

man. He could hold his temper like a gentleman during petty disputes “but [was] implacable when legitimately roused,” writes Peter N. Stearns, a historian at George Mason University.

By the 1920s, though, corporate capitalists had linked anger with inefficiency, and the emotion lost its luster. Anger was found to lead to labor disruptions, frazzled coworkers, and weakened sales in the service and retail industries. A spate of anger restrictions was imposed on the country’s workers. The preference for restraint soon extended to social interactions of all kinds. Boxing fell out of favor among the middle

class, and trendy “fair fighting” handbooks counseled frustrated spouses to scream their displeasure into an empty closet, rather than at each other. A United Auto Workers pamphlet from the 1940s admonished union activists that a “lost temper means a lost argument.”

Studies show that today Americans are more likely to want to conceal their anger than the Chinese, heirs of Confucius, the great master of self-control. Even so, American cultural critics continue to diagnose anger as the country’s “leading emotional problem.” While he does not decry the virtues of cheerfulness,

Stearns believes that the emphasis on suppressing anger can “create real confusion about one’s own authentic emotions,” make one more susceptible to distress when encountering anger, and diminish the public’s willingness to protest wrongs.

Some groups, whether corporate executives, high school basketball coaches, or right-wing pundits, ignore or reject the “pressure to keep the fires of emotion banked,” Stearns says, and may easily intimidate—even control—the mild-mannered. A more nuanced approach to anger control might teach the “uses as well as abuses of anger.”

PRESS & MEDIA

Localized Pain

THE SOURCE: “Citizens’ Local Political Knowledge and the Role of Media Access” by Lee Shaker, in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, Winter 2009.

HAND-WRINGING ABOUNDS over the future of newspapers. With advertising revenues shrinking, how will they manage to stay in business? Who will fill their role of reporting on political affairs? Lee Shaker, a researcher in Princeton University’s Department of Politics, cautions that the issues are different for national and local news—and the outlook for local coverage is particularly bleak.

Many citizens get their local news from friends and neighbors, not from newspapers directly, but the news circulated in social net-

works tends to trace back to published papers, Shaker writes. A shuttered local paper could silence much of that chatter. Already, several major local newspapers have shut down completely (e.g., *The Rocky Mountain News* in Denver) or moved to an online-only business model (e.g., *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*).

The people who follow local news tend to have a slightly different demographic profile than those who are knowledgeable about national affairs. While both groups tend to be more educated, older, and wealthier than the average citizen, national-news aficionados are also disproportionately male and white. Using data

from a survey of 1,001 Philadelphians in the weeks following the 2007 mayoral race, Shaker found that on matters of local concern, men and women, blacks and whites, all tended to have roughly equivalent levels of knowledge.

It’s not just local newspapers that are threatened by the changing media environment. Shaker writes that the “near-infinite array of media choices” forces local television news “into constant and direct competition with better-funded, more polished options,” including, of course, the bounty of non-news entertainment available. In 1993, more than three-quarters of survey respondents reported regularly watching local television news, but in 2008 just over half did. Among Philadelphia residents, those with cable television (more than three-quarters of respondents) tended to know less about local pol-

EXCERPT

Without a Paddle

No industry in living memory has collapsed faster than daily print journalism. You can still buy a buggy whip, which is more than can be said for a copy of *The Rocky Mountain News*, *Cincinnati Post*, or *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. One would think that a business in such dire condition would be—for desperation's sake—wildly innovative. But newspapers exhibit a fossilization of form and content that's been preserved in sedimentary rock since the early 1970s when the "Women's Pages" were converted to the "Leisure Section." *General Motors* itself showed more inventive origi-

nality on its way to Chapter 11, as the two people who bought *Pontiac Aztecs* can attest.

Readers are fleeing newspapers. What are newspapers offering to lure them back? Out-of-register color photographs have replaced blurry black-and-white pics. More working women and black people appear in comic strips. (Although comparisons to *Walt Kelly's Pogo* and *Al Capp's L'il Abner* show, if anything, a decline in the social relevance of the funny pages, *Marmaduke* always excepted.) Various versions of "Dr. Gridlock" have been instituted so that when you get to work and open your morning paper you can see why you didn't get to work.

—P. J. O'ROURKE, author of, most recently, *Driving Like Crazy*, in *The Weekly Standard* (June 7, 2010)

itics than those without such access, presumably because of cable TV's many alluring alternatives to local news broadcasts. Cable did

not have the same negative effect on viewers' knowledge about national political issues.

The first order of business for local

news media outlets is simply staying alive. But even if they manage to survive, Shaker warns, it's possible no one will pay them much attention.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

Atheists Anonymous

THE SOURCE: "Preachers Who Are Not Believers" by Daniel C. Dennett and Linda LaScola, in *Evolutionary Psychology*, March 2010.

GENERATIONS OF QUESTIONING churchgoers have struggled to accept the teachings of Christianity, as have, inevitably, some clergy. The stakes are certainly higher for the latter. What does it mean to be a nonbelieving pastor?

Daniel C. Dennett, a philosophy professor at Tufts University, and social worker Linda LaScola discreetly identified and interviewed

five "closeted" nonbelieving ministers to better understand this "invisible phenomenon." The pastors, all Protestant men (Dennett and LaScola couldn't identify any nonbelieving Catholic or Orthodox priests), expressed skepticism about a host of fundamental Christian teachings, including the virgin birth of Jesus, the existence of heaven and hell, and the status of the Bible as the inerrant word of God. Some admitted that their religious stance might be best described as atheist. "The whole grand scheme of Christianity, for me,

is just a bunch of bunk," said Jack, a Southern Baptist minister of 15 years.

Three of the five pastors felt stuck in a purgatory of sorts: They wanted to leave the church, but felt they lacked options. "If I had an alternative, a comfortable paying job, something I was interested in doing, and a move that wouldn't destroy my family, that's where I'd go," said Adam, a Church of Christ minister with a very religious wife and children. He regularly chided himself, "Just stick with what you're doing; it pays good. . . . You're doing good in your community; you're respected. But it's just gnawing away inside."

Most of the pastors had no sense of their impending change of heart when they entered religious life. Their first stirrings of doubt