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AUTHOR Tims, Albert R., Jr.
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ABSTRACT

To examine the relationship between parent and child news media use within specific age groups and to evaluate the stability of this use over time, 501 parent child pairs were interviewed by telephone in the winter and again in the fall of 1980 on their political views, social values, and media use. Findings on exposure to five types of media--newspapers, magazines, network television news, late evening local news, and television news specials--showed that (1) newspaper exposure increased substantially between the ages of 10 and 17, with consistency of exposure growing to a level roughly on par with that of adults by age 13 and with intergenerational exposure rates greatest during adolescence; (2) exposure to either magazine articles or network television news did not generally increase with age, exposure stability did not increase systematically, and intergenerational similarity was neither particularly large nor age related; (3) the frequency and stability of exposure to local late evening television news and intergenerational stability in this type of viewing all increased with age; and (4) the frequency of exposure to television news specials did not increase in a consistent or substantial rate although systematic increases in stability and intergenerational similarity were evident. (Seven tables on media exposure rate are appended.) (MM)

DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS MEDIA USE.[1]

Albert R. Tims, Jr.
Institute for Communication Research
Department of Telecommunications
Indiana University
Radio-TV Center
Bloomington, Indiana 47401
(812) 335-3818

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DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS MEDIA USE

Introduction

Early studies of political socialization considered the news media use of the young person, but only because the behavior was viewed as a form of political participation. Accordingly, news media use was more often than not simply treated as a criterion for assessing the impact of primary socialization agencies such as the family and schools (Hyman, 1959). In the 1960s political socialization researchers began to question whether the news media ought to be counted among those agencies through which the young person comes to know about the political world (Dawson & Prewitt, 1969). Conceptually, this represented a major reorientation. The news media were for the first time being regarded as social institutions capable of exerting an influence. Use of the news media no longer merely represented some kind of low-level political participation; rather, it reflected the potential influence of news media. From the point-of-view of the socialization researcher, news media use became an independent, or predictor, variable rather than a dependent, or criterion, variable.

In keeping with the dominant paradigms in social psychology at this time, the importance of the news media as a political socialization agency was gauged largely in terms of attitudinal and behavioral effects. Researchers wanted to know if the news media served to establish new political attitudes or to stimulate political behaviors. Cognitive outcomes of exposure to the news media such as increased levels of political knowledge were not assigned great significance at the time. Indeed, Dawson and Prewitt (1969) concluded that the news media did not meet the criteria of a primary socialization agency in that they served more to reinforce existing political orientations established by other agencies than to establish new political orientations. This conclusion jibed largely

with the prominent "limited effects" view of mass media influence during this period (Klapper, 1960).

Chaffee, Ward, and Tipton (1970) were among the first mass communication researchers to systematically study the role of the news media in the political socialization process. They pointed out that the reinforcement interpretation of the news media's role in political socialization failed to take into account two rather important facts. First, they argued that it was incorrect to assume that the child has political predispositions at the outset of the socialization process controlling news media exposures and reinforcing existing orientations. In their view, evidence of such predispositions suggests that the child has already been socialized. Secondly, they pointed out that cognitive outcomes such as increases in political knowledge or interest are as important in the socialization process as the development of partisan attitudes and orientations.

A number of studies have suggested that regular exposure to the news media begins at a rather early age. Atkin and Gantz (1975), for example, found that about one-quarter of the kindergarten and first-grade children they surveyed reported almost daily television news viewing. Gollin and Anderson (1980) note that one-third of the 6-to-8-year-old children they surveyed reported newspaper exposure with 7 percent reporting frequent exposure.

News exposures at this early age are unlikely to be directed by already developed political dispositions. More probable explanations can be found in the opportunities for exposure provided within the family (c.f., McLeod, Fitzpatrick, Glynn, & Fallis, 1981). Since much of the youngster's news media use takes place in the homes and may be under considerable parental control, especially in terms of the availability of print news media such as newspapers and news magazines, it is difficult to discuss patterns of news media exposure without involving some discussion of the family context (Chaffee, McLeod, & Atkin, 1971).

In a recent review, Chaffee, Jackson-Beeck, Durall, and Wilson (1977) drew a number of generalizations about the role of the mass media in the political socialization process. Their review of the research literature pointed to conclusions that young people believe that the news media play an important role in the development of their political opinions and that the mass media constitute the principle source of information about politics for them. These conclusions are, of course, consistent with the news media's institutional role of news diffusion. The fact that young people seem to recognize these functions of the news media does not in and of itself guarantee the news media a prominent role in the political socialization process. While the child has very little direct control over the lessons his parents choose to teach, the methods of instruction they choose to use, or the role the school system assumed in his political eduction, he does exercise some degree of independence in his use of the news media. Unlike these other agencies, the news media are more easily manipulated, avoided, and selected. This control, however, is far from absolute. In many homes, the parents will exercise predominant control over the number, variety, and character of the periodicals that enter the home as well as the extent to which television news programs are viewed. Nevertheless, the child can more easily avoid this kind of exposure than interactions with parents or schooling. In fact, the evidence to date suggests that direct parental influence in news media use patterns is rather limited (Chaffee et al., 1971).

Still some situations involving news exposure within the family are virtually unavoidable. For example, many families habitually watch the network or local television news during the dinner hour or regularly read news stories aloud to one another during the evening hours. These unintentional exposures as well as the control over the availability of the news media in the home environment represent important constraints in the patterns of news media use developed

by the youngsters. It is this issue of how youngsters develop patterns of news media use that is the focus of this study.

Background

Meine (1941) gave us one of the first systematic looks at the news media use patterns of junior and senior high school age children. The concerns at the time about the impact of radio on the then emerging generation who had grown up with this new medium of communication at their disposal (Eisenberg, 1936) are not very difficult from those voiced today about the now emerging generations who have grown up with television at their disposal (Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961; Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, & Roberts, 1978). As Meine puts it,

> "It has been feared that people accepting radio as part of their environment will never again place the same reliance on the printed word . . . that the new generation will be one of listeners and that reading will become a lost art" (p. 189).

