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ABSTRACT
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(John Beatty); "'Willingness to Censor': Developing a Quantitative
Measurement across Speech Categories and Types of Media" (Jennifer L. Lambe);
"Can Social Comparison Theory Explain Fascination with TV Talk Shows?"
(Cynthia M. Frisby); "Answering the Critics: Are News Councils Out to Get the
Media" (Jennifer L. Lambe, Genelle I. Belmas, and William A. Babcock);
"Journalistic and Humanist Approaches: Movie Reviews in 'The New Yorker' and
'Entertainment Weekly'" (James Kendrick); "An Alternative to the Impasse: The
Grassroots Approach to Cope with Media Violence Issues" (Hoaming Denis Wu and
Lois A. Boynton); "The Agenda-Setting Process of a Daily Newspaper: A Case
Study" (Elizabeth Evenson Williams); "The Use and Abuse of Media-Sponsored
Opinion Polls in Two Presidential Campaigns: A Critical Analysis of Network
TV News and Six Prestige Print Media" (Dennis T. Lowry and Josephine Nio);
"Participation in Community Organizations and Consumption of TV and Newspaper
News" (Esther Thorson and Glenn Leshner); "Print Mass Media Coverage of the
Promise Keepers: The First Five Years" (Dane Claussen); "Daily Newspaper
Editors' Audience Construction Routines: A Case Study" (Randall S. Sumpter);
"The Value of the Journalistic Identity on the World Wide Web" (Ekaterina
Ognianova); "Social Reality Effects of the Mass Media in Japan: Media
Coverage in the 'Aum Shinrikyo' Case" (Shinichi Saito and Miki Kawabata); "In
the Olympic Tradition: Sportscasters' Language and Female Athleticism" (Lisa
M. Weidman); "Surviving the FCC: The Legacy of UHFs" (Kathryn B. Campbell);
"Agenda-Setting and Spanish Cable News" (Salma I. Ghanem and Wayne Wanta);
"Do Social Norms and Media Coverage Influence Illicit Drug Trade among
College Students? Implications for Media Practitioners and Drug Educators"
(Alyse R. Gotthoffer); "Perceptions of Traditional American Journalists
toward the Internet as a News Source: A Critical Approach" (Thomas E.

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        Ruggiero); and "Auto Elite and Agenda-Setting: How the Auto Elite Set the
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AND SOCIETY.

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TALK RADIO AS FORUM AND COMPANION: LISTENER ATTITUDES AND USES AND GRATIFICATIONS IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

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Talk Radio as Forum and Companion: Listener attitudes and uses and gratifications in Austin, Texas

A survey of talk radio listeners found little support for a companion function. Seeking companionship was weakly related to liking the host, and to parasocial interaction but it did predict a positive attitude to government. Forum gratifications acted with liking the host in what might be called "community information"-seeking. Those seeking such information see talk radio as a town meetring and do not see talk as mean-spirited despite preferring to hear others' points of view.

Talk Radio as Forum and Companion: Listener attitudes and uses and gratifications in Austin, Texas

> There are those who say talk radio is dangerous, and I am probably the sort of listener they have in mind. I am addicted. I only consume the good stuff, mind you, and there isn't that much of it around; but when I find it my days are rearranged, my friendships, work and study put aside, and for weeks I binge on tirade and debate (Margolis, 1990; pp. 6-7).

> I have recently talked with lots of talk radio buffs, and it seems to me that people are getting tired of listening to angry middle-aged white guys ranting about the latest headlines and shouting down similarly disgruntled callers (Herndon, 1994; p. Onward 17).

> America is awash in talk. Loud talk. Angry talk. Conspirational talk. Raunchy talk, smug talk, self-serving talk, funny talk, rumor-mongering talk. A cacophony of chat fills the airwaves from coast to coast, from dawn to dusk and beyond, all talk all the time (Kurtz, 1996; p.3).

Love it or hate it, talk radio came of age in the 1990s —and some say it may already be on the decline (Paige et al., 1998) as analysts rushed to understand the phenomenon. The number of news/talk stations rose from 308 in 1989 to more than 1,330 at the end of 1997 (Paige et al., 1998). It has been the subject of recent books by a critical theorist (Munson, 1993), a television critic (Kurtz, 1996) and at least two talk show hosts (Scott, 1996; Laufer, 1995). It has been analyzed in several national surveys (Kohut et al., 1993; Benchmark Company, 1994; Adams Research, 1995; Cappella et al., 1996) and in numerous research papers.

Cappella et al. (1996) found that 18 percent of the adult population reports listening to at least one call-in political talk radio show at least twice a week. In Austin, Texas, two news talk stations have a combined rating of 8.1 percent in the fall 1996 Arbitron survey (Herndon, 1996), with several other popular talk programs on music stations, often in morning drive time.

Much of the analysis of talk radio points out the contradictory nature of the medium. It is reviled for its negativity, even described as an unhealthy addiction, yet it also is seen as a powerful political force only recently unleashed. It has been credited with stopping a mass transit tax proposal in Denver (Green, 1997), and, at least temporarily, a proposed Congressional pay raise, and cited as a factor in: Zoe Baird (Page and Tannenbaum, 1996) and

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Kimba Wood's unsuccessful nominations (Kurtz, 1996); the Exxon boycott; the backlash against gays in the military; the cellular phone/cancer controversy; Clinton's health care plan; and the "three strikes and you're out" crime bill provision which was co-authored by a talk-show host (Wright, 1995). Rush Limbaugh rose to become an important figure in Republican politics and in 1993 President Clinton held a briefing on health care for 200 talk show hosts at the White House (Laufer, 1995).

Can all this be true of a medium that, for all the urgent attention afforded it, has been around for about 70 years and may be no more than an electronic version of the town crier, the newsboy (Burd, 1988), the lyceum movement and women's magazines (Munson, 1993)?

Those who react with alarm are mostly authors and critics who are reacting to reports of on-air interactions and self-promotional claims of talk show programs, rather than examining the shows themselves, or audience members' interpretations. This paper uses the audience in an attempt to evaluate the role of talk radio in society. It is motivated by the suspicion that much of what is claimed about talk radio is overblown, overly emotional and overly selective.

Review of the Literature

Some histories of talk radio isolate a psycho-social predisposition said to derive from the alienating, monolithic conditions of modernity — the talk show as therapist for the lonely, and as creator of social networks (Bronstein, 1983), although Bick (1987) denies that it is anything more than another form of mass communication, claiming that "the very existence of the radio transmitter belies interpreting talk radio formats as interpersonal communication" (p. 109).

Talk radio provides a format that argues strongly for the falseness of the mass/interpersonal dichotomy simply on the face of its simultaneous combination of mass media with a one-on-one conversation, to say nothing of the interpersonal uses that audiences make of the format, including the possibility of parasocial interactions (Horton and Wohl, 1956).

Clearly, there are elements of interpersonal communication in talk radio programming and listening. The parasocial and interpersonal functions of talk radio are labeled "Companion"

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based on the paper "Talk Radio — Forum and Companion" (Tramer and Jeffres, 1983). Dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976) could address the social end of this factor, and parasocial interactions (Horton and Wohl, 1956) the more psychological. Wilkinson and Grant (1995) suggest that "the Gulf War attracted many people to tune in (as dependency theory would predict)" (p.17) and then the behavior became a habit for many.

Talk may also have important ties to traditional communicatory roles such as public oral communication, for example town criers, (Burd, 1988) which a postmodern perspective would suggest are returning to vogue.

Avery and Ellis (1979) provide evidence for the hypothesis that talk radio serves as an interpersonal surrogate, mentioning studies by Turow (1974) and Bierig (later published as Bierig and Dimmick, 1979). These two papers and one by Armstrong and Rubin (1989) have titles of the sort "Talk Radio as Interpersonal Communication." They cite each other, back to Turow, but seem to suffer from poor operationalizations of loneliness in the earlier works. Bierig and Dimmick (1979), for example simply asked respondents if they lived alone.

A second line of thought emphasizes the political role of the talk show, a form of social discourse also tied to the degeneration of premodern "back fence" or commons interactions (Levin, 1987; Rehm, 1993; Kohut et al., 1993; Craft cited in Paige et al., 1998). This factor will be labeled "Forum." This view also attaches the growth of talk radio to disenchantment with traditional electoral politics, a view apparently seized upon by politicians in the 1992 elections (Waluszko, 1995; Hollander, 1995).

Some support for the political forum hypothesis was gained in an early study of a half-hour overtly political call-in show (Crittenden, 1971), when the public was arguably more political, and in analysis of recorded talk shows from 1977 and 1982 (Levin, 1987), although Avery and Ellis (1979) claim that Crittenden's results derived from the brief, targeted nature of the program in question. Surlin and Soderlund (1993) found a mix of interpersonal advice-type talk and political-community discussion in Jamaica, although they did not analyze callers' or listeners' perceived uses of the programs.

A third factor in the attention to talk radio may be as entertainment beyond the social-

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psychological and political. Uses and gratifications studies have found a link between entertainment and parasocial gratifications (Dobos and Dimmick, 1988), which suggests that companion-seekers will be more likely to report entertainment as a gratification. Ultimately, entertainment is assumed to be one of the reasons for listening, something that is taken for granted — otherwise there would be little or no listening, by definition.

One of the key questions examined in the study remains, then, the extent to which talk radio acts as a surrogate for interpersonal relations as opposed to a forum for the politically interested and, perhaps, involved. In the years since Tramer and Jeffres (1983) posed and popularized the terms, few surveys have addressed the relationship between the two concepts. The Times-Mirror survey (Kohut et al., 1993) Hofstetter et al., (1994) and Hollander (1996) looked at the political, Rancer et al. (1994) examined the psychological, and Benchmark (1993) looked at simple audience preferences and demographics. Zerbinos (1993) came closest to re-iterating the two concerns ("Talk Radio: Motivation or Titillation?") although she emphasized the political functions.

FORUM/COMPANION: AN ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

The Tramer and Jeffres (1983) paper makes a good jumping-off point, but is severely limited in its scope and operationalizations, and over-zealous in its conclusions. Much of that is due to the fact that it was an intercept survey of callers with a single question ("Are you calling to give/receive information or did you want to chat?") serving as a filter for the three categories of callers (seeking information, companionship, or a forum).

Callers constitute a small segment of the audience (typically 2 to 5 percent) and there is research to suggest (Kohut et al., 1993; Hofstetter et al., 1994; Rancer et al., 1994; Hollander, 1996) that they are different from the rest of the audience (more politically aware, active, less likely to seek companionship). There is little basis on which to conclude, as Tramer and Jeffres did, that

> Just as Herzog found radio soap operas functional outlets for *escape* some 40
> years ago, today's talk radio formats are providing a similar outlet for today's
> isolated *listeners*
> (Tramer and Jeffres, 1983; p. 300; emphasis added).

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Tramer and Jeffres do not even have much of a basis for making such a conclusion about the callers, as 44 were said to seek a forum, 49 companionship, and 61 information. The difference between the forum and companion motivations is not significant, and the 61 information-seekers are ignored in this conclusion. It is also too simplistic to code callers, based on a single filter question, into mutually exclusive categories.

HYPOTHESES

Relationships among the variables can be summarized as in the following diagram (Figure 1). Some elements of the figure are discussed elsewhere (Beatty, 1996). Single-headed arrows are drawn to indicate probable causal pathways (e.g. higher income "causes" forum usage), double-headed to indicate correlates. Parasociability (Auter and Palmgreen, 1993) is a personality trait said to predict parasocial interaction with the media.
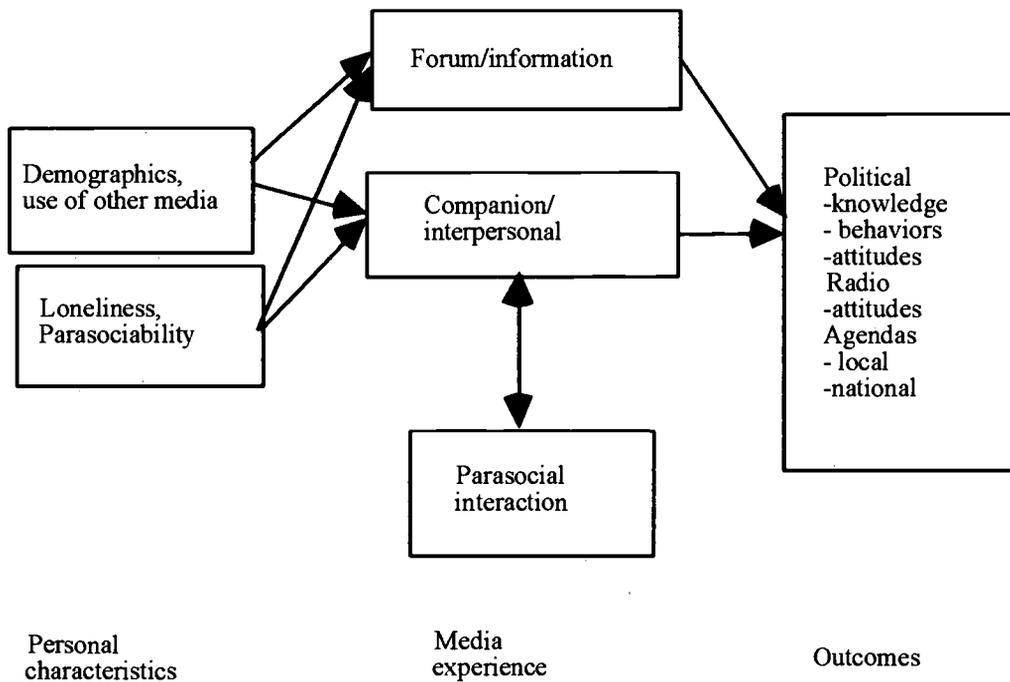

Figure 1. Relationships of study variables.

Comments in this study's pre-test raised the issue that the site of listening was related to the

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gratifications sought. In particular, respondents volunteered that they listen to talk radio for companionship primarily in the car.

> H1: Those whose primary listening site is the car will be more likely to agree with companionship-seeking as a reason for listening to talk radio than will those whose primary listening site is at home or work.

Forum-seekers would be lower on parasocial involvement with a favorite host, with talk show hosts in general (what Auter and Palmgreen (1993) call "parasociability"), and lower on loneliness (from the UCLA loneliness scale, Russell et al. (1980), not merely "living alone" as in Bierig and Dimmick (1979)). Since loneliness and parasociability are personality traits, they would predict companion-seeking (but not forum-seeking), whereas parasocial interaction is an aspect of radio listening that is coincident with the obtaining of gratifications.

Counter to Tramer and Jeffres' (1983) claim, Zerbinos (1993) found companion-seeking to be the least reported gratification among six offered to respondents, although she adds "another way of asking this question might produce more truthful results" (p. 15). Items on parasociability and loneliness can complement the Likert item "I listen to talk radio for companionship" to examine both the relationship between listening and the two personality traits, and the relationship between the Likert item and the traits.

> H2: The more listeners to talk radio are lonely, the more they will seek companionship gratifications.
> H3: Parasocial interaction will be positively correlated with companion-seeking.
> H4: The more listeners to talk radio possess parasociability, the more they will seek companionship gratifications.

Surlin's research (Surlin, 1986; Surlin and Soderlund, 1993) suggests that ethnicity and culture help determine the nature of uses of talk radio, as Albarran and Umphrey (1994) found for television viewers. We would expect members of a minority culture who are new to the community to use the medium more for information and orientation to community issues, and less to satisfy a need for interpersonal communication. Surlin (1986) found that lower SES listeners in Jamaica sought primarily information and surveillance (forum-type) gratifications rather than interpersonal or companionship gratifications. Those newer to community are also more likely to use the format for surveillance (forum-type) purposes in that they are more marginal.

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H5: Non-white listeners and those new to the Austin area are more likely to seek forum gratifications than are whites and those residing longer in the area.

The tendency to use talk radio for interpersonal gratification is conceptually related to affect toward the host. "Surrogate companionship" could derive from the experience of hearing a conversation without close listening, as well as from the hosts who,

> come into the home as *companions* who are willing to listen to personal problems, share ideas about social and political issues, remind listeners that they are not alone, and provide assurance that their beliefs and attitudes are shared by others (Avery and Ellis, 1979; p. 114; emphasis added).

In other words, companion-seekers are likely to come to like hosts who fulfill their needs, and through positive feedback (listening most to those they like) develop a favorite host. Forum-seekers would not be expected to name a favorite host.

H6: The more talk radio listeners seek companionship, the more likely they are to name a favorite host.

Zerbinos (1993) asked listeners how important it was "To hear points of view expressed that are similar to mine" (p. 8). Listeners were divided although this was only the fifth-ranked of six reasons for listening. Kohut et al. (1993) found that most listeners preferred hearing opposite points of view:

RQ1: Are forum- and companion-seeking related to a preference for hearing an opposite or own point of view?

On the other hand, Kohut et al. (1993) found several indicators of distrust and disaffection with government (lower favorability for President Clinton, the U.S. Congress) to be associated with talk radio listening, as did Cappella et al. (1996). Listeners are less likely to approve of the efforts of local politicians (assuming they are less media-dependent). Forum-seekers might be even less approving but they could just as easily support the government:

RQ2: What is the relationship between forum-seeking and opinion about the job the local government is doing?

Given the claim that the format has become overly mean-spirited, it is likely that the forum-seekers who are more interested in issues and debate would listen more than would companion-seekers. Seeking companionship implies that the format is perceived as friendly,

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rather than mean-spirited. Put another way, a high degree of companion-seeking would be evidence that the critics are over-rating the hatefulness or mean-spiritedness of the medium.

> H7: The more listeners to talk radio seek companionship the less likely they will be to perceive talk radio programs as mean-spirited.

Talk radio's role as a political forum is somewhat antithetical to the idea that talk radio is mean-spirited, although there are likely to be instances of both types of content. Theorists (e.g. Rehm, 1993) and media critics (Austin American-Statesman, 1992; Burns, 1994) have trumpeted the positive political forum, or "town meeting" role in the face of the more extensive criticism of the programs' negative tone. Among listeners, those who come to the format seeking a political forum are more likely to see it as fulfilling a town meeting function.

> H8: The more listeners to talk radio seek a political forum, the more likely they are to perceive talk radio programs as town meetings of the air.

Regular listening to local talk radio reveals frequent discussion of politics. Through repetition of names and issues by the hosts and callers, listeners are likely to become more familiar with political information. This familiarity would seem likely to be correlated with forum-seeking but not with companionship-seeking:

> H9: The more listeners to talk radio seek political forum gratifications, the more likely they will be to be able to identify local political figures and abbreviations.

Zerbinos (1993) found that talk radio listeners were slightly more likely than non-listeners to be aware of current political issues, and to be members of community associations. Cappella et al. (1996) found more participation reported by listeners, and Hofstetter et al. (1994) also found talk radio listeners higher in political participation, calling this "the most surprising and significant finding" of their study (p. 476). Extending those results to the forum/companion uses, it would seem that forum-seeking is positively correlated with communicating with elected officials, going to political meetings, and with membership in associations:

> H10: The more listeners to talk radio seek political forum gratifications, the more likely they will be to have participated in political activities.

Summary research questions: The personal characteristics and media use variables in Figure 1 can be used to test for the ability to predict the outcomes using regression models. The

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point here is to recognize that the hypotheses developed above are easily testable and that multivariate models reduce to research questions of the form: How do personal characteristics and media use predict political knowledge (attitudes toward talk radio content, attitudes toward political institutions, political participation)? Answering those research questions allows another look at the role forum- and companionship-seeking play in the outcomes of the model.

Methods

Contest entry blanks were obtained from KVET/KASE radio in Austin. KASE is a country station, KVET-AM is news/talk and KVET-FM carried a popular morning talk show ("Sammy and Bob"). A set of local names and telephone numbers was generated from the entry blanks. The intent was to obtain with limited resources a rich sample of radio listeners many of whom would be familiar with call-in talk programs broadcast on KVET AM and FM.

Interviews were completed with 174 talk radio listeners in May and June of 1996. The upper-bound response rate was 80 percent. Respondents were asked seven uses and gratifications items, five derived from the Times-Mirror study (Kohut et al., 1993) and two from Zerbinos (1993). Four knowledge items tested local political knowledge. One item asked about attitude toward local politics ("In general, how good a job do you think the city council is doing?"). Five items from Kohut et al., (1993) asked about political involvement (whether they had called or sent a letter to the White House, to a Congressman, participated in an opinion poll, attended a civic meeting or joined a community group).

Parasocial interaction items (Auter and Palmgreen, 1993) asked respondents about hypothesized interactions with a favorite host. Some items were adapted from Auter and Palmgreen's (1993) Identification With Favorite Characters subscale for soap operas; others are from Rubin and Perse (1987) adapted for radio, excluding those specific to television such as "My favorite host seems attractive."

Parasociability items asked about "any talk show host that you enjoy listening to" and provide a measure of a personality trait, the tendency to interact parasocially. Four loneliness items are a subscale from a longer psychological instrument developed at UCLA (Russell et al., 1980) that improves on indirect measures that merely asked about the number of people in the

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household (Armstrong and Rubin, 1989).

Radio attitude questions consisted of one asking whether respondents liked to hear their own or opposite point of view and two Likert items adapted from media coverage ("Call-in talk radio shows are town meetings of the air": "Talk radio call-in shows are mean-spirited."). Follow-up interviews were conducted with a sample of the 40 percent who agreed to them.

RESULTS: **Factor analysis, scaling**

Table 1: Factor analysis of seven reasons for listening to talk radio.

Reason	Factor 1	Factor 2
Keep up on issues of day	.58	.40
Companionship	.30	-.14
To learn things can't find elsewhere	.76	.00
To learn how people feel about issues	.69	.17
Like the host	.06	.94
Know what's going on in community	.72	.02
Pick up information to use in conversation	.60	.07

Table 1 does show part of the expected pattern (seen in the pre-test) in which what could be called the "non-interpersonal" reasons for listening fall strongly on one factor with liking the host on a second. Liking the host loads highly on the second factor and has close to a zero loading on the first, but companionship loads negatively on Factor 2 and moderately on Factor 1, counter to the hypothesis. It is interesting that a reason cited as an interpersonal utility by Dobos and Dimmick (1988) ("To pick up information that I use in conversation with other people") loads close to zero on the second "host" factor. This suggests that the interpersonal nature of talk radio lies mainly in liking a host (but not in attaining some companionship from the host), and that the interpersonal communication utility functions with the knowledge and surveillance gratifications (Factor 1). The nature of this factor might be described as **community information**-seeking — finding out the issues, getting knowledge and being able to use that in the community.

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There does not seem to be a strong association between the two "interpersonal" reasons for listening (host, companionship).

To further assess the inter-item relationship, a reliability analysis of the two items was performed. This produced a very low Cronbach's alpha of .11. On the other hand, the five community information items (loading strongest on Factor 1) produced a Cronbach's alpha of .72, sufficient to proceed with a single scale constructed from the combined scores on the five items. Further analysis proceeded with examination of hypotheses that predicted relationships with a "forum" variable employing the community information construct. Those hypotheses that predicted relationships with a "companion" variable were examined against the scores on the host item and the companion item independently.

Parasocial interaction, parasociability: Respondents who reported a favorite talk show host were given seven Likert-type parasocial interaction items adapted from television research (Rubin and Perse, 1987; Auter and Palmgreen, 1993).

Reliability analysis produced a Cronbach's alpha of .58. This is low for a seven-item scale, but shows that the items almost act together well enough to form a single scale. The lowest correlations are between items from the two studies. The item: "If he/she appeared on another radio station, I would listen to that program," correlated at .08 or below with Auter and Palmgreen's three identification items (and at .09 with another Rubin and Perse item, "I would like to meet him/her in person").

The four Likert-type parasociability items from Auter and Palmgreen (1993) were analyzed for reliability and produced a Cronbach's alpha of .77. All inter-item correlations were at .40 or above. These data are high enough for a four-item scale and so a parasociability measure was created by summing the scores to the items (possible range from 4 to 20, mean = 14.30, s.d. = 2.64).

Political knowledge, participation: Three items measuring local political knowledge were combined into a single political knowledge score. This measure was considered to be a simple sum (score) as opposed to a scale requiring a check of inter-item reliability. Political activity, or participation, was treated in a similar manner.

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Listening patterns

Those who reported listening to talk radio (N=174) devoted an average of 37 percent of their radio listening time to talk. Almost half of the listeners devote less than 20 percent of their radio listening to talk radio, mostly 10 to 20 percent. Another fifth listen about half the time to talk and one-seventh might be characterized as talk radio "junkies" (as Margolis, 1990, described himself) all of whom devote 90 percent or more of their radio listening to talk. The distribution is not continuous and seems to define three distinct listening patterns.

Time spent with talk per day = (average radio minutes per day)(percent of radio time devoted to talk). The mean for 168 listeners who responded to both questions was 62.9 minutes (s.d=72.2) per day.

A surprising percentage of talk radio listening — 70 percent — was reported as being done in the car, followed by at work (17%) and at home (13%).

Many people listen to talk radio in their cars while they are working (traveling salespeople, for example), which may cloud interpretation of the primary listening site question.

Listener attitudes toward talk radio content

Three items measured listeners' attitudes toward talk radio content. The first was taken from Kohut et al. (1993). This study found 17 percent preferring their own point of view versus 59 percent preferring an opposite opinion, reflecting the pattern found in Kohut et al. (1993) and Zerbinos (1993). Apparently, the confrontational nature of talk as portrayed in much of the press (Herndon, 1994; Cappella et al., 1996) is an attractive rather than a repulsive quality.

Listeners also do not agree that talk radio is mean-spirited despite the fact that the phrases of that type have been used in reference to the popular "Sammy and Bob Show." Only 20.1 percent agree that talk radio is mean-spirited, whereas 60.3 percent disagree This finding dovetails with the preference for an opposite point of view to provide a picture of listeners who enjoy lively discussion and are perhaps aware of the hosts' ironic or sarcastic attempts at stirring up the pot for the sake of a good show. It suggests that the average talk radio listener is a more discriminating or even oppositional audience member in Stuart Hall's (1980) sense than is the average newspaper critic with regards to talk radio. This conclusion was borne out by

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follow-up interviews.

The response to the town meeting statement (taken directly from headlines to an editorial (Austin American-Statesman, 1992) and an op-ed column (Burns, 1994)) indirectly supports this interpretation of the audience's reaction of talk radio content. The proportion agreeing that talk radio shows are town meetings (43.7 percent) was about equal to the proportion disagreeing (38.5 percent). Listeners did not agree with the statement overall, but they did not disagree, which implies that they are not overly taken with the discussions' importance, even though the other attitude items show that they enjoy hearing opposing viewpoints and don't find them mean or upsetting.

In other words, they may take an ironic stance which recognizes that much of what goes on is fabricated for the sake of lively interactions.

Uses and gratifications

Table 2 gives the percentages of talk radio listeners in each response category for the seven uses and gratifications as well as comparisons to the other two talk radio studies. It is notable that of 1,218 questions asked there were only three "Don't know" responses, suggesting that these listeners have already formed some opinions about why they listen.

