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ABSTRACT

In recent years, increasing concern with newspaper accuracy and credibility has led some people to question whether newspapers should use veiled, non-specific, attributions in news reporting. This study contains a content analysis of a sample of newspapers to determine the frequency and nature of veiled attributions as they are now employed. The newspapers selected for this study were located in the East and Midwest. One of the major findings of the study was that 36 percent of the 5182 stories examined in this investigation contained at least one attribution to unnamed sources. Additional findings of this study are reported in both narrative and table format. (RB)

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VEILED NEWS SOURCES — WHO AND WHAT ARE THEY?

An ANPA
News Research Center Study

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Which 'Veiled Attributions' Are Most Often Used by Newspapers? How do Readers Respond to Them?

In recent years, increasing concern with newspaper accuracy and credibility has led some people to question whether newspapers should use veiled, or non-specific, attributions in news stories.

Some people have held that such practices result in a loss of confidence in the newspaper because readers feel they are not being told the full truth since the unidentified source cannot be held publicly accountable. It is also argued that failure to attribute information to an identified person may even cause the reader to doubt whether there was a reliable source, thus leading the reader to question the validity of the entire account.

On the other hand, reporters often argue that to make full identification would result in sources "drying up," which would mean that the public would get less information about the public's business.

The ANPA News Research Center commissioned Professor Hugh Culbertson of Ohio University to study these matters in two ways:

The first is a content analysis of a sample of newspapers to determine the frequency and nature of veiled attributions that are employed. The second is a study of samples of readers to determine whether they are aware of such attributions and, if so, what their reactions are to those attributions and the stories in which they are used.

This issue of the **News Research Bulletin** reports the first part of the study: the frequency and nature of veiled attributions. For example, 36% of the 5182 stories that were analyzed contained at least one veiled attribution. However, the frequency of the practice varied rather widely from one type of newspaper to another. More than half of the stories in The New York Times and Washington Post included such attributions, compared to slightly less than one-third of the stories in six Ohio dailies.

"Officials," "spokesmen" and "sources" were the three most common veiled attributions, and Culbertson writes that "the veil was thicker and attribution was more vague in international news than in domestic copy."

The second part of the study will be reported in a **News Research Bulletin** later this year. Data from samples of newspaper readers in two communities are now being analyzed. One community is a small agricultural-industrial town; the other is an upper middle class suburb of a major city.

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The Pentagon Papers, the prominent role of news leaks in Watergate and the furor over protecting confidential news sources have all recently focused attention on long-standing dilemmas about how and when a newsman should quote a source.

On the one hand, thorough attribution presumably helps readers interpret news intelligently. On the other, newsmen must at times use euphemisms (for example, "a source close to the White House"), or no attribution whatever, to "pry the lid off."

While newsmen and media critics often discuss this complex problem, there's been very little study of how the general public views the use of unnamed sources or veiled attribution. We don't know how many people notice the practice — or how often the "Noticers" tend to accept or reject what unnamed sources are reported to have said.

John Adams did find that, in the early 1960's, a sample of college students attached relatively high credibility to unnamed government sources.[1] However, the literature tells us little about how a general population sample might react in the 1970's.

Recent polls have uncovered a great deal of skepticism — in some cases, cynicism — about major American institutions, including the media.[2] This could reflect doubts about such practices as veiled attribution.

However, Alex Edelstein, in a study in the state of Washington, found some evidence of fairly high public respect for media coverage of Watergate.[3] It is possible that veiled sources gained credibility during the Watergate affair because they turned out to be accurate.

Reporters depended heavily on unnamed sources such as "Deep Throat" in Watergate coverage[4] and "The Close Associate" in the Agnew scandal.[5] Editors such as the Washington Post's Benjamin Bradlee were often reluctant to rely on them.[6]

However, as the book **All The President's Men** makes clear, Carl Bernstein and Robert Woodward of the Post went to great lengths to insure an unnamed source's credibility. Their general rule was to insist on corroboration from at least two independent sources.[7] They even sought "character references" in at least one case.[8]

Before doing a study of the public's reaction to veiled attributions, we thought it necessary to describe, in at least an approximate way, newspapers' practices in the use of unnamed sources. Thus we looked closely at a constructed week's issues of each of 12 newspapers.* This bulletin describes the results of this part of our investigation.

