, "Decision-making style: habit, style or both?"

<sup>a</sup> on a scale of “-3=least influential” and “+3=most influential”

<sup>b</sup> on a recoded scale of “1=strongly disagree” and “5=strongly agree”

\*  $\alpha = .57$ , which is less than the acceptable level of .70, so it is dropped from further analysis.

### Research Questions

We sought to answer three research questions. RQ1 asked to what degree do the value systems predict newspaper editors' decision-making styles, after controlling for demographic and job-related effects? Investigating the relationship between Nordic editors' value systems and decision-making styles by using Pearson-product-moment correlation coefficient, the study (see Table 5) showed that the total  $R^2$  shows two of the three models significant at the .05 level: *rational* style, ( $F [12, 138] = 1.834, p = .048$ ) and *avoidant* style ( $F [12, 138] = 1.919, p = .037$ ). Each model accounted for 14 percent of variance. The amount of incremental  $R^2$  in Block 3, consistently accounting for 5 or 7 percent of variance in decision-making styles, also was significant at the .01 level for the two models. That is, although the three value systems uniquely contribute only 5 to 7 percent variance in two decision-making styles, we are 99 percent confident that the contribution is real in the inferred population. So respondents' value systems as a whole significantly affect their decision-making styles after removing the effects of demographic and job-related variables. Note that neither demographics nor job-related variables as a whole were significant to any of the styles.

RQ2 asked for the relationships between decision-making styles and demographics, job-related variables, and value systems. Regarding individual relationships, three significant predictors were found: gender, circulation size, and *journalistic elements*. First, gender predicted the *intuitive* ( $\beta = -.22, p < .05$ ) decision style. Specifically, female respondents tended toward the more *intuitive* decision style. Second, respondents, tended on smaller newspapers tended toward a more *avoidant* ( $\beta = -.21, p < .05$ ) decision style. Third, journalistic elements had a positive impact on the *rational* ( $\beta = .31, p < .001$ ) decision style. In sum, demographics, job-related variables, or value systems were not strong predictors of decision-making styles.

RQ3 sought to determine which value systems have greater effect on each decision-making style, after controlling for demographic and job-related effects. The results in Block 3 of Table 5 show that a *rational* decision-making style was influenced most by *journalistic elements*. Specifically, respondents' *rational* style resulted from their belief in journalistic values such as *newsworthiness, scoop, professionalism, accuracy, impact, ethics, autonomy, objectivity, coordination, and responsibility*. But neither the *intuitive* nor the *avoidant* decision-making styles were affected significantly by any of the value systems.

## Discussion

Managerially, Nordic newspaper front-line editors have shown themselves to be different yet the same. At least three conclusions deserve mention.

TABLE 5: HIERARCHICAL REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VALUES AND DECISION-MAKING STYLES AFTER CONTROLLING FOR DEMOGRAPHIC AND JOB-RELATED VARIABLES

Predictor	Rational (Final Beta)	Intuitive (Final Beta)	Avoidant (Final Beta)
<b>Block 1: Demographics</b>			
Age	.05	-.11	-.09
Male	-.12	-.22*	.15
Education	.00	-.01	.06
Ideology	-.03	-.10	-.05
Incremental R <sup>2</sup> (%)	.03	.05	.14
<b>Block 2: Job-related Variables</b>			
Experience	.01	.16	-.14
Position	.05	.03	-.09
Circulation	-.08	-.15	-.21*
Staff size	.05	.15	.03
Incremental R <sup>2</sup> (%)	.04	.01	.06
<b>Block 3: Value Systems</b>			
Journalistic Elements	.31***	-.05	-.15
Collective Culture	-.05	.06	.07
Intrinsic values	-.07	.15	.02
Corporate Ideals	.09	-.05	-.15
Incremental R <sup>2</sup> (%)	.07**	.03	.05**
<b>Total R<sup>2</sup> (%)</b>	.14*	.09	.14*
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> (%)</b>	.06	.01	.07

\* p<.05; \*\* p<.01; \*\*\* p<.001

First, in regards to their American peers, Nordic editors possess unique value systems when it comes to making decisions. They—unlike U.S. editors—do not let most personal values systems impact their decision-making styles. Whereas American editors said all four of the value systems played a role (Sylvie & Huang, 2008: 71) in making decisions, Nordic editors reported only *journalistic elements* stood out in doing so—and only in the *rational* style. In fact, scrutiny of the list of personal values' means shows that—in those 33 values categories that show significant regional differences—U.S. editors tend to report using each personal value more, in 21 value-to-value comparisons (see Table 1).