Meine found that radio was the most frequently used source of information among the young people surveyed, but that it was not simply replacing print news media as the source of public affairs information. He reported that 70 percent of the youngsters he defined as "good" newspaper readers also listened to the radio news at least once a day. Moreover, he found a systematic progression in the number of news sources mentioned and in the use of the print media with increasing age. More importantly, he reported that the percentage of children reading serious news items, that is foreign news, politics, editorials, columnists, and book reviews increased from 53 percent among 7th and 8th grade children to 71 percent among 9th and 10th grade children to 82 percent among 11th and 12th grade children. Although he invokes on theoretical explanation for his findings, Meine does document the fact that the news media use behavior of the young person undergoes considerable change during the adolescent years.

For the most part, television has replaced radio as the chief competitor to the newspaper in the public affairs arena, but the basic question of how the

young person comes to use the news media remains essentially unanswered. Chaffee and Tims (1982) have recently offered some initial empirical support for the notion that news media use follows a systematic pattern and that levels of use consistent with this pattern increase between the ages of 10 and 17. Much like Meine, they report finding that print media use does not replace broadcast news media use but, rather, is adopted as an additional news media use behavior. Their argument for a cumulative progression from broadcast news media use to print news media use was supported by a scalogram analysis which successfully classified 86 percent of the 718 10 to 17 year olds surveyed, as well as 88 percent of their parents, on a four-level Guttman scale. Moreover, segmenting the adolescents by grade in school, they showed a strong linear relationship between grade and news media use as defined by their Guttman scale levels. Broadcast news media use, acquired at a rather early age, persists at a relatively stable, or at best slightly increasing level through adolescence while print news media use develops rather slowly and, to the extent that it does develop, gets added to the already established broadcast news media use behavior. The finding reported by Chaffee and Tims also tell us that not everyone eventually progresses to the top level of the news media use scale; well over one-quarter (28%) of the parents in their study had patterns of use dominated by the broadcast news media.

Atkin (1978) profiles the development of broadcast news exposure patterns of younger children (kindergarten through fifth grade). Using self-report measures, he found that 24 percent of the children in kindergarten and the first grade reported watching national news programd (like Walter Cronkite or John Chancellor) almost every day. This exposure increased to 36 percent among children in the fourth and fifth grades. Overall, he reported a moderate correlation between grade in school and national television news exposure ($r = .15$, $p < .05$). Atkin also reports rather extensive exposure to radio news programs,

increasing from 24 percent for the kindergarten and first graders to 40 percent for the second and third graders to 58 percent for the fourth and fifth graders, although viewing and listening diaries kept by a subsample of the survey respondents yielded substantially lower exposure figures.

Gollin and Anderson (1980) also report systematic increases in exposure to television network news between the early elementary school (13%) and junior high school (40%), but not between junior and senior high school. They report, however, that exposure to newspapers shows consistent increases from early elementary school through high school. Additional evidence is offered by Drew and Reeves (1980a) who found a significant positive relationship between newspaper reading and grade in school for children in the third through seventh grades (r = .22, p < .001). Similarly, Rubin (1978) found a highly significant positive relationship between age and public affairs television viewing (r = .15, p < .001), despite an even stronger negative relationship between age and overall television viewing (r = .31, p < .001) for a sample of 401, 9, 13, and 17 years olds.

A number of factors such as reponse scaling, method of interviewing, sample selection, and the like can be pointed to as confounding factors in any direct comparison of the absolute levels of news media use reported in these studies. Such limitations do not, however, diminish the importance of these studies in mapping what seem to be consistent developmental patterns in the acquisition of news media use behaviors.

Unfortunately, none of these studies give any indication of the relative stabilities of public affairs news media use at different ages. It should be noted that increases in frequency of exposure do not necessarily correspond with stable or consistent exposures. Important issues for understanding the development of news media use behavior involving the notion of stability include (1) whether or not stabilities in news media use increase with age, (2) whether

stabilities for broadcast and print media are generally equivalent at different age levels, and (3) at what point the stabilities in print and broadcast news media use for adolescents become equivalent to those found in the adult population. One approach to these issues is to systematically examine the inter-individual variance found in exposures within specific age groups for specific media. Another approach is to systematically examine the intra-individual variance in exposures over-time. While both approaches yield valuable information, the latter one is the most satisfactory basis for assessing the relative consistency of individual exposure patterns.

Intergenerational Transfer of News Media Use

In 1971 Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin reported that "our data give rather little support to the notion that parental example in media use provides an important model for the adolescent . . ." Since this influential study was published, no one has systematically challenged this conclusion (Chaffee, 1977-78). They report a modest .13 correlation between adolescent and parent exposure to television news for both junior and senior high school age adolescents. The relationship between parent and adolscent news reading is even less impressive at .09 and .06 respectively for junior high and senior high school adolescents. Unfortunately, the authors do not use the same indicators for parent television news exposure and adolescent news exposure, nor is their measure of news rating based solely on exposure. Both of these factors raise some doubts about the validity of these findings as a test of a direct behavioral modeling hypothesis. However, in at least one study, Chaffee, et al (1970) uses simple exposure measures that yield a .12 parent-adolescent correlation for television news viewing and a .03 correlation for the amount of time spent reading the newspaper. Based on much smaller samples of 6th (N=105) and 9th (N=119) grade youngsters, they report mother-child correlations for television news viewing of .29 for each sample. In subsequent analysis of these data, (McLeod & O'Keefe, 1972;

McLeod & Brown, 1976), evidence is offered to show that while modeling is stronger for television use behavior of mothers, the overall indication is that this is not a very potent explanation of adolescent communication behavior.

The data more recently reported by Chaffee and Tims (1982) are suggestive of stronger intergenerational similarity in news media use than found in these earlier studies. They report a highly significant .23 ($p < .001$) parent-adolescent correlation using their four-step news media use Guttman scale. Even so, the weight of evidence suggests rather limited direct correspondence in the news media use behaviors of parents and their children.

Before completely discounting the role of parental example, however, a number of factors need to be taken into account. First, there is very little systematic evidence concerning the reliability of recall measures of media use. The recent work by Atkin (1978) suggests that considerable variance exists in the estimates generated, depending on the measurement technique used. Moreover, as Vaillancourt (1973) has demonstrated, the survey responses from children and adolescents are subject to much greater unreliability than survey responses from adults. These limitations combined with the fact that we know very little about the actual stabilities of these behaviors impose serious constraints on our ability to make valid judgements about the magnitude of the relationships we can expect to find.