A Purposive Sample of Newspapers

Papers studied were in the East and Midwest to permit possible later interviewing of staffers and readers. To insure a broad and varied group of publications, we looked at three distinct types:

1. The New York Times and Washington Post, often regarded as leaders in investigative journalism — and in related practices such as veiled attribution. We saw these newspapers as a kind of benchmark for use in assessing others. The Post, in particular, has played a leading role in discussions about leaks since editor Benjamin Bradlee's widely publicized 1972 statements about them.[9]

2. The Chicago Tribune, Detroit News, Philadelphia Bulletin and Cleveland Plain Dealer, the largest circulation dailies in four metropolitan areas.

3. The Columbus Dispatch, Cincinnati Post, Toledo Blade, Youngstown Vindicator, Canton Repository and Zanesville Times-Recorder. These newspapers represent a wide variety of geographic areas and circulation levels within Ohio.

These newspapers aren't a random sample of all American dailies. However, the six largest newspapers merit careful study in their own right because of their size and possible

*A constructed week consists of seven days, one Monday, one Tuesday, etc., spread out over a period of several weeks or months.

impact. Also, the six varied Ohio newspapers were found to greatly resemble each other in veiled-attribution practice, so findings about them seem likely to apply in general elsewhere (especially since, in smaller newspapers, wire-service and syndicate stories appear to account for a high proportion of unnamed sources).

We studied five AMs (The New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, Cleveland Plain Dealer and Zanesville Times-Recorder) and seven PMs.

Also, the 12 newspapers included six independents, four group-ownership newspapers (Newhouse's Plain Dealer, Scripps-Howard's Cincinnati Post, the Chicago Tribune and Thomson-Brush-Moore's Canton Repository) and two non-group newspapers involved in multi-media ownerships (the Washington Post and the Zanesville Times-Recorder). Thus the study covered a wide variety of edition times and ownership patterns.

Two constructed weeks were selected. Each of these contained a single day picked at random from each of seven scattered weeks between April 1 and Aug. 31, 1974. This period featured intense debate and activity related to Watergate. Only the last day chosen in each constructed week came after President Nixon's resignation on Aug. 9.

Within each of the three types of newspapers described above, half of the publications chosen were studied for one constructed week, half for the other. Dates were as follows:

1. First constructed week (April 5, April 16, May 11, May 29, June 10, July 7 and Aug. 22) — the Washington Post, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Philadelphia Bulletin, Columbus Dispatch, Toledo Blade and Youngstown Vindicator.

2. Second constructed week (April 6, April 17, May 6, May 30, June 14, July 9 and Aug. 18) — The New York Times, Detroit News, Chicago Tribune, Zanesville Times-Recorder, Cincinnati Post* and Canton Repository.

The edition of each newspaper mailed to subscribers in Athens was analyzed.

The content study proceeded in two phases.

First, the author and a graduate research assistant counted stories in each issue which contained veiled attribution, and those which did not.

*The Cincinnati Post does not publish on Sunday, so it had no issue to be analyzed on August 18.

Second, the researchers read each article studied, underlining all unnamed-attribution phrases. Then each source was coded on 23 variables, most of them reported below.

The researcher and assistant checked frequently with each other in the early stages of coding to refine procedures.*

Only Straight News Analyzed

The analysis covered only straight news, excluding opinion columns (though pieces labeled "news analysis" were included), news-in-brief items, question-and-answer articles, personal profiles, how-to-do-it pieces, timeless human interest stories, special one-shot sections and speech texts. Also excluded were sports and theater news as well as weather reports and forecasts.

Attribution in opinion columns and other excluded material merits study, but it lay beyond the scope of the present research.

The study covered all stories meeting the above criteria in 10 of the 12 newspapers. For The New York Times and Washington Post, however, the researchers coded every other story from a randomly chosen starting point at the beginning of each issue. **This was done because of the very large number of stories published by these newspapers.