Items are listed in order of the mean score for each Likert item for which 5= "Strongly agree." Because the differentiations among gratifications sought, gratifications gained (Dobos and Dimmick, 1988) and uses are unaddressed in this study, the less specific term "reasons" (as in Zerbinos, 1993) will be used in the remainder of this paper.

Table 2: Percentages of talk radio listeners by reasons for listening to talk radio with comparisons to Times-Mirror and Zerbinos.

Reasons for listening	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
To learn how people feel about different issues[1]	2.3	7.5	7.5	62.1	20.7	3.91
Because I like the host of the show[6]	4.0	13.2	17.2	46.0	18.4	3.62
To know what's going on in my community[ii]	1.7	17.2	17.2	52.3	11.5	3.57

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Reasons for listening	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
To keep up on issues of the day[2]	2.9	18.4	17.8	51.7	9.2	3.47
To pick up information that I can use in conversation with other people[5]	1.7	23.6	22.4	44.8	7.5	3.35
Because it is a good way to learn things I can't find out elsewhere[3]	4.6	26.4	12.1	43.7	12.6	3.35
For companionship[vi]	16.7	52.3	17.8	11.5	1.7	2.29

Times-Mirror (Kohut et al., 1993) rankings indicated by numerical superscripts. Their fourth-ranked reason was "Because it is entertaining." Zerbinos (1993) rankings indicated by Roman numeral superscripts.

Despite some comparability problems, patterns emerge. Companionship was the lowest-rated of six reasons for Zerbinos (1993) and the lowest of the seven reasons in this study, with 13.2 percent agreeing that it was a reason they listened. This is further evidence that the early claims of a lonely, isolated audience (Avery and Ellis, 1979; Bierig and Dimmick, 1979; Tramer and Jeffres, 1983; Armstrong and Rubin, 1989) no longer apply, if they ever did.

This study and Kohut et al. (1993) found a surveillance reason to be the top-ranked reason for listening, and another surveillance reason ranked high in this study (third) and in Zerbinos (second). Knowledge-based reasons were also important but less so (fourth and tied for fifth in this study, second and third in Kohut et al., 1993) and communication utility was still less important (tied for fifth in this study and fifth in Kohut et al., 1993).

The difference in rankings between liking the host (second) and seeking companionship (seventh) suggest that the two items are not acting together or are not part of a single psychological construct for listeners. In other words, there are many listeners who listen because they like the host of a program or programs, but they do not seek or attain companionship from the host(s). This was borne out in the factor analysis and associated reliability check of the factors.

Uses and gratifications and relations to other variables

The three reasons derived from the factor analysis reported previously — community

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information, host and companionship — were tested in separate one-way ANOVAs against the primary listening site.

The use of talk radio for companionship did vary depending on primary listening location with an $F = 5.06$; $p=.007$. This seems to confirm the expectation that companionship was the use most likely to be tied to site of listening, although multiple range tests showed the pattern to be different than expected. The companionship use for those listening primarily at home was greatest (mean=2.86; N=22) and differed significantly from the companionship ratings of "car listeners" (mean=2.22; N=121) and "work listeners" (mean=2.13; N=30) at p= .05. Companionship ratings did not differ significantly between work and car listeners. Thus **Hypothesis 1** is not supported in that companionship-seeking is not associated primarily with listening in the car. It seems that respondents found it to be associated more with "the comforts of home."

The use of talk radio for community information or because the host was liked did not vary greatly across the three listening sites, and no two groups differed significantly at the .05 level according to multiple range tests.

Respondents' scores on the three reasons for listening were compared with their scores on the loneliness scale, recalling the relatively low alpha score obtained for the scale (.40). Companionship had an almost-zero correlation with loneliness ($r=.04$; $p=.61$), contrary to **Hypothesis 2**, while liking the host had a slight negative correlation ($r=-.04$; $p=.60$, N=167). Surprisingly, the community information scale score had a statistically significant correlation with the loneliness score ($r=.20$; $p=.01$, N=168). The community information scale does have elements of interpersonal communication (e.g. getting information to use in conversation with others) that could explain a correlation with loneliness.

The lack of a positive relation between liking the host and loneliness is not surprising in the light of results reported earlier. Liking the host and having a favorite are not strongly related to companionship nor is liking the host strongly related to loneliness. Those listeners who express positive affect toward hosts may do so because they find the host(s) enjoyable or entertaining, perhaps because they too are outgoing, communicative people. It is clear that the

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opposite conclusion is not supported by this study. Talk radio listeners in general, and even those who relate positively to talk radio hosts, are not listening to compensate for a lonely life.

The positive correlation between seeking information about the community and loneliness is unexpected, but may be evidence that finding out the issues, how others feel and what's going on, and using it in conversation are more attractive to those who are lonely because they can address their loneliness through feeling connected to the community, more than through feelings for the host. Those who seek such community information also show some affect toward the host ($r=.14$; $p=.07$) and tend to seek companionship ($r=.13$; $p=.10$). It may be safer to say that there is not a strong relationship between loneliness and the reasons people listen to talk radio, but loneliness is tied more to community information items than it is to affect for the host.

The three reasons for listening were compared to parasocial interaction and parasociability. Parasocial interaction (a media use behavior) and parasociability (a psychological tendency) correlated at $r=.56$ ($p=.001$; $N=61$) which suggests that the operationalization of parasociability is of some use in predicting parasocial interaction. Auter and Palmgreen (1993), who devised the parasociability items, found that parasociability and parasocial interaction correlated at $r=.33$.

As with loneliness, companionship-seeking had almost no relationship to parasocial interaction ($r=-0.07$, $p=.56$, $N=63$; **Hypothesis 3** not supported), an element of media exposure, nor to parasociability ($r=0.02$, $p=.78$, $N=165$; **Hypothesis 4** not supported), a personality trait. In other words, companionship-seeking is not related to parasocial interaction, which is an interaction with the host, and the tendency to interact parasocially with the host (parasociability) does not predict companionship-seeking.

In contrast to the null results for companionship-seeking, listening because of liking the host correlated with parasocial interaction ($r=0.26$, $p=.04$, $N=63$) and was predicted by parasociability ($r=0.29$, $p=.000$, $N=163$), lending some reliability to these three host-related measures. Unexpected interactions between community information-seeking and parasocial interaction ($r=0.31$, $p=.01$, $N=63$) and parasociability ($r=0.33$, $p=.000$, $N=165$) suggest that

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community information-seekers have some affective relationship with the host, despite the distinct factor loadings reported above. There seems to be an interpersonal character to community information-seeking in that it is related to these two measures and to loneliness.

This study found talk radio listeners more likely than non-listeners to be white and they also are likely to have been in Austin for a shorter period than non-listeners. Those newer to the community are more likely to seek out talk radio for whatever reasons, although language barriers may keep the percentage of non-white listeners down.

White and non-white listeners were compared in terms of their mean scores on companionship, liking the host and community information. Whites and non-whites do not differ in the uses they make of talk radio in Austin, in contrast to the findings of Surlin (1986) and Surlin and Soderlund (1993). **Hypothesis 5** is not supported, perhaps because of the influence of the "country music" sample used. Taken together, race and length of residence did not appear to explain differences in reasons for listening to talk radio, contrary to what is stated in Hypothesis 5.

Uses and gratifications and outcome variables:

Outcome variables (see Figure 1) encompass: attitudes toward talk radio content, attitudes toward political institutions, political knowledge and political participation.

Mean scores for the three reasons for listening to talk radio were compared for those naming a favorite host and those who did not.

Those naming a favorite host scored higher on the reason "Because I like the host of the show" (mean difference = .51, p=.002) as hypothesized using the original "companion" concept (**Hypothesis 6**). The two items acted almost as a reliability check on whether or not respondents liked a host (had a favorite). On the other hand, there was almost no difference between the two types of listeners (favorite host or none) on the degree to which they listened for companionship (mean difference = .05, p=.76; contrary to Hypothesis 6). This is further evidence that positive affect toward hosts (in this case, having a favorite) is not related to using talk radio for companionship.

The three reasons for listening to talk radio were analyzed with respect to preferring to

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hear the respondent's own point of view or an opposite one. This outcome variable and responses to the "mean-spirited" and "town meeting" items are considered measures of attitudes toward talk radio content.

Research question 1 asked about the relationship between preferred point of view and reasons for listening. There does not seem to be an important relationship between the point of view preferred and the uses made of talk radio.

Of the three reasons for listening only companionship-seeking predicted a (positive) attitude toward city council ($r=.16$; $p=.03$; $N=168$; **Research question 2**).

Hypothesis 7 stated that forum-seeking would predict disagreement with the statement, "Talk radio shows are mean-spirited," and **Hypothesis 8** predicted that forum-seeking would predict agreement with the statement, "Talk radio shows are town meetings of the air." The community information (forum) scale correlated at $r = -.24$ ($p=.001$; $N = 169$) with the "mean-spirited" Likert item and at $r = .35$ ($p=.001$; $N = 169$) with the "town meeting" item, supporting both hypotheses.

Those seeking community information may be finding what they seek — a reasoned political forum — or these results may suggest that those paying close attention to the discussion of political issues recognize that there is passion involved in debate and welcome a "good argument." Rancer et al. (1994) found that talk radio listeners were more likely to be "argument prone" and less likely to avoid arguments than non-listeners. This study supports that characterization of talk radio listeners, in particular if they come to the format seeking community information.

None of the correlations between reasons for listening and political knowledge (**Hypothesis 9**) and between reasons for listening and political activities (**Hypothesis 10**) attained statistical significance at $p=.05$; in fact, the hypothesized relationship between community information-seeking and political activities approached significance but in the opposite direction specified by Hypothesis 10 (the more listeners seek community information the less likely they are to report engaging in political activities). This is surprising in the light of this study's finding that talk radio listeners were more likely to have local political knowledge

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and to report participating in political activities than were non-listeners. Apparently, gaining political knowledge and engaging in political activities are a result of listening to talk radio but not of coming to the format seeking community information.

Summary multiple regressions

Hierarchical multiple regressions were performed to summarize the ability to predict the cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes among talk radio listeners. Predictor variables were entered in blocks with the first block consisting of demographic, psychological and media use variables. These included time spent listening to talk radio. The second block consisted of the reasons for listening to talk radio. The regressions shown do not include parasocial interaction since inclusion of that variable would eliminate all listeners who did not report a favorite host.

Table 3 shows the hierarchical regression Beta weights for the cognitive outcome variable, local political knowledge. Regression 2 added the reasons for listening as a second block.

Table 3: Predictors of local political knowledge

Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Time listening to radio	-.08	-.07
Days reading newspaper	.07	.07
Time reading newspaper	.04	.05
Time reading magazines	.03	.03
Time watching TV	-.12	-.12
Education level	.12	.13
Age	.008	-.01
How long in area	.18**	.19**
Income	.11	.13
Ideology	.18**	.19**
Loneliness	-.04	-.05
Parasociability	.15*	.13
Time listen to talk radio	.01	-.006

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Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Race (white/other)	-.15*	-.14
Gender	-.31**	-.31**
Companionship		.08
Like the host		-.004
Community information		.11
Multiple R (F significance)	.57 (.0002)	.59 (.0003)
R^2	.33	.35
R^2 change		.02
Adjusted R^2	.23	.23

* $p \leq .10$ ** $p \leq .05$ *** $p \leq .01$

The non-significant contribution of community information-seeking means that **Hypothesis 9** is again not supported. As a related result, adding the reasons for listening increased the variance explained by the predictors by only .02. Significant predictors of local political knowledge were length of residence in the area, ideology (more liberal –> more knowledge) and gender (males –> more knowledge). Race (white) and parasociability were moderately significant in the first regression but dropped below significance after the reasons for listening were added. Education was not significantly related to local political knowledge, nor were any of the media use variables. In a re-analysis of American National Election Study data, Waluszko (1995) found that education was the strongest predictor of political knowledge among radio and TV talk show audiences, although media use variables including talk show exposure were among the weakest, similar to the results of this study.

It is not surprising that the longer respondents lived in the area the more likely they are to have local political knowledge. There is no prima facie reason to associate males with greater political knowledge. Waluszko, in fact, (1995) found that females were more likely to have political knowledge.

The regressions did explain 35 percent of the variance in political knowledge with F significant at $p < .0001$. The conclusion is that liberal males who are long-term residents of the

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area are more likely to have local political knowledge and that reasons for listening to talk radio and other exposure to other media do not help to predict that knowledge. Talk radio listening does appear to aid in local knowledge acquisition but the effect is slight and not attributable to reasons for (gratifications sought from) listening.

Table 4 gives the results of regressions predicting attitude toward the city council.

Table 4: Predictors of attitudes toward city council.

Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Time listening to radio	.04	.06
Days reading newspaper	.17*	.15
Time reading newspaper	-.07	-.05
Time reading magazines	.04	.03
Time watching TV	.008	.02
Education level	.08	.09
Age	-.08	-.09
How long in area	-.12	-.12
Income	-.01	-.003
Ideology	-.27**	-.27**
Loneliness	-.02	-.03
Parasociability	.12	.14
Time listen to talk radio	-.24**	-.23**
Race (white/other)	-.11	-.09
Gender	.19*	.20*
Companionship		.10
Like the host		-.08
Community information		-.004
Multiple R (F significance)	.51 (.008)	.52 (.017)
R^2	.26	.27
R^2 change		.01
Adjusted R^2	.15	.14

*$p \leq .10$ **$p \leq .05$ ***$p \leq .01$

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The reasons for listening to talk radio did not contribute significantly to prediction of attitudes toward local government. The R^2 value increased only by .01 when the three reasons were added to the regression equation. The second equation produced an R value of .52 (F=.02) and explained 27 percent of the variance in attitude. Significant predictor variables were ideology (more conservative –> more negative attitude; p= .006), time spent listening to talk radio (more time spent –> more negative; p= .03) and gender (female –> more positive; p= .05).

It may be that attributing cognitive and attitudinal outcomes to the reasons for listening is attempting to fine tune the analysis too much, at least for a sample of this size, and one drawn non-randomly. Taking listeners as a group, it was found that talk radio listening predicted a more negative attitude toward local government, in accordance with the findings of Kohut et al. (1993) and Hollander (1996). The regressions in Table 4 above extend that finding by revealing that negativity toward the government increases with time spent listening. It is also understandable that, at least in Austin, conservative ideology predicts a more negative attitude toward the government. Tapes made of KVET talk shows during the survey period, primarily "Sammy and Bob," include examples attacking the city council on elections, taxes, legislation pertaining to bicycle helmets, traffic and road maintenance, superfluous city positions and pro-environmentalism.

Attitudes: None of the individual predictors of preferring the listener's own or opposite point of view was statistically significant and the F values for the two regressions were far from significant. The dependent variable in this case is dichotomous and so the use of multiple regression is debatable, and discriminant analysis may be more appropriate.

Table 5 gives results of regressions predicting responses to the item "Call-in talk radio shows are town meetings of the air. More listeners agreed (44 percent) than disagreed (39 percent) with the statement.

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Table 5: predictors of agreement that talk radio is town meeting.

Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Time listening to radio	.18*	.20**
Days reading newspaper	.03	.04
Time reading newspaper	-.16	-.16*
Time reading magazines	-.21*	-.20*
Time watching TV	-.01	-.01
Education level	-.06	-.04
Age	.06	.01
How long in area	.02	-.01
Income	.14	.19*
Ideology	-.07	-.05
Loneliness	.14	.10
Parasociability	.06	-.04
Time listen to talk radio	-.07	-.13
Race (white/other)	.13	.11
Gender	-.004	-.02
Companionship		.06
Like the host		.03
Community information		.38**
Multiple R (F significance)	.41 (.184)	.56 (.004)
R^2	.17	.31
R^2 change		.14
Adjusted R^2	.04	.18

* $p \leq .10$ ** $p \leq .05$ *** $p \leq .01$

In this case, the addition of the reasons for listening increased the variance explained by 14 percent, resulting in a multiple R significant at $p < .01$. Most of this increase was due to the community information reason for listening (Beta = .38; p = .0001). This is strong support for **Hypothesis 8** which held that those who sought a political forum from talk radio would then perceive the format as a town meeting of the air. This is not surprising in that a political forum

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(redefined as community information) is almost synonymous with "town meeting." However, this is an important finding in that it adds confidence in the worth of the community information construct, to the responses to the town meeting item, and in the hierarchical regression method employed.

Time spent reading magazines ($p<.05$) and time spent reading the newspaper ($p<.10$) had significant negative Beta weights, meaning that the more time listeners spend reading, the less likely they are to agree that talk radio shows are time meetings. Those who prefer the print media seem to disparage the significance of talk radio, perhaps viewing it more as ironic entertainment.

Table 6 shows the results of regressions predicting response to the item "Talk radio call-in shows are mean-spirited." The majority of listeners disagreed (60 percent, vs. 20 percent agreeing) with the statement.

Table 6: Predictors of agreement that talk radio is mean-spirited.

Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Time listening to radio	.04	.04
Days reading newspaper	.06	.05
Time reading newspaper	.12	.14
Time reading magazines	-.09	-.08
Time watching TV	-.02	.001
Education level	.09	.07
Age	.15	.16
How long in area	.001	-.00009
Income	-.06	-.06
Ideology	-.19*	-.20**
Loneliness	.16*	.18**
Parasociability	-.09	-.03
Time listen to talk radio	-.29***	-.24**
Race (white/other)	-.11	-.08
Gender	.03	.07

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Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Companionship		.14
Like the host		.03
Community information		-.31***
Multiple R (F significance)	.47 (.031)	.55 (.003)
R^2	.22	.31
R^2 change		..09
Adjusted R^2	.10	.18

* p≤.10   ** p≤.05   *** p≤.01

Results in Table 6 show a similar pattern to those for the town meeting statement. Addition of the reasons for listening in the second regression increased the R^2 by .09, with a multiple R of .55 (F = .003). This increase was due primarily to the negative Beta weight for community information-seeking (p = .001), supporting **Hypothesis 7**. The more listeners seek community information, the less likely they are to perceive talk radio as mean-spirited.

Other significant negative predictors were time spent listening to talk radio (p = .02) and ideology (p = .03). If the content of talk radio is indeed not mean-spirited, as these respondents think (by 3 to 1), then it is logical to find that the more one listens the less likely one is to perceive talk radio as mean-spirited.

Loneliness had a significant positive Beta weight (p = .04). Companionship-seeking also had a positive Beta weight (p = .13), suggesting that those looking for interpersonal support or psychological comfort from talk radio and perhaps not finding it might come to see talk radio as mean.

The fourth item categorized as attitudinal, naming a favorite host (dummy coded; see Table 7), is distinct from the preceding three in that it does not describe a belief or attitude about talk radio content. It is perhaps not conceptually an outcome variable, but it is included in these concluding regressions because it tests another hypothesis about a specific reason for listening (Hypothesis 6).

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Table 7: Predictors of naming a favorite host.

Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Time listening to radio	.08	.06
Days reading newspaper	-.15	-.12
Time reading newspaper	.03	.04
Time reading magazines	-.03	.001
Time watching TV	-.03	-.02
Education level	.08	.04
Age	.17*	.18*
How long in area	.23**	.22**
Income	.08	.08
Ideology	-.05	-.05
Loneliness	-.13	-.11
Parasociability	.31***	.28***
Time listen to talk radio	.004	.02
Race (white/other)	.08	.07
Gender	-.16	-.14
Companionship		-.001
Like the host		.20**
Community information		-.13
Multiple R (F significance)	.57 (.0002)	.54 (.012)
R^2	.33	.29
R^2 change		.05
Adjusted R^2	.23	.15

* $p \leq .10$ ** $p \leq .05$ *** $p \leq .01$

Addition of the reasons for listening to talk radio increased the explained variance only slightly (by .05), but the initial regression was already significant ($p = .0002$), mostly due to the contribution of parasociability ($p = .002$) and length of time in the Austin area ($p = .02$). These predictors, along with age ($p = .08$) had similar Beta weights in the second regression and were joined by the reason "Because I like the host" ($p = .04$) as significant predictors of naming a

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favorite host. This supports **Hypothesis 6**, acting as a form of reliability check on those reporting affect toward the host (listening because the host is liked, vs. naming a favorite). Companionship-seeking once again seemed unrelated to liking the host, with an almost-zero Beta weight (p = .99). Cautions about the use of multiple regression with a dichotomous dependent variable should be borne in mind, although the model did show strong support for the expected predictors parasociability and liking the host.

Parasociability, the psychological trait predicting parasocial interactions with hosts (Auter and Palmgreen, 1993), was further supported as a viable construct, being the indicator contributing most to prediction of those naming a favorite host (p = .009). Since it was conceptualized by Auter and Palmgreen (1993) as a psychological tendency to interact parasocially with a given host, it is understandable that it helps predict having a favorite (conceptually a precursor to developing parasocial interactions with that host).

Listeners who lived longest in the Austin area and are older are more likely to have named a favorite host. The hosts named most often as favorites (Sammy and Bob in 22 out of 69 cases) are local hosts who have been on the air for a long time.

The final regression analysis examines predictors of a (reported) behavioral outcome, political participation:

Table 8: predictors of engaging in political activities.

Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Time listening to radio	-.07	-.07
Days reading newspaper	.08	.09
Time reading newspaper	.05	.03
Time reading magazines	.11	.10
Time watching TV	-.10	-.12
Education level	.13	.13
Age	.30***	.34***
How long in area	.08	.08
Income	.24***	.22**

Predictor	Regression 1	Regression 2
Ideology	.02	.01
Loneliness	-.14	-.13
Parasociability	-.06	-.02
Time listen to talk radio	-.07	-.06
Race (white/other)	.002	-.02
Gender	-.01	-.04
Companionship		-.19**
Like the host		-.06
Community information		-.07
Multiple R (F significance)	.59 (<.0001)	.63 (<.0001)
R^2	.35	.39
R^2 change		.04
Adjusted R^2	.25	.28

* $p \leq .10$ ** $p \leq .05$ *** $p \leq .01$

The second regression, incorporating the reasons for listening, increased the explained variance slightly (R^2 increased by .04) from the first regression, which was highly significant ($F < .0001$). The increase was due primarily to the negative coefficient for companionship-seeking (Beta = -.19; p = .03) and not to that of community information-seeking (Beta = -.07; p = .40), meaning that **Hypothesis 10** was not supported. Community information, in fact, was negatively related to political activities, as was companionship.

There is no clearly obvious mechanism that would explain why companionship-seeking would lead to fewer political activities. Two of the five items that formed the activity scale have a social component (attending a council meeting, joining a community organization) which would predict a positive relationship between companionship and those sorts of activities. The fact that an activity item referring to polls and one referring to letter-writing were not explicitly local might explain the weak relationship between companionship and political activities as operationalized in this study.

The "forum" concept was reconceptualized in this study as "community information," a

construct that emphasizes the community utility of the information sought from talk radio. It was expected under Hypothesis 10 that those who sought and obtained useful information about their community from talk radio would be moved to act on that information by joining an organization, attending a meeting, responding to polls, and writing letters. The fact that an item referring to polls and one referring to letter-writing were not explicitly local might explain also the weak relationship between community information and political activities as operationalized in this study. It might be advisable in future to create distinct measures for local and non-local political participation.

The strongest predictors, as found in bivariate tests, of reported political activities in both regressions were age and income. The greater the age and income of listeners, the more likely they are to participate in political activities. Explanations for this relationship seem straightforward, although tangential to the concerns of this study.

DISCUSSION

One of the strongest conclusions of this study is that talk radio is not perceived of by its listeners as mean-spirited, despite the fact that listening to opposite points of view is preferred. This finding suggests an audience that can "handle" debate, sees that much of it is set up for entertainment value, and is listening with an ironic ear to any emotions that heat up. At the same time, listeners are aware that talk radio is not supremely powerful politically, as seen in the neutral response to an item portraying talk radio as a town meeting.

Tabulation of the uses and gratification items shows that political forum uses are highly rated, as is one companion-type use (liking the host) and companionship is by far the least agreed-with reason for listening. On its own this last finding also runs counter to the portrayal of the marginal audience member.

Another line of research found that reasons for listening to talk radio are related to race and ethnicity, the reasoning being that those new to and in the minority of a community will feel the need to orient themselves to the mainstream. This was not found in this study.

It was further discovered that liking the host and seeking companionship are conceptually distinct for this audience, so reasons for listening were split into companion, host

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and what is termed here community information (having elements of interpersonal utility as well as surveillance and information).

It is assumed that the three reasons for listening adequately capture the essence of listening motivations. However, identifying predictors of reasons for listening was generally unsuccessful. Psychological characteristics such as parasociability and loneliness did not predict companion- (or host-) seeking, and in fact both did predict community-information seeking. There seems to be an element to community information-seeking that is associated with these psychological needs in a way that suggests the needs are satisfied by trying to become more connected to the community rather than to the individuals hosting the shows. The interaction is not interpersonal, rather it could be termed intra-community.

The validity of the community information construct is increased by its ability to predict attitudes toward talk radio content (the media-attitudes mentioned above). Those who seek community information are more likely to see talk radio as a town meeting and less likely to see it as mean-spirited. These findings support the portrayal of an audience that does not react superficially to the format. Within that audience, there are some who are acutely attuned to talk radio's ability to provide useful dialogue (the town meeting) in among the distractions and trivialities, even though listeners were neutral overall in their agreement with the town meeting portrayal of the format.

Listening because they liked the host also predicted listeners' naming a favorite host, which serves as a form of reliability check on both measures. Parasociability also predicted naming a favorite host as it should, a more important finding in that parasociability has not been extensively tested.

Multiple regression models generally reaffirmed the stronger relationships mentioned above. Certain demographic variables emerged as predictors of outcomes, some explicable (conservatives have a more negative attitude toward city council) some not (females are more likely to have political knowledge). Interesting patterns among other media use variables included a sort of anti-talk stance among heavier readers of magazines and newspapers (seeing talk radio as mean and not as a town meeting).

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Parasocial interaction was also tested as an intervening media experience variable. This was only possible for about one-third of the listeners, and so it is not surprising that patterns changed and the equations often were not strong predictors. Nevertheless, this resulted in some interesting findings (not shown above). It was a significant predictor of political knowledge, of positive attitude toward government, and of preferring to hear opposite points of view (it could not be tested as a predictor of liking the host). Taken together, these results imply that those who identify (interact parasocially) with hosts gain political knowledge while enjoying the experience of listening to debate. In almost the reverse of the set of findings that community information-seeking was predicted by affective characteristics (loneliness, parasociability), in this case an affect leads to more knowledge, perhaps through "being in a good mood" while listening.

Clearly, sorting out the interactions among the cognitive and affective components of reasons for listening and listening outcomes is as problematic as separating mass from interpersonal communication. There do seem to be some counter-intuitive results which suggest that the interpersonal elements of community information (getting information to communicate to others) complicate the interpretations. Nevertheless, it is a useful construct in predicting attitudes toward talk radio, suggesting also that further use be made of items that directly ask listeners about their perceptions of the format. It should be well established that listeners attend to the format in ways that are more sophisticated, and that they themselves are less marginal, than the critics would have it.