The present study will begin by examining the levels of news media use reported by children between the ages of 10 and 17. It will then compare the over-time stabilities of these behaviors within specific age ranges and between age groups. The next objective will be to examine the intergenerational similarity of news media use patterns. This analysis will consider both the strength of the relationship between parental behavior and the child's behavior within specific age groups and the stability of these behaviors over-time. It

is expected that the young person becomes an increasingly active consumer of the news media with age, and that with increased exposure comes greater stability. Moreover, since the youngster is hypothesized to be gradually adopting "adult" exposure patterns and the parent is the most salient adult model for most adolescents, it is expected that the similarity between parent and child will increase with the age of the youngster.

Study Design and Sample

The present study is based on the first two waves of a three-wave statewide survey of adolescents (age 10 to 17) and their parents in Wisconsin. In two-parent families, one parent was selected through a systematic selection procedure to be interviewed along with the child. The data collection was funded by a grant (#SES-7913435) from the National Science Foundation to study the 1980 presidential election campaign and preadult political socialization. The sample was obtained through a random digit dialing sampling technique developed for the state of Wisconsin by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory. The first wave of interview was conducted between January 29 and March 18, 1980 with a total of 718 matched parent-child pairs represented. Kennamer and Chaffee (1981) define this interview period as encompassing the pre-primary and early primary phases of the election campaign. In addition to the candidate sorting taking place in the state caucuses and primaries, the public was watching the politically volatile hostage situation in Iran, Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, Abscam investigation revelations, and debating the proposed U.S. boycott of the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow.

The second wave of interviews was conducted between October 1 and November 3, 1980. Of the 718 matched parent-child pairs in the first wave of interviews, 501 complete sets of interview were completed in the second wave. This represented a 30 percent sample mortality. This rather large mortality was due in part to the requirement that both the parent and the child in each pair complete

the interview at both time points. By the time of these October interviews, the campaign period was at a virtual end with all of the major decisions made and issue positions outlined. Media "news" coverage found time to report on partisan pranks, capitalizing on verbal blunders by the candidates, particularly those of Ronald Reagan. With the nation deeply frustrated, the Carter administration worked desperately to negotiate a release of the hostages in Iran before the election.

Interviews were conducted with the child and then with the parent in each household by professional telephone interviewers trained and supervised by the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory. The interviews covered a wide range of topics dealing with the 1980 presidential election campaign, perceptions of the candidates, attitudes toward government and social institutions, interpersonal communication about politics, mass media use, partisan political orientations, political beliefs, and social values. Interviews took approximately 35 minutes to complete on average.

News Media Exposure

Rather than combine measures of exposure based on medium (print versus television), it was decided that exposure to specific sources should be examined individually. This approach does not preclude general comparisons between print and television news sources and has the advantage of permitting within medium comparisons. For example, Patterson and McClure (1976) have based some rather sweeping conclusions about the influence of television in the election process on measures of exposure to the national network news. While -- as Patterson and McClure suggest -- early evening news viewing may be characterized by uninvolved exposure, the same thing may not necessarily be said of late evening news viewing or the viewing of news specials.

News media exposure for the parent and child was measured using the following five exposure measures.

1. Newspaper: How many days in the last seven did you read a newspaper?
2. Magazine: In the past week, how many -- if any -- magazine articles have you read about national politics or government?
3. Network television news: On how many days in the past seven did you watch the national news on television?
4. Late evening news: How often do you watch local late evening news? (frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never)
5. Television news specials: How often do you watch news programs like 60 minutes or news specials? (frequently, sometimes, rarely, or never)

RESULTS

Maturational Differences in Patterns of News Media Exposure

Table 1 shows the mean levels of newspaper exposure during the first (winter) and second (fall) wave of interviews broken down by the age of the youngster. Inspection of the patterns across the age groups for both the winter and fall measurements reveals a systematic linear increase in the frequency of newspaper reading (winter: $F = 44.8$, $d.f. = 7, 488$, $p < .001$; fall: $F = 26.8$, $d.f. = 7, 491$, $p < .001$). On the whole, the overall rates of exposure are equivalent at the two time points. The average rates of exposure are equivalent at the two time points. The average frequency of newspaper reading for the entire sample was 3.36 days in the winder and 3.41 days in the fall. The absolute frequency of reading ranged from an average of 2.04 days per week for the ten year olds to 4.22 days per week for the 17 year olds during the winter measurement. In the fall, the range declined somewhat. Even among the 17 year olds, the frequency of newspaper reading was substantially lower than that reported by parents (winter = 4.22 vs. 5.36; fall = 3.54 vs. 5.18). These findings support the general prediction that frequency of news exposure increases with age. In addition, they suggest that while there is a marked

increase in the frequency of exposure between the ages of 10 and 17, the levels reached are still substantially below those found in the adult population. One explanation for this lies in the notion that newspaper reading patterns continue to develop during adulthood (c.f., Chaffee & Wilson, 1975). In this study, the correlation between the age of the parent and newspaper reading was highly significant at both measurement points (winter: $r = .21$, $p < .001$; fall: $r = .19$, $p < .001$). Thus, it seems that during the child-raising years (late twenties through early sixties) encompassed in this study, there is evidence of age-related increases in newspaper exposure. An interpretation that cannot be ruled out is that these differences are not reflective of systematic developmental changes but are due to cohort, or generational, differences in media use. Recent figures on newspaper circulation suggest less involvement with the newspaper than in years gone by, but this in and of itself is not sufficient to reject the alternative life cycle explanations. For the 10-to-17 year old sample however, it seems more likely that the differences observed are reflective of developmental changes rather than cohort effects.