The researchers coded each source as to the locus (international, national, state or local) of the story in which it appeared. Rules used included these:

1. State news included that dealing with state-wide trends and events along with news about occurrences within the newspaper's state but outside its metropolitan area.

2. Stories about events within the U.S. related to American foreign relations were coded as international; however, we defined an item as national if it focused on some basically domestic issue (for example, Watergate) but mentioned international reactions and implications in passing.

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*When the two researchers coded the same stories independently, they agreed in their judgments more than 90% of the time.

**This procedure insured that Times and Post treatment of major national-international stories was covered, facilitating comparisons with other newspapers. To be sure, there was an under-representation of local and state stories in the Times and Post. This is taken into account in analyses.

3. A story which mentioned a national trend or program was regarded as state or local if the first three or four paragraphs stressed a state or local angle.

In addition to unnamed personal sources, the study covered both named and unnamed organizations. That was done because quoting an organization such as the Army fails to clarify who really says what. Such attribution "veils" the fact that one or a few individuals tend to originate most statements put out by a large organization.

If a wire-service story appeared in, for example, six of the twelve papers, it was coded six times in the study. Thus our analysis yielded a picture of wire-service stories as they appeared in print, not necessarily as they came to newspaper wire editors. Other studies are needed to clearly describe: a) wire-service attribution practice, and b) how euphemisms within wire-service and syndicate stories may change or disappear on newspaper copydesks.

We now turn to an analysis of stories appearing in the 12 newspapers.

Number of Stories with Unnamed Personal Sources

As Table 1 shows, 36% of the 5182 stories coded in all newspapers contained at least one attribution to unnamed

TABLE 1

Percentage of All Stories Containing At Least One Unnamed Personal Source in Each Type of Newspaper*

	New York Times, Washington Post	Four Other Metropolitan Newspapers	Six Smaller Ohio Dailies	Total, All Newspapers
Stories having one or more unnamed personal sources	54% (418)	36% (581)	30% (842)	36% (1,841)
Stories having no unnamed personal sources	46% (353)	64% (1,045)	70% (1,943)	64% (3,341)
Totals	100% (771)	100% (1,626)	100% (2,785)	100% (5,182)

*The difference among types of newspapers was greater than could reasonably be attributed to sampling error, as determined by use of appropriate statistical tests.

persons. Apparently, veiled attribution is widespread in American journalism.

Unnamed personal attribution appeared in 54% of all stories coded in The New York Times and Washington Post, 36% in the other four metropolitan newspapers and 30% in the six smaller Ohio dailies.

There was surprisingly little variation from newspaper to newspaper within a given newspaper type. Unnamed personal sources show up in 52% of all New York Times stories studied and in 57% of those from the Washington Post. Comparable figures ranged from 32 to 43% for the other four metropolitan newspapers and from 21 to 35% in the six smaller Ohio publications.

Table 2 indicates that the three types of newspapers differ even more sharply when one considers only staff-written stories.* Roughly 57% of all Times and Post stories which were staff-written contained veiled attribution to individuals. That compares with 31% for the four metropolitan newspapers and 19% for the six smaller Ohio dailies.

To sum up, we can list several generalizations:

1. Unnamed sources were common in all types of newspapers, showing up in at least 21% of all stories coded for each of the 12 newspapers studied.

2. The practice of veiled attribution was almost twice as common in The New York Times and Washington Post as in the smaller Ohio newspapers. The four biggest-circulation dailies fell in between.

3. The Times and Post relied very heavily on their own staffs for the investigative reporting which involved veiled attribution. In the Times, 56% of the staff-written stories, but only 31% of the few wire service items, quoted unnamed personal sources. Comparable figures in the Post were 58% for staff-written material, 51% for wire-service content.

4. In the four metropolitan newspapers, unnamed sources were about as likely to show up in staff-written as in wire stories. This equality was almost exact for the Plain Dealer and Tribune. In the News and Bulletin, unnamed sources appeared in a slightly higher percentage of wire-service than of staff stories.