In addition to conclusions reported above, this study has potential use for those in radio broadcasting unfamiliar with audience reasons for attending to the format and with any psychological or interpersonal interactions with it. If most listeners do not use the format for companionship but often interact parasocially with the host and find liking the host to be important, then hosts need not attempt to coddle or be overly friendly to the listeners. Listeners seem to enjoy the sense of community that listening to talk radio provides, and this should be emphasized. The strong relationship between listening and political activities suggests that hosts should provide encouragement to listeners to get involved. Follow-up interviews pointed out

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that listeners should not be talked down to, nor should controversy or argumentation be avoided for fear of turning off the audience. Heavy listenership in cars with the potential for button-setting and "surfing" among channels suggests that listeners are likely to listen to brief portions of programs, often without keen awareness of the host.

This study is limited in part by the nature of the self-selected sample. While the use of a list of radio contest entrants produced respondents apparently willing to be interviewed, it precluded strong conclusions about the talk radio audience in general, despite apparent parallels between this study's respondents and those of other national surveys.

Further research could benefit from replicating the study with a random sample of respondents, and with a census or random sampling of content.

The picture of the talk radio audience provided here is much different from that of earlier radio research and from many of the portrayals in the press. Most likely, changing times, changing uses of the format and biases of the critics all contributed to this difference. As the format continues to mature, society evolves, and more attention is paid to it by researchers and journalists, the most important research agenda may simply be replication of studies such as this one to allow for a better understanding of a complex and dynamic communication interaction.

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"Willingness to Censor":
Developing a Quantitative Measurement
Across Speech Categories and Types of Media

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"Willingness to Censor": Developing a Quantitative Measurement Across Speech Categories and Types of Media

Freedom of speech, thought and conduct are at the core of traditional concepts of liberty in a democracy. In a diverse society, it is inevitable that opinions and beliefs will clash. Free expression, while highly prized, is not an absolute right. First Amendment scholar Thomas Emerson argues that the most difficult aspect of maintaining a system of free expression is deciding "what limitations, if any, should be imposed to reconcile that interest with other individual and social interests" (1967: 16). Current debates like those about how to keep children away from inappropriate material on the Internet, and whether or not hard liquor advertising should be allowed on television remind us that, as a society, we do place limits on free expression.

In the law that has developed surrounding the First Amendment, these limits are set differently depending on the *type* of expression involved (e.g. political speech or pornography), and also depending on *where* the message is conveyed (e.g. on television, or at a speech in a public park). Previous research that provides quantitative measures of individual attitudes about free expression treats expression as a single concept, or focuses on one specific category of expression like pornography. The question of whether individuals think that expression should be treated differently in various kinds of media has also not been addressed.

The goal of this project is to develop a valid and reliable quantitative measurement of an individual's willingness to censor across speech categories and across media. Such a measurement would be useful in order to compare differences among speech categories,

differences among the various media, differences among subsets of people, and interactions between categories, media and people.

The development of this scale is not meant to suggest that individual or collective attitudes toward free expression be used as a guide for determining where the limits on free expression will be drawn legally. The First Amendment is designed, in part, to protect expression even in the face of opposing popular opinion. Neither is this research meant to suggest that the government should actively protect expression in every circumstance. Rather, it is the ultimate goal that this measurement tool help to provide a better understanding of the way that individuals think about free expression, in the hopes that such an understanding will allow insight as to how tolerance for the exercise of First Amendment rights might be maximized in particular circumstances. Existing First Amendment law and theory are used as a guide for developing the measurement tool. This paper describes the development of the survey instrument and presents results from a pilot study.

Scale Development

Willingness to Censor

Previous quantitative measures have defined censorship as any effort to restrain expression. Legally, however, censorship occurs only when the *government* restrains expression in some way. Accordingly, subjects are asked to indicate what they believe to be the most appropriate government response in different situations. Drawing on First Amendment law, this scale incorporates five possible government reactions to expressive behavior:

1. prior restraint – stopping the communication *before* it happens; this is the classic form of censorship

2. subsequent punishment – imposing fines or other penalties *after* the communication has taken place

3. time, place, manner restrictions – regulating some content-neutral aspect of expression; examples would be regulations about the volume level on a sound truck, or not allowing a parade to march on a busy street during rush hour

4. allow – not taking any action one way or the other, thus permitting the expression to happen by default

5. protect – actively ensuring that the expression will take place; for example, by issuing some kind of order or providing police escorts

Categories of Speech & Types of Media

The U.S. Supreme Court has afforded different levels of First Amendment protection according to the category of expression involved. Seven different categories of expression are included in this scale: pornography, hate speech, speech which raises privacy issues, political speech, abortion speech, defamatory speech, and commercial speech. These categories were selected by examining category distinctions made in recent Supreme Court decisions and media law textbooks.

In addition, the Supreme Court has used a medium-specific approach to First Amendment litigation, creating different models of protection for different forms of communication. Seven different media were incorporated into the scale items: "pure" speech, demonstrations (defined as including some conduct, like picketing, as well as speech), newspaper, magazine, television, cable, and the Internet.

A total of forty-nine items were compiled, one representing each possible combination of medium and category.[1] From these items, it is possible to generate an overall "willingness to censor" score, as well as subscores for each medium and category. Each

item consists of a scenario, followed by a description of the five possible government responses.

A sample item representing the political speech/demonstration combination reads:

> A group protesting the U.S. government's foreign policy in Iran burns the flag on a street corner.
>
> I think the government should:
>
> __ make it illegal to burn the flag
>
> __ arrest the protesters for disturbing the peace
>
> __ require the protesters to hold their demonstration in a less populated area
>
> __ do nothing
>
> __ protect the protesters' right to demonstrate

The scenarios were adapted from actual court cases, identified through the Media Law Reporter and *Westlaw*.[2] In each circumstance, the expressive activity was held to be legal by the courts. Previous research has found that judgments about protecting civil liberties are affected by the group wishing to exercise their rights. Therefore, a diversity of groups were included from both sides of the political spectrum.[3] Additionally, a variety of government representatives are involved in the items, because censorship occurs when there is state action by any branch of the government.

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[1] See Appendix A for the complete forty-nine item survey instrument.

[2] The Media Law Reporter is a periodical published by The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. It provides the text of court decisions relating to communications law, organized by speech category. *Westlaw* is an on-line database of legal documents maintained by West Publishing Company. Most of the situations were adopted directly from existing cases, with the exception of the Internet items. Since there had been very little litigation involving the Internet, these items were derived by using the facts of particular cases, but changing the medium of communication.

[3] Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus (1982) suggest using a *least-liked group* method to handle this issue. Using this method, subjects select their least-liked group and then respond to items involving that group. This procedure was not adopted here, however, because most groups would not "fit" into each of the seven different categories of expression. For example, while the Ku Klux Klan would clearly fit in the hate speech and political speech categories, they would just as clearly be out of place in scenarios describing pornography or abortion speech.

Pilot Study Results

The survey instrument was given to a convenience sample of 130 undergraduate students who were enrolled in one of six journalism classes during winter quarter, 1997. They completed the 49-item willingness to censor scale, as well as some basic questions about their media use, political affiliations, and demographic characteristics. The purpose of this pilot study was to check the reliability of the overall scale and the subscales, and to examine differences between speech categories, media and people. Because of the homogeneous nature of the sample, the extent of these analyses were limited. However, the overall willingness to censor scale and the subscales were close to normally distributed. A few of the individual items were bimodal or slightly skewed.

Reliability analysis

The reliability for the overall 49-item scale is .91, which indicates that all of these items are essentially tapping into one underlying latent variable. The majority of category subscales range from .60 to .81. (see Table 1) The lower reliability of privacy, at .48, makes sense theoretically because the tort of privacy incorporates a number of different legal causes of action.[4] The medium subscales are lower, ranging from .46 to .65. It appears that people think about issues involving free expression more consistently in terms of categories of speech rather than according to the medium of communication.

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[4] Law professor William Prosser (1960) identified four invasion of privacy torts. Items representing the false light, disclosure of private facts and appropriation actions were included in this scale. The fourth possible cause of action, intrusion, was not included because it involves actions during newsgathering rather than during the publication or distribution of expression.

Table 1: Reliability analysis [Cronbach's alpha]

Overall Scale (49 items)   .91

Category Subscales (7 items each)
     pornography   .78
     hate speech   .81
     privacy   .48
     political speech   .71
     abortion speech   .62
     defamation   .60
     commercial speech .67

Medium Subscales (7 items each)
     pure speech   .49
     demonstration   .53
     newspaper   .51
     magazine   .58
     television   .46
     cable   .65
     internet   .59

Mean differences by speech category and medium of communication

For each item responses were coded from 0 to 4, corresponding with the level of government response the subject selected. The possible options ranged from a 0 for government protection to a 4 for prior restraint (see Table 2A). Mean scores are presented on a per item basis, to give more clear meaning to the results. Most of the means for the overall scale and the subscales fell into the area between allowing expression to happen and setting some time, place or manner restrictions. The overall mean is 1.69.

Table 2A: Possible government responses

← 4 = Prior Restraint

← 3 = Subsequent Punishment

← 2 = Time, Place or Manner

← 1.69 OVERALL MEAN

← 1 = Allow

← 0 = Protect

For the speech category subscales (see Table 2B), subjects were most concerned about expression that might invade someone's privacy, with abortion speech and hate speech not far behind. Subjects were least likely to be willing to censor political speech and commercial speech.

Table 2B: Category Subscales (mean per item)

	Mean	Category	[SD]
← 2	◁ 2.0	Privacy	[.54]
	◁ 1.8	Abortion	[.57]
		Hate	[.94]
	◁ 1.7	Defamation	[.53]
		Pornography	[.68]
← 1.69		OVERALL MEAN	[.50]
	◁ 1.4	Commercial	[.64]
	◁ 1.3	Political	[.66]

On the medium subscales (see Table 2C), the Internet was the medium most likely to be censored, with demonstrations a close second. Newspapers and magazines caused the least concern.

Table 2C: Medium subscales (mean per item)

	Mean	Medium	[SD]
← 2	◁ 2.1	Internet	[.58]
	◁ 1.9	Demonstration	[.64]
	◁1.7	Television	[.52]
← 1.69		OVERALL MEAN	[.50]
	◁1.6	Speech	[.52]
		Cable	[.63]
	◁ 1.5	Magazine	[.56]
	◁ 1.4	Newspaper	[.56]

Differences among people

This final set of analyses is limited due to the homogeneous undergraduate sample. However, there are some statistically significant findings which will be explored with a more diverse group of subjects.

In terms of gender (see Table 3), this pilot study indicates that women are more willing to censor than men for the overall scale, and especially for the pornography and hate speech subscales. Women also have significantly higher mean scores for the medium subscales on the Internet, and for magazines and newspapers. This finding is consistent with previous research which has shown small but robust differences between men and women. In a number of studies using a variety of methods, women have been somewhat less likely to extend civil liberties protections (Stouffer 1955; Nunn, Crockett & Williams

1978; Sullivan, Piereson & Marcus 1982; McClosky & Brill 1983; Wyatt 1991; Marcus,

Sullivan, Theiss-Morse & Wood 1995).

Table 3: Gender Differences

Scales	Men n=46		Women n=84		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Significance (2-tailed)
Scale Total	1.56	.43	1.74	.48	.04
Category:					
Abortion	1.8	.58	1.8	.58	.86
Commercial	1.34	.64	1.48	.63	.26
Defamation	1.75	.50	1.77	.56	.81
Hate	1.49	.87	1.94	.94	.01
Political	1.21	.72	1.35	.62	.24
Pornography	1.47	.59	1.82	.71	.006
Privacy	1.89	.56	2.01	.52	.24
Medium:					
Cable	1.45	.59	1.65	.65	.09
Demonstr.	1.84	.60	1.94	.66	.39
Internet	1.93	.57	2.14	.58	.05
Magazine	1.37	.55	1.57	.55	.05
Newspaper	1.30	.52	1.50	.56	.05
Speech	1.50	.50	1.67	.53	.07
Television	1.59	.47	1.73	.54	.15

Subjects were also asked to indicate their political affiliation, choosing either

republican, democrat, independent or undecided. In running a one-way ANOVA for

political affiliation with the overall scale and subscales, the political speech and

pornography subscales show a significant difference of means. With the follow-up tests, it

appears that republicans are more willing to censor these categories of speech than are any

of the other groups. However, when this same procedure is repeated separately for men

and women, these differences do not remain. With this new analysis, other subscales

emerge as significant, suggesting that men and women in the same political party may not

have inclinations to censor the same kinds of speech. For example, republican men are

less likely to want to censor abortion speech than are other men, while republican women are *more* likely than other women to censor the Internet, magazines and political speech.

Subjects were also asked to indicate how often they read the newspaper and how often they watched television news, on a 5-point scale from every day to never. The original intent was to combine the two variables into a single media use variable, but the correlation between broadcast news usage and newspaper use and the overall scale and subscales were strikingly different (See Table 4). For newspaper use, there is a moderately positive correlation, meaning that increased frequency of newspaper use is associated with a *decrease* in willingness to censor. This correlation is statistically significant in all but four of the subscales. For broadcast use, there is a moderately *negative* correlation, indicating that increased frequency of television news viewing is associated with an *increase* in willingness to censor. This correlation is statistically significant in only two of the subscales – defamatory speech and speech on the Internet.

Table 4: Media Use – Pearson Correlation

Scales	Newspaper Use	Broadcast News Use
Scale Total	.23**	-.11
Category:		
Abortion	.20*	-.12
Commercial	.18*	.05
Defamation	.09	-.24**
Hate	.25**	-.05
Political	.18*	-.11
Pornography	.03	-.04
Privacy	.20*	-.11
Medium:		
Cable	.18*	-.09
Demonstr.	.08	-.07
Internet	.21*	-.22*
Magazine	.17*	-.03
Newspaper	.20*	-.14
Speech	.24**	-.02
Television	.24**	-.07

*p<.05   **p<.01

Finally, subjects were asked to indicate their major field of study. Although all were enrolled in journalism classes, some were not journalism majors. In order to check the possibility that journalism students might be less likely to censor than other students given their professional goals, a t-test was run. In comparing journalism majors with students from all other majors, there were no differences in mean scores on the overall scale or the subscales, with one exception – non-journalism students were more willing to censor speech which might invade someone's privacy than were journalism students. [$p<.05$; Journ. majors: Mean 1.9, SD .54 // Non-journ. majors: Mean 2.1, SD .53]

Further research

Before administering the 49-item scale to a more representative sample, the instrument will be refined. The items that had bimodal or skewed distributions will be revised. There were also some items where a number of respondents checked more than one government reaction, and these scenarios will be rewritten as well. Then, the survey will be given to a larger and more representative sample of the U.S. population. This will allow for better comparison among different segments of people and provide norms for future research. In particular, the scale could be used as a basis for comparison among different social, political or occupational groups.

Once the scale is validated with a more representative sample, there are other avenues of research which would be useful to pursue. It would be valuable to examine how the scale correlates with a variety of demographic and personality characteristics, as well as other political and social attitudes. This scale may also be helpful in exploring why there are robust, though small, differences among women and men in extending civil liberties

protections. Also, this scale only incorporates items which involve the publication and distribution of expression. It would be fascinating to use a similar methodological approach to explore public attitudes about the processes of newsgathering – for example, the use of hidden cameras, and the application of shield laws for journalists.

Conclusion

> "Tolerance is the pivotal dilemma of democracy in a pluralistic society."
> (Marcus, et. al 1995: 3)

In his book The Tolerant Society (1986), law professor Lee Bollinger argues that by studying public *reactions* to speech activities, it is possible to gain greater insight into our broader conception of tolerance. He says "...we can see free speech as a limited, or partial, area in which an extraordinary position of self-restraint is adopted by the society as one means of developing a more general capacity with respect to that impulse [intolerance]" (120). The "Willingness to Censor" scale described in this paper provides a unique avenue for exploring the dynamics of public attitudes about free expression, by examining responses across speech categories and types of media.

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Appendix A:
Pilot Study Survey Instrument

Section One

In this section, you will be presented with situations in which freedom of speech comes into conflict with other important social and individual goals. You are asked to indicate what you think would be the best response in each situation.

There are no right or wrong answers. You are being asked for your opinion.

There are five possible responses listed for each situation. *Please mark the one answer which you feel to be most appropriate.*

A company promoting a rock musical, which contains scenes where the actors are naked, wants to lease a municipal auditorium to present their production.
    I think city officials should:

__ Refuse to allow them to lease the auditorium for this production, because it violates a city ordinance against public nudity

__ Grant the lease for the production, but sue the producers if they leave the scenes with nudity in the show

__ Grant the lease for the production, but require that audience members be 18 or older, or accompanied by an adult

__ Grant the lease with no conditions

__ Grant the lease, and provide police officers to insure the security of the performers

---

The Aryan Nation, a white-supremacist group, is publishing and distributing a newspaper in your state.
    I think state officials should:

__ close down the newspaper

__ levy a tax on special interest newspapers, like this one

__ not allow the publisher to send the newspaper through the mail

__ allow the newspaper to be distributed

__ protect the publisher's right to print and distribute the newspaper

A television news photographer takes video of a famous person entering a house of prostitution. The celebrity seeks a court order to stop the TV station from using the footage.
    I think the judge should:

__ order the TV station not to air the video

__ fine the TV station to compensate the celebrity

__ order the TV station to alter the video so the celebrity can't be identified

__ take no action against the TV station

__ issue a ruling protecting the right of the TV station to use the video

---

An anti-government militia group maintains a page on the World Wide Web that includes step-by-step instructions for making bombs.
    I think the government should:

__ confiscate their computer equipment so they can't have a presence on the WWW

__ bring criminal charges against the militia's members

__ require them to take the bomb information off their page

__ do nothing

__ protect their right to publish on the WWW

1

A group of protesters is picketing outside an abortion clinic, sometimes obstructing the paths of patients who are entering the clinic.
I think city officials should:

__ forbid the protesters from picketing outside the clinic

__ arrest the protesters for disturbing the peace

__ require the protesters to stay at least 15 feet away from the clinic

__ take no action against the protesters

__ protect the right of the protesters to express their beliefs

---

During a campaign, the current mayor was speaking at a civic group's meeting. Discussing his opponent, he commented that she had the same name as a missing Nazi war criminal and asked "Is this the same Ilse Koch? Who knows?" Koch sued the mayor for trying to destroy her reputation.
I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ order the mayor not to talk about his opponent in public

__ fine the mayor to compensate Koch

__ require the mayor to make a public apology

__ not take any action against the mayor

__ issue a ruling upholding the mayor's right to speak

A local pharmacist places an ad, which includes price information for prescription medication, in a magazine targeted at the elderly.
I think the government should:

__ forbid the pharmacist from advertising prices for prescription medication

__ fine the pharmacist for advertising price information

__ require the pharmacist to list the price information in small print

__ take no action against the pharmacist

__ protect the right of the pharmacist to advertise price information

---

As you are surfing the World Wide Web, you accidentally come across a site that contains graphic sexual images.
I think the U.S. government should:

__ confiscate the computer equipment of the site's producers

__ fine the producers of the site

__ require the site's producers to install a blocking mechanism so that it can't be accessed accidentally

__ let the site's producers decide what to do

__ protect the right of the producers to choose what to include in their site

---

A newspaper publishes a story that reveals that a certain community member is gay. He had not wanted to reveal this fact publicly, and he sues the newspaper for invading his privacy.
I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ order the newspaper not to publish such information again

__ fine the newspaper to compensate the man

__ require the newspaper to issue a public apology

__ take no action against the newspaper

__ issue a ruling supporting the right of the newspaper to publish true information

---

A group protesting the U.S. government's foreign policy in Iran burns the flag on a street corner.
I think the government should:

__ make it illegal to burn the flag

__ arrest the protesters for disturbing the peace

__ require the protesters to hold their demonstration in a less populated area

__ do nothing

__ protect the protesters right to demonstrate

2

The first of a three part TV mini-series just aired on your local NBC affiliate. It included two characters who frequently makes racist remarks against African-Americans and Mexicans.

I think the Federal Communications Commission, which grants the station's license, should:

__ forbid the station from airing the last two parts of the mini-series

__ revoke the station's license to broadcast if it airs the last to parts of the mini-series

__ require that the last two parts of the mini-series be aired after 9:00 p.m.

__ let the local station decide whether or not to air the last two parts of the series

__ make sure that the last two parts of the series air as scheduled

---

A newspaper editor publishes an editorial on election day endorsing a particular candidate.

I think state officials should:

__ make it illegal to solicit votes on election day

__ fine the editor for his partisanship

__ require the editor to issue a special edition with a statement supporting the other candidate

__ do nothing

__ protect the editor's right to express his views on the election

---

An arts and entertainment program on your cable system included a negative review of a local restaurant. The critic said that the restaurant owners "are rude and vulgar people" and are "pigs." The owners sued the critic for ruining their reputations.

I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ forbid the critic from doing any more negative reviews

__ fine the critic to compensate the restaurant owners

__ require the critic to issue a public apology

__ not take any action against the critic

__ issue a ruling defending the critic's right to express his opinion

---

The chamber of commerce issues a yearly magazine that profiles the various civic organizations in your community. A chamber staff member, who is the head of a local pro-life group, plans to include a feature on his group in the next issue.

I think the city officials who oversee the chamber of commerce should:

__ refuse to allow an article on the group to be included in the magazine

__ fire the staff member if he insists on publishing the article about his group

__ require the staff member to include an article about pro-choice groups, also

__ let the staff member decide what to do

__ protect the right of the staff member to include the article in the magazine

---

A site on the World Wide Web includes nude photographs of a woman who is a fashion model. She has sued the site's producers for invasion of privacy.

I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ issue an injunction prohibiting further publication of the photographs

__ fine the site's producers to compensate the woman

__ require the site's producers to include a caption explaining that the photos are included without the model's consent

__ take no action against the site's producers

__ issue a ruling protecting the right of the site's producers to include the photographs

---

A new certified public accountant (CPA) is going door-to-door soliciting business.

I think the government should:

__ not allow CPA's to solicit clients in this way

__ fine the CPA for violating people's privacy

__ only allow the CPA to solicit to people who have expressed an interest in receiving such information

__ take no action against the CPA

__ protect the right of the CPA to solicit clients door-to-door

3

A cable channel is promoting an upcoming series about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. The promotion names several authors that it claims are "guilty of misleading the American public" about the assassination. One of the authors sues the cable channel for portraying him in a false light.
I think the judge who is hearing the case should:

__ order the cable channel not to air the series

__ fine the cable channel to compensate the author

__ require the cable channel to include an interview with this author in their series, so he can state his point of view

__ take no action against the cable channel

__ issue a ruling protecting the right of the cable channel to air the series

---

An alternative newspaper in your community runs a singles column each week which sometimes includes graphic descriptions of sexual encounters.
I think city officials should:

__ force the paper to stop running that column

__ fine the paper each time the column includes graphic descriptions of sex

__ require the paper to run a warning on the front page of any issue that contains graphic sexual descriptions

__ let the paper decide what to do

__ protect the paper's right to publish the column

A magazine article about on-duty drunkenness by certain police officers mistakenly included a picture of an officer who was not involved. The officer sued the magazine for damaging his reputation:
I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ not allow the magazine to publish any more articles about police behavior

__ fine the magazine to compensate the officer

__ require the magazine to make a public apology

__ not take any action against the magazine

__ issue a ruling protecting the magazine's right to publish, even when they've made a mistake

---

The names and home phone numbers of an abortion clinic's medical staff and board of directors are provided by an anti-abortion activist on the Internet.
I think the government should:

__ confiscate the activist's computer equipment so she can't publish such information on the Internet

__ press charges against the activist for endangering the lives of the clinic's staff and directors

__ order the activist to remove the phone numbers from her Internet site

__ take no action against the activist

__ protect the right of the activist to provide the information on the Internet

---

In a meeting at a public hall, a speaker is preaching hatred against gays and lesbians.
I think the police officers on the scene should:

__ arrest the speaker to stop him from finishing the presentation

__ fine the speaker for disturbing the peace

__ require the speaker to apologize for the offensive language

__ do nothing

__ protect the speaker's right to say whatever he thinks

A television station which broadcasts into two states accepts advertising for a lottery in one of the states. The other state prohibits lotteries.
I think the Federal Communications Commission, which grants the station's license, should:

__ forbid the TV station from broadcasting any lottery advertising

__ fine the TV station for accepting the lottery advertising

__ require the TV station also to run public service announcements about the dangers of gambling

__ take no action against the TV station

__ protect the right of the TV station to accept the lottery advertising

A pro-life corporation published a special edition of its quarterly newspaper the week before national elections, urging people to vote for anti-abortion candidates.
I think the Federal Election Commission should:

__ make it illegal for corporations to spend money in support of particular candidates

__ fine the corporation for publishing a special "election edition" of its newspaper

__ require the organization to provide space in its newspaper for candidates to respond

__ take no action against the organization

__ protect the right of the organization to express its views concerning political candidates

---

The local news programs on a TV station in your city always favors one political party over the other.
I think the Federal Communications Commission, which grants the station's license, should:

__ not allow the station to cover political stories

__ fine the station to compensate the other political party

__ require the station to give an equal amount of favorable coverage to the other political party

__ do nothing

__ issue a ruling supporting the right of the TV station to choose what to include on its news programs

---

A magazine is planning to publish an in-depth article about a 20-year old murder case, involving a son convicted for murdering his parents. The piece discusses family relationships while raising issues of child abuse and rehabilitation. The murderer's brother sues the publisher for invading his privacy.
I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ order the magazine not to publish the article

__ fine the magazine to compensate the brother

__ order the magazine to change the names in the article so that the brother won't be identified

__ take no action against the magazine

__ issue an order protecting the magazine's right to publish the article

---

College students are holding a rally to protest the University's decision not to allow condoms to be distributed in residence halls. They are carrying signs and banners with sexual language and pictures.
I think University officials should:

__ break up the rally

__ put the students who participate in the rally on probation

__ take the signs and banners from the rally

__ do nothing

__ supply campus police to provide security for the rally

A group of neo-nazis produces a weekly call-in program on the public access channel of your cable system.
I think the city officials who granted the cable company its franchise should:

__ demand that the group's program not appear on your cable system

__ fine the group and the cable company each time the program appears

__ require that the program only be shown after 9 p.m.

__ allow the cable company to handle the situation

__ protect the right of the group to produce the program on public access

---

An on-line service provides a forum for information about and discussion of current events. In the forum, allegations were made about the illegal actions of an investment company. The investment company sued the on-line service for damaging its reputation.
I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ force the on-line service to close down its forum for discussion of current events

__ fine the on-line service to compensate the investment company

__ require the on-line service to make a public apology

__ take no action against the on-line service

__ issue a ruling protecting the right of the on-line service to provide a forum for discussion

A personal injury lawyer is running an ad on your cable system, soliciting business from people who had suffered injuries as a result of using a certain product.