Table 2 shows age group means for magazine article reading about politics and government. Unlike the findings for newspaper reading, there is little to suggest a strong developmental progression in the frequency of magazine article reading. This may be partly due to the rather low overall exposures reported (winter: $X = .86$ articles, s.d. = 1.64; fall: $X = 1.04$ articles, s.d. = 2.01). The mean levels of readership during the winter measurement appear to systematically increase with age, ranging from .63 for the 10 year olds to 1.19 for the 17 year olds. The rather substantial standard deviations make such an interpretation somewhat tenuous however. One-way analysis of variance of between group differences was nonsignificant (winter: $F < 1$, d.f. = 7, 493, n.s.; fall: $F < 1$, d.f. = 7, 493, n.s.). Similar to the findings for newspaper reading, the frequency of magazine article reading among the 17 year olds falls below the

average for the parent (winter: 1.19 vs. 1.41; fall: .95 vs. 1.41). The low means and large standard deviations found for both the adolescent sample and the parent sample reflects the skewness of these distributions. Overall, nearly 70 percent of the adolescents report no magazine article reading.

Table 3 reports the age differences in exposure to television network news. Counter to the general expectation, there is no evidence of age related differences in network news exposure at either measurement point. One-way analysis of variance tests of between group differences were nonsignificant for both measurements (winter: $F < 1$, $\underline{d.f.} = 7, 483$, $\underline{p} = \underline{n.s.}$; fall: $F < 1$, $\underline{d.f.} = 7, 487$; $\underline{p} = \underline{n.s.}$). Children as young as 10 and 11 are just as likely to view network television news programs as are adolescents aged 16 and 17. The mean frequency of viewing across the age groups in the winter measurement was 3.25 days with the fall level falling to 2.69 days. The difference between these two viewing levels is highly significant ($\underline{t} = 3.61$, $\underline{d.f.} = 984$, $\underline{p} < .001$). With the exception of one age group, Table 3 clearly shows that the frequency of viewing in the fall was consistently lower than the previous winter. This is likely due to the time of year and changes in interest in the news as the election period drew to a close.

Comparisons of the frequency of viewing reported by the parents and their children once again show a substantial gap. For example, in the winter the 17 year olds reported watching the television network news an average of 3.22 days per week, compared to 4.98 days per week reported by the parents. In the fall, the difference was 2.63 days vs. 4.37 days. The difference between the viewing frequency of the parents and the 17 year olds is roughly equivalent at the two time points, due to the decline in the absolute frequencies for both groups. Much like the findings for the child sample, the decline in the viewing frequency of the parents is statistically significant (4.98 vs. 4.37, $\underline{t} = 4.01$, $\underline{d.f.} = 992$, $\underline{p} < .001$). The comparable decline in viewing frequencies for both

the parents and their children tends to suggest that environmental rather than life-cycle factors are responsible, although the evidence is far from conclusive.

More generally, these figures suggest that the frequency of exposure reported by parents is not arrived at through a linear age-related progression. As reported above, exposure levels do not increase with the age of the youngster, although the levels observed are substantially lower than reported by their parents. At what point will this gap be bridged, if ever? If adult levels of viewing are stimulated by the assumption of adult roles and responsibilities a discontinuous, or stair-step, developmental pattern is suggested. Alternatively, the difference between parent and offspring may reflect an actual generation gap. A closer examination of parental exposure levels reveals a modest, albeit statistically significant, relationship between parental age and exposure (winter: $\underline{r} = .08$, $\underline{p} < .05$; fall: $\underline{r} = .10$, $\underline{p} < .02$), thus lending relatively less support to the generation gap interpretation than to the adult role interpretation. If exposure does not substantially increase until adult roles are assumed, then it follows that the impact of factors such as parental example may not be fully felt, or perhaps even apparent, until the individual reaches this point.

Table 4 shows the age differences in the frequency of watching the late-evening local television news. The pattern of means shown differs in two important respects from that found for national television news viewing. First, there is no evidence of a decline in viewership between the winter measurement and the fall measurement. Second, there is a clear age-related increase in exposure (winter: $F = 2.53$, $\underline{d.f.} = 7, 492$, $\underline{p} < .02$; fall: $F = 3.98$, $\underline{d.f.} = 7, 492$, $\underline{p} < .001$). The largest increases in exposure take place between the ages of 10 and 13. After age 13, the frequency of viewing remains roughly equivalent for all age groups. As was found for both newspaper reading and national television news viewing, the viewing frequencies reported by the parents are substan-

tially higher than those of their children (winter: $t = 14.37$, $d.f. = 998$, $p < 998$, $p < .001$; fall: $t = 14.00$, $d.f. = 998$, $p < .001$). Unlike these other news sources, there is no evidence of age-related increases in exposure for the parents. In the broadest sense, the substantial difference between these findings and those reported for national television news suggest that these should not be treated as equivalent behaviors. Patterns of exposure to late-evening news much more closely resemble those found for newspaper exposure. It should be kept in mind, however, that unlike newspaper exposure, increases are not evident across the entire age group represented. Once the youngster has reached early adolescence, viewing frequency remains relatively stable.

Table 5 shows the mean frequency of viewing television news specials like 60 Minutes. The average frequency of exposure for each age group remains essentially constant over-time. The largest increase in exposure is between 10-year-old and the 11-year-old age groups, with the pattern of age differences for the older age groups continuing to show increases, but in a variable pattern. The results of analysis of variance reveal significant between-group differences at both time points (winter: $F = 2.8$, $d.f. = 7, 492$, $p < .01$; fall: $F = 2.28$, $d.f. = 7, 491$, $p < .02$). Consistent with the findings for all other news exposure measures, there are substantial differences in the frequency of exposure reported by the parents and their children at the two measurement points (winter: parent $X = 3.49$ vs. child $X = 2.80$, $t = 11.62$, $d.f. = 999$, $p < .001$; fall: parent $X = 3.39$ vs. child $X = 2.73$, $t = 11.12$, $d.f. = 998$, $p < .001$). As with the measures of late evening television news viewing, there is no evidence of age-related differences in news special viewing among the parents. In terms of support for the general expectation of an age-related progression in news exposure, the results for this news source fall between those found for the late

evening television news and the national television news. Exposure does increase with age, but not substantially or in a consistent fashion.