*All stories not clearly identified as coming from a wire service, syndicate or other non-staff source were coded as staff-written. Doubtless some published press releases fell in our staff-written category; however, we thought it necessary and appropriate to code these as staff-written for two reasons. First, we could seldom identify such copy with certainty. And second, as viewed by many readers, a press release not identified as such comes from a newspaper's staff, it would seem.

TABLE 2

Percentage of Staff-Written Stories Containing At Least One Unnamed Personal Source in Each Type of Newspaper Studied*

	New York Times, Washington Post	Four Other Metropolitan Newspapers	Six Smaller Ohio Dailies	Total, All Newspapers
Stories having one or more unnamed personal sources	57% (337)	31% (270)	19% (224)	31% (831)
Stories having no unnamed personal sources	43% (255)	69% (604)	81% (967)	69% (1,826)
Totals	100% (592)	100% (874)	100% (1,191)	100% (2,657)

*The difference among types of newspapers was greater than could reasonably be attributed to sampling error, as determined by use of appropriate statistical tests.

A caveat seems in order here. These figures may tell more about the types of stories covered than about attribution per se. Morris Janowitz and others have noted that small-town newspapers tend to focus largely on "consensus" news rather than on controversies likely to require veiled attribution.[10] The author will have more to say on this later.

We now turn from counting stories with and without atttribution to analysis of the specific phrases used.

What Phrases Were Used?

We wrote down all phrases used to denote veiled sources. **Table 3** lists the more common ones.

"Officials," "spokesmen" and "sources" rank first, second and third, respectively, in frequency of occurrence within each type of newspaper studied. These three words outnumbered all other veiled attributions by a large amount.

Few modifying adjectives were used with these nouns. Of 610 officials quoted, only 44 were described with modifiers. And in 80% of these 44 instances, the accompanying word was

"senior," "high," "high-ranking," "responsible" or "top" — all suggesting high status within society or an organization.

TABLE 3

Single Words Most Frequently Used To Denote Unnamed Sources

	New York Times, Washington Post	Other Four Metropolitan Newspapers	Smaller Ohio Dailies	Total, All Newspapers
Officials	142	179	289	610
Spokesman	106	159	219	484
Sources	100	120	134	354
Members	23	24	33	80
Observers	27	26	15	68
Experts	24	19	18	61
Anonymous	9	14	7	30

Of 354 "sources" quoted, 27 were described as "close" to someone, 21 as "informed." The term "spokesman" almost never went with a modifying adjective (of course, the individual or organization for whom one spoke was generally spelled out).

In sum, veiled-attribution phrases gave little information in the form of descriptive adjectives. Where such adjectives did appear, they tended to be positive, suggesting that a person was high-ranking, well-informed or an insider.

All this may reflect two things. First, newsmen presumably feel they should seldom quote sources who appear to be unreliable. And second, a reporter doubtless has an interest in making veiled sources seem authentic to deskmen and readers.

Who and What Are the Veiled Sources?

The 5458 veiled sources fitted into six categories with the following frequencies:

1. Two or more persons [for example, State Department officials] — 35%. Plural-personal sources totaled 41% in staff-written Times and Post articles compared with 23% in Associated Press pieces used by the same two newspapers. This may reflect Benjamin Bradlee's policy on the Post requiring that his staff get confirmation from more than one source.

2. Named organizations — 26%. Examples here included the U.S. State Department and Rotary International.

3. Single-person sources — 21%. "A high-ranking official" or "a usually reliable source" would qualify here.

4. Organizations which were identified in general [for example, police] but with no proper name given — 8%.

5. Media and related institutions [Reuters or The New York Times, etc.] — 4%.

6. Nations [i.e., Russia or Cairo] — 4%.

Veiled attributions in national, state and local coverage all came close to the above percentages.

However, international stories differed from the domestic variety in a few ways:

1. Named organizations accounted for only 12% of all veiled attribution in international stories, 30% in domestic. Interestingly, however, in international stories, named organizations were almost twice as common among American sources as among those from abroad. The oft-noted American penchant for bureaucracy apparently shows up in coverage of its foreign dealings. Of course, reporters may shy away from giving full names for organizations in, say, France or Tanzania because these names would mean little to American readers.