I think the government should:

__ forbid the lawyer from soliciting clients through advertising

__ fine the lawyer for soliciting business in this manner

__ require the lawyer to mention his fees for service in his ad

__ not take any action against the lawyer

__ protect the lawyer's right to solicit clients through advertising

---

A newspaper ran editorials and cartoons stating that anti-nuclear protesters are "bums," "deluded," and "insane," and that signs they have been carrying are "gibberish," "un-American," and "trash." The protesters have sued the newspaper for attacking their reputations.

I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ stop the paper from printing any more editorial commentary on the protesters

__ levy a fine against the newspaper to compensate the protesters

__ require the newspaper to run guest editorials from the protesters point-of-view

__ not take any action against the newspaper

__ issue a ruling protecting the newspaper's right to express its editorial position

---

One of the new prime-time television series this year on the ABC affiliate in your city regularly includes explicit nudity.

I think the Federal Communications Commission, which grants the station's license, should:

__ require the station to stop airing any episode with explicit nudity

__ fine the station each time an episode with explicit nudity airs

__ require the station to air the series after 9:00 p.m.

__ let the station decide the appropriate action to take

__ protect the right of the station to air the series

A magazine for U.S. members of the socialist party regularly publishes articles in support of foreign governments and against the U.S. government.

I think the government should:

__ close down the magazine

__ fine the magazine's publishers

__ make the publishers include articles explaining the U.S. government point of view

__ take no action

__ protect the right of the magazine's publishers to express their opinions

---

The Ku Klux Klan has filed for a permit to hold a march through your town.

I think the city permit office should:

__ refuse to give them a permit

__ hold them responsible for any physical or personal damage that occurs as a result of the march

__ require them to hold the march in a sparsely populated area of town

__ issue a permit for the march

__ issue a permit, and provide police escorts to make sure their right to march is protected

---

An individual who is opposed to abortion is shouting his beliefs in front of a doctor's office where abortions are performed. The office is in a residential neighborhood.

I think city officials should:

__ forbid him from protesting there in the future

__ arrest him for disturbing the peace

__ require him to protest with signs instead of by shouting

__ allow him to continue to protest

__ protect his right to protest

A group advocating welfare reform publishes a leaflet which includes photos and stories about women who are "shamelessly and brazenly violating the law by having children out of wedlock and receiving welfare to support them." One of the women whose photo is included sues the group for portraying her in a false light.

I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ order the group to stop distributing the leaflet

__ fine the group to compensate the woman

__ order the group to take the woman's photo out of the leaflet

__ take no action against the group

__ issue a ruling protecting the right of the group to publish their leaflet

---

A bookstore in your city sells magazines featuring pictures of nude and partially-clothed adults in various sexual positions.

I think city officials should:

__ force the bookstore to stop selling the magazines

__ file charges against the bookstore's owner for distributing pornographic material

__ require the store to place the magazines behind the counter, so customers have to ask for them

__ let the store's owner decide what to do

__ protect the right of the bookstore to sell the magazines

A radical Jewish organization which advocates violence against Muslims has a home-page on the World Wide Web.

I think the government should:

__ confiscate the group's computer equipment so they can't have a home-page

__ arrest the group's leaders for advocating violence

__ require the organization to place a warning about the content that appears before their page is accessed

__ do nothing

__ protect the organization's right to express its beliefs

An anti-abortion organization produces a monthly program on the public access channel on your cable system. During the program, they show pictures of local physicians who perform abortions, and label them as "murderers" and "killers."

I think the city officials who run the public access channel should:

__ not allow organization to air their program on the public access channel

__ fine the organization for improper use of a public facility

__ require the organization to refrain from identifying any particular physician

__ take no action against the organization or its program

__ protect the right of the organization to air its program

Several students at a public university were protesting the University's contracts with two businesses known to be anti-union. They were speaking on the library lawn in the center of campus, using bullhorns to amplify their voices.

I think University officials should:

__ have campus police remove the protesters

__ put the students involved in the protest on probation

__ require the students to stop using bullhorns

__ do nothing

__ protect the student's right to speak their opinions

A liquor store includes price information in their newspaper ads for alcoholic beverages.

I think the government should:

__ issue on a ban on price advertising for alcohol

__ fine the liquor store for advertising alcohol prices

__ require the liquor store to advertise prices in very small print

__ take no action against the liquor store

__ issue a ruling supporting the right of the liquor store to advertise price information

6 2

A TV news program showed a picture of a local doctor while the voice-over indicated that some health practitioners use "quack machines, fraudulent tests, and illegal drugs to treat cancer." The doctor has sued the television station for damaging his reputation.
   I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ not allow the TV station to run these kinds of stories in the future

__ fine the TV station to compensate the doctor

__ require the TV station to broadcast a story correcting their mistake

__ take no action against the TV station

__ issue a ruling supporting the TV station's right to air these kinds of stories

---

A black separatist organization in your city is publishing a "humor" magazine which makes fun of whites, especially Jewish people and Catholics.
   I think city officials should:

__ close down the magazine

__ levy a tax on special interest magazines, like this one

__ revoke the special mailing rates for their magazine

__ allow the group to continue to publish and distribute the magazine

__ protect the right of the group to publish and distribute the magazine

---

In a public speech criticizing the practice of placing mentally ill people in boarding homes, the speaker reveals that Ed Samuels, one of the boarding home operators, had been convicted of certain criminal sexual acts 30 years ago. Samuels sues the speaker for disclosing private facts.
   I think the judge hearing the case should:

__ forbid the speaker from commenting publicly on the boarding home issue again

__ fine the speaker to compensate Samuels

__ require the speaker to make a public apology

__ take no action against the speaker

__ issue a ruling protecting the right of the speaker to criticize the boarding home operators

---

Volunteers for a political advocacy group set up a table outside of the post office to solicit contributions and sell subscriptions to their newspaper.
   I think the post office should:

__ order the group to leave the premises

__ fine the group's members for soliciting on government property

__ make the group move so they are not blocking the path of post office customers

__ not take any action against the group

__ protect the group's right to solicit contributions and subscriptions

---

A locally produced, sexually explicit program has begun to air on a public access channel on your cable system.
   I think the city officials who granted the cable company its franchise should:

__ require the cable company to stop airing the program

__ fine the cable company each time the program airs

__ require that the program be aired after 9:00 p.m.

__ let the cable company decide what to do

__ protect the right of the local producers to show their program

---

A pro-life organization has bought time on an independent television station in your city. They want to air a 15 minute program which includes graphic pictures of aborted fetuses.
   I think the Federal Communications Commission, which grants the station's license, should:

__ forbid the station to air the program with the graphic footage included

__ fine the station if it airs the program as is

__ allow the station to show the program with the graphic footage, as long as it is shown after 10 p.m.

__ leave the decision of whether or not to air the program up to the station

__ require the station to let the program air as scheduled

An on-line promotion company is sending unsolicited e-mail to people who have Internet access through a state University.

I think University officials should:

__ block all messages the promotion company tries to send to University e-mail accounts

__ sue the promotion company for improper use of state resources

__ require the promotion company to stop sending messages to individuals who make such a request

__ not take any action against the promotion company

__ protect the right of the promotion company to send their messages

---

On a picket line during a strike, one of the union banners says "#1 Scab Jacobsen Sucks." Jacobsen has sued the union leader, saying that his character was called into question.

I think that the judge hearing the case should:

__ forbid the union leader from having any signs directed at individual workers

__ fine the union leader to compensate Jacobsen

__ require the union leader to make a public apology

__ not take any action against the union leader

__ issue a ruling protecting the union leader's right to speak

---

A cable channel is planning to air films produced outside of the U.S. that explore global political issues like acid rain and nuclear power.

I think the U.S. government should:

__ not allow the cable channel to air the programs

__ fine the cable channel for airing these programs

__ require the cable company to label the films as "political propaganda"

__ do nothing

__ protect the cable channel's right to air the films

Section Two

This section is for demographic purposes only. All information will be kept strictly confidential; your name will not be connected to your answers.

Please answer each question as best you can.

Your age: ____

Your gender (circle one):   Male   Female

Your heritage: (check one)

____ African-American

____ Asian-American

____ Caucasian American

____ Hispanic/Latino-American

____ Native American

____ I am a foreign citizen

____ Other: _____

Your political affiliation: (check one)

____ Republican

____ Democrat

____ Independent

____ Undecided

____ Other: _____

Your annual income: (check one)

____ $50,000 or more

____ $30,000 - $49,999

____ $20,000 - $29,999

____ $10,000 - $19,999

____ less than $10,000

Your parents' combined annual income: (check one)

____ $100,000 or more

____ $75,000 - $99,999

____ $50,000 - $74,999

____ $30,000 - $49,999

____ $20,000 - $29,999

____ $10,000 - $19,999

____ less than $10,000

I am:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
extremely liberal						extremely conservative

Have you ever:

voted in national or local elections?   Yes   No

participated in a political demonstration?   Yes   No

worked on a political campaign?   Yes   No

Your major: _____

College status: (check one)

_____ freshman

_____ sophomore

_____ junior

_____ senior

_____ graduate/professional

_____ other:

_____

How many college courses have you had in:

(write in a number for each subject – if none, write 0.)

_____ sociology

_____ philosophy

_____ political science

_____ history

_____ law

_____ journalism

How often do you read a newspaper? (check one)

_____ every day

_____ 3-4 times/week

_____ 1-2 times/week

_____ almost never

_____ never

How often do you watch or listen to television or radio news programs? (check one)

_____ every day

_____ 3-4 times/week

_____ 1-2 times/week

_____ almost never

_____ never

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RUNNING HEAD: TALK SHOW FASCINATION

Can Social Comparison Theory Explain Fascination With TV Talk Shows?

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ABSTRACT

Mass media commentaries suggest that television talk shows are dramatically increasing and have become quite popular with American viewers.   Despite the public's interest in TV talk shows, mass media researchers have paid little attention to assessing the short-term and long-term effects of watching these programs.   It is hypothesized that self-enhancement or feeling better about oneself and one's life may be a reason people watch what some consider to be trashy, morbid TV programs. The article defines the social comparison process and provides ideas and research techniques for future research that could be used to test the idea that consumers might use certain media to engage in social comparisons with media images.

Can Social Comparison Theory Explain Fascination With TV Talk Shows?

Perhaps more than any other brand of media message that we receive, television talk programs deliberately use such gross manipulation in their attempt to entertain and supposedly "inform" us. While they employ a deceptive, game-like atmosphere, the information they provide about "real-life," claiming that it's just a "reflection" of reality is worse than useless. It's dangerous...for it puts us in the habit of 'entertaining sin'...using the moral errors and deviance of others for our entertainment and tolerating such behavior as a normal part of life. (Abt & Mustazza, 1997, p. 83)

What explains the success of TV talk shows and other media that focus on the misfortunes of others (i.e., tragic news stories)? Has politics become entertainment and entertainment a reality? This paper hopes to offer an explanation: Consumers like and are attracted to morbid news stories and other "tragic" media messages because these messages provide information that helps them feel better about themselves, particularly when afforded with opportunities to compare themselves against the adversities and misfortunes of others.

Remarkably, very little academic attention has been devoted to the messages contained in talk show programming or the effects of the messages on viewers' self-concepts, perceptions of reality, attitudes, and opinions. Much of the work on TV talk shows has focused on analyzing the topics and issues. Studies, for example, have revealed that a majority of the TV talk show topics focus on the misfortunes or problems of others: "Skinheads, racists, misogynists, youngsters who hate school and society, parents who hate their children, self-mutilators, cheating lovers, sadomasochistic lovers, incest perpetrators and 'survivors,' transsexuals and bisexuals, nymphomaniacs, dysfunctional families... strippers, people with gross eating disorders, cult members, murders" and the list goes on (Abt & Mustazza, 1997, p. 25).

Other research conducted on the content and focus of many of the topics discussed on TV talk shows revealed that, more often than not, the shows focus human misery and tragedies (Zoglin, 1991). Current research conducted by Abt and Mustazza (1997) revealed that approximately 78% of the topics on TV talk shows are about sex, behavioral disturbances, and families out of control. Zoglin (1991), a reporter for Time, also argues that the topics on television talk shows are "surrealistic blurs of human misery, sideshow voyeurism, and sheer lunacy" (p. 79).

Critics contend that these type of topics merely create and exacerbate conflict. Take, for example, what happened on Jenny Jones in 1995 (Abt & Mustazza, 1997; Carter, 1996). In March of 1995, a young man appeared as a guest on a show about secret admirers. The admiree, knowing that the show was about secret admirers, expected his admirer to be female, but was surprised and embarrassed to discover that his admirer was a long-time male friend. The friend admitted his secret fantasy as well; tying the admiree up and spraying whipped cream and champagne all over his body. The shocked, humiliated, and embarrassed admiree vehemently declared on the show that he was "100% heterosexual." A few weeks later, the admiree bought a 12-gauge shotgun and killed the admirer. He told police that the reason he committed the murder was simply because he was embarrassed and humiliated by his appearance on the program.

In addition to encouraging violence and aggression, critics feel that television talk shows distort reality. Talk shows do not reflect the real world or the true context of American life, Bernstein argues (1994). This critic believes that television talk shows merely provide viewers with a type of entertainment designed to boost ratings and viewership. Take for example, topics such as "moms having affairs with their children's friends," "cross-dressing after dark," "skinheads," and "incest." These topics, critics believe, may not be newsworthy or may not appear to provide information because they are "devoted to hyping the hype"

(Bernstein, 1994). Others critics agree with comments made by Bernstein and Lieberman and argue that the emotionally laden topics that seem to permeate television talk shows are nothing but pure garbage, "trash TV," or "tabloid sleaze" (Bander, 1996; Bernstein, 1994; Lieberman, 1995; Thomas, 1997).

TV Talk Shows: America's Entertainment!

TV talk shows are dominating the airwaves of daytime television and have become, according to Abt and Mustazza (1997), "America's entertainment." Viewers, research suggests, have become fascinated with and dedicated to viewing their favorite TV talk show (Nielsen Media Research, 1997). A case in point: Ricki Lake recently received the "Best Talk Show" award at the United Kingdom National Television Awards. "Ricki Lake's syndicated talk show has made her the Oprah of Generation X" (Mr. Showbiz, Star Bios, Internet Homepage). The 3.6 % audience rating for the Ricki Lake show means that this program reaches an estimated audience of 3 million people (Abt & Mustazza, 1997; Gamson, 1995).

According to the Ricki Lake home page, the show reflects the evolving tastes of its young adult audience and promises to deliver original, lively talk for its viewers. The Ricki Lake show also "lets us [viewers] share other people's relationship issues in a cutting-edge daytime forum designed to keep action hot and audience members involved" (Ricki Lake Internet Home Page). It is then no wonder why this show remains highly ranked and continues to attract a large number of faithful viewers among its target audience of 18- to 34-year-old women. "To these younger people, it [the show] makes a couple of deliciously tempting promises: that Ricki will let them 'eavesdrop on other people's traumas and dramas in a cutting edge daytime forum designed to keep action hot and audience members involved,' and that Ricki's 'trademark compassion, intellect, and irresistible charm creates an atmosphere where guests and audience members feel comfortable letting it all hang out with absolute candor and some surprising results'" (Abt & Mustazza, 1991, p. 75).

Many of the television talk shows, however, cannot compare with the ratings of the Oprah Winfrey show. Winfrey's syndicated talk show stayed in the number one position for approximately ten years and is described as being in a class all by itself (Abt & Mustazza, 1997; Nielsen Media Research, 1997). Recently, Winfrey announced that she was no longer going to produce sensationalized or negative shows (e.g., racism, welfare reform, etc.). "We started doing confrontational TV.... I believe it was important to introduce these issues and face the truth of who we were...Instead, TV got stuck thriving on them, and for the worst possible reasons--exploitation, voyeurism, and entertainment" (quote by Oprah Winfrey as cited in Abt & Mustazza, 1997, p. 1). After years of focusing on negative topics, Oprah has completely overhauled her program by employing a celebrity-interview format. Oprah is not the only talk show to change formats. In November 1995, Geraldo Rivera decided to change the format of his talk show and turned toward a more entertaining, "nontrashy" show (Abt & Mustazza, 1997).

According to some media analysts, TV talk shows such as Oprah and Geraldo, which have softened the content of their shows, are now considered to be the "big losers" in reaching younger audiences (Abt & Mustazza, 1997; Collins, 1998). According to some media analysts, nice topics do not and will not draw ratings (Abt & Mustazza, 1997; Carter, 1996). And, it should be noted that, since changing its format, Winfrey's popular talk show has experienced a slight decline in audience ratings, going from approximately 10 to approximately 7% of the viewing audience. With respect to viewers between the ages of 16 and 34, the most popular talk shows are Ricki Lake, Jenny Jones, and Jerry Springer. These three shows tend to focus on topics that encourage extreme emotional responses.

Moreover, recent audience ratings show that the Jerry Springer Show has now become the first talk show to take over Oprah's number one spot (Collins, 1998). In fact, according to Collins (1998), the rise in the ratings, popularity, and success of the Jerry Springer Show is

remarkable. The viewing audience enjoys this particular talk show so much that a pre-recorded videotape was created that is full of back-to-back fistfights, violence, anger, and bad language. The talk show segments are so intense that they had to be censured from live broadcast. Interestingly, the video has sold some hundreds of thousands of copies (Collins, 1998). The rise in ratings of his TV talk show and now the sale of the censored videotapes causes some people to ask themselves, "why are people watching this type of media programming?"

Some regular viewers of TV talk shows believe that TV talk shows provide valuable information by keeping them informed and up-to-date on societal events (Frisby & Weigold, 1994). Other viewers, however, believe that the greatest benefit of watching TV talk shows rests in the fact that the shows are very entertaining.   Hence, some regular viewers would argue that these programs are popular because the content elicits an "exciting" affective response.   Several theories in mass media use may be used to explain media choice and preference.

The next section will discuss mass media theories that have been used to explain the media use and exposure effects. The literature review will begin with a discussion of three theories of media use, uses and gratifications, entertainment, and affective regulation, and will end with a discussion of an alternative theoretical framework that might be used to guide future research on TV talk shows and other mass media.

A Brief Review of Mass Communication Theories: How well can they explain fascination with TV talk shows?

Uses and Gratifications of Media Use

Uses and gratifications theorists focus on how media satisfy social and individual needs. Media are considered a source of gratification, and audience members are viewed as

active seekers and communicators (Rubin, 1994). The uses and gratifications approach shifts the focus from media effects (e.g., Does the media "cause" things to happen in society?) to examining how people use the media (e.g., What people do with media or the purposes for which individuals use media). According to Rubin (1994), before examining media effects or how media impact human behavior, researchers need to determine how individuals use the media and attain a firm understanding of audience motivations and behavior. Uses and gratifications paradigm has three objectives: "(1) to explain how people use media to gratify their needs, (2) to understand motives for media consumption, and (3) to identify functions or consequences that follow from needs, motives and behavior" (Rubin, 1994, p. 419).

Research

Uses and gratifications is based on the following assumptions (Rubin, 1986):

1. Individuals use media to satisfy specific needs. Media use is goal directed.

2. Individuals select and actively pursue the media channels and content to fulfill specific needs.

3. Individuals are aware of the needs they anticipate meeting from media and can state their needs and expectations and their specific reasons for using particular media.

Five Categories of Needs

To explain motives for media use, Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) identified five distinct and theoretically meaningful categories of audience needs. The five categories of needs related to media use are a) cognitive, b) affective, c) personal integrative, d) social integrative, and e) escapist needs. Cognitive needs relate to using media for obtaining information, knowledge and understanding of the world. Affective needs relate to emotional experiences and the pursuit by an individual to satisfy entertainment or pleasure needs. Personal integrative needs relate to the desire of an individual to gain confidence, stability, or

esteem. Social integrative needs relate to an individual's desire for affiliation with family and friends, and escapist needs relate to the individual's desire for tension release or diversion.

Research on Media Use and Audience Needs

Researchers and uses and gratifications theorists frequently refer to at least six gratifications of media use; information (also known as surveillance/ or knowledge), escape, passing time, entertainment, social viewing/status enhancement, and relaxation gratifications (Rubin, 1981). Although the variable names for these gratifications may change from study to study, research in mass media uses and gratifications of mass media use continues to confirm that these six gratifications hold up across situations (Conway & Rubin, 1991; Rubin, 1981; Rubin, 1986).

According to Katz et al., (1973), individuals obtain different gratifications from different media. Learning and knowing oneself was best served, they found, by print media. Newspapers, the researchers suggest, satisfy an individual's needs for status enhancement or "self-confidence." On the other hand, watching television was determined to be most useful for "killing time" and maintaining friendships and family solidarity (Katz et al., 1973).

Research on Gratifications of Television Talk Shows.

In a study on gratifications of television talk shows, Frisby and Weigold (1994) found five gratifications obtained from viewing television talk shows. Subjects were asked to watch one of three-television talks show at any time during an ordinary week. Immediately after watching the show, participants answered questions about their talk show viewing motives. They were also asked to speculate why, in their opinion, "other people" watch television talk shows.

According to the data, viewers claim to watch TV talk shows in order to feel good, or forget about problems (affect management), because the shows are on at home (passive exposure), to learn about the issues of the day or learn about the world (surveillance), for

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something to do (pass time), and because friends watch them (social viewing). In addition, analysis revealed that regular viewers were more likely than nonviewers to state that learning about issues was a major gratification obtained from viewing television talk shows.

Limitations of Uses and Gratifications

Research employing a uses and gratifications theoretical perspective means asking individuals to subjectively report on and identify their particular experiences.   The uses and gratifications approach to media use assumes that people are aware of the needs they anticipate from media and, if asked, can promptly and specifically state reasons for using certain media. The technique most often used to assess the specifics of media use and motives for media use is the self-report questionnaire or survey (Zillman & Bryant, 1986).

Many of the uses and gratifications studies rely on questionnaires or surveys (see for example, Conway & Rubin, 1991; Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973; Rubin, 1981). One explanation for such heavy reliance on these specific measurement instruments may be the fact that surveys, are quick and easy and yield a great of information that may be relevant to the relationship among psychological or emotional needs, and characteristic purposes and motives for using certain media.

Data obtained in many of the studies on media use and gratifications are generally analyzed using factor analyses or tables. Most times, the evidence collected in the studies provides support for the six well-known gratification categories (i.e., information, entertainment, escape, social, passing time and relaxation). This categorization of variables, some argue, may be a fundamental weakness of the uses and gratifications approach because the conclusions generally restate published findings, and, typically provide broad explanations for media use.   Very little research has been identified that relates specific motives to specific audience satisfactions and needs. The studies, therefore, have been criticized for being largely exploratory and nontheoretical in nature (Zillman & Bryant, 1986).

One problem with using questionnaires or surveys on media use is that the data are often inconclusive (Zillman & Bryant, 1986). Respondents are oftentimes responding to the researcher's questions and are not asked open-ended questions or questions that will let them say what they want to say. Moreover, some critics argue that respondents may be unaware of their motives, or maybe even unwilling to disclose their "true motives."

Are media audiences so reflective that they can provide a rational explanation for their media use? Would a survey yield the same six gratifications if respondents were asked questions which extended beyond the six gratifications mentioned above? For example, suppose people were asked to respond to a question like, "I watch Ricki Lake because the guests are usually worse off than me and seeing that makes me feel better." Or, "I watch Jenny Jones because I compare myself with the guests, and suddenly realize I am in a much better situation." How would people respond? How likely is a response like, "I sure do and boy do I feel great when I see the guests make fools of themselves?" Or are individuals likely to be hesitant, embarrassed, and/or reluctant to admit such a motive? Would a "uses and gratifications" question such as this prompt a socially desirable response (i.e., strongly disagree or even "no way").

Consumers may be unaware of reasons why and may be unable to articulate why certain media contents are chosen over other forms. And, with regard to explaining television consumption, particularly motives for consuming "bad" or morbid television programs, the uses and gratifications theoretical approach may not tap into the actual motives for media use.

Entertainment Theory

According to Zillman and Bryant (1986), entertainment can be defined as "any activity designed to delight and, to a smaller degree, enlighten through the exhibition of the fortunes or misfortunes of others, but also through the display of special skills by others and/or self" (p. 303). With this definition of entertainment in mind, it seems clear that consumers may fulfill

specific needs for entertainment comedies, tragedies, and drama programs (Zillman & Bryant, 19986).

Is the TV talk show popular among viewers because the program content produces an "exciting" affective response? And, who benefits more from exposure to entertaining programs like television talk shows? Research suggests that reactions to entertaining programs can be positive or negative, depending on an individual's idiosyncratic needs (Zillman & Bryant, 1986; Zuckerman, 1979).   Under this assumption, it is possible to speculate that certain viewers watch TV talk shows to regulate affect.   "Thus, for understimulated, bored persons, exposure to certain exciting television programs can be seen as having the benefit of returning them [viewers] to a hedonically superior, and, hence, desirable state" (Zillman & Bryant, 1986, p. 307).

Affective Regulation

"It [affective regulation] is, in fact, the effect of entertainment consumption. It is the primary effect that is sought out and pursued for the benefits that it entails---benefits such as being distracted from acute grievances, having boredom removed, being cheered up, being given great excitement, being helped to calm down, or being fed pacifying messages." Zillman and Bryant, 1986, p. 320.

Bryant and Zillman (1984) provide another behavioral approach that might clearly explain why people use media: affective regulation. Media use from this perspective is selective and deliberate. Moreover, the affective regulation paradigm does not require respondents to provide explicit reasons or comparisons of why or how they made program choices (Zillman & Bryant, 1986). Program choice and exposure to certain programs is conducted "mindlessly" and spontaneously. "It can be projected that these choices are situational variables and serve ends which respondents need not be and probably are not aware of" (Zillman & Bryant, 1986, p. 306).

Research on Affective Regulation and Media Use

Research on media use for affective regulation suggests that people select television in order to regulate their affective states. Viewers seek out specific media for very specific benefits, such as being distracted from serious problems and/or grievances, having boredom removed, and being cheered up or calmed down. These benefits may be comparable to the "escape" motive associated with uses and gratifications (Zillman & Bryant, 1986)

In a study related to using media to regulate affect, Potts and Sanchez (1994) found that television viewing does serve as a means of escape and to regulate or enhance mood. Depressed viewers tended to engage in "strategic" television viewing. The researchers argue that mood guides strategic television viewing by changing a negative mood, or maintaining a positive one (Potts & Sanchez, 1994).

Dittmar (1994) also found strong correlations between depression and gratifications obtained from viewing television. In this study, subjects were screened by a clinical interview and were selected for participation based on their responses during the interview and to the MMPI. Those subjects who were identified as depressed and met criteria for depressive disorders were invited to participate in the study. Non-depressed subjects were identified also by responses to the MMPI and clinical interview.