Over-Time Consistency in News Media Exposure

A second general expectation offered is that the over-time consistency in exposure to news sources would increase with age. With only two measurement points included in this analysis, it is virtually impossible to accurately decompose the over-time relationship in exposure levels into stability and reliability estimates. This is important to keep in mind, since these represent two very different sources of covariation. On the one hand, we have the issue of the trueness of the measurement and on the other, the issue of sameness over-time. An unreliable instrument may lead to an inference of low stability over-time when, in fact, there may be considerable stability (Carmines & Zeller, 1979). Vaillancourt (1973) has shown that the reliability of responses to survey instruments are lower for children than for adults; a fact that makes the interpretation of differences in over-time relationships for adults and children somewhat problematic. The same holds true for the interpretation of differences in over-time relationships for younger and older children. In the present situation, in order to compare the over-time relationships in news exposure for different age groups, certain fundamental assumptions have to be introduced.

If the over-time correlation is to be interpreted as an indicator of the stability of the true variable between the time points, then the reliability of the measurement instrument must be assumed to be perfect. If, on the other hand, the over-time correlation is to be interpreted as an indicator of the reliability of the measure, then perfect stability must be assumed (Sullivan & Feldman, 1979). Moreover, since comparisons are being made between groups, the additional restriction must be introduced requiring the assumption of perfect reliability or perfect stability hold equally for all groups. That is, if

reliability is assumed to be perfect, it must be assumed to be perfect at all age levels.

It could be argued that neither of these assumptions is realistic which makes interpretation of over-time correlations involving only two time points impossible. Given the current state of knowledge about the stability and reliability of news exposure measures, it is indeed difficult to make an empirically based decision about which of these assumptions is most reasonable. As mentioned earlier, Atkin (1981) has gathered some evidence suggesting that indicators of television exposure do not yield consistent findings. While this is a somewhat different issue than the over-time reliability of a single indicator, it does cast some doubt about the accuracy of self-report measures of exposure. Since the main concern in the present study is with the stability rather than the reliability of exposure patterns and because the indicators employed have considerable face validity, the decision has been made to assume perfect reliability. This makes it possible to interpret the over-time correlations in terms of stability coefficients. Clearly, this is not a strongly held assumption. The goal at this point is not to make definitive statements about the stability of exposure, but to provide a starting point for future work in this area. If reliabilities are less than unity but essentially equivalent across the age groups, then the result would be a conservative estimate of the stabilities. In this situation, the unreliability acts like a negative constant leaving the patterns in the data unaffected. On the other hand, if reliabilities increase with age, as some might expect, then interpretation becomes more problematic. However, since use of the term "stability" implies more certainty about the true source of covariation than is possible in the present study, the word "consistency" will be used in its place. As stated above, the expectation is that the observed consistency reflects the actual stability of the true variable.

Table 6 shows the over-time correlations for both parent and child in the reported frequency of newspaper reading broken down by the age of the child. The parent's auto-correlation is included to provide a baseline against which to judge the child's. By breaking the parent's correlations down based on the child's age, some indication of baseline variance is also provided. The consistency of parental exposure to the newspaper between the winter measurement and the fall is quite high overall (r = .76, p < .001), ranging between .84 and .65. The consistency of the newspaper readership over-time increases substantially from .34 for the 10 year olds to .52 for the 11 year olds to a high of .80 for the 13 year olds. The overall consistency for the 10 to 17 years olds is .62 (p < .001). By age 13, the consistency of the youngster's newspaper reading has become essentially equivalent to that found in the adult population, even though we know from the analysis of reading levels that exposure continues to increase. After age 13, there is some indication that the consistency of the behavior declines, although it remains within the general range found in the adult population. Nevertheless, it was not expected that the early adolescents (13 and 14 year olds) would exhibit substantially greater consistency in newspaper reading than older adolescents (16 and 17 year olds).

In rather sharp constrast to the findings for newspaper exposure, Table 6 shows substantially lower and much less stable over-time correlations in exposure in magazine articles about government and politics. The over-time correlation for the parent is .49 (p < .001) and is .29 (p < .001) for the 10 to 17 year olds. In addition to the relatively lower consistency of news magazine exposure as compared to newspaper exposure, there is also much greater variablity in the parent subgroups derived from breaks by their child's age (ranging from .22 to .61). There is little to suggest that the consistency of parental exposure is substantially higher than for their children. Of course, as pointed

out earlier, this measure is known to be highly skewed and obviously subject to attenuation as well as bias due to the influence of extreme values, particularly when the indicators are based on the relationships within age groups. These findings do not lend support to the expectation that consistencies would increase with age. However, they suggest, by virtue of the instability of parental behavior, that this kind of news exposure may not be particularly regular when measured in this fashion.

The over-time correlations for network television news exposure for the parents is .50 ($p < .001$), ranging from .34 to .67 in the age groups. The over-time correlation for the 10 to 17 year olds is .43 ($p < .001$), ranging from .18 to .57. These relationships differ from those found for newspaper reading in several important respects. First, the magnitude of the consistencies is lower. Secondly, the difference in the consistency of parental exposure and the exposure of their children is smaller (.76 to .62 vs. .50 to .43). Finally, there is no evidence of a systematic increase in the consistency of the viewing behavior in the 10 to 13 age range. For the most part, the consistency of the child's viewing in each age group closely parallels that found for the parents. The over-time correlation for the 10 to 12 year olds is .30; for the 13 to 15 year olds, it increases to .51 and stays roughly at that level for the 16 to 17 year olds ($r = .49$). Although the absolute frequency of exposure to national television news does not increase between the ages of 10 and 17, there is at least some indication that the consistency of the viewing behavior does generally increase to a level roughly equivalent to that found in the adult population.

The over-time correlations for measures of exposure to the late evening local television news also reflect, considerable variability in the consistency of behavior for the parent subgroups based on their child's age (r's range between .30 and .72). The overall consistency of parental exposure is slightly

higher than for the national network news (r = .58, p < .001). Unlike the national network news, there are substantial differences in viewing consistencies of children and their parents, particularly for the younger ages. The average consistency for the 10 to 12 year olds is only .16 as compared to .35 for the 13 to 15 year olds and .55 for the 16 to 17 year olds. The overall consistency for the entire age range is .35 (p < .001). Again, there is evidence of general increases in the consistency of viewing behavior with age. It appears that by the time the youngster has reached the age of 14, the consistency of his late evening television viewing behavior is roughly on a par with that of the adult population. Once again, the age related patterns for this television news source match more closely what has been found for newspapers than for national television news.