2. Looking only at personal sources in international news, we found that information regarding organizational affiliation is given for 24% of foreign sources, for 47% of American sources.

3. Media institutions constituted 8% of veiled sources in international news, only 1% in domestic copy. Further, within international stories, media institutions accounted for 11% of the foreign sources but only 2% of Americans quoted. Reuters, in particular, was often quoted.

How Are Veiled Sources Authenticated?

The journalist can do at least four things to make a veiled-attribution phrase appear authentic.

First, he can provide information about source backgrounds, organizational affiliations, job titles and accomplishments.

Second, he can cite two or more sources in a story.

Third, he can use quotation marks to suggest that quoted matter is verbatim and has not been conjured up or altered by newsmen.

And fourth, he can use a byline so readers may, to some degree, attribute content to a reporter or reporters.

We now look briefly at the use of each of these practices.

In all, 3094 unnamed persons and sets of persons not labeled as organizations were quoted. In 13% (414) of these cases, the story gave no information whatever about job title, background or organizational affiliation.

Complete lack of information was slightly more common among personal sources in international news (16% of all such sources) and national news (14%) than in state (10%) and local (11%) news.

Such a lack of information occurred slightly more often among Times and Post sources (16%) than with the other 10 newspapers (12%).

We next looked for the presence of rather specific information about vocational and other roles played, organizational affiliations, etc.

Precise organizational affiliation involved clearly spelling out an agency or organization (for example, the State Department or the U.S. Army). A "U.S. government source" was not considered identified as to organizational affiliation, however, in the preceding analysis, such a designation was coded as providing some information about the source.

"Lawyer" was seen as a specific vocational title where the person quoted apparently had a private practice. "Diplomat" was not coded as such as title. "Ambassador" or "Assistant Secretary of State" was.

Some findings:

1. Newspapers were almost twice as likely to give information concerning the source's organization, firm or agency as they were to give information about his specific job or role within that organization. Organizational ties appeared with 51% of personal sources; job title with only 29%.

2. Precise organizational affiliation and job title were both missing for 65% of all unnamed personal sources in international news; for only 39% in domestic stories.

3. Both title and organizational affiliation appeared with only 3% of unnamed sources in international stories; with 13% in domestic coverage.

In sum, the unnamed attributions appeared to be relatively vague in news related for foreign affairs. Diplomatic secrecy, it appears, outdid that of most domestic sources.

Use of Multiple Sources

We now turn to a second possible means of authentication — quoting from two or more separate sources. We have seen

that the Times and Post often do use a single veiled-attribution phrase to denote more than one person.

We also counted the frequency with which a given unnamed source stood alone as the only source quoted in a story. Two or more persons were counted as one source here when they were denoted with a single attribution phrase.*

Not unexpectedly, only 5% of all unnamed sources stood alone in Times and Post coverage. Comparable figures were 11% in the larger metropolitan newspapers, 15% in smaller Ohio dailies.

Within the smaller Ohio newspapers, 24% of all veiled sources stood alone in local news, 18% in state news, 13% in national and 10% in international.

In the four large-circulation metropolitan newspapers, unnamed sources were more than twice as likely to stand alone in wire-service copy as in staff-written material.

Of course, the variable studied here may reflect story length (a source is likely to stand alone in a very brief item) rather than attribution practice per se; however, standing alone could still influence credibility as perceived by the newspaper reader.

To sum up here, journalists seldom put all of their attribution marbles into one unnamed basket within a given story; however, about one-fourth of all veiled sources did stand alone in the local coverage of the six smaller Ohio dailies studied.

Use of Direct Quotations

Now we turn to a third possible means of authentication — direct quotation to suggest that the comments made were not concocted by journalists.

In this study, only 3% of all personal sources were directly quoted. Another 5% were quoted partially (with some of a given quote being direct and some indirect). In our sample, newsmen apparently did not often see quotation marks as a useable, needed means of making a veiled source appear credible.