Results showed that among male and female college students, depressed women were more likely than any other group to watch more soap operas and depressed men were more likely to watch situation comedies. Based on the data, Dittmar concluded that television may offer a certain "coping style" that offers depressives a method of "vicarious living." Depressed individuals may use characters on television to "provide emotional gratification while at the same time avoiding the risks associated with real interpersonal relationships" (Dittmar, 1994, p. 325).

<u>Affective Regulation and Viewing TV Talk Shows</u>

To what degree does affective regulation determine or affect people's motives for viewing talk shows? To answer this question, Frisby and Weigold (1994) examined correlations between motives for talk show viewing and feelings experienced while watching the show. The sample comprised 89 people who viewed TV talk shows at least once a week. The participants received instructions to watch (in their own home or dorm) one episode of Oprah, Donahue, or Geraldo. Prior to viewing, subjects completed Rosenberg's self-esteem scale and received a booklet containing instructions and all other dependent measures. Verbal and written instructions emphasized that while viewing the program, subjects were to record all thoughts in spaces provided in the booklet. Additionally, they indicated any feelings experienced during each thought on an accompanying set of scales.

Data revealed that regular talk show viewers (i.e., people who indicated watching TV talk shows more than twice a week) experienced significantly more positive, happy thoughts while viewing talks shows. Since much of the content on a TV talk show involves tragic events or trashy topics, one explanation for the increase in positive thoughts among regular viewers could be that the guests who are observed suffering misfortunes or problems might be providing viewers with an opportunity to say, "gee, I thought I had it bad," and this thought causes them to rejoice or ultimately feel more optimistic (a positive feeling) about their own personal circumstances.

AN ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE TO EXPLAIN MEDIA USE

<u>Social Comparison Theory: Making inferences about the self and others</u>

The previous theoretical approaches in mass communications discussed in this paper—uses and gratifications, entertainment theory, and affective regulation—share certain basic assumptions and constructs, but are not unified theories that might be used to explain

why people consumer media and predict the effects of media consumption on social behavior. In contrast, the paper will now turn to a particular theory of social psychology, social comparison theory. Compared to the other mass communication theories, social comparison theory is narrower in its domain of interest because it specifically focuses on social inferences that relate the self to others (Robertson & Kassarjian, 1991).

Exposure to tragic events and/or bad news almost invites social comparison among viewers (Zillman & Bryant, 1986). Viewers may be encouraged to compare and contrast their own situation with the situations of the "suffering parties they witness, and that this contrasting eventually produces a form of satisfaction" (Zillman & Bryant, 1986, p. 317). Affect is enhanced because viewers, seeing the misfortune of others, become appreciative of their life circumstances and situations. According to Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, when people are uncertain about their abilities and opinions, they evaluate themselves by making comparisons with similar others. People compare themselves with others for a variety of reasons: to determine relative standing on an issue or related ability, to emulate behaviors, to determine norms, to lift spirits or feel better about life and personal situations, to evaluate emotions, personality, and self-worth (Suls & Wills, 1991; Taylor & Loebel, 1989). The remaining part of this paper explores the notion that talk shows and other media may be popular with individuals because of the affective consequences that follow from audience social comparisons. Social comparison theory, it is believed, may help to explain and uncover an important motive for watching television talk shows, a motive that people may be unable or reluctant to express openly.

What is Social Comparison?

Social comparison is defined as "the process of thinking about information about one or more people in relation to the self" (Wood, 1996, p. 520). Social comparison does not mean that the individual has to give careful, elaborate, conscious thought about the comparison, but

it implies that there has to be, to some degree, an attempt to identify or look for similarities or differences between the other and self on some particular dimension (Wood, 1996). Some theorists might argue that for a comparison to be considered a comparison, the individual must be aware of the comparison and come into direct contact with the other person (Wood, 1996). However, as Wood (1996) points out, social comparisons do not require conscious or direct personal contact because "even fictional characters and stereotypes may represent meaningful standards of comparison" (p. 522).

Social Comparisons with Images in the Mass Media

From a mass communication perspective, social comparison theory would prove extremely useful in developing theory focused on information processing and the effects and uses of mass media messages. As Goethals (1986) states, "it can be hard to hear an extremely intelligent person on the radio, or see an extremely handsome one in the grocery store, or participate on a panel with an expert without engaging in social comparison no matter how much we would like not to" (p. 272). Based on this statement and research on social comparison, it is believed that people engage in some type of comparison when encountering other people, namely media images. It also seems reasonable to speculate and hypothesize that when people encounter social information such as the images or characters presented in the mass media, audiences might automatically and unconsciously engage in a social comparison.

It should be noted that people might not be able to consciously articulate the comparison process or able to consciously register its effects (i.e., self-enhancement, self-improvement, etc). Research on social comparison suggests that people do engage in some type of social comparison (refer to Emmons & Diener, 1985; Richins, 1991; Wheeler & Miyake, 1991). The problem is, however, some social comparisons occur without visible manifestations of their effects. People, research suggests, may think about the social information without

exhibiting the effects of having done so (Wood 1996). People may dismiss comparisons for self-defensive or ego protective reasons. For instance, thoughts about another person as they relate to the self may be biased by one's goals or habits (i.e. high self-esteem or optimism bias) and thus may color a visible effect of a social comparison. Does this mean then that a social comparison has not occurred? The answer is no. The person, this author believes, has to make some judgement as to whether a target is similar or dissimilar and may purposely select to avoid the comparison by derogating the target or making thoughts that rate themselves more favorably on a number of other dimensions.

To test the hypothesis that most people engage in social comparison when confronted with social information, Wheeler and Miyake (1992) asked respondents to record all the thoughts and comparisons that occur in their everyday lives. Since the researchers were also interested in the effects of the comparison they also provided participants with specific definitions of a comparison. They told them that "merely noticing a similarity with or a difference from another person would not necessarily be called a comparison unless accompanied by some psychological reactions" (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992, p. 762). The researchers found some evidence and empirical support for social comparison thoughts and the effects of social comparison processes.

Respondents in the study tended to make comparisons on two dimensions: lifestyle and assets. Asset comparisons, comparisons made on ability, appearance, and social skills, were more likely to occur when participants were engaged in passive or informal conversations with close friends and relatives (Wheeler & Miyake, 1995). Lifestyle comparisons, comparisons made on dimensions regarding personality, lifestyle, and academic matters, on the other hand, were more likely with acquaintances and strangers. These comparisons, the researchers found, were most likely to be upward, a comparison process that will be defined in the next section. So, mass media researchers employing social comparison theory might be

able to determine if viewers make comparisons with media images based on Assets or Lifestyles.

The Major Social Comparison Goals

Upward Comparison

Social comparisons made with others who are superior to or better off than oneself are referred to as *upward comparisons*. Individuals engaging in upward comparison may learn from others, be inspired by their examples, or become highly motivated to achieve similar goals. Upward comparisons, research suggests, are invoked when individuals are motivated to change or overcome problems (Major, Testa, Bylsma, 1991). Self-improvement is the main effect of an upward comparison because the targets serve as role models and teach and motivate individuals to achieve or overcome similar problems (Seta, 1982; Wood, 1989). According to literature on social comparison, an effective upward comparison target is one who is extremely competent and is proficient and skillful in terms of coping with personal problems (Major et al., 1991; Seta, 1982).

Downward Comparisons

When a social comparison involves a target who is inferior, incompetent and/or less fortunate, the comparison is referred to as a *downward comparison* (Wills, 1981). The basic principle of downward comparison is that people feel better about their own situation and enhance their subjective well-being when they make comparisons with others who are worse off or less fortunate. According to theory, downward comparisons help individuals cope with personal problems by allowing them to see themselves and their problems in a better, more positive light (Wood 1989). Downward comparisons are most likely to occur when people engage in a social comparison with a target who is incompetent and less fortunate (Sherman, Presson, & Chassin, 1984; Schulz & Decker, 1985).

Prevalence of Downward Social Comparisons. "People are ambivalent about .

downward social comparison because it presents conflict with normative prescriptions" (Wills,

1991, p. 53). Research suggests that one result of downward comparisons is an increase in

subjective well-being. "Simply put, this basic principle of downward comparison theory

suggests that people should feel better about their own situation or about themselves if they

find out there are others who are worse off" (Gibbons & Gerrard, 1991, p. 318). Data on

downward social comparisons and media use suggest that everyday encounters with media

images may provide viewers with social information, information that encourages them to think

about the information and engage in an automatic, spontaneous social comparison that

ultimately effects mood and other aspects of subjective well-being (Frisby & Weigold, 1994;

Frisby, 1998; Wheeler & Reis, 1991; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). The information obtained from

media use studies employing social comparison theory could be used in the field of mass

communication to better understand how comparison processes in general operate in

naturalistic, everyday media environments (i.e., the effects of a passive or spontaneous social

comparison with media images on viewer attitude and affect) and how these comparisons

affect individuals' attitudes (Wheeler & Miyake, 1992; Wills, 1991).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN MASS MEDIA RESEARCH
How Social Comparison Theory Might Be Used to Explain Fascination with Mass Media

"A final issue is whether a model of self-enhancement through downward comparison has utility for approaching phenomena that have not usually been construed in social comparison terms, such as hostile humor, gossip, aggression, vandalism, and effects of media on social behavior. Pursuit of questions about how social comparison theory applies to these phenomena could be an interesting endeavor" (Wills, 1991,k p. 74).

Situation Comedies

 Downward social comparison theory may be used to explain why people like to watch

situation comedies and other comedic or humorous media content. Wills (1981) speculated

that embedded in humor are two paradoxical facts: a) the stimulus for humor depicts common

negative occurrences to a person, and b) the response to the stimulus is positive affect.

Therefore, the essence of humor, according to Wills (1981), is "to provide a sophisticated way

of presenting the occurrence of misfortune" (p. 263). Wills goes on to argue that audiences

simply may appreciate humor because of the focus humor places on the misfortunes of other

people.

In a study focused on assessing the relationship between personality traits and

gratifications obtained from watching TV, Frisby (1995) found that extroverts, people who

enjoy the company of others, reported watching situation comedies for information. What type

of information do these shows provide? It is possible to speculate that the information

provided is social information and audiences use this information to self-enhance. Future

studies could determine if humor provides the viewing audience with opportunities to engage in

downward comparisons and ease insecurities by making downward comparisons with

somebody else's misfortune, frustration, and imperfections. That, according to media analysts

and other researchers, is the basic fact of humor: it's not funny, they say, unless "the humor is

conducted at someone else's expense" (Wills, 1981, p. 263). Therefore, it is suggested that

future mass media research explore the notion that situation comedies elicit social

comparisons and assess the impact of this media vehicle on self-evaluation and subjective

well-being. Research in this area could determine if humor helps to ease insecurities by

allowing people to make downward comparisons with comedic content (i.e. comedy shows,

situation comedies, etc.) or shows that poke fun at a worse off other or someone less fortunate

and less perfect.

TV Soap Operas

Frisby (1995) conducted a study on the relationship among five personality traits and

gratifications obtained from watching TV programs. The study revealed that introverts,

individuals who described themselves as shy and reserved, reported watching daytime soap

operas for information. What type of information are viewers getting from TV soap operas? A reviewer of the paper offered an explanation for this finding: Some viewers, particularly introverts, might use the information obtained from watching soap operas to change or overcome interpersonal communication problems. Future research could determine if media images and characters on TV soap operas serve as role models and if these comparison targets teach or motivate individuals to overcome particular problems (i.e. fashion or styles, conflicts in interpersonal relationships, etc).

Future research could assess the particular comparison dimensions (i.e., personality, physical appearance, intelligence, career, etc) and other informational cues viewers rely on when cognitively elaborating the social information and media image. Research might then determine if self-improvement is the main effect of this type of social comparison. Thus, research on this topic could answer the question: do media images portrayed and depicted on TV soap operas motivate individuals to do better and solve personal problems?

Social Comparison and Other Media Vehicles

Tabloid Journalism

Why do people read "The National Inquirer," "The Globe," or "The Star?" Do people read these "trashy magazines" because they make them feel better about their self-perceptions and their own life situations? Or does it make them feel better to see similar others fail and face tragedies? Does reading about another Elvis sighting by a local resident, for example, make an audience member say, "And I thought I was abnormal, at least I haven't claimed to see Elvis!"

In light of the Princess Diana tragedy, social comparison theory might be a useful theory to explain motivation to read and audience fascination with tabloid media. In a related study on TV talk shows, Frisby (1998) found that viewers experienced a significant boost in mood after witnessing shows that focused on the misfortunes of another person. The Frisby

(1998) study and others employing social comparison theory and research should provide

some insights into explaining why consumers are attracted to other "trash" or tabloid programs:

viewers feel better about themselves and their life circumstances after watching a worse off

other. As far as practical applications, social comparison theory, in this sense, might be

employed to shed some understanding of the underlying psychological gratifications obtained

from reading The National Enquirer and other tabloids. Future research could determine

whether or not social comparisons are elicited by print media and uncover the effects, if any, of

the social comparison.

Talk Radio

It is possible that social comparison could also be elicited by talk radio. Consequently,

listeners of Howard Stern's radio show may feel better about their values, opinions, and how

they feel about other issues that are discussed on this program. Future research could be

used to address gratifications obtained from frequent radio consumption and could determine

if social comparisons are elicited by talk radio.

Advertising

"Sometimes when I thumb through a magazine or watch television and see
those ads with beautiful models, I don't really pay attention. I mean, they don't
really get to me personally. But, every now and then, there will be something
about the model that really gets to me and gets on my nerves. Sometimes the
model makes me feel jealous, depressed, or even mad at myself. Then, I think,
'it's just a model. She's not like me.'" Samantha, a 21 year-old African American
College student (personal communication, October 5, 1993).

Advertising researchers have recently started investigating the factors or characteristics

that influence attractiveness, likability, and desirability (Morse & Gergen, 1970; Cash, Cash, &

Butters, 1983, Myers & Biocca, 1992; Richins, 1991; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). However most

of the studies that focus on the effects of images in television advertising and programming on

women generally involve employment of samples that are comprised of primarily Caucasian

women. Researchers have largely ignored the effects of advertising images on various ethnic

groups.   Few, if any, have focused on the effects of idealized images on women of african-american, Asian, Hispanic, Indian, and other cultures.

Research suggests that there is a relationship between idealized images in the media and a woman's self-schema, perceptions of body images, mood, self-esteem, and standards of beauty (refer to Cash et al., 1983, Grow, 1988, Myers & Biocca, 1992, Richins, 1991; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992). Many women desire to be physically attractive and appealing to others (see Savern, 1988). According to Savern (1988), advertisers know that a desire for physical attractiveness is tied closely with the female ego, therefore, they design and create attractiveness-based messages and employ idealized images that can easily stimulate desires for the product. Thus, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that self-improvement or evidence of an upward comparison will occur when consumers are confronted with advertising images. However, this statement is not practical or realistic.

Research, for example, could determine how idealized images affect women of different cultural backgrounds. The dominant image in most healthy and beauty ads are images of Caucasians. Research utilizing social comparison theory and research could be used to determine how Caucasian images affect the self-esteem and mood of women of different cultures or ethnic backgrounds. Research in this area could determine if advertising in this respect is doing more harm (i.e., deflating self-esteem of minority group members) or if the images encourage people in different ethnic segments to engage in an upward comparison and ultimately purchase products via use of idealized images.   Since idealized images are found everywhere and at any time, future research should explore whether or not black women, for example, avoid social comparison with dissimilar media images and only make comparisons with models in "black magazines."

DISCUSSION

It should be noted that many of the guests appearing on television talk shows like *Ricki Lake*, *Jenny Jones*, and *Jerry Springer* tend to be "downward" or at least guests who appear to be involved in tragic, unfortunate events. As a content analysis of the show's topics revealed, rarely do TV talk show programs focus on "upward" guests or people who have successfully overcome serious tragedy (Abt & Mustazza, 1997). The main question guiding the present research focused on understanding why viewers are fascinated with TV talk shows and talk show topics such as "transplant recipients who claim to have adopted the personalities of their donors."

Tragic events or exposure to tragic events affords individuals with the opportunity to celebrate current life circumstances (Zillman & Bryant, 1986). In fact, it could be hypothesized that exposure to tragic events invites social comparison, and this comparison provides respondents with the opportunity to compare and contrast their own situation with that of the "worse off" other. The compare and contrast process ultimately produces a form of satisfaction. "Seeing misfortunes befall others and seeing them suffering from it thus may make viewers cognizant and appreciative of how good they have it" (Zillman & Bryant, 1986, p. 317).

SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS

"In our information age it's especially true that the messages we receive from the various media we are exposed to require constant questioning. If we passively sit back and receive unexamined messages, failing or refusing to consider not only what is said to us but how and why, we are open to the grossest kinds of manipulation, passing itself off as 'entertainment'"(Abt & Mustazza, 1997, p. 83).

Research has revealed that among the most widely read items in the newspaper are stories about accidents, accounts of disasters, and natural phenomena, crime stories, and letters to the editor (i.e., Katz et al., 1973). Literature on audiences suggests that if a news

story is about a crime, tragedy, or an accident, it is more likely be read than if it is about other more complicated issues (Zillman & Bryant, 1986). What motivates readers to be fascinated with bad or tragic news? Do people use the information for social comparison purposes or are media images of crime and violence cultivated in our minds? Do these images overpower the social comparison process and result in perceptions of a mean and cruel world? The present study suggests that viewers may be fascinated with crimes, accidents, and stories of tragic events because the immediate effect of viewing this type of content is pure self-enhancing entertainment.

The present paper suggests that the entertainment function of television may involve viewing the misfortunes of others. The paper also suggests that social information obtained from watching TV talk show guests might possibly elicit a social comparison process, a process that provides "information" viewers use primarily to feel better about themselves and their own lives. This means that television talk shows may be consumed in part to help viewers cognitively re-evaluate their own interpersonal problems and /or tensions. Thus, as far as society is concerned, TV talk shows could have a more positive effect because, if the data obtained in this study is correct, the shows may provide viewers with a type of information that seems to enhance or change a negative mood state. Future research should consider the research methods presented in the paper in order to examine the long-term and short-term effects of social comparison processes on self-concepts and viewer attitude (Bryant & Zillman, 1984; Wood, 1996). Research in this area, for example, could determine if low self-esteem people deliberately seek out and select media content to enhance or change negative or threatened mood states.

Many television talk show hosts claim that guests on their shows help viewers learn and inspire many of their loyal fans to overcome similar problems. It is not clear, however, at what point viewers begin to feel a "psychological closeness" with target guests and whether or not

this closeness shifts the social comparison behavior from a more passive comparison process

to a comparison with similar others that colors their perceptions of the show and the show's

topic. That is, at what point do viewers change from feeling better about their own lives to

copying the behavioral patterns of the talk show guest?

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Answering the Critics: Are News Councils Out to Get the Media?

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Abstract: Nearly 15 years after the demise of the National News Council, there is a renewed debate about the need to establish some similar mechanism for handling public complaints against the media. Recent discussions reveal that there are still strong reservations on the part of many members of the news media. This paper addresses the question of whether news councils are a forum for media-bashing, using the records of the Minnesota News Council as a case study.

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Abstract: Nearly 15 years after the demise of the National News Council, there is a renewed debate about the need to establish some similar mechanism for handling public complaints against the media. Recent discussions reveal that there are still strong reservations on the part of many members of the news media. This paper addresses the question of whether news councils are a forum for media-bashing, using the records of the Minnesota News Council as a case study.

Nearly 15 years after the demise of the National News Council, there is a renewed debate about the need to establish some similar mechanism for handling public complaints against the media. One of the most visible proponents is CBS correspondent Mike Wallace, who favors the creation of state councils as well as a revived national forum for resolving disputes about media ethics. Wallace has been actively engaging others in this discussion; he raised the news council idea in a speech at Harvard University in 1995, spearheaded a 1997 discussion among influential media representatives at the Ford Foundation, and produced a story for *60 Minutes* about the Minnesota News Council (Shepard 1997). He argues that journalists should be willing to undergo the same kind of scrutiny they practice in their reporting: "All of us journalists are perfectly willing to call attention to profligate politicians, priests and potentates, but we show little enthusiasm when similar attention is focused on us" (Shepard 1997).

After the *60 Minutes* segment aired, the Minnesota News Council received numerous requests from other states interested in forming news councils. In response, one of the Council's founding members, Bob Shaw, compiled suggestions for starting a news council.[1] He stresses that for any news council to survive, the news media must support its establishment. Shaw says, "If a person outside the press wants to start a council, *and does not consult the press during the formative stage*, that project, I believe, is doomed" (Shaw 1998; italics in original). There is widespread agreement that the failure of the National News Council was due to the lack of support from key news organizations such as the *New York Times* (Kaplar 1991: 20; Brogan 1985: 90-92; Shepard 1997).

Recent discussions about news councils reveal that there are still strong reservations on the part of many members of the news media (Howe 1997; Stein 1997;

Consoli 1997). Clearly, their concerns must be addressed for any newly created council to succeed. The Minnesota News Council (MNC), which began in 1971, has been the longest running news council. As such, its determinations offer a unique opportunity to examine the validity of concerns raised by critics of the news council concept. Before examining these records, it is important to review more thoroughly the debate about news councils.

A Credibility Problem

Both sides of the news council debate agree that the media's relationship with the public is in trouble. In January 1997, the Newseum and the Freedom Forum's Media Studies Center sponsored a survey entitled "News Junkies, News Critics." This study was intended to examine how Americans view the news and the individuals and institutions reporting it. Not surprisingly, the results of the study indicated that although Americans have a strong need for and attachment to the *news*, they distrust the *news media*.

> By large percentages, survey respondents say news is either sometimes or often improperly influenced by power interests: elected officials, big business, advertisers, corporate media owners, and, most of all, the media's desire to make profits. Ethically, Americans see journalists as the equals of politicians, lawyers and sales people— people with agendas. Most people do not trust journalists. They tend to trust local news outlets over national ones. Nearly two-thirds think the news is too sensational, and that reporters spend too much time offering their own opinions (Newseum 1997: 1).

Moreover, while Americans value a free press as "crucial to the functioning of a free society," 85% could not name press freedom as one of the five First Amendment freedoms, and nearly two-thirds said that there are times when the press should be restrained from publishing certain things (1997: 2).

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Businesses and community organizations in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and

St. Paul are attempting to address some of these concerns. This past November the

second of a series of "feedback fora" in which individuals are invited to comment on the

news media's "proper role in the community" was held in Minneapolis. This series,

entitled the Twin Cities Project on Media and the Public, is sponsored by a number of

Twin Cities corporations and civic groups, including the League of Women Voters. The

purpose of these sessions is "to help the public better understand the competitive and

financial pressures the media face and to help the media better understand what troubles

the public about news coverage" (Holston 1997).

Participants' main complaint at this second session was a "disconnect" between

the media and the public; "the reality of Twin Cities life they know is either

misrepresented or underrepresented by what they read in the local newspapers or see on

TV newscasts" (Holston 1997). Specific complaints included claims that news stories

sometimes are just not true, and that reports are really opinions presented as fact. These

themes are echoed in complaints brought before the MNC, the longest-running news

council in existence and the focus of this paper.

The Newseum's survey is not the first such negative appraisal of journalists and

news organizations. There have been previous studies on the credibility of journalists and

what can be done to restore it (for example, a 1985 study commissioned by the

Associated Press Managing Editors Association), and repeated calls for change (Hughes

1994; Shaw 1996; Merritt 1995). In fact, an earlier American Society of Newspaper

Editors (ASNE) study assessed how seriously Americans take their First Amendment

rights and those of the media in practice. While respondents rated free speech as their

second most precious First Amendment right and treasure highly a free press, these values are only held in the abstract. When questioned about specifics, this support dwindled alarmingly, with individuals willing to remove legal protection from those forms of expression they found offensive (Wyatt 1991: v). Media rights fared no better: Most journalistic privileges received only modest protection, and respondents were particularly uncomfortable with selling or broadcasting sexually explicit material or advertising products that are legal but harmful (1991: 11-12).

Another study asserts that it is an entity called "the media" that receives most of the public's wrath. The study, conducted in 1996 by the Louis Harris Organization for The Center for Media and Public Affairs, found that "the public's hostility is directed toward the 'media,' a code word for the big corporate institutions that employ these journalists and control the supply of news in the United States" (Harwood 1997: A21). Individual journalists, then, are not the target of public disdain, but rather their employing organizations, who are considered to be "biased and unfair in their coverage of political and social issues" (1997: 2).

It is clear that media accountability is suffering, and there are repeated calls for a remedy. As these studies indicate, public disenchantment with the perceived excesses of the media could result in constitutional modifications to the First Amendment. William B. Ketter, editor of the Quincy, Mass., *Patriot Ledger* and past president of ASNE, points out that a constitutional amendment protecting the American flag against desecration might well pass, circumventing the Supreme Court's 1989 decision that flag-burning is a protected First Amendment expression (Menzies 1997: 15). Other modifications, devastating to American journalism, could follow.

Perhaps most telling of the depth of the problem is the newest media credibility study. On July 17, 1997, ASNE announced a three-year, million-dollar study to assess journalism's declining credibility. The Journalism Credibility Project will include a "think tank," reviews of existing literature on journalism credibility, and test site research partnerships with eight newspapers. Sandra Mims Rowe, ASNE President and editor of *The Oregonian*, one of the papers involved in the study, trumpeted the effort as "among the most ambitious initiatives ASNE has ever undertaken." She added, "If we really believe something must be done beyond hand-wringing, and if we choose serious and thoughtful consideration of this problem over quick fixes, fads or formulaic approaches, then we can develop long-range actions that can advance our credibility and increase public trust" (ASNE 1997).

Clearly, media accountability and responsibility are among the most pressing problems facing American journalism today. It is also important to clearly differentiate between *responsibility* and *accountability*. Media ethicist Lou Hodges says that responsibility refers to the societal definition of the role the media ought to fulfill (Elliott 1986: 13-14). He distinguishes this from accountability, which addresses questions of how responsibility will be enforced.

The First Amendment commitment to freedom of expression makes it unacceptable for the government to undertake the role of making the media accountable to the public. The media are currently held accountable through various mechanisms of self-regulation in the forms of professional standards, a few ombudsman positions, ethics codes, media reporters, and in extreme circumstances, through the courts. The public/civic journalism movement (see Merritt 1995) that arose during the early 1990s

and continues today is yet another attempt by journalism to connect itself with the public and perhaps gain back some of its lost credibility.

However, the level of dissatisfaction about media performance and credibility demonstrated by studies such as those described above and repeated attempts by media members to address these concerns attest to the fact that these methods alone have been insufficient to ensure accountability. News councils offer another possible non-governmental alternative for establishing media accountability to the public.

News Councils—Past and Present

There have been several previous attempts to establish news councils in the United States.[2] As discussed previously, the most visible of these efforts was the National News Council, in existence from 1973 until 1984. Upon the recommendations of a task force funded by the Twentieth Century Fund research group, the National News Council was created as a private, non-profit organization designed "to receive, to examine, and to report on complaints concerning the accuracy and fairness of news reporting in the United States."