As with late evening local television news viewing, the over time correlation in news special viewing for the parents is .58 (p < .001). Interestingly, the consistency for the parent subgroups defined by child age range from .48 to .71 increasing more or less with the child's age. Again in a manner similar to late evening local news exposure, by the age of 14, the consistency of the youngster's viewing behavior is equivalent to that of an adult. The over-time consistency in exposure to television news specials increases from .34 (10 to 12 year olds) to .54 (13 to 15 year olds) to .62 (16 to 17 year olds). The overall consistency for the entire 10 to 17 year old sample is .48 (p < .001).

The patterns of over-time correlations for newspaper reading, late evening local news viewing, and news special viewing all support the general expectation that exposure levels would become more consistent with increasing age. Moreover, it was shown that between the ages of 13 and 14, these consistencies are at a level more or less parallel to those found in the adult population, despite the fact that exposure levels are still substantially below adult levels. News

magazine exposure appears to be highly unpredictable, at least as measured in this study, for both parent and child. Exposure to the national television news also appears to increase in consistency with the age of the youngster, but to a lesser extent.

Parent-Child Similarity in News Media Exposure

The third general expectation is that parent-child similarity in news media exposure will increase with the age of the child. This expectation is based on the belief that as the age of the youngster increases, his exposure patterns will increase in frequency, become more stable, and generally approach those of an adult. As reviewed above, the evidence to data has not been generally successful in demonstrating a substantial degree of intergenerational transfer of media use behavior. The present study differs from past efforts in that the objective is not simply to assess the absolute magnitude of the relationship, but to provide a comparative assessment between different news sources across a substantial age range.

Table 7 presents the parent-child correlations for both the winter and fall measures of newspaper exposure. The overall intergenerational relationship for the winter measure is .33 ($p < .001$) and .30 ($p < .001$) for the fall measure. This is substantially higher than the findings from earlier research (Chaffee, McLeod, & Atkin, 1971). The patterns across the age groups are virtually identical for the two measurements with the parent-child relationship showing a marked increase during the early adolescent years. For example, across the two measurements, the average correlation for the 10 and 11 year olds, is .23; for the 12, 13, and 14 year olds, it jumps up to .43; and for the 15, 16, and 17 year olds, it falls to .22. These data strongly suggest that substantial intergenerational relationships do in fact exist in newspaper exposure at certain periods in the youngster's life. Recall from Table 1 that during this early adolescent period (12 to 14) there are substantial increases in newspaper

reading but the frequency is well below that of the parent and the older adolescent. Thus, this intergenerational similarity is not simply a function of frequency. These data suggest that during the period in which the young person is most actively acquiring newspaper readership, parental influence is at its peak. Before the age of 12, the youngster is an infrequent and inconsistent reader, and parental influence is not strongly evident. After the age of 15, the youngster has developed regular exposure patterns, but parental influence is no more substantial than for the 10 and 11 year olds. It may be that by this time, other sources of influence have come into play. Nevertheless, these data point to a dynamic intergenerational relationship for newspaper exposure (c.f., McLeod & O'Keefe, 1972). If nothing else, these findings illustrate the limitations of simple conclusions about the magnitude of parent-child news media use relationships.

Parent-child similarity in magazine article reading about politics or government is shown in Table 6. The overall similarity across the age groups is substantially lower than for newspaper exposure (winter: $\underline{r} = .15$, $\underline{p} < .001$; fall: $\underline{r} = .11$, $\underline{p} < .01$). Given the general lack of consistency in this measure over time, parent-child similarity is remarkable consistent across the two measurements. These data suggest little, if any, increase in intergenerational similarity with age. However, given the low over-time consistency for these measures and the skewed nature of the distributions, the fact that a relationship of any magnitude was found is noteworthy.

Turning now to television news sources, the parent-child similarity in network television news exposure by the age of the child is consistent with previous research. The overall intergenerational similarity is not particularly large, especially at the fall measurement (winter: $\underline{r} = .20$, $\underline{p} < .001$; fall: $\underline{r} = .07$, $\underline{p} < .10$). During the winter measurement, intergenerational similarity more or less randomly fluctuates between .09 and .28 across the age groups.

During the fall, however, the fluctuations are much more substantial, ranging from -.23 for the 11-year-old age group. In fact, the overall similarity for the 10 to 13 year olds is -.09 during the fall. This jumps to .24 for the 13 to 15 year olds and then falls back to .07 for the 16 and 17 year olds. The general shape of this pattern is quite similar to that found for the intergenerational similarity of newspaper exposure, although the magnitude of the relationship are much lower. As shows in Table 7 the intergenerational similarity of late evening television news exposure varies considerably between age groups. The overall magnitude of the relationship is not substantial at either measurement point (winter: $\underline{r} = .05$, $\underline{p} < .15$; fall: $\underline{r} = .09$, $\underline{p} < .05$), due in part to negative or near zero relationships for youngsters in the 10- to 12-year-old age range. During early adolescence, there is evidence of a marked increased in intergenerational similarity in exposure at both measurement points. During the winter measurement, the intergenerational similarity in exposure for the 17 year olds is .42, but subsequently drops to .13 at the fall measurement. In general, the magnitude of the intergenerational relationship appears to decline in late adolescence. Once again, these findings point to considerable variability in the magnitude of parent-child similarity in news media use between the age of 10 and 17. This may be due in part to the lack of consistency in the behavior of the youngster, the parent, or both. It may also be due to real changes in the strength of the relationship.

Finally the intergenerational similarity in exposure to television news specials is roughly equivalent for both measurements at each age level. The overall magnitude of the relationship is .21 ($\underline{p} < .001$) for the winter measurement and .22 ($\underline{p} < .001$) for the fall measurement. Again, there is considerable nonsystematic variability between the age groups but the overall pattern suggests that parent-child similarity increases with the age of the youngster.

Actually, after the age of 12, the strength of the intergenerational similarity is quite substantial in general.

The results presented in this paper provide mixed support for the expectations of increases in exposure, consistency, and intergenerational similarity with the age of the youngster. Moreover, they suggest that the patterns for each source of news are quite unique. For example, none of the findings for magazine article reading support the general expectations, while the finding for both local television news and television news specials do. Newspaper exposure, local television news exposure, and television news special exposure all appear to systematically vary with age. Magazine article reading and national television news exposure appear to vary very little with age.