*In following this procedure, we made an assumption. To clearly tell the reader that sources A and B supplement or confirm each other, the publication must refer to the two sources with separate phrases. To be sure, we did not look at instances of confirmation per se. We simply assumed that, if a veiled source were standing alone, no confirmation could occur (or at least, none could be apparent to the reader.)

Frequency of direct quotation depended on who wrote a story. In particular:

1. The practice occurred with 17% of all personal sources in staff-written Post and Times stories, with 15% in staff-written material from the Detroit News, Chicago Tribune, Cleveland Plain Dealer and Philadelphia Bulletin.
2. In AP and UPI stories, 11% of all personal sources rated quotation marks. This seemed rather surprising in view of the emphasis which the wire services are said to place on quotes.
3. In the six smaller Ohio newspapers, only 4.5% of all veiled personal sources in staff-written items were directly quoted.

Many observers suggest that metropolitan newspapers do lots of investigative reporting, smaller dailies less of it. If we assume the wire services fall in between, we have a hint that direct quotation of unnamed sources goes with such reporting. This, of course, is highly speculative.

Use of Bylines

We now consider a fourth and final possible means of authenticating a story — providing a byline.

Where attribution is unclear in a bylined story, a reader may tend to attribute content to the author or authors (in our survey, we will look at people's reactions to bylines). When we compared bylined with non-bylined stories, we found that:

1. In national and international coverage, the Times and Post gave no job title or organizational affiliation for about 58% of all personal sources in bylined stories, but for only 47% in non-bylined items. The relative vagueness of veiled attribution in bylined stories, then, could lead to some readers weighing the byline in interpreting the story.
2. In smaller Ohio newspapers, however, the trend runs in the opposite direction. No information was given for about 38% of all sources in bylined national-international material.

Of the 5458 veiled sources studied, 17% were in the military, police and education categories, 43% were from elsewhere in government and 40% from outside government. We looked at several specific types of sources within these broad categories.

First, we turn to executive and legislative sources at various levels of government.

The Legislature and the Executive

Veiled executive sources clearly outnumber the legislative, with the judiciary running a very distant third. Newsmen often probe controversial issues and deeds within the executive branch, while courts and legislative chambers are often closed to such coverage.[11]

TABLE 4

Percentage of Veiled Attributions to Persons and Organizations Within the Executive and Legislative Branches*

Branch of Government	Locus of Story		
	National	State	Local
Executive	59%	66%	73%
	(160)	(45)	(54)
Legislative	41%	34%	27%
	(111)	(23)	(20)
Total	100%	100%	100%
	(271)	(68)	(74)

*This table includes only attribution to federal-government sources in national news, to state-government sources in state news, and to local-government sources in local news. Data are summed for all 12 newspapers.

However, the dominance of the executive branch over the legislative in sheer number of veiled sources was greater at the local level (about three to one) than at the state (roughly two to one) or national (three to two) levels. City councils, it appears, were relatively less likely to "spring leaks" than were the state and national legislatures.

Looking at international stories only, clearly identified executive-branch people and groups totaled 74% of all government sources, legislative people and groups only 15% (most of the rest couldn't easily be identified from context). If we view unnamed attribution as an index, then, the Congress had a rather muted voice in foreign-affairs coverage by mid-1974 — this despite reported attempts to assert itself by then.

In national news, the federal legislature was cited more often. It accounted for 28% of all veiled attributions to government. The figure was 42% for the Times and Post, 32% in the four metropolitan newspapers, and only 16% in the six smaller Ohio dailies.

Federal sources accounted for 20% of the veiled government groups and individuals quoted in state news, 23% in local news. State government, in turn, contributed 20% of all government sources in local coverage. This doubtless reflects the rather great dependence of any given city or state on higher levels of government.

Watergate Sources — A Quick Look

We counted unnamed sources in the continuing Watergate story. Many could not be identified as being within the Senate, the House of Representatives, the special prosecutor's office, the White House or any other group involved in the drama.