The MNC, which began through the impetus of the Minnesota Newspaper Association in 1971, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. As a precondition to accepting a complaint, it requires grievants to first pursue their objections with the offending media organization. If a resolution cannot be reached, grievants may pursue a hearing, but they also must sign a waiver indicating that they forfeit the right to pursue the matter in the courts. According to its executive director, Gary Gilson, the MNC neither has nor wants enforcement powers (Lambe 1995: 4). Rather, it relies on media

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organizations to publicize its actions. MNC's membership is an equal representation of public and media members.

The News Council Debate

Members of the news media are split as to the desirability of news councils. Most supporters of news councils argue that news councils are a middle ground for those whose complaints to the media are brushed off or not satisfactorily addressed by the news organization, and who either cannot or will not pursue a court case. News councils are not meant to replace either direct contact with the media nor the judicial process.

News councils, according to their proponents, are a valuable tool for both the media and the public. Everette E. Dennis, a former senior vice president of the Freedom Forum and current professor at Fordham University, notes that "the rights of a free press ultimately depend on the consent of citizens" and maintains that news councils are an important component of generating and keeping this consent.

> One reason we have this deplorable situation, in which the public gives the media such low marks, is that we have so few channels for feedback, so little opportunity for criticism. There are very few press councils...[they are] the exception in America, not the rule. ... Press councils are not ancient Star Chamber tribunals. They are settings for rationale [sic] debate and their findings are usually publicized in the press (Dennis and Merrill 1991: 166-167).

These channels for feedback are important components of citizen consent. A 1995 study of the impact of news ombudsmen during coverage of a presidential campaign indicated that ombudsmen were not just responding to complaints and concerns as they arose, but they also engaged in a "two-way symmetric model of public relations." This model "emphasizes communication as a means to 'manage conflict and improve understanding' with the public" (Bridges and Bridges 1995: 87). Such communication is

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essential to maintaining a positive relationship with the public. News councils, it is

argued, offer similar options for the public to engage in a dialogue with the media.

Some media commentators maintain that a National News Council might be the

key to reinforcing journalism's sagging credibility. *The Christian Science Monitor* former

editor-in-chief, John Hughes, supports a fresh examination of the National News Council

concept:

> Some journalists opposed the earlier national news council,
> arguing that it was the thin end of the wedge for press
> control. Others supported it, maintaining that this toothless,
> nongovernmental body could be a useful force for building
> journalistic credibility. In light of journalism's low
> standing, it may be time to revive the debate (1994: 19).

News councils might also hold the key to a reduction in litigation. Dennis Hale

(1994) proposes that the MNC actually helped reduce the number of libel appeals in

Minnesota. The number of Minnesota libel appeals before and after the creation of the

News Council were compared with those in Wisconsin, Iowa, and North and South

Dakota during the same time period. Minnesota media libel appeals increased less than

those of its four neighbors: 84% compared to 180% in the border states (1994: 7).

However, some journalists argue that with or without enforcement powers, news

councils are anathema to the profession. These critics say giving an independent entity

power to enforce judgments against the media is tantamount to giving that entity control;

but without enforcement powers, the entity is ineffective and useless. If individuals feel

that they have been wronged by the media, the appropriate way to address their

complaints is to take the case directly to the offending medium or to court, instead of to a

third-party intermediary.

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Few proponents of news councils argue for enforcement powers[3], but critics say that even news councils' non-binding decisions could be harmful to a free and unfettered press. At least one opponent notes that determinations are a dangerous precedent for the law, despite the good intentions of the news council in issuing them. Clayton Haswell, former editor of Contra Costa Newspapers in California and an ex-Associated Press editor for Minneapolis, said in a debate about news councils that even the "conversations" that news councils hold to make their determinations could be hazardous and "would be admissible as evidence in a defamation trial" (Stein 1997: 15). He added, "Not a single attorney I know believes that knowingly ignoring a news council verdict would be anything less than devastating…as evidence of reckless disregard" (1997: 15).

Another concern is the so-called "chilling effect" that any regulation—internal or external—upon the press can be argued to perpetuate. Richard Cohen writes for *The Nation*, "A council could be just one more threat for a journalist to avoid by playing it safe, and may ultimately hurt the very marketplace it seeks to protect. It could slow the free flow of ideas and work against individuals and organizations that take chances and break new ground. There's too little of that already" (1997: 11). G. Woodson Howe of the Omaha *World-Herald* notes, "The First Amendment guarantees that government may not regulate the press. Judges may not wield authority over the press. Why then, should the press voluntarily submit its work to a nongovernmental jury? … The claim that the credibility of the press would be improved by smug outsiders handing down verdicts is hard to sustain" (1997: 7). Haswell also agrees: despite the fact that news councils have no "real" authority, they might project a "moral authority that is the root of all real authority" (Stein 1997: 15). And John Consoli, in an editorial for *Editor & Publisher*

entitled "A Bad Idea," adds the ultimate fear: that news councils encourage more

regulation—by the government.

> [News councils] could, down the road, open the door to
> some types of regulations on the press by lawmakers, many
> of whom would jump at the chance to muzzle the press in
> the guise of doing right by responding to their constituents'
> complaints. ... New York Times executive editor Joseph
> Lelyveld reaffirmed his newspaper's longtime opposition to
> a national news council concept. Lelyveld said his
> newspaper has a "deep concern that voluntary regulation
> can lead, bit by bit, to more serious kinds of regulation."
> And regulation of any type is contradictory to the First
> Amendment, which reads: "Congress shall make NO law
> abridging the freedom of speech or of the press..." (1997:
> 6).

Not all media in the Twin Cities support the idea of a news council, either. A

recent interview with Stanley S. Hubbard, chairman, chief executive officer and president

of Hubbard Broadcasting, the corporate parent of Twin Cities television station KSTP-

TV and radio stations KSTP-AM and FM, clearly indicated his position toward news

councils.

> We've never belonged [to the MNC]. We have laws in this
> country and if you think we libeled you, you can ask us for
> a retraction. On almost every occasion, we've been able to
> work things out amicably with people who have disagreed
> with what we had to say. ... The News Council is a
> kangaroo court—ask the people at Channel 4 [WCCO-TV,
> who lost a highly publicized dispute with Northwest
> Airlines at the MNC a few months before] (Beal 1997: 2D).

These critiques must be addressed for the debate about news councils to move

forward. The overall voting records of both the National News Council and the MNC do

not show an anti-press bias. In its 11-year history, the National News Council heard 232

total cases. 116, or exactly half, were rejected and the media absolved. In only a quarter

of the cases were complaints against the media upheld, while the balance of the cases

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were either dismissed (15.9%), withdrawn or partially upheld/rejected (8.6%) (National News Council 1984, p. 6).

The MNC's record reveals similar results. Of its first 111 cases, 43.2% of the complaints against the media were rejected, while only 31.5% were upheld, 15.3% upheld in part and rejected in part, and 9.9% were resolved in other ways. But members of the news media are not convinced just by the overall voting patterns. There is also concern that individual council members might be biased against competing news organizations. KARE-11 television news director Tom Lindner says his station is uncomfortable with "the notion of taking a vote, especially since some of our competition are members of the Council" (Shepard 1997).

The records of the MNC allow us to examine the voting patterns of its members as well as the overall council vote. Since 1979, the individual votes of council members have been recorded in the written record of MNC hearings. This offers 17 years of data, with a total of 73 determinations during that time.

In previous research papers, we have used the determination as the unit of analysis for our examination of the MNC data. However, in this paper we will use individual voting records as well as determinations to consider the question of dissent on the MNC.

Coding Methodology

The MNC's determinations were analyzed using content analysis. The instrument used to conduct this analysis was generated, in large part, by reading a sample of the determinations. An emphasis was placed on later determinations because as the MNC's procedures were refined throughout the years, the information available is more

complete. A coding instrument was developed based on this process. A copy of the coding instrument can be found in Appendix A.

One aspect that is particularly noteworthy about the coding instrument is the four-part model used to characterize the nature of the complaint: type, subject, element and issue. Much of the work that exists in media ethics characterizes complaints about media behavior only in terms of the issues involved. Clearly this is an important aspect of the situation. But by reading the initial sample of complaints, it was evident that the concerns of grievants were often centered on particular element(s) of the media message (e.g., the headline, specific language choices, the placement of the item, etc.) rather than on the coverage as a whole. Additionally, the MNC's discussion about the appropriateness of the media organization's action often took into account the type of message involved (e.g., the standards for something published in an editorial were differed from the standards for an investigative piece). Finally, it seemed that media messages dealing with certain subjects (campaign coverage, crime and community controversies) were often the basis for complaints.

Reading the cases also revealed that many of the determinations involved decisions about several media messages, or about several different aspects of the same media message. Therefore, the four-part model was duplicated so that it would be possible to code up to six different aspects of a single determination.

Data was also gathered on individual members of the MNC over time. Each individual member's status on the MNC (public or media), type of media for media members (print or broadcast) work location (metro or outstate[4]), and sex. Table 2 below

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contains this data for members deemed to be "chronic" dissenters—those individuals who voted in at least five cases and who dissented in at least 1/3 of those cases.

Individual votes were also coded for each aspect of a single determination as well as for the individual overall and for the MNC overall. For example, if in a determination with two aspects, a member voted to reject both aspects, the data would reflect each individual rejection, as well as an overall member vote of "reject" and whatever the overall MNC voted. This makes the voting records for those 79 determinations that recorded them valuable information to examine the question of dissent.

Findings

In examining the individual voting records of the MNC members, we first looked for differences between those members representing the media and the public. Public members of the Minnesota News Council were only *slightly* more likely to uphold complaints against the media than were media members. Public members voted to uphold in 26.9% and to reject in 43.1% of the determinations, whereas media members voted to uphold 24.4% of the time, and to reject 46.4% of the complaints. The percentages of split voting (voting differently on separate aspects of the case) are very similar between media and public members.

We also wondered if a member's length of tenure on the MNC would have an impact on their voting. Interestingly, media and public members' lengths of tenure on the MNC are virtually identical, as reflected in Table 1. There does not seem to be a pattern of voting pro- or anti-media established over a lengthy tenure. What is striking is the number of people who always vote in agreement with the overall Council. Of the 122 members, 54 always voted in accord with the full Council. Only 15 members dissented

regularly. These "chronic" dissenters are people who had voted in 5 or more cases, and

who dissented in more than one third of those cases (see Table 2). The remaining 53

members dissented at some time, but did not show this regular pattern of dissent.

Table 1

Number of Determinations	Media Members	Public Members
None	11	10
1-4	16	16
5-9	13	13
10-14	7	7
15+	15	14

This table shows the length of tenure of MNC members in terms of
how many determinations they voted in. For example, if a media
member voted in 13 determinations, he/she would be one of the
seven members in the Media Members column who voted in 10-14
determinations.

Table 2
"Chronic" dissenters: members who voted in
five or more determinations and dissented in at least 1/3 of those

Name	Public or Media Member?	Work Location	Sex	Total Number of Determinations Participated In	Total Number of Dissents	Number of "Problematic" Determinations Dissented In
Fairbanks	Public	Metro	Female	8	4	4
Givens	Public	Metro	Female	5	3	0
Handberg	Media	Metro	Male	15	6	5
Hilger	Media	Outstate	Male	13	7	5
Larson	Media	Outstate	Female	25	11	5
LeGrand	Public	Metro	Female	14	5	5
Orwoll	Public	Outstate	Female	25	9	4
Parker	Public	Metro	Female	15	7	5
Parry	Media	Metro	Female	6	3	2
Reeder	Media	Metro	Female	9	5	5
Selby	Public	Outstate	Female	13	4	3
Seltzer	Public	Metro	Male	9	4	2
Sorensen	Media	Outstate	Female	8	4	3
Stanley	Media	Metro	Female	17	6	5
Tuttle	Public	Metro	Female	9	4	2

Because the chronic dissenters were unique, we examined their records more

completely. They were no more or less likely to vote for or against the media. Often, their

dissent differed from the overall Council vote only in one aspect of the determination.

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These dissenters are evenly split between media and public members, and reflect the council as a whole in the number of metro and outstate representatives. Twelve of the 15 chronic dissenters (80%) are women. This is striking because overall MNC membership has been approximately 60% male and 40% female.

Having discovered low levels of dissent in individual voting patterns, we next turned to the question of dissent in particular determinations. Of the 73 determinations that contain individual voting records, only 22 have five or more dissenting votes. With a membership of 24 and an average hearing attendance rate of 18-20, this means that approximately 25% of those voting disagreed with the overall Council. Only four determinations have nine or more dissenting votes. As Table 3 below and the last column of Table 2, above, demonstrate, it is not only the chronic dissenters who caused these determinations to have high levels of dissent. A closer review of these determinations shows that the more complicated determinations (those with a higher number of aspects coded per determination) are the ones that generate the highest levels of dissent. This makes sense, since there are more opportunities for disagreement in these "problematic" determinations. Additionally, we found that these determinations are not generally the "high-profile" determinations—the ones that generate the most publicity.

The determinations with five or more dissenting votes differ from the overall group of determinations in several respects. Most notable are the differences among grievants and issues.

Grievant types. The "problematic" determinations (those with five or more dissents) were more likely to be brought by government organizations—27.6% of "problematic" determinations versus only 8.1% of all determinations. On the other hand,

Table 3—Determinations with five or more dissenters

Det. No.	Determination Title	Date	Summary	Council Holding	Dissenters	Dissent Reasons
42	Randy Johnson vs. WTCN-TV	9/18/80	County commissioner complained about two reports that the television station had broadcast about a breakfast meeting of the county board. The broadcasts had portrayed the meeting as "shrouded in secrecy."	Rejected	Anderson. Hetland. Provost, *Selby, Tuttle*	All: Board members had been given a disproportionately short period of air time to state their side of the story.
43	Chester Mirocha vs. *St. Paul Dispatch*	11/17/81	U of MN plant pathology professor complained that newspaper damaged his reputation by falsely implying that he knowingly conducted secret biological warfare research for State Dept. despite Univ. ban. Also alleged unprofessional conduct by reporter.	Rejected	All partial: Early, *Fairbanks,* Provost, Miles, *Selby,* Brooks	Early, Fairbanks, Provost: Professor was harassed by reporter. Miles, Selby: Paper did not falsely imply that professor breached Univ. ban; the description of "secrecy" was apt. Brooks: Paper was insensitive to professor, which resulted in "overkill."
45	Proctor City Council vs. *Proctor Journal*	3/29/82	City council complained that newspaper (1) was inaccurate and misleading in reporting of financial data, (2) implied that council members were racists, (3) falsely claimed that a violation of state open meeting laws took place, (4) attributed statements to council member that he did not actually make, and (5) used pejorative language to tarnish council members' integrity.	Upheld	All partial: Carlson, *Fairbanks,* Fushan, Graven, Higgins, Kramer (abstain in part 3: Simonett)	No separate dissents, no illuminating discussion.
48*	Scott Shely vs. *Stillwater Evening Gazette*	3/22/83	Member of pro-nuclear weapons freeze group complained that newspaper had (1) not covered a nuclear freeze march; (2) associated freeze proponents with radical leftists; (3) denied access to letters column; and (4) distorted news about Stillwater's consideration of freeze resolution	Rejected (all four parts)	**Part 1:** Allen, Early, *Fairbanks,* Gilson, Peek, Ziegenhagen; **Part 3:** Allen, Brommer, Brooks, Early, *Tuttle,* Ziegenhagen; **Part 4:** (all partial) Allen, Brommer, Brooks, Early, Peek, Ziegenhagen	**Part 1:** Paper exercised poor news judgment in not covering a nuclear freeze march. **Part 3:** Council did not have enough information to determine if letters to the editor had been handled appropriately. **Part 4:** Story in question was acceptable, but headline was misleading.

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* next to number of determination: nine or more dissenters
Dissenter name *bold and italic*: "chronic" dissenter

Det. No.	Determination Title	Date	Summary	Council Holding	Dissenters	Dissent Reasons
49	St. Louis Cty. Attorney's Office vs. *Star & Tribune*	3/83	Asst. cty. atty. complained that newspaper improperly published identifying information about a witness in a criminal proceeding for swindling.	Rejected	Peek (dissent in part), *Fairbanks*, Gilson, Ryan, *Selby*	Peek: If any names were to be used, all names should have been used. / Fairbanks, Gilson, Ryan, Selby: Newspaper should have used greater sensitivity in considering whether to publish the information about the victim.
70	The Bunkers vs. *Owatonna People's Press*	10/23/87	Community member complained that newspaper had disclosed her name as the witness to a crime.	Upheld	Ashmore, Bednar, Casey, Dornfeld, Falkman, *Orwoll*, Persons	All: Complaint should have been denied because her name was appropriately published; "we are telling the newspaper to censor information...because 'the story would be just as good without it.'"
76	Zachary Zoul vs. *Mankato Free Press*	9/23/88	City administrator complained that newspaper published (1) an editorial, and (2) a news story, both containing factual errors and false implications about his job performance.	Upheld (part 1); Rejected (part 2)	Part 1: McDowall, Mundale, *Orwoll*, Pennock Part 2: *Larson*, Sundin (abstain: *Orwoll*)	No separate dissents, no illuminating discussion.
80*	MACCRAY School District v. *West Central Tribune*	2/2/90	School district complained that newspaper was not publishing its cooperative school district combination name ("MACCRAY") in all capital letters as legally registered; it was using "Maccray."	Upheld	Ashmore, Casey, Hanley, *Larson*, Stone, Swain, Tanick	All: Majority spoke with its heart, not its head. "Professional newspapers do not decide to use upper-case or lower-case letters because a school board demands it. They set up rules that, in their people's judgment, best help the readers quickly and fairly understand the printed information." / Casey, Hanley additional dissent: In upholding the complaint, the Council veered away from its tradition of "weighing the merit of cases on the basis of accuracy, fairness or balance" and toward trivial questions of newspaper style.
85	WAMM and WWW vs. KARE-TV	8/29/90	Activist groups complained that television station had broadcast factual inaccuracies about welfare fraud and abuse. This was a third-party grievance—i.e., the parties bringing the complaint were not directly involved in it.	Rejected	Ashmore, Tanick, Warder (abstain: Stauffer, Dornfeld, Parrish)	Dissents were without comment. / Dornfeld, Parrish special abstention: Council should not have heard the case; it ignored its own rules about not taking third-party complaints. Council has set a dangerous precedent.
88	Dr. Morris Kurtz vs. *St. Cloud Times*	4/19/91	Athletic director complained of unfair editorial about his turning in of a rival player who had appeared in a clothing ad in violation of NCAA rules.	Rejected	Gilson, Huynh, *Orwoll*, *Parker*, Pennock (abstain: *Hilger*)	All: Paper had ignored earlier comment by director noting that he would uphold NCAA rules; "gossip is not reporting."

* next to number of determination: nine or more dissenters
Dissenter name *bold and italic*: "chronic" dissenter

Det. No.	Determination Title	Date	Summary	Council Holding	Dissenters	Dissent Reasons
92	Metropolitan Council vs. WCCO-TV	1/9/92	Council complained that television station had acted contrary to "accepted journalistic conventions" in ignoring an embargo placed on a news release by the council.	Upheld	*Hilger, Larson,* Parrish, Tanick (abstain: *Handberg*)	All: Embargoes are generally valuable; however, in this case the embargo was somewhat ambiguous. Additionally, the embargo seemed to have been imposed for the Met Council's own political convenience. Hilger additional dissent: News embargoes are objectionable because they often favor newspaper deadlines and are used to manipulate the media.
93	William Lass vs. *Star Tribune*	4/14/92	Mankato State Univ. professor complained that the newspaper failed to contact him for a story in which a student made accusations against him.	Upheld	Dornfeld, *Parker,* Swain (abstain: *LeGrand;* Simonett	All: Paper's conduct was not endorsed, but an apology that the paper issued to professor (prompted by Council process) should have relieved the paper from the formal complaint.
95	Sally Evert vs. *Stillwater Evening Gazette*	12/10/92	Former county commissioner complained that newspaper treated her unfairly in her re-election campaign by (1) running a campaign-generated article for her opponent as a news story, (2) running a thank-you from her opponent as a guest column with a photo and a thank-you from her without photo, and (3) running a critical letter to the editor from her opponent's campaign manager without identifying the writer.	Upheld (all parts)	Part 2: Graham, *Handberg, Larson, Parker,* Parrish, Simonett, *Stanley* (abstain in pt. 3: *Parker)*	No separate dissents. no illuminating discussion.
96*	Pam Coyle vs. *Austin Daily Herald*	12/10/92	Police dispatcher complained that newspaper had (1) made errors about her job status and (2) had treated her unfairly by running critical comments about her in its "Anonymous Comments" feature.	Upheld (both parts)	Part 1: *Larson, Parker,* Smith, Simonett, *Handberg,* Pennock Part 2: *Parker, Hilger, Larson, Orvoll*	No separate dissents, no illuminating discussion.

* next to number of determination: nine or more dissenters
Dissenter name *bold and italic*: "chronic" dissenter

Det. No.	Determination Title	Date	Summary	Council Holding	Dissenters	Dissent Reasons
98	Chief John Laux, Minneapolis Police Dept. vs. KARE-TV	6/17/93	Police chief complained that television station did not observe acceptable journalistic standards when it (1) transported a murder suspect from Chicago to Minneapolis without informing the police in either city, the pilot of the plane, or the driver of the hired van, (2) located and attempted to contact a witness, and (3) contributed to a "circus" atmosphere in a different case when it arrived at the scene of a suspect's surrender at police headquarters with the suspect's girlfriend, who was then under police surveillance.	Upheld (parts 1 and 2); Rejected (part 3)	Part 1: *Hilger*, Kostouros (abstain: *Sorensen*) Part 2: Covington, Graham, *Handberg*, Pine, Smith, *Stanley*, Van Pilsum (abstain: *Reeder*, *Sorensen*) Part 3: *Hilger* (abstain: *Sorensen*)	Part 1: Hilger: Station took unusual risks, but a public good was accomplished with the return of a suspected murderer. "In sum, there are times when mitigating circumstances present themselves..." From discussion: Part 1: Kostouros: Station did not "buy" the story by providing the suspect transportation back to Minneapolis. While it is unwise to subject employees to danger, it is not wrong.
99	St. Paul Port Authority vs. *City Pages*	12/9/93	Port authority complained that (1) an article about its financial affairs misinformed and misled readers, and (2) a letter to the editor from it was cut drastically.	Rejected (part 1); Upheld (part 2)	Part 1: Dissent: Kiernan, Smith, *Sorensen*, *Stanley* (abstain: *LeGrand*)	Stanley: Paper's standard on letters to editor was reasonable and not unfair.
101	Minnesota Dept. of Health v. KSTP-TV	6/23/94	Health dept. complained that television station had (1) painted an unfair picture of a dept. retreat, and (2) had used a hidden camera inappropriately.	Upheld (both parts)	Part 1: *Reeder*, Van Pilsum Part 2: *Hilger*, *Parry*, *Stanley*, Van Pilsum (both parts abstain: Simonett)	Part 1: No separate dissent. From discussion: Van Pilsum: Overall story was about state-wide overspending at retreats. The story was fair. Part 2: Hilger: Insufficient information to support unethical use of hidden camera. Parry, Stanley, Van Pilsum: Use of hidden camera at a bar where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy is acceptable, and there seemed to be no other way to get the information. Identities were masked, and the story was clearly targeting state policies, not the individuals interviewed.

* next to number of determination: nine or more dissenters
Dissenter name *bold and italic*: "chronic" dissenter

Det. No.	Determination Title	Date	Summary	Council Holding	Dissenters	Dissent Reasons
103*	Ellis Olkon vs. *Twin Cities Reader*	Unknown	Husband of county board candidate complained that newspaper, in a story just before the primary election, (1) was unfair in relying upon sources hostile to him and not contacting him for comment, (2) defamed him by reporting that he had financial interest in a "whorehouse," and (3) inaccurately characterized the results of a lawsuit.	Upheld (part 1); Rejected (parts 2 and 3)	Part 1: *Parker, Parry, Sorensen, Stanley* Part 2: *Hilger*, Peterson, Pumarlo (abstain: *Handberg*) Part 3: *Handberg, Hilger, Parker,* Pumarlo (abstain in all three: Anderson)	No separate dissents; no illuminating discussion.
104	Paul Thiede vs. *Brainerd Daily Dispatch*	Unknown	County commissioner complained that newspaper editor acted unethically when he sent a private letter on newspaper stationery to solicit letters to support his position in a bitter county debate.	Rejected	Kostouros (abstain: Anderson, Cytron, *LeGrand*, Smith, *Stanley*)	No separate dissent. From discussion: Kostouros: On the role of the journalist: "Many believe it should be only through the pages of the newspaper—let others act, while the paper only observes. Some say that's too narrow. Miller [editor] thought so, so he went an extra step, but he did it after writing an editorial ripping the county board. Trying to get people to write letters to the editor was awkward, but there was nothing wrong with it."
107	Jackie Schwietz vs. KTCA's *Newsnight Minnesota*	9/21/95	Executive director of anti-abortion group complained that television station had (1) violated a promise to her about an interview she had granted, and (2) violated an understanding with a news source.	Rejected (both parts)	Part 1: Sellers (abstain: Anderson, *LeGrand, Seltzer*) Part 2: Amaris, *LeGrand,* Reeder, *Seltzer* (abstain: Anderson, Sellers)	No separate dissents. From discussion: Seltzer: Exec. dir. had a promise and an expectation that should have been honored. Difficult for reporters to form relationships with sources when they cannot assure them about how a story will be ("moving target").

* next to number of determination: nine or more dissenters
Dissenter name *bold and italic*: "chronic" dissenter

Det. No.	Determination Title	Date	Summary	Council Holding	Dissenters	Dissent Reasons
110	Ellen Mork v. WJON Radio	6/6/96	School board member complained that radio editorialist had been unfair to her by (1) not checking the assertions by another board member against her before airing them, and (2) not including her version of the facts in the original airing of the editorial (even though she had been offered the opportunity to respond afterwards, and the editorialist had attempted to contact her beforehand).	Upheld (part 1); Dismissed (part 2—Council believed that vote on part 1 had addressed part 2)	Barkelew, Jones, *LeGrand, Reeder* (abstain: Anderson)	No separate dissents. From discussion: Jones: Editorial are part of a debate. Board member had the opportunity to respond, and the audience knows to expect debate from the radio station. Reeder: Opinions are provided to the public for the purpose of being debated; the editorialist clearly said on-air that he did not know the facts.
111	Dr. L. David Mech vs. *Star Tribune*	6/20/96	Biologist specializing in wolf research complained that article about him (1) carried a prejudicial headline, (2) used inflammatory language, (3) used too many anonymous sources, and (4) leveled charges against him without substantiation.	Upheld (parts 1 and 2); Rejected (parts 3 and 4)	**Part 1:** Conner, *Handberg*, Hoben, *Reeder*, Smith, Van Pilsum **Part 2:** Connor, *Handberg*, *Reeder*, Smith, Thompson, Van Pilsum **Part 3:** Amaris, Sellers, *Seltzer* **Part 4:** Barkelew, *Seltzer* (abstain in all parts: Anderson)	No separate dissents, no illuminating discussion.