The stability of these behaviors between the winter measurement and the fall measurement across the age groups are again quite different from one source to the next. Newspaper reading behavior has by far the greatest overall stability, although there is no evidence of increase after the age of 13. In terms of overall stability, newspaper reading is followed by television news special viewing, television national news viewing, late evening local television news viewing, and magazine article reading. In no instance is there a completely consistent year-by-year increase in stability, although the patterns for both the late evening local television news and television news specials come very close. The stability of parental behavior also exhibits considerable variability within the defined subgroups and in general is not substantially greater than the stability of the behaviors of the older youths.

Overall, intergenerational similarity is greatest for newspaper reading followed by television news special viewing, magazine article reading, national television news viewing, and late evening local television news viewing. The expectation that intergenerational similarity would systematically increase with age was in no instance totally confirmed. For newspaper reading, national

television news viewing, and late evening local television news viewing, the pattern is decidedly curvilinear with the maximum similarity occuring during the early adolescent years. No systematic age-related variation is at all evident for magazine article reading. Only for television news special viewing is the pattern generally consistent with the expected linear relationship.

CONCLUSIONS

There can be little doubt about the important place the mass media occupy in the day-to-day lives of our children. By the time today's youth reach adulthood, we can assume with confidence that they will typically have spent more time in the presence of the mass media than in any other conscious activity. Almost no major world event will escape their awareness in this age of live, on-the-spot, news coverage. During the Vietnam war, we received our first introduction to television's capacity to bring the horrors of warfare into our living rooms. Today's youth have come to expect to be presented with the realities of terrorism, revolution, and destruction as a matter of course. More than ever before, the mass media provide the emerging generations with a port hole through which they can see and know about a world beyond their ability or, perhaps, their desire to experience first hand.

Researchers, concerned parents, government bodies, and the communications industry have all devoted considerable attention in recent years to the effects of mass media on our behavior, our attitudes, our values, our government, and our culture. In the rush to find the effect, we have largely overlooked the more fundamental questions about the nature of the media use behavior thought to bring about in these various outcomes. Chief among these overlooked questions is how the young person comes to use the mass media. This is not to say that the cognitive capabilities of the child to process and interpret mass media

presentations have been ignored, because this is clearly not the case (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981).

In this study, the assumption was not made that the variable of interest was a composite measure of news media use, or print news media use, or television news media use. Instead, each news source was considered independently. This had the methodological advantage of eliminating concerns over which component measures contributed the meaningful variance and made intergenerational and cross-sectional comparisons more clearly interpretable. It also had the conceptual advantage of not making assumptions about the general equivalence of news exposures via different sources. Why should we assume watching the early evening national television news is the same as watching the late evening local television news? Both involve the same medium, but that hardly qualifies as a sufficient criterion for equivalence.

Newspaper exposure increases substantially between the ages of 10 and 17. The over-time consistency of exposure increases to a level roughly on a par with adults by age 13. Intergenerational similarity in newspaper exposure rates is greatest during early adolescence. These three statements basically summarize the general findings from the descriptive analysis of newspaper exposure. Of the five news sources examined in this study, newspaper reading was found to change the most across the age groups, exhibit the highest over-time consistency, and the highest intergenerational similarity. This evidence strongly suggests the following empirical generalizations:

(1) Newspaper reading develops substantially during adolescence.

(2) Newspaper reading develops stability during early adolescence.

(3) Intergenerational similarity in newspaper reading is maximal during the period in which the behavior is increasing at the fastest rate.

During adolescence the youngster becomes much more likely to pick up a newspaper and to make it a regular activity. Some might describe this in terms

of ritual, and, indeed, it might be. Consider the family environment in which the afternoon paper is first read by the mother as she goes about the business of preparing the evening meal. The teenage son or daughter regularly finds her sitting at the kitchen table with the paper spread out before her. On his arrival, the father may greet his wife and children, then promptly and routinely pick up the newspaper and retire to the living room or den. Generally, by early adolescence, the child is fully capable of reading the newspaper but may have no good reason to do it. The mere fact that the youngster's parents habitually read the paper day-in and day-out may serve as a catalyst as the youngster begins to look for ways to exercise newly developed cognitive capabilities. This could explain why parental influence is maximal during the period in which the behavior is increasing at the most rapid pace. Obviously, the descriptive analysis of intergenerational similarity cannot take us very far in understanding the processes involved in the development of newspaper reading behavior. It does, of course, lead us to question previous research suggesting that parental newspaper exposure does not play a significant role in the newspaper exposure of their chilren.

The conclusions about exposure to magazine articles about government and politics are quite different from those made about newspaper exposure. This by itself is quite significant insofar as it points to a major problem with composite measures of media use. Exposure to magazine articles does not generally increase with age, nor does the stability of the behavior increase systematically, nor is intergenerational similarity particularly large or age related. In other words, it appears as if not much of anything is going on. Keep in mind, however, that the difference between the findings for magazine article reading and newspaper reading may be due in part to the greater specificity of the magazine exposure measure. At least for the present, it can be concluded that the two print news sources come to be used in different ways.

Much like magazine article reading, exposure to network television news does not increase with age, nor does the stability of the behavior increase much after the age of 12 or 13, nor is there substantial intergenerational similarity at any age level. Exposure to network television news does not develop during adolescence in the same way that newspaper exposure develops.

Local late evening television news viewing was found to be more like newspaper reading than national television news viewing insofar as frequency of exposure increased with age, exposure stabilities generally increased with age, and intergenerational similarity also increased with age. The magnitude of these increases and the strengths of the relationships were not as great as found for newspaper reading, but they were nevertheless, evident. Part of this finding can be attributed to the fact that the late evening news comes on after the normal bedtime for younger children during the school year and the increasingly relaxed attitudes of parents about late evening viewing as the youngster moves through adolescence.

While the frequency of exposure to television news specials was not found to increase in a consistent or substantial rate, evidence of systematic increases in over-time stability and intergenerational similarity were evident. As with local late evening news viewing, the youngster's behavior both becomes more stable and more like that of his or her parent as age increases.