TABLE 5

Percentage of Veiled Attributions to Persons and Institutions In Watergate-Related Stories*

Source	New York Times, Washington Post	Other Four Metropolitan Newspapers	Six Smaller Ohio Dailies
Special Prosecutor's Office	4.5%	4.3%	5.8%
White House	11.7	22.6	26.3
Senate Watergate Committee	6.3	3.5	5.1
Courts	1.8	4.3	1.9
Defendants and Accused	1.8	1.7	1.9
House of Representatives (including Judiciary Committee)	11.7	15.7	22.4
Other Senate Sources (besides Ervin Committee)	7.2	4.3	1.9
Other Sources, and those not identified as to organizational affiliation	54.9	43.5	34.6
Totals	99.9 (no. of sources=111)	99.9 (no. of sources=115)	99.9 (no. of sources=156)

*Percentages in each column sum to 99.9 rather than 100 because of rounding error.

However, more sources with clear organizational ties came from the White House (21%) and the House of Representatives (17%) than from any other place. The White House, it would appear, was about as likely to leak information as it was to have information leaked concerning it. (Of course, the sheer number of leaks may not reflect their impact.)

Looking further, it appears that readers of different newspapers got varying doses of these leaks. Only 12% of veiled Times and Post Watergate sources were within the White House, compared to 23% in the four metropolitan newspapers and 26% for smaller Ohio dailies.

Obviously this difference could reflect greater reliance on wire coverage by newspapers other than the Times and Post. However, in the four other metropolitan newspapers, the White House accounted for seven of 35 veiled Watergate sources in AP and UPI copy, six of 24 in staff-written stories. In these newspapers, then, play given to White House rather than other leaks did not differ much between staff and wire.

In the above counts, only current White House personnel were coded as within the White House. Defendants and accused persons who had left the White House were treated separately. They accounted for 2% of all veiled sources.

Non-Governmental Sources

For non-governmental sources (along with the military, police and educational sectors, which we viewed as rather autonomous units within government), we found a great deal of similarity among the three types of newspapers in citing people and organizations. A few highlights follow.

Corporate sources (excluding business-related interest groups such as the National Association of Manufacturers) accounted for 19% of all non-governmental leaks. Technical and management people outnumbered those in the labor movement by about six to one. Policemen and police organizations (including the FBI, the Secret Service and a few other government-related groups serving a police function) accounted for 17%.

Both business and police sources bulked large in domestic coverage and played a lesser but still meaningful role in the international realm, as shown in **Table 6.**

TABLE 6

Percentage of Veiled Non-Governmental Sources Within Various Sectors of Soceity*

	International News	National News	State News	Local News	All News
Higher Education	1.2%	1.9%	9.5%	2.8%	2.7%
Business	10.2	23.5	18.0	21.3	19.2
Public Service Organizations	6.6	12.2	12.2	9.4	10.1
Labor	2.6	2.4	8.5	3.8	3.3
Medicine[1]	1.3	3.7	1.4	2.2	2.5
Law	0.8	3.5	3.1	2.4	2.5
Finance[2]	3.7	9.9	2.4	3.1	6.0
Military	18.1	7.3	2.4	2.4	8.4
Police	11.1	14.2	15.6	27.8	16.8
Church	1.7	1.1	1.0	1.8	1.4
Political Organization[3]	7.4	2.6	8.5	3.1	4.5
Scientists not on University Faculties	3.9	4.2	0.0	0.3	2.8
Private Citizen (no other role indicated)	6.7	3.8	5.4	7.7	5.6
Mass Media	20.4	8.1	6.1	4.8	10.2
Elementary and Secondary Schools	0.5	0.4	4.4	5.5	2.0
Miscellaneous	3.9	1.1	1.3	1.4	1.9
Totals	100.1 (no. of sources =775	99.9 (no. of sources =1306)	99.8 (no. of sources =294)	99.8 (no. of sources =741)	99.9 (no. of sources =3116)

*Percentages in each column do not sum to 100 because of rounding error.

[1]Included under medicine were the American Medical Association, unnamed doctors, nurses, hospital administrators and others within the field of medicine.

[2]Finance included banks, lending organizations and other institutions concerned with the borrowing, selling, distribution and collection of money.