Moreover, Table 3 shows that Nordic editors tend to report a style that is more *avoidant* and *spontaneous* than that of American counterparts.

These results suggest the primacy of journalism (to the exclusion of other value groupings) in Nordic newsroom decisions but also that either Nordic editors either are more discriminating (i.e., more moderate) in which values they use in their decision-making or that other, unknown value systems play a role; e.g., the Nordic editors' *avoidant* and *spontaneous* tendencies suggest an "in-the-moment" or non-deliberate approach may be at work. Still, both groups gave the exact ranking order to the decision-making styles in question (in order of importance: *rational*, *intuitive*, *dependent*, *spontaneous*, and *avoidant*) albeit that the *spontaneous* style probably is more of an American trait. Too, the Scandinavian emphasis on the *rational* approach agrees with the belief that "Scandinavian managers know what works in Scandinavian organizations. We understand the cultural rules and adapt the management style to fit to those rules. Consequently it is not a question of values, but more of a rational process..." (Grenness, 2003: 17). And the fact that the value systems impacted two of the three statistically worthwhile decision-making styles lends weight to Scott and Bruce's (1995: 829) contention that managers tend to use more than one decision-making style and that styles aren't equally exclusive—a practice that Scandinavian and American front-line editors seem to share.

Second, from an overall management view—value systems play a lesser role in the interplay with Nordic front-line editors' decision-making styles. The percent of the variance (shown in Table 5) was smaller than that reported by American editors (5 and 7 percent for *two* styles for Nordic editors, compared to between 9 and 10 percent for *four* styles for the Americans). That there *is* a relationship is not surprising because other, previous studies show personal value systems related to job satisfaction, motivation, leadership styles, and both individual and organizational performance.<sup>6</sup> But finding that the Nordic editors' *journalistic elements* value system predicted a *rational* style, while the others *only collectively* predicted *the avoidant* style was two fewer predictors than Sylvie and Huang (2008) found among American editors.

Among control variables, final betas (accounting for the three value systems' impact on decision-making styles) showed that none of the demographic variables—except gender—predicted any of the management styles, while neither did any of the job-related variables—

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<sup>6</sup> For example, see Fitzgerald, G.A., and Desjardins, N.M. (2004). "Organizational values and their relation to organizational performance outcomes," *Atlantic Journal of Communication* 12(3): 121-145; Connor, and Becker, "Personal value systems and decision-making styles of public managers"; and Shim, S., Lusch, R.G., and Goldsberry, E. (2002). "Leadership style profiles of retail managers: personal, organizational and managerial characteristics," *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* 30(4): 186-201.

except circulation. While earlier studies provide contrasting<sup>7</sup> and confirming<sup>8</sup> results, we expected more clarification in regard to age and ideology, which had no significant impact on decision styles. A future study should consider age and experience in one model to clarify how editors form decision styles.

Finally, while *journalistic elements*' values significantly affected rational decision-making, partly confirming Sylvie & Huang (2008), none of the other value systems singularly influenced *intuitive* or *avoidant* decision-making – in contradiction to Sylvie & Huang (2008). It would be easy to say (and we are guilty here of doing so) that Nordic and American countries simply differ in how they manage their newspapers. But to more fully understand this difference, consider that several studies found rational decision-making limits boundaries on problem formulation, whereas intuitive decision-making is more open to alternatives and thus more innovative<sup>9</sup>—and yet the current study showed no relationships (except for female editors) to the *intuitive* style. In short, the Nordic editors actually showed more consistency of approach than the Americans – emotion and impulse that one might associate with the intuitive/avoidant style are conceptually opposite of rational qualities. This occurred despite the fact that Nordic editors rate *spontaneous* and *avoidant* style means higher than their American counterparts: The *spontaneous*-related values had a low Cronbach's alpha coefficient, making that category unreliable; and while the Nordic *avoidant* style mean was significantly higher than the American figure, both numbers were the lowest-rated of all four styles. Of course, "consistency" in one sense might be interpreted by others to be Nordic cultural homogeneity or American cultural diversity.