* next to number of determination: nine or more dissenters
Dissenter name **bold and italic**: "chronic" dissenter

complaints brought by public organizations (organizations that anyone can join, such as political parties) generated a higher level of dissent in only 4.5% of the "problematic" determinations, whereas 15.3% of the total determinations were brought by these groups. Other types of grievants were equally represented in both types of determinations.

Issues. Although 14.3% of all determinations raised questions about access, none of the "problematic" determinations addressed this issue. There have only been three determinations overall that have raised issues of privacy; however, two of those three determinations generated high levels of dissent.

Discussion/Conclusions

We found no evidence that predictors such as length of time on the Minnesota News Council and media/public status had no bearing on how a MNC member voted on the Council. Further, this and previous studies we have conducted on the Minnesota News Council have found no evidence that MNC members are in any way "out to get" the media. In fact, not only as an overall council has the vote has been approximately 50/50 for and against the media, but voting patterns of individual council members also do not demonstrate a tendency to vote for or against the media.

Those individuals determined to be "chronic" dissenters were evenly split between the media and public, although we did find that considerably more women than men tended to be dissenters. Our research on dissenters did not indicate any pattern in close cases (where there were five or more dissents). Rather, it appears that the common thread is the nature of the case itself. Simply stated, complex cases (those with multiple parts), not high-profile cases, are the ones where we detected the greatest dissention.

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Thus, we are left with a situation where socialization, not individual characteristics and demographics, appear to be exerting an influence. Our findings indicate that individuals who become MNC members take their MNC duties so seriously that they divest themselves of their past and their biases. In effect, members seem to construct for themselves and stand behind the sort of "veil of ignorance" envisioned by John Rawls (1971).

Bob Shaw, founding member of the MNC, in "How to Start a News Council," admonishes:

> Don't become trapped by the concept of representation.
> The problem never became a great one for us, but in my
> opinion it has great potential for mischief. I recommend
> that all candidates for council membership be carefully
> instructed that if they feel they *represent* any particular
> group in the population, they must check that
> representation at the door. They should be expected to use
> their own good judgment applied on the merits, not to carry
> water for outside special interests. If this point is ignored, a
> council could easily become a babel of 'activists'(Shaw
> 1998).

Clearly, MNC members see the News Council as something bigger than themselves, and approach their work on the council very seriously, and with a "duty-bound" sense. While it was beyond the scope of this research to query members as to their impressions of and relations to the MNC, we are reminded of the "Frontier Thesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner (1993), in which the historian argues that there was something in the process of Westward movement and the American West itself that changed the nation's early pioneers. This same phenomenon is seen in MNC members, who put on a mantel of impartiality and fairness when they sit on the Council.

Further research clearly is needed to analyze the complex psychological issues at play when individuals become MNC members. Nevertheless, our study indicates that there is something about serving on the News Council that tends to make members very mindful of their need to individually act in a fair and responsible manner when deciding themselves whether the media have been fair and responsible.

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[1] This document is available on the Minnesota News Council's web page, at <http://www.mtn.org/newscouncil>

[2] For a review of the history of news councils, see Hermanson (1990).

[3] Some commentators do, however. See Hughes 1997: 19 (a lamentation that the National News Council had "no teeth, no punitive powers" and a call for a privately funded new National News Council).

[4] "Metro" was considered to be the seven-county metro area made up of Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Washington, Scott and Carver counties.

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Appendix A
Coding Instrument

1. Hearing Determination number _____

2. Case # _____

3. Date of events (publication, broadcast) _____ (mm/yy)

4. Date complaint received _____ (mm/yy)

5. Date of hearing _____ (mm/yy)

6. Primary Grievant name _____

7. Primary Grievant location
   1   metro area
   2   outstate
   3   out-of-state

8. Type of Grievant (Primary)
   1   Private Individual(s)
   2   Public official(s)
   3   Public figure(s)
   4   Relative of public official(s)
   5   Relative of public figure(s)
   6   Public Organization(s)
   7   Private Organization(s)
   8   Business(es)
   9   Government Organization(s)
   10   Media organization(s)
   11   Other

9. Secondary Grievant name _____

10. Secondary Grievant location
   1   metro area
   2   outstate
   3   out-of-state

11. Type of Grievant (Secondary)
   1   Private Individual(s)
   2   Public official(s)
   3   Public figure(s)
   4   Relative of public official(s)
   5   Relative of public figure(s)
   6   Public Organization(s)
   7   Private Organization(s)
   8   Business(es)
   9   Government Organization(s)
   10   Media organization(s)
   11   Other

12. Media Type

1 daily newspaper
2 weekly newspaper
3 college newspaper
4 newspaper -- other
5 radio station
6 TV station
7 wire service
8 magazine
9 multiple media
10 other

13. Media Circulation/market size

1 Large (100,000 +)
2 Medium (50,000 - 99,999)
3 Med/Small (30,000 - 49,999)
4 Small (0 - 29,999)

14. Media Location

1 metro area
2 outstate
3 out-of-state

15. Media response

1 no response
2 letter
3 video
4 attended hearing
5 copy of relevant company policy
6 attended + video
7 other

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16. If response, who

Print media:
1　Publisher
2　Editor
3　reporter
4　other
5　publisher/editor
6　publisher/reporter
7　publisher/other
8　publisher/editor/reporter
9　publisher/editor/other
10　publisher/reporter/other
11　publisher/editor/reporter/other
12　editor/reporter
13　editor/other
14　editor/reporter/other
15　reporter/other

Broadcast:
30　general manager
31　news management
32　on-air talent
33　other　—
34　general manager/news management
35　general manager/on-air talent
36　general manager/other
37　gen mgr/news mgmt/on air talent
38　gm/nm/other
39　gm/oat/other
40　gm/nm/oat/other
41　nm/oat
42　nm/other
43　nm/oat/other
44　oat/other

___ not identified
___ no response

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17. Type of media message - Part I

1 advertising
2 editorial
3 photograph
4 video
5 opinion
6 letters to the editor
7 news
8 investigative
9 poll/survey
10 corrections
11 cartoon
12 analysis
13 other:_____

18. Subject of media message - Part I

1 campaign coverage
2 crime
3 community controversy/public issue
4 other

19. element of message - Part I

1 promo
2 headline
3 placement
4 editing
5 typeface
6 attribution
7 language
8 accuracy
9 not one element central to complaint
10 other

20. Issue -- Part I

1 conflicts of interest
2 deception (hidden cameras, lying, etc.)
3 privacy
4 inappropriate for children
5 fairness
6 stereotyping (racism, sexism, etc.)
7 sensationalism
8 plagiarism
9 source/reporter relationship
10 access
11 lack of coverage
12 other

21. Type of media message - Part II

1   advertising
2   editorial
3   photograph
4   video
5   opinion
6   letters to the editor
7   news
8   investigative
9   poll/survey
10 corrections
11 cartoon
12 analysis
13 other:_____

22. Subject of media message - Part II

1   campaign coverage
2   crime
3   community controversy/public issue
4   other

23. element of message - Part II

1   promo
2   headline
3   placement
4   editing
5   typeface
6   attribution
7   language
8   accuracy
9   not one element central to complaint
10 other

24. Issue -- Part II

1   conflicts of interest
2   deception (hidden cameras, lying, etc.)
3   privacy
4   inappropriate for children
5   fairness
6   stereotyping (racism, sexism, etc.)
7   sensationalism
8   plagiarism
9   source/reporter relationship
10 access
11 lack of coverage
12 other

25. Type of media message - Part III

1 advertising
2 editorial
3 photograph
4 video
5 opinion
6 letters to the editor
7 news
8 investigative
9 poll/survey
10 corrections
11 cartoon
12 analysis
13 other:_____

26. Subject of media message - Part III

1 campaign coverage
2 crime
3 community controversy/public issue
4 other

27. element of message - Part III

1 promo
2 headline
3 placement
4 editing
5 typeface
6 attribution
7 language
8 accuracy
9 not one element central to complaint
10 other

28. Issue -- Part III

1 conflicts of interest
2 deception (hidden cameras, lying, etc.)
3 privacy
4 inappropriate for children
5 fairness
6 stereotyping (racism, sexism, etc.)
7 sensationalism
8 plagiarism
9 source/reporter relationship
10 access
11 lack of coverage
12 other

29. Type of media message - Part IV

1 advertising
2 editorial
3 photograph
4 video
5 opinion
6 letters to the editor
7 news
8 investigative
9 poll/survey
10 corrections
11 cartoon
12 analysis
13 other:_____

30. Subject of media message - Part IV

1 campaign coverage
2 crime
3 community controversy/public issue
4 other

31. element of message - Part IV

1 promo
2 headline
3 placement
4 editing
5 typeface
6 attribution
7 language
8 accuracy
9 not one element central to complaint
10 other

32. Issue -- Part IV

1 conflicts of interest
2 deception (hidden cameras, lying, etc.)
3 privacy
4 inappropriate for children
5 fairness
6 stereotyping (racism, sexism, etc.) _
7 sensationalism
8 plagiarism
9 source/reporter relationship
10 access
11 lack of coverage
12 other

33. Type of media message - Part V

1 advertising
2 editorial
3 photograph
4 video
5 opinion
6 letters to the editor
7 news
8 investigative
9 poll/survey
10 corrections
11 cartoon
12 analysis
13 other:_____

34. Subject of media message - Part V

1 campaign coverage
2 crime
3 community controversy/public issue
4 other

35. element of message - Part V

1 promo
2 headline
3 placement
4 editing
5 typeface
6 attribution
7 language
8 accuracy
9 not one element central to complaint
10 other

36. Issue -- Part V

1 conflicts of interest
2 deception (hidden cameras, lying, etc.)
3 privacy
4 inappropriate for children
5 fairness
6 stereotyping (racism, sexism, etc.)
7 sensationalism
8 plagiarism
9 source/reporter relationship
10 access
11 lack of coverage
12 other

37. Type of media message - Part VI

   1 advertising
   2 editorial
   3 photograph
   4 video
   5 opinion
   6 letters to the editor
   7 news
   8 investigative
   9 poll/survey
  10 corrections
  11 cartoon
  12 analysis
  13 other:_____

38. Subject of media message - Part VI

   1 campaign coverage
   2 crime
   3 community controversy/public issue
   4 other

39. element of message - Part VI

   1 promo
   2 headline
   3 placement
   4 editing
   5 typeface
   6 attribution
   7 language
   8 accuracy
   9 not one element central to complaint
  10 other

40. Issue -- Part VI

   1 conflicts of interest
   2 deception (hidden cameras, lying, etc.)
   3 privacy
   4 inappropriate for children
   5 fairness
   6 stereotyping (racism, sexism, etc.)
   7 sensationalism
   8 plagiarism
   9 source/reporter relationship
  10 access ____
  11· lack of coverage
  12 other

41. Voting -- Overall

1 upheld
2 rejected
3 upheld in part, rejected in part
4 upheld in part, dismissed in part
5. rejected in part, dismissed in part
6 other

42. Voting -- Part I

1 upheld
2 rejected
3 dismiss
4 abstain
5 other

43. Voting -- Part II

1 upheld
2 rejected
3 dismiss
4 abstain
5 other

44. Voting -- Part III

1 upheld
2 rejected
3 dismiss
4 abstain
5 other

45. Voting -- Part IV

1 upheld
2 rejected
3 dismiss
4 abstain
5 other

46. Voting -- Part V

1 upheld
2 rejected
3 dismiss
4 abstain
5 other

47. Voting -- Part VI

1 upheld
2 rejected
3 dismiss
4 abstain
5 other

48. Individual Voting records

1--upheld   2--rejected   3--dismiss   4--abstain   5--other

Participant	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	Part VI
1 Wallace Allen	____	____	____	____	____	____
2 Victoria Amaris	____	____	____	____	____	____
3 Douglas Amdahl	____	____	____	____	____	____
4 Oscar Anderson	____	____	____	____	____	____
5 Paul Anderson	____	____	____	____	____	____
6 Kerry Ashmore	____	____	____	____	____	____
7 Ann Barkelew	____	____	____	____	____	____
8 David Beaulieu	____	____	____	____	____	____
9 Beth Bednar	____	____	____	____	____	____
10 Jim Bormann	____	____	____	____	____	____
11 Bernard Brommer	____	____	____	____	____	____
12 George Brooks	____	____	____	____	____	____
13 Mary T. Carlson	____	____	____	____	____	____
14 Don Casey	____	____	____	____	____	____
15 Harold Chucker	____	____	____	____	____	____
16 Ronald Clark	____	____	____	____	____	____
17 Nancy Conner	____	____	____	____	____	____
18 Leon Cook	____	____	____	____	____	____
19 Bob Covington	____	____	____	____	____	____
l Craig, Jr.	____	____	____	____	____	____

1--upheld   2--rejected   3--dismiss   4--abstain   5--other

Participant	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	Part VI
21 Barry Cytron	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
22 Ruth Denny	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
23 Steven Dornfeld	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
24 Phil Duff	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
25 Jane Earley	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
26 Donald Egert	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
27 Evelyn Fairbanks	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
28 Linda Falkman	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
29 John Finnegan	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
30 Debra Flemming	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
31 Dorothy Florence -LeGrand	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
32 Mike Foley	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
33 Mary Forsythe	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
34 John Froyd	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
35 Nancy Fushan	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
36 J. Edward Gerald	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
37 Bettie Gibson	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
38 Gary Gilson	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
39 Roxanne Givens	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
40 Ronald Graham	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

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1--upheld   2--rejected   3--dismiss   4--abstain   5--other

Participant	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	Part VI
41 David Graven						
42 Ron Handberg						
43 Bill Hanley						
44 Bower Hawthorne						
45 Paul Hedberg						
46 James Hetland, Jr.						
47 Kenneth Hickman						
48 Harold Higgins						
49 Andy Hilger						
50 Karen Himle						
51 Molly Hoben						
52 Thomas Holloran						
53 Deborah Howell						
54 Nghi Si Huynh						
55 Mike Igoe						
56 Leola Johnson						
57 Syl Jones						
58 Mindi Keirnan						
59 Jean King						
60 William Kling						
n Kostouros						

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1--upheld   2--rejected   3--dismiss   4--abstain   5--other

Participant	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	Part VI
62 Michael Kramer	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
63 Carole Larson	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
64 Terry McCullough	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
65 Wendy McDowall	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
66 Harriet McPherson	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
67 Yusef Mgeni	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
68 James Miles	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
69 Lowell "Tip" Mills	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
70 John Milton	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
71 Malcolm Moos	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
72 Susan Mundale	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
73 Ruth Myers	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
74 Cecil Newman	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
75 Luanne Nyberg	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
76 Glenn Oliver	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
77 Laverne Orwoll	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
78 Judith Parker	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
79 Penny Parrish	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
80 Kate Parry	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
81 William Pearce	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
82 Mary Peek	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

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1--upheld   2--rejected   3--dismiss   4--abstain   .5--other

Participant	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	Part VI
83 George Pennock	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
84 Charlie Persons	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
85 Bill Peterson	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
86 C. Donald Peterson	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
87 Sandra Peterson	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
88 Carol Lynn Pine	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
89 Robert Provost	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
90 Jim Pumarlo	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
91 Maureen Reeder	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
92 Jerry Ringhofer	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
93 Frank Rodriguez	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
94 Gordon Rosenmeier	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
95 Bob Ryan	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
96 Rod Searle	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
97 Nancy Selby	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
98 Laurisa Sellers	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
99 Jonathon Seltzer	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
100 Robert Shaw	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
101 Bernie Shellum	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
102 John Simonett	_____	_____	_____	144	_____	_____
on Smith	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

1--upheld   2--rejected   3--dismiss   4--abstain   5--other

Participant	Part I	Part II	Part III	Part IV	Part V	Part VI
104 Sonja Sorensen-Craig						
105 Warren Spannaus						
106 David Speer						
107 Gordon Spielman						
108 Kate Stanley						
109 Dennis Stauffer						
110 Gary Stevens						
111 John Stone						
112 Louise Sundin						
113 Tom Swain						
114 Marshall Tanick						
115 Terry Thompson						
116 Emily Ann Tuttle						
117 Trish Van Pilsum						
118 Sandra Vargas						
119 John Warder						
120 Annette Whiting						
121 Nedra Wicks						
122 Mary Ziegenhagen						

Anecdotal comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

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Journalistic and Humanist Approaches:
Movie Reviews in *The New Yorker* and *Entertainment Weekly*

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ABSTRACT

This study compared reviews of 15 movies in *Entertainment Weekly* and *The New Yorker* to determine whether they used a journalistic or humanist approach, according to Bywater and Sobchack (1989). Using content analysis, the researcher coded for humanist mentions in eight major categories.

The results showed that both magazines employed the journalistic approach in the majority of their reviews, which meant they concentrated more on describing facts about the movies rather than interpreting humanist traits.

INTRODUCTION

The motion picture is one of the world's most recent and important art forms. While theater, painting, architecture, literature, musical composition, and other forms of artistic expression have existed for hundreds of years, movies have only been around since Thomas Edison and W.L. Dickson invented the Kinetograph, the world's first motion picture camera in 1889. And, in a real sense, movies weren't deemed truly relevant within the public sphere for another sixty years.

On May 26, 1952, in the case *Burstyn v. Wilson*, the Supreme Court determined the importance of movies once and for all when it declared movies constituted a "significant medium for the communication of ideas" (Jowett 1976, 407). With this decision, the cinema became important as more than just entertainment; it not only solidified its place in the art world, but more importantly, it became free speech.

Movies stand out because, as both art and speech, they are accessible and affect different people in different ways. In his book, *The Major Film Theories: An Introduction*, J. Dudley Andrew wrote, the movies grew "like a vine around the great trunks of serious and popular culture," and they even began "to alter the culture's view of history" (1976, 11). The movie critic Pauline Kael called them "the supreme art." As she put it, "Our responses to a movie grow out of our experience, knowledge, temperament — maybe even our biochemistry ... they touch people's responses on so many levels" (Espen 1994, 135). This accessibility and impact on popular culture is best demonstrated with the case of English actor Laurence Olivier's film version of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: six months after it was first released in 1948, more people had seen *Hamlet* on screen than all those who had watched the live production over the previous 400 years (Titchener 1988, 31).

As the prestige of motion pictures grew, so did movie criticism. "Never before has an art been dogged so quickly by intellectuals trying to understand it or, more often, trying to

set it properly on its way" (Andrew 1976, 11). Film theory and criticism date back almost

to the beginning of the movies, and, as early as 1935, it was accepted in academic circles

that film was an art form (Andrew 1976, 13). However, at that time, serious discussion of

movies was mostly limited to those tightly controlled academic circles. It wasn't until

motion pictures found acceptance as art among the masses that movie criticism was able to

branch out beyond university and scholarly study. Movie criticism did not reach its present

level of maturity as a discipline until the mid-1960s (Chang 1975, 721).

Now, movie criticism is everywhere: in every major newspaper and magazine, on

television shows, on the radio, in newsletters, in trade publications, in religious

publications, and now on the Internet. Each of these media varies with respect to audience,

social conventions, and variations in the physical media themselves, which raises certain

questions. For instance, do the critics for these media differ in the movies they pay

attention to and what they say about them? Are these critics different not only in the

particular movies of which they approve, but also in what they focus on when deriving

their conclusions? How does the audience for a publication affect what the critic says

about certain movies?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Both television and the movies have been content analyzed numerous times, especially in terms of violence and how it affects young viewers. Usually, when a movie is studied, the purpose is to measure how the audience reacts to the movie's content (Chang 1975, 721). But little has been done to study the criticism of movies and, more importantly, how that criticism relates to various audiences.

This was the purpose behind Robert Travis' 1990 qualitative study, "The Routinization of Film Criticism." He noted:

> . . . comparatively little has been done in the sociology of film to examine how film criticism is 'managed' in society. Although such attention is paid to the making and consuming of film, we have not focused enough on the business of interpretation. Thus, we need to ask: Who is film criticism written for? How is it written? And who benefits? (1990, 51)

Travis used the theories of social fashion to determine that movie criticism is a way of "making the ambiguous neat and clean" (1990, 51). He argued that movie critics use routinization, which is "a way of ordering the world and making sense out of the absurd and the obtuse" (1990, 53). He pointed out that movie critics, like art and literary critics, are a vital part of society because the average viewer does not have the skills to "read" a movie. In this way, movie critics set social fashion in the cinema.

In another study, Robert O. Wyatt and David P. Badger (1990) used surveys to determine the effects of information and evaluation in movie criticism, and arrived at a conclusion that greatly differed from Travis'. Wyatt and Badger found that movie reviews containing high levels of neutral information (facts about the plot, characters, actors, and director) and low levels of evaluative information (statements of opinion about the movie) created in the reader a higher degree of interest about the movie.

Wyatt and Badger concluded that "traditional theories of persuasion — those which analyze the effects of argumentation, dissonance, social judgment and the line — are not particularly relevant to examining the effects of reviews" (1990, 367). Wyatt and Badger found that critics do increase awareness of movies, but it is almost a side effect of their merely writing about those movies. Their critical opinions and evaluations of the movies in question make little difference unless it is unrelentingly negative. This is far cry from the idea of the critics' setting social fashion, as Travis determined.

This perceived lack of interest in serious movie criticism is a theme struck by Josh Young, a movie critic who often writes for *Esquire*. Young conceded that "[t]he growing influence of TV, the explosion of ancillary markets such as home video, and the public's shrinking attention span have all diminished the impact of serious criticism" (1996, 15). Young argued against those critics he termed "bottom-feeder reviewers who traffic in soundbites," also referred to within the movie industry as "quote whores" (1996, 15). These are critics who have no real interest in reviewing a movie on its artistic or social merits, but instead concentrate on writing catchy phrases movie studios can put on their advertising as proof that their movies are critically acclaimed.

This was simply unheard of twenty years ago. From the 50's to the 80's, movie critics still mattered (Young 1996, 15), and this is reflected in the kinds of media studies used to analyze them. Won H. Chang's 1975 study, "A Typology Study of Movie Critics," used a quantitative approach to determine the interrelationships between movie critics and the movies they wrote about. Chang's study relates directly to the study being performed here because of his concentration on the particular medium each critic used to spread his message. To Chang — who took obvious influence from the writings of Marshall McLuhan — the medium says a great deal about each critic and what he says.

Using reviews by 38 critics of 81 movies nationally distributed in the United States in 1972, Chang developed a system where he rated the critics according to whether they favorably reviewed the movie, had a mixed review, or gave it an unfavorable review. By

setting up a matrix, he was able to group the critics into three categories: elites, auteurists, and entertainment-oriented. These critic types were organized in terms of: 1) their individual power as critics; 2) the power of the medium the critic used; 3) the nature of the critic's medium and its audiences, and 4) the critic's personality (Chang 1975, 722).

According to Chang's study, the elites were mostly magazine critics who wrote for "prestigious news magazines" and "elite, upper middle-class publications such as *The New Yorker, New York Magazine, New Republic*, and *Esquire*." Auteurists, the middle group, also wrote for magazines and some newspapers, but they were smaller audience publications like *The Village Voice*. Entertainment-oriented critics, which most closely reflected the movie-going public, were almost entirely electronically-oriented (Chang 1975, 723-724). While some of these entertainment-oriented critics can be seen as legitimate, many of them developed into the breed Young complained about as dragging down the art of movie criticism in the name of marketing. Critics who regularly appear on television, such as Joel Siegel of ABC's *Good Morning America* and Gene Shalit of NBC's *Today*, have "become more famous than most filmmakers" (Young 1996, 16).

The categorization of movie critics is nothing new. Since movie criticism began, critics have been labeled with such diverse terms as moralists and sociologists. Critics have almost always been separated and categorized by the film theories they employ in reviewing movies. A film theory is a "system of propositions that claims to explain the nature and functions of cinema" (Bordwell 1989, 4). Film scholars consciously employ film theory when analyzing a work, but most movie critics writing for mass audiences use film theory as an unconscious guide. However, as David Bordwell points out in his book, *Making Meaning*, a critic has so many weapons at his disposal — language, rhetoric, metaphorical and punning redescription — that he has enough leeway to prove almost any theory valid (1989, 4).

In the arena of mass audience criticism, Tim Bywater and Thomas Sobchack laid out two main categories in their 1989 book *Introduction to Film Criticism*. The books itself

actually breaks movie criticism into three main approaches: textual, textual/contextual , and contextual. The latter two divisions can be further subdivided into more specific approaches, such as historical, genre, social science, and auteur theories of movie criticism. While these are all valid means to interpreting movies, mass media movie critics usually select parts of these disciplines at their leisure. In any one review, a newspaper critic might employ auteur theory, historical theory, and social science theory to help illuminate a movie.

Therefore, the textual approaches category is best suited for defining mass audience movie criticism. The term *textual approach* refers to the fact that the critic focuses on each individual movie by exploring its texts: plot, characters, themes, performers, etc. (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 1). The authors divide the textual division into two somewhat overlapping approaches relevant to this study: journalistic and humanist.

The journalistic approach produces movie reviews for general moviegoers who have yet to see the movie. These reviews have several functions. First and foremost, they provide information about movies currently playing in theaters — who's starring in them, who directed them, what they're about. Secondly, these reviews evaluate a movie in terms of entertainment value, "so that readers sympathetic to the reviewer's tastes have an idea whether or not they wish to spend their time and money to see it" (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 4). A third, and somewhat inadvertent function, is that they serve as publicity for the movie itself.

Most of these reviews are published in daily and weekly newspapers and weekly and monthly magazines, on both the local and national levels. Because these publications focus on a variety of topics, not just on movies, these journalists must write in the space allotted to them, which often restricts how detailed their reviews can be (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 3-16).

This work is mostly performed by working journalists who must produce the reviews on a deadline. They often have no special qualifications to be movie critics, but this does

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not mean they are incapable of producing good movie reviews. In fact, some of the greatest and most widely-read movie critics are not scholars, but rather working journalists like Pauline Kael of *The New Yorker*, Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and Janet Maslin of *The New York Times* (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 5).

Bywater and Sobchack make a distinction between a *reviewer* and a *critic*. For the most part, writers using the journalistic approach are more appropriately titled *reviewers* because they are more interested in neutral, factual information. Critics, on the other hand, are as interested in evaluating and interpreting movies as they are in informing audiences about them, which means that critics most often utilize the humanist approach (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 5).

The humanist approach, therefore, produces movie criticism for general, cultured readers who accept movies as fine art, and have probably already viewed the movie being discussed. This approach is termed *humanist* because "it sees film as an art like other arts, and film criticism as a general human activity practiced by the educated, cultured person" (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 25).

These reviews provide thorough discussion about a movie's appeal to an intelligent viewer. They interpret motifs and symbols in difficult movies, as well as evaluate both movies and those who make them on traditional aesthetic principles. Humanist critics are usually not mainstream journalists, but rather writers with critical experience in literature or fine arts, free-lance writers, academics from a wide variety of backgrounds, or film scholars. Humanist critics are found in variety of publications, ranging from humanities and arts journals like *Critical Inquiry* and *Film Quarterly*, to upscale magazines like *The New Republic* (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 24-25).