[3]Political organizations included political parties, closely affiliated interest groups such as the Ripon Society and party-related groups such as the Democratic National Committee.

Public service organizations constituted about 10% of all non-governmental domestic sources. This collection of sources ranged from business-related groups (for example, the National Association of Manufacturers) to social-change oriented organizations (i.e., the Black Panthers and Common Cause), youth groups (Boy and Girl Scouts) and adult voluntary organizations (Parent-Teachers' Association, Kiwanis International).

The military accounted for 18% of all non-government sources in international coverage. Also, financial institutions constituted a substantial 10% in national copy, higher education 9% in state news. These figures doubtless reflect the functions of the particular institutions. The military operates primarily in the foreign realm. The stock market is a national institution. And state governments take much of the responsibility for American higher education.

Labor accounted for more than 8% of non-government veiled attributions in state stories, reflecting substantial play given the state AFL-CIO in the Ohio press. Veiled labor sources seldom showed up except at the state level.

As noted earlier, media sources and institutions bulked large in international coverage but not in domestic news.

To sum up, veiled attribution was by no means limited to government. Furthermore, specific institutions were often cited in news about geographic regions which those institutions directly serve.

Summary

Looking at all of our data, we drew at least seven major conclusions.

First, about 46% of all veiled sources were organizations and nations. The remaining 54% were singular and plural persons.

Second, looking at personal sources, newspapers were more likely to provide information about the veiled source's organizational affiliation than about his job or role within an organization.

Third, the veil was thicker and attribution was more vague in international news than in domestic copy. Diplomatic secrecy seems likely to be the key here.

Fourth, adjectives and adjective phrases were quite rare in descriptions of veiled sources. When they were used,

however, they usually implied a source was well informed or was of high status.

Fifth, journalists seldom relied solely on a single veiled source within a story. This was especially true with staff-written Times and Post material.

Sixth, while government sources accounted for a large number of veiled attributions, veiled non-government sources are common. Unnamed military sources are especially common in international news, corporate sources in national, state and local news.

Seventh, in Watergate coverage during the five months studied, veiled attribution to the White House was at least as common as to other sources.

Finally, our data suggest certain characteristics of veiled attribution in The New York Times and Washington Post. These include:

1. Providing little information about a source's job title or organizational affiliation. Perhaps Times and Post staffers often quote people whose sensitive positions lead them to remain "deep" in the background.
2. Relying little on any one unnamed source. This shows up in the large number of phrases indicating plural persons (for example, "sources close to the State Department") and in the fact that few stories rely solely on one veiled source (whether that source be one or more persons.)
3. Relatively (compared to other newspapers) frequent direct quotation of unnamed sources.
4. Fairly frequent attribution to veiled legislative sources in national news.
5. Little quotation of unnamed sources identified with the White House in Watergate coverage.

[1]John Adams, "The Relative Credibility of Twenty Unnamed News Sources, **Journalism Quarterly** 29:79-82, Winter 1962.

[2]Polls by the Louis Harris organization have been particularly revealing here.

[3]Alex Edelstein, "Media Credibility and the Believability of Watergate," American Newspaper Publishers Association **News Research Bulletin**, No. 1, Jan. 10, 1974.

[4]Carl Bernstein and Robert Woodward, **All The President's Men** (New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1975), pp. 73-5.

[5]Richard Cohen and Jules Witcover, **A Heartbeat Away** (New York: Bantam Paperbacks, 1974), p. 95.

[6]Bernstein and Woodward, **op. cit.**, p. 319.

[7]**Ibid., pp. 293-5.**

[8]**Ibid.**, p. 329.

[9]Nicholas Von Hoffman, "Thanks to the Boss for Killing the Backgrounder," column from the Los Angeles Times-Washington Post News Service published in Athens (Ohio) Messenger, Jan. 16, 1972.

[10]Morris Janowitz, **The Community Press in an Urban Setting** (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1967), pp. 59-97.

[11]For an interesting discussion of such constraints on coverage, see Edward Jay Epstein, **News From Nowhere** (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 251.