Up to now, little attention has been devoted to the development of news media use behaviors. Like all behavioral patterns and skills, the use of the news media is something that must be developed. Drew and Reeves (1980a) point out that nearly all of the research on news media use has focused on the socialization of children by the news media rather than how children are socialized to the news media. We cannot assume that the child springs forth as a fully capable consumer of the news media, nor can we assume that patterns of

use develop at equivalent rates for all individuals. For example, recent reviews (Atkin, 1981; Drew & Reeves, 1980b; Prisuta, 1979) point to systematic differences based on factors such as age, social class, and motivation. Chaffee and Tims (1982) have further suggested that there may be a systematic developmental progression in news media use patterns moving basically from broadcast to print media. Their findings suggest that the print media do not simply replace the broadcast media but are used in addition to them as the youngster moves from childhood through adolescence. Moreover, their research clearly shows that considerable variance exists both between and within age groups in the patterns of news media use exhibited.

As we move forward in this area it will be important to keep in mind McLeod and O'Keefe's (1972) recommendation that a full explication of the process by which the young person becomes a consumer of the news media must take into account environmental, interactional, and maturational factors. It must also deal with the learning processes through which the news media use behaviors are acquired.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations
for Newspaper Reading by Age of Child

	Winter Measure			Fall Measure		
Age Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
10	2.04	2.41	49	2.43	2.49	51
11	2.44	2.46	66	2.40	2.41	67
12	2.61	2.57	64	3.16	2.61	63
13	3.21	2.75	52	3.81	2.71	52
14	3.73	2.86	73	3.82	2.58	73
15	4.11	2.70	54	3.96	2.67	54
16	4.16	2.79	75	4.03	2.58	76
17	4.22	2.71	63	3.54	2.72	63
Total	3.36	2.77	496	3.41	2.65	499
Parents	5.36	2.46	501	5.18	2.46	501

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Magazine Article Reading About Government and Politics

	Winter Measure			Fall Measure		
Age Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
10	.63	1.52	52	.81	1.78	52
11	.72	1.58	67	.93	1.61	67
12	.86	1.72	64	1.44	2.40	64
13	.63	1.24	52	1.21	2.39	52
14	.85	1.50	73	.79	1.73	73
15	1.00	1.83	54	1.07	2.55	54
16	.95	1.50	76	1.12	1.94	76
17	1.19	2.12	63	.95	1.64	63
Total	.86	1.64	501	1.04	2.01	501
Parent	1.41	2.28	501	1.41	2.42	501

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations
for National Television News Exposure

	Winter Measure			Fall Measure		
Age Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
10	2.83	2.35	47	2.18	1.73	51
11	3.55	2.19	65	2.78	1.87	63
12	3.30	2.07	61	3.38	2.19	64
13	3.15	2.17	52	2.94	2.15	51
14	3.47	2.05	73	2.42	1.91	73
15	3.30	2.09	54	2.89	2.38	54
16	3.08	2.11	76	2.37	2.15	76
17	3.22	2.10	63	2.63	2.38	63
Total	3.25	2.13	491	2.69	2.12	495
Parent	4.98	2.30	496	4.37	2.50	498

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Local Late Evening Television News Exposure

	Winter Measure			Fall Measure		
Age Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
10	2.37	1.20	52	2.29	.89	52
11	2.61	.95	67	2.51	1.08	67
12	2.67	.96	64	2.73	.98	64
13	2.92	.99	52	2.98	.90	52
14	2.75	.98	73	2.49	.94	73
15	2.80	.98	54	2.87	.89	54
16	2.88	.99	75	2.73	.99	75
17	3.00	1.00	63	3.00	.98	63
Total	2.75	1.01	500	2.70	.98	500
Parent	3.61	.78	501	3.54	.82	501

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations
for Television News Special Exposure

	Winter Measure			Fall Measure		
Age Level	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
10	2.31	1.11	52	2.33	.90	52
11	2.82	1.18	67	2.84	.93	67
12	2.64	1.00	64	2.66	.98	64
13	3.00	.89	52	2.83	1.00	52
14	2.77	.98	73	2.56	1.15	73
15	2.98	.88	54	2.94	.84	53
16	2.93	.99	75	2.77	.85	75
17	2.89	1.00	63	2.87	.99	63
Total	2.80	2.02	500	2.73	.98	499
Parent	3.49	.74	501	3.39	.79	501

Table 6

Over-Time Correlations for Measures of
News Media Exposure from Winter to
Fall for Children and Parents
by Child's Age

	Newspaper		Magazine		National TV		Local TV		TV Specials	
Age Level	Child	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Parent	Child	Parent
10	.34	.83	.11	.22	.33	.60	.35	.72	.13	.48
11	.52	.78	.11	.61	.40	.47	.00	.73	.36	.50
12	.58	.84	.30	.55	.18	.34	.13	.51	.42	.52
13	.80	.80	.58	.48	.43	.42	.22	.53	.46	.58
14	.72	.66	.31	.61	.57	.41	.34	.55	.63	.55
15	.62	.65	.52	.48	.55	.51	.47	.30	.42	.67
16	.57	.79	.38	.54	.55	.67	.49	.70	.59	.61
17	.60	.70	.19	.31	.42	.53	.61	.53	.65	.71
Total	.62	.76	.30	.50	.43	.50	.35	.58	.48	.58

Table 7

Correlations Between Parent and Child Exposure
to News Sources by the Age of the Child

Age Level	Newspaper		Magazine		National TV		Local TV		TV Specials	
	Winter	Fall	Winter	Fall	Winter	Fall	Winter	Fall	Winter	Fall
10	.21	.27	-.08	.19	.10	-.01	-.02	-.12	.12	-.18
11	.19	.24	.12	.10	.22	-.23	-.06	-.12	.03	.02
12	.47	.39	.23	.12	.18	-.09	-.07	-.19	.30	.35
13	.44	.35	.22	.20	.09	.32	-.07	.24	.11	.04
14	.49	.43	.08	.04	.28	.19	.13	.30	.28	.36
15	.20	.28	.17	.14	.09	.24	.17	.24	.31	.15
16	.20	.08	.37	.17	.26	.04	-.06	.06	.27	.26
17	.28	.25	.08	.18	.28	.10	.42	.13	.23	.42
Total	.33	.30	.15	.14	.20	.07	.08	.07	.20	.22