While the humanist and journalistic approaches to movie reviews have obvious differences, they are also interrelated. There is a fine line between the higher rungs of the journalistic approach and the lower rungs of the humanist approach. For instance, Bywater and Sobchack, the authors who created these categories, included *The New Yorker* as a

publication that features both the journalistic and humanist approaches. The authors also mentioned critics such as Stanley Kauffmann of *The New Republic* and Bosley Crowther of *The New York Times* who were working journalists, but reflected many characteristics of the humanist approach, especially because their name values connected with their publications gave them a certain notoriety and authoritative position (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 4). Despite the slightly overlapping edges of these two approaches, they can be considered separate, different and reflective of almost every movie critic writing for a mass audience in America.

The study performed here focused on movie reviews published in two magazines, *The New Yorker* and *Entertainment Weekly*, and evaluated them in terms of the humanist and journalistic approaches. By quantifying the number of mentions in each review that were reflective of humanist writing, this study attempted to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the styles of the two magazines in terms of evaluating popular movies.

STATEMENT OF HYPOTHESIS

The purpose of the study was to determine if and how movie reviews in a sophisticated, literary magazine like *The New Yorker* differ in form and content from movie reviews in a mass audience-oriented magazine like *Entertainment Weekly*. This would help demonstrate what are the current trends in movie criticism in the mass media.

Four hypotheses guided the research:

H_1: The critics at *Entertainment Weekly* will more often use the journalistic approach to write movie reviews, while the critics at *The New Yorker* will more often use the humanist approach to write movie reviews.
This hypothesis was directly related to Bywater and Sobchack's definitions of journalistic and humanist movie reviews as described in the literature review.

H_2: The critics writing for *Entertainment Weekly* will more often write their reviews assuming that the readers have not already seen the movie, while the critics writing for *The New Yorker* will more often write assuming that the readers have seen the movie.
Bywater and Sobchack pointed out that "[o]ne of the distinguishing characteristics of humanistic writing about film is the assumption that the reader has seen the film or films under discussion" (1989, 31). In humanist movie reviews, "there is the assumption that the reader and the writer have a common body of experience and knowledge within which the discussion can take place" (Bywater and Sobchack 1989, 32).
Therefore, if H_1 holds true that the reviews in *The New Yorker* are more often reflective of humanist writing, then H_2 should also be true.

H_3: The critics at *Entertainment Weekly* will state outright whether the movie was good or bad, while the critics at *The New Yorker* will be simply discuss the positive and negative aspects of the movie, thus encouraging the reader to be an active participant rather than a receiver of information.
According to Bywater and Sobchack, the main purpose of the journalistic movie reviewer is to give information about the basics of the movie being shown (plot, characters, etc.) and "to evaluate the film so that readers who are sympathetic to the reviewer's tastes have an idea whether or not they wish to spend their time and money to see it" (1989, 3-4).
On the other hand, Bywater and Sobchack wrote that the primary function of a humanist movie review "is not to guide people to see or not to see the film, but rather to comment on an event that writer and reader have shared" (1989, 31). Therefore, the critic will try to avoid making value judgements about the work as a whole that might influence the reader in his decision whether or not to see the movie.

METHOD AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Content analysis was the research method used in this study. Content analysis was chosen because it allowed the researcher to catalog the characteristics of the reviews, quantify them and then compare the results with statistical precision.

The scope for this study was a random sample of movie reviews that appeared in *The New Yorker* and *Entertainment Weekly* between January 1, 1994, and December 31, 1994. This time period, which reflects an actual calender year, was selected because it is the time period the National Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences uses when determining what movies are eligible for the that year's Academy Awards.

For a study involving movies, it was best to use a full calender year because the movie year tends to run in seasons. Summer is the time when studios release their expensive action movies that are expected to gross hundreds of millions of dollars, while fall and early winter are the times when they release more thoughtful and artistic movies in the hopes of getting attention from Oscar voters. To haved selected random movies from only a few months might haved biased the results by making it more likely that only a certain kind of movie would have been reviewed.

Entertainment Weekly and *The New Yorker* were chosen because they have drastically different styles appealing to different audiences, but they both have emphasis on art and culture. *Entertainment Weekly*, which began in 1990, has a colorful and complex lay-out design, wild fonts, and snappy bite-sized writing. It concentrates on what's popular at the moment, making it ideally suited for people in their teens and twenties who have grown up on MTV and cable television.

The New Yorker, on the other hand, has been in circulation for almost 73 years and has established a reputation for solid, literary writing in both fiction and non-fiction. It is a sophisticated magazine that appeals to older men and women with cartoons drawn by

"great cartoonists," factual pieces written by "journeymen of ability," interesting and unique profiles, along with excellent film, theater, art, and music criticism (Paneth 1983, 352). When Harold Ross founded *The New Yorker*, he said that it would be, "What is commonly called sophisticated . . . it will hate bunk . . ." (Paneth 1983, 352).

A total of 15 movies reviewed in both magazines was chosen for this study. The movies were randomly selected using a table of random numbers. The movies came from the list of motion pictures released domestically in the United States during the given period of time as listed in *Magill's Cinema Annual*. While this publication is not a comprehensive listing of every movie released in the United States during the given period of time, it does list all the major movies that garnered attention by a wide variety of critics. *Magill's Cinema Annual* uses entertainment industry publications, including trade magazines and newspapers, as well as on-line sources to compile the list of what the editors consider "significant" films (Fhaner and Scnalon 1996, vii). By using a list that had already weeded out small, independent movies that might not have gained national exposure, it reduced the chances of randomly selecting movies that had not been reviewed by one or both of the magazines used in this study.

The unit of analysis for this study was the sentence. Each review was analyzed for sentences containing mentions of certain critical aspects of movies. These mentions could have been the entire sentence, a phrase within the sentence, or possibly a single word. By quantifying the number of sentences containing certain critical mentions within each review, the researcher hoped to be able to quantitatively show the emphasis, and whether the writing was journalistic or humanist.

The researcher adapted categories of mentions from the writings of Bywater and Sobchack, that differentiate humanist writing from journalistic writing. Both forms of movie reviews contain basic information regarding plot, characters, the actors and the director. However, the following categories are inherent only in humanist writing:

1. What the movie tells us about the human condition.

2. How the movie reflects current intellectual interests in politics, religion, history, philosophy or art.

3. What the movie's theme is.

4. What kinds of ideas are hidden beneath the surface of the movie.

5. Interpretation of symbolism.

6. How form and content interacts to convey the filmmaker's meaning.

7. How the movie relates to its genre.

8. How the quality of this movie ranks in comparison to the best movies of the past.

These categories were taken almost verbatium from the works of Bywater and Sobchack. There was a potential ninth humanist mention category for "How the movie relates to the world outside the theater." At the outset of the study, this category was included, but it soon became apparent to the researcher that it was too general and could possibly include mentions that would also fit in Categories 1, 2, and 4. Therefore, it was discarded.

For any further research in this area, or if someone else wanted to duplicate this study, it might help to include some additional explanation about the categories and what they would include. Any coders for a study of this type need to be familiar with movies, film theory, and the general structure and style of most art criticism. Below are listed the eight humanist categories, as well as the two additional categories relevant to H_1 and H_2, an example mention taken from articles used in this study, and an explanation of why the researcher thinks each mention belongs in its respective category.[1]

• Category 1: What the movie tells us about the human condition

"Stone has caught the surrel madness of the image culture, in which our brains have been colonized by the mass media" (from the *Entertainment Weekly* review of *Natural Born Killers*).

Here the critic mentions what the director, Oliver Stone, is saying through his movie about how modern mass media has changed the human thought processes and how we view the world. At first, this mention might seem to fit in Category 6, but it doesn't because it never discusses "how" Stone develops this meaning.

• Category 2: How the movie reflects current intellectual interests in politics, religion, history

"You could easily watch the film and think that this most challenging of religions boils down to treating people with compassion — a worthy idea, but hardly one that Buddhists have a lock on" (from the *Entertainment Weekly* review of *Little Buddha*).

In this sentence, the critic is clearly making a connection between what he feels the movie is trying to tell the audience about a major world religion, and what the religion is like in real life. This is also a good example of why the researcher discarded the ninth humanist category having to do with how the movie relates to the world outside the theater. Obviously, religion is an aspect of the world outside the theater.

• Category 3: What the movie's theme is.

"They're pure killers, the movie tells us, because they're pure Americans — the inevitable products of a sick culture" (from *The New Yorker* review of *Natural Born Killers*).

This example shows two things about Category 3: the critic doesn't always come out and say "The theme of this movie is ...", and movies may have more than one theme. The theme that the sick culture of America produces sick individuals is only one theme in *Natural Born Killers*, and not the only one mentioned in the review.

• Category 4: What kinds of ideas are hidden beneath the surface of the movie.

"In its way, the clear and present danger of this pop production is that we are given permission to feel good about feeling cynical about government" (from the *Entertainment Weekly* review of *Clear and Present Danger*).

There is an important distinction between this category and Category 3: the theme of the movie is intended by the filmmakers, while the mentions that fit into this category are usually unintended byproducts that slip into the movie. In this example, the government conspiracy and crooked politican characters are created first and foremost to serve the plot; it is only in a secondary, underlying sense that they foster cynicism about the government.

• Category 5: Interpretation of symbolism

"... Eric rises and takes to the streets of Detroit — a savage wasteland that looks like a nightmare projection of his own bombed-out spirit ..." (from *The New Yorker* review of *The Crow*).

Like the theme, the critic will rarely come out and state that something symbolizes something else. However, in this instance, it is obvious that he is reading into how the setting is reflective and symbolic and the main character's emotional state.

• Category 6: How form and content interacts to convey the filmmakers meaning

"... I loved the way in which overlapped dialogue — a trick that Rudolph inherited from Robert Altman — acquires a moral edge, uncovering a breed of people whose priciniple desire is not to mesh their voices in harmony but to shout each other down" (from *The New Yorker* review of *Mrs. Parker and the Vicious Circle*).

This is a solid example a sentence that shows how the director, Alan Rudolph, used a sound technique to show the audience something about his characters. Although it mentions a famous other director, this mention would not fit into Category 9 because it doesn't specifically talk about any of Altman's other films, and there is no particular comparison.

Other techniques mentioned in other reviews include camera angles to show emotions, lighting to create a mood, or even the inclusion or ommitting of a scene or piece of dialogue that might have changed the audience's perception of a character or event.

• Category 7: How the movie relates to its genre.

"[T]he characters of fifties noir used to sweat not with desire but with the frustration — even sexier — of being forbidden to fulfill that desire in front of us ... wheras Bridget can have Mike ... as loudly and as openly as she wants" (from *The New Yorker* review of *The Last Seduction*).

Here the critic is comparing the film noirs of the fifties to *The Last Seduction*, which a film noir of the nineties. He points out that the production code of forty years ago disallowed on-screen sex, which gave an additional dimension to the action on screen; the more free and liberal state of movies in the nineties that allows such on-screen sex has taken away that extra dimension.

It should be noted here that this mention might seem to also fit into Category 8, but it doesn't because there is no mention of comparison to a specific film noir of the fifties, just the genre in genral.

• Category 8: How the quality of this movie rates in comparison to the best movies of the past.

"*Nell* is like *The Piano*, remade as a safe, prosiac TV movie" (from the *Entertainment Weekly* review of *Nell*).

This is an obvious example of the critic making a relative comparison of qualities between *Nell* and an earlier film, *The Piano*. This mention falls into this category only because *The Piano* was a critically-acclaimed film, a nominee for the Academy Award for Best Picture of the year, and winner of the Palm D'Or at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival. The important thing to remember when coding for this category is "the best movies of the past," not just a comparison to any movie.

• Mentions that imply the reader has seen the movie.

No examples of this mention category can be given from the reviews used in this study because none were found. However, as was discussed in the statement of

hypothesis, these mentions would most likely take the form of giving away important

plot points that might ruin the experience of discovering them firsthand by watching the

movie.

An example might be a review of Alfred Hitchcock's *Pyscho* that gives away the

fact that Norman Bates if the killer. Someone who had never seen *Psycho* before

would not get the full experience of seeing the movie for the first time having already

been told this information.

• Mentions of overall judgement.

"I think *Natural Born Killers* is brilliant — the most haunting experience I've had at
the movies this year . . ." (from the *Entertainment Weekly* review of *Natural Born
Killers*).

This is an obvious example, and some are this obvious. This was, in general, the

easiest category to code for because most of the mentions stood out this plainly.

Sometimes they took the form of a long string of adjectives that were used to make an

overall value judgement.

By showing an abundance or lacking of these humanist traits, the researcher was able

to quantitatively show what kind of writing appeared in each magazine. Movie reviews that

contained a high percentage of mentions in these categories would be reflective of humanist

writing. A lack of these mentions would be reflective of journalistic writing.

The researcher was the only coder in the study[2]. To ensure the results were reliable,

roughly 13 percent of the data was reanalyzed to ensure intercoder reliability. Intercoder

reliability was found to be .75.

For this study, the term *movie* was used to describe the motion pictures reviewed in the

two magazines. This did not include made-for-TV movies or made-for-cable movies. It

only included those movies nationally distributed to theaters in the United States. The

movies examined here were likely to include both domestic and foreign films, but all of them would have been seen in theatrical release in the United States.

The term *movie* was chosen instead of *film* because *film* tends to carry with it a preconceived notion of being important or exceptionally artful. Pauline Kael, who wrote movie reviews for *The New Yorker* for 23 years, always argued for the use of the term *movie* instead of *film* because she didn't want to become a pedant. When she worked as a critic for *The New Republic*, she even went so far as to remove the word *film* from the title of her column and replace it with *movie,* because she felt the word *film* was too pretentious (Bywater and Sobchack 12).

In this case, because the random sample ensured that a variety of reviews were studied — those of both good and bad movies — *movie* was a less loaded term to use. However, the terms *film theory* and *film scholar* were used because there are no such phrases as *movie theory* and *movie scholar.*

As stated in the literature review, movie reviews and movie criticism are different in a variety of ways. However, for the purposes of this study, the term *movie review* was used to describe the articles in both *The New Yorker* and *Entertainment Weekly* to avoid confusion. Although the purpose of the study was to determine whether the authors at the two magazines show a difference in the way they write movie reviews, a single term was used to describe both of them. To balance the language, those who write movie reviews were consistently labeled as *movie critics,* as opposed to *reviewers.*

However, the researcher's decision to use a single set of terms to describe the writers and what they produce should not diminish the fact that this study aimed to prove the two magazines employed different kinds of writers to produce different kinds of writing.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows an alphabetical listing of the movies used for the study, dates the reviews appeared in each magazine (which is within a few weeks of the movie's national release date), and each movie's genre, according to *Cinemania*, a reference CD-Rom containing information on thousands of movies, and the writing of movie critics Leonard Maltin, Roger Ebert and Pauline Kael.

Table 1. Movie Reviews Selected for Study

Movie	Genre	*NY* Review Date	*EW* Review Date
Barcelona	Drama/Comedy/Romance	Aug. 15	Aug. 12
Clear and Present Danger	Action/Thriller/Political	Aug. 15	Aug. 12
Color of Night	Thriller	Sept. 5	Sept. 9
Crow, The	Horror/Crime	May 23	May 13,
Ed Wood	Biography/Drama/Comedy	Oct. 3	Sept. 30
Forrest Gump	Drama/Comedy	July 25	July 15
Jimmy Hollywood	Comedy/Drama	April 4	April 8
Last Seduction, The	Crime/Drama	Oct. 24	Oct. 18
Little Buddha	Drama/Religious	May 30	June 17
Maverick	Drama/Comedy/Crime	June 6,	June 3
Mrs. Parker & the Vicious Circle	Biography/Drama	Dec. 13	Dec. 9
Natural Born Killers	Drama/Comedy/Crime	Sept. 9	Aug. 26
Nell	Drama/Romance	Dec. 19	Dec. 16
Shawshank Redemption, The	Prison/Drama	Sept. 26	Sept. 23
True Lies	Action/Spy/Thriller	July 25	July 22

A glance at Table 1 shows that movies selected for study were widely dispersed over both genre type and release period, thereby excluding any foreseeable artifacts involving

these variables. For example, the reviews weren't in danger of dealing with the same aspects of movies over and over again because a majority of the movies fell into the same genre, such as thrillers or romantic epics.

Once the coding of the movie reviews was completed, it was quickly apparent there was little difference between the amounts of humanist criticism in the two magazines. Of the 415 sentences in the *Entertainment Weekly* reviews, 56 contained humanist mentions. The remaining 359 sentences were journalistic in nature. *The New Yorker* reviews contained 678 sentences, 109 of which contained humanist mentions. This left 569 sentences that were journalistic in nature.

Therefore, the *Entertainment Weekly* reviews were 13.49% humanist and *The New Yorker* reviews were 16.08% humanist. The difference was not statisically significant, as p> .20, and mass media research generally requires p <.05.

The findings for H_1 are listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Movie Reviews According to Sentences with Humanist Mentions

Sentence types	Movie Reviews	
	Entertainment Weekly	*The New Yorker*
Sentences with humantist mentions	13.49%	16.08%
Sentences without humantist mentions	86.51	83.92
	100% n=415	100% n=678

$x^2 = 1.49$, df = 1, p > .20

Table 3 shows how the humanist mentions in the movie reviews of each magazine were broken down into the eight categories. No statistical testing was done on these results

because they do not relate directly to any particular hypothesis. However, they do show
some interesting relations between the two magazines and what they focus on, and might
be a good launching point for another study of the same nature.

Table 3. Movie Reviews According to Percentage Categories of Humanist Mentions

| | Movie reviews | |
Mention Categories	*Entertainment Weekly*	*The New Yorker*
Category 1	7.14%	1.83%
Category 2	7.14	1.83
Category 3	7.14	4.59
Category 4	14.29	14.68
Category 5	0.00	0.92
Category 6	32.14	42.20
Category 7	17.86	18.35
Category 8	14.29	15.60
	100% n = 56	100% n = 109

The results of H_2 were also found to be not significant. The researcher hypothesized
that, because humanist movie criticism involves shared knowedge between the critic and
the reader, there would be certain mentions that would imply the reader has already seen
the movie in question; these would most likely take the form of giving away major plot

points or discussing the ending of the movie in specifics that would ruin the experience for anyone who had not already seen it.

The analysis of all 30 reviews in both magazines did not turn up a single mention of this nature, which is shown below in Table 4.

Table 4. Movie Reviews According to Percentage of Mentions
That Imply the Reader Has Seen the Movie

	Movie reviews	
	Entertainment Weekly	*The New Yorker*
Sentences with mentions that imply the reader has seen the movie	0%	0%
Sentences without mentions that imply the reader has seen the movie	100%	100%
	100% n = 415	100% n = 678

Although reviews in both magazines concentrated heavily on plot synopsis and character discussion, the critics never ventured far enough to potentially ruin the experience of viewing the story development firsthand.

In H3, the researcher hypothesized that *Entertainment Weekly* would contain significantly more mentions of overall judgement of the movies than *The New Yorker* would. As with H2, H3 was dependent on H1 being found significant. However, because analysis of the reviews found there was little difference between *Entertainment Weekly* and *The New Yorker* in terms of humaist mentions, and both magazines contained reviews there were decidedly journalistic in nature, H3 logically did not hold true.

Table 5. Movie Reviews According to Percentage of Mentions of Overall Judgement

Sentence types	Magazines containing movie reviews	
	Entertainment Weekly	*The New Yorker*
Sentenes with mentions of overall judgement	3.61% (15)	2.65% (18)
Sentences without mentions of overall judgements	96.39 (400)	97.35 (660)
	100% n = 415	100% n = 678

$x^2 = .53$, df=1, p > .20

Discussion of Results

Though the researcher's hypotheses did not hold true, the study itself shows a definite pattern that is logical and consistent. Significance of the second and third hypotheses were reliant on the first hypothsis being true, so when the first hypothesis did not hold true, the others fell in accordance.

The results of the study suggest that these two magazines both utilize the journalistic approach with a few inclusions of humanist mentions. There was only one review in the entire study that did not include at least one humanist mention.[3] *Entertainment Weekly* averaged almost four humanist mentions per review, while *The New Yorker* averged about seven. At first glance, this seems to show that *The New Yorker* had more than twice as many humanist mentions in its reviews, but that is not taking into consideration the fact that *The New Yorker*'s reviews averaged a length almost twice that of *Entertainment Weekly*.

The results of this study allow for some generalizations about movie reviews in these two magazines. First of all, as Bywater and Sobchack pointed out in their chapter on

journalistic reviews, the main purpose of the reviews was to inform the moviegoing public about the movies. This means that the bulk of each review is made up of plot synposis, discussion of actors, directors and other filmmakers, and general value judgements about various aspects of the movie. Neither the reviews in *Entertainment Weekly* nor those in *The New Yorker* spent much time discussing the humanist traits of each movie. As was pointed out in the literature review, according to David Bordell's book *Making Meaning*, the critics used a wide range of "weapons" to write about the movies. In this case, the humanist "weapon" was not used nearly as much as some of the others.[4]

Unfortunately, this study leaves unanswered the question of why two magazines that have so many apparent differences are so similar in their movie criticism. Part of this can be answered by saying that the journalistic/humanist comparison is only one aspect of the criticism. There could be some other differences in style, language usage, or aspects of cinema that could beexamined in further study.

For example, possible future study could look into the cultural references used when critiquing movies in each magazine. Does *Entertainment Weekly* rely more on pop culture references, while *The New Yorker* relies more on classical and literary references? In this study, any cultural reference would be coded as a humanist mention, but another study could draw further differences among the humanist mentions.

Another worthy follow-up could trace the historical development of the movie reviews in the mass media. Although *Entertainment Weekly* , being less than a decade old, is not particularly applicable to such an endeavor, *The New Yorker* has been around for more than seven decades and could prove interesting for that type of study. Has the movie criticism in *The New Yorker* always had so few humanist mentions, or is it a recent development? Another study could examine numerous other magazines (both high-brow and popular) in the mass media that publish notable movie criticism, including *Esquire, New Republic, Commonweal,* and *Rolling Stone.* A wider examination of a variety of

publications could be used to thoroughly assess the state of current mass media movie criticism.

What this study seems to show is two examples of a decided trend toward the journalistic approach in movie criticism. Although it is not approriate to use these two examples alone to generalize about the state of movie criticism, the results are still pertinent because these two magazines are extremely popular and widely-read by two distinct populations in America.

The tenatative claim that thesemagazines are moving in a journalistic direction might be supported or refuted by future study metioned above that compares the movie criticism in recent issues of *The New Yorker* to criticism in issues 40 or 50 years ago to determine if there has been a change. It seems that the truly humanist movie criticism has found refuge only in specialized art and cinema periodicals and journals. In all likelihood, mainstream magazines like *Entertainment Weekly* and *The New Yorker* understand that most of their readers are not particularly interested in humanist movie criticism, and instead want mostly facts and general judgments about the quality of the movies and whether they are worth seeing.

Unfortunately, this is most likely a side effect of what Josh Young claimed is the diminished impact of serious criticism (1996, 15). The journalistic approach, with its emphasis on describing the plot and making general value judgments rather than actively interpreting and analyzing movies, does not fit into the widely-quoted statements of Pauline Kael (who wrote for *The New Yorker* for several years) about the role of the critic, which fit much better into the humanist approach:

> [The role of the critic] is to help people see what is in the work, what is in it that shouldn't be, what is not in it that could be. He is a good critic if he helps people understand more about the work than they could see for themselves; he is a great critic if, by his passion, he can excite people so that they want to experience more of the art that is there, waiting to be seized (1965, 309).

And, the journalistic approach arguably does nothing to advance what critic John Simon claimed is the "first and last responsibility" of the movie critic: "to raise the standard of

motion pictures" (Murray 1975, 90). Simon, who has a background in comparative literature and began working as a drama critic for *New York* magazine and *Hudson Review* before writing movie criticism for *Esquire*, also leans heavily toward the humanist approach when he writes that the critic "informs, interprets, and raises the ultimate questions, the unanswerable ones that everyone must try to answer nonetheless" (Murray 1975, 91).

As Josh Young pointed out in his article, when movies like *Independence Day* and *Twister* are critically panned by most critics, and still go on to make $300 million and $225 million respectively in the United States alone, people are either not reading criticism or not paying attention to it (1996, 15). This seems to indicate that the general moviegoing public does not care anymore about the true artistic quality of the motion pictures they see, and it would be hard to imagine that this disinterest is not reflected in how movie critics have begun to view and write about movies.

NOTES

1. It should be noted that *Entertainment Weekly* includes with each review a "grading system," that is similar to the "box scores" noted in Chang's study (1975, 721). Box scores typically contains some kind of easily understood symbolic language that allows the critic to give a quick and easy rating to each movie. The most oft-used symbol is the star, and the ratings generally range between one and four stars, with a four-star movie being considered great. *Entertainment Weekly* does a variation on that, where it assigns a letter grade to each movie. The grades range from A to F, including pluses and minuses (such as B+ or C-). The researcher determined these were certainly equal to a mention of overall judgement, but they were not included in this study because the research was designed to look only at the body of the review, and any mentions that were coded had to appear in a grammatical sentence.

2. Unfortunately, this represents one the particular weaknesses of this study as reported here. Due to practicle concerns of not being to procure any other coders qualified to judge the movie reviews, the researcher was the only coder. A stronger approach would have included at least one or two other coders, to avoid the study becoming too reliant on only one person's impressions.

3. This was the *Entertainment Weekly* review of *Barcelona*. With only 14 sentences, it was the second shortest review analyzed in the study.

4. Although it was not coded for, the researcher noticed that some of the other weapons Bordell mentioned, including metaphorical and punning redescription and rhetoric were in great amounts. Further study on the use of language and argument devices would be a worthy follow-up to this study.

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An Alternative to the Impasse:

The Grassroots Approach to Cope with Media Violence Issues

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An Alternative to the Impasse:
The Grassroots Approach to Cope with Media Violence Issues

INTRODUCTION

There has long been concern that television content that is violent in nature can have adverse effects on viewers, particularly children (see, for example, Comstock and Strasburger, 1993). Although television has been regulated by federal laws since its inception, these statutes do little to address content (Hughes and Hasbrouck, 1996). Most content regulation attempts have been met with stiff Constitutional resistance. "Issues related to First Amendment rights, concerns about censorship and the need to establish the 'clear and present danger' as required by the FCC (Federal Communication Commission) have prevented the enactment of strong regulatory controls" (p. 137).

Still, citizen concerns from time to time prompted the government to investigate on its own. The Surgeon General would issue a report in 1972 concluding that television violence may have adverse effects on children; however, no strong action followed as the report suffered through a bureaucratic gristmill (Cater and Strickland, 1977). Ten years later, the National Institute of Mental Health