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baccalaureate degrees, reports Manhattan College sociologist Kevin Dougherty. These students tend to be less academically skilled, less ambitious, and from poorer families than students entering four-year institutions. But several studies have found that even students with similar disadvantages who begin at four-year schools are more likely to wind up receiving bachelor's degrees than their counterparts at community colleges.

The reason for the difference, according to Dougherty, is that community-college students encounter "institutional obstacles" all along the way. They rarely have the opportunity to live on campus—and thus have a weaker commitment to staying the course during the often-difficult early college years. Entering community-college students are 10–18 percent more likely to drop out than their counterparts at four-year schools. The next hurdle is transferring to a four-year institution. Many of these institutions are reluctant to take transfer students. Only half the baccalaureate aspirants manage to make the move—often without much help from community-college faculty or advisers, whose efforts are concentrated on vocational education. The students who do transfer then face further obstacles. They are often

denied financial aid and credits for community-college courses. The transfer students also frequently find themselves poorly prepared to meet the new academic demands, and often find it hard to fit into college social life. Eventually, several studies show, about one-third of the transferees drop out.

What is to be done? Clark Kerr and other prominent educators have recommended that community colleges more or less stop trying to do what they are not doing well and instead concentrate on what they do best: vocational education, adult and community education, and remedial education. But that, Dougherty says, "would leave many baccalaureate aspirants homeless." He proposes a different solution: Turn the community colleges into two-year branches of state universities. Nine states already have such arrangements. "Because of [the branches'] strong connections to the universities," he says, "[they] apparently make it much easier for students to transfer than do community colleges." And once they have transferred, the students encounter fewer difficulties. This would be good news for working-class and minority students, for whom the community college has become a gateway to higher education.

PRESS & MEDIA

Invisible News

"Black on Black" by Jim Strader, in *Washington Journalism Review* (Mar. 1992), 4716 Pontiac St., College Park, Md. 20740.

In its prime during the late 1940s, the *Pittsburgh Courier* claimed more than 400,000 readers and wielded enormous influence among blacks—not only in Pittsburgh but throughout the nation. Today the *Courier*, along with most other black newspapers across the country, is suffering from dwindling circulation, sagging advertising revenues, and diminishing prominence in the black community.

The basic problem, notes Strader, a wire service reporter, is that black newspapers such as the *Chicago Defender*, the *Atlanta Daily World*, and the *New York Amsterdam News* are no longer, in one editor's words, "the only place blacks [can] read about blacks. Now there's competition everywhere." National black magazines such as *Ebony* and *Emerge* have cut into the newspapers' readership. And the presence of blacks at many mainstream papers and in television news has made the "mainstream" press more attentive to the desires of black

readers and viewers, lessening the need for all-black news.

The black newspapers' audience has also changed. Many middle-class blacks have moved to the suburbs, where they are far removed from the newspapers' urban concerns. "There is a portion of the black community that is indifferent to the black press," asserts Roland Wolseley, author of *The Black Press, U.S.A.* "Editors don't like to be told this. They have a tough job holding the interest of middle-class blacks."

It wasn't always so hard. During the civil-rights movement, black newspapers (some with national distribution) were considered by many blacks their only reliable source of news and the newspapers helped reinforce a sense of collective identity. The papers publicized the goals of civil rights and equality, and had large circulations closely tied to political advocacy. In recent years, however, the *Chicago Defend-*

Here's Madonna with the News

Jon Katz, former executive producer of the *CBS Morning News*, announces in *Rolling Stone* (Mar. 5, 1992) that "straight news," as reported in daily newspapers and on TV network broadcasts, is becoming extinct.

In place of the Old News, something dramatic is evolving, a new culture of information, a hybrid New News—dazzling, adolescent, irresponsible, fearless, frightening and powerful. The New News is a heady concoction, part Hollywood film and TV movie, part pop music and pop art, mixed with popular culture and celebrity magazines, tabloid telecasts, cable and home video.

Increasingly, the New News is seizing the functions of mainstream journalism, sparking conversations and setting the country's social and political agenda. It is revolutionizing the way information reaches people and moves among them. It is changing the way Americans evaluate politicians and, shortly, elect them . . .

The modern news media—the Old News—was formed in the years after World War II. Major newspapers and instantly powerful network-news divisions chose Washington and New York as their headquarters, and presidential politics, the economy and foreign affairs—the Cold War, mostly—as their pre-

minent beats. In its heyday, the Old News showed us the murder of John Kennedy, took us to the moon, then helped drive a president from office and end a war.

Other stories—the sexual revolution, the role of race, dramatic changes in the relationship between people and their jobs, the evolution of pop culture, a rebirth of spiritualism—were covered sporadically and incompletely by the Old News . . . They were a sideline, never the main event.

But for the New News—and for much of America—they were the event. Women, blacks, Hispanics, gays and Asians had launched an ongoing political and cultural revolution against middle-class white males, who continue to dominate most institutions, including the news media . . .

Mainstream journalism frequently checkmates itself. In worshipping balance over truth, objectivity over point of view, moderation over diversity, and credibility over creativity, the Old News gives consumers a clear choice. Consumers can have a balanced discussion, with every side of an issue neutralizing the other, or they can turn to singers, producers and filmmakers offering colorful, distinctive, often flawed but frequently powerful visions . . . More and more, Americans are making [their preference] clear.

er's circulation has declined to 30,000, one-tenth what it used to be, while the *Courier's* is down to 50,000, and the *Baltimore Afro-American* has dropped its national edition.

To woo readers back, some black newspapers are focusing on local issues and strengthening their base in the inner cities. The publish-

ers contend that black communities still need a local black perspective on the news and advocacy on black issues. While blacks trust CNN and *USA Today*, *Birmingham Times* publisher James E. Lewis says, "on the local level, black people do not trust the information that's in the local newspapers as it applies to them."

How Clark Kent Learned to Fly

The American news media emerged from the Watergate scandals with unprecedented power—founded, some press critics say, on illusions. As Edward Jay Epstein noted back in 1973, "What the press did between the break-in in June [1972] and the trial in January was to leak the case developed by the federal and Florida prosecutors to the public." Yet the myth that young *Washington Post* reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein had toppled a disgraced president—a myth fed by their best-

"Watergate: A Study in Mythology" by Michael Schudson, in *Columbia Journalism Review* (May-June 1992), 700 Journalism Bldg., Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. 10027.

selling book, *All the President's Men* (1987) and the popular movie that was made from it—dies hard. That partly explains journalism's enhanced clout after Watergate. But Michael Schudson, author of *Discovering the News* (1978) and chair of the communication department at the University of California, San Diego, sees another reason: the Nixon administration's relentless attacks on the news media.

From the beginning of Richard Nixon's presidency in 1969, he "insisted on treating the