Because this study dropped the *dependent* and *spontaneous* styles in mid-analysis, future studies may want to modify the Scott and Bruce<sup>10</sup> items to increase the scale reliability. Other aspects also warrant caution: the less-than-desirable response rate; the Web-based survey mode; the survey's somewhat exploratory nature; and/or the results' self-reported quality. As in any survey, scholars rely on respondents'

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<sup>7</sup> Robinson and Lipman-Blumen, "Leadership behavior of male and female managers."

<sup>8</sup> See Mellahi and Guermat, "Does age matter? An empirical examination of the effect of age on managerial values and practices in India," and Patterson, T.E., and Donsbach, W. (1996), "News decisions: Journalists as partisan actors," *Political Communication* 13: 455-468.

<sup>9</sup> Scott and Bruce, "Decision-making style: The development and assessment of a new measure"; Christopher W. Allinson, Elizabeth Chell and John Hayes, "Intuition and entrepreneurial behaviour," *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology* 9 (March 2000): 31-43; and Eugene Sadler-Smith, "Cognitive style and the management of small and medium-sized enterprises," *Organization Studies* 25 (February 2004): 155-181.

<sup>10</sup> Scott and Bruce, op cite.

memory, honesty, and ability to comply. A survey also excludes chances for observation or other methods confirming or dispelling the results. This study's sample methodology also likely under-represents certain demographic groups while over-representing those with Internet access. The focus on U.S. and Nordic editors excludes other countries or territories, so international inferences require qualification. Finally, data from the respondents' subordinates wasn't available and would provide more insight.

Still, this conceptual replication of Sylvie & Huang (2008) further supports the notion that personal values affect decision-making styles. The current study demonstrates that how much a person values a style of behavior seems related to how he or she evaluates decisions and situations (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998: 383) and corroborates the pilot study's implication that Nordic editors are not as influenced by as many different values as the Americans (i.e., they tend to say more values *do not* influence their decision-making).

For the global newspaper industry, the study suggests three ways in which the industry will have to culturally navigate its change-or-die crossroads. One way suggests using a cultural lens, since Nordic editors more firmly believe in *journalistic elements*, while American editors trust a mix of elements when it comes to making decision. (Although, the industry should remember that while the findings build on Sylvie & Huang's study as to linking values and decision-making styles, individuals still may believe in more than one value system and use several decision-making styles.) A second view should cast an eye as to how particular situations predict certain decision-making styles; the re-occurrence of gender as a factor in Nordic countries reinforces the probability of the notion that newsroom managing would look somewhat different—on both sides of the Atlantic—if more women were in managing roles. Too, smaller newspapers tend to use a more *avoidant* style, so framing change initiatives (at least in Scandinavia) may have to consider organizational size.

The third prospect—and more promising from a business perspective, although it may hold much more credibility in the Nordic countries—is the emergence of *corporate ideals* as a value grouping, the knowledge that audience- and business-related values have predictive power in shaping decision-making styles in Scandinavia. This concern might solely be a factor of the Nordic survey being conducted closer to the 2007 recession (and, thus, probably extends to the United States), but nevertheless has merit and may stand to reason, given that scholars (e.g., Brytting & Trollestad, 2000; Grenness, 2003) in the new century have taken note of a Scandinavian corporate and business emphasis promoting lasting connections among companies, management, employees and the public. In any event, this study should show that no monolithic, global newspaper management style exists and that any solutions to challenges posed by change probably should be largely local in nature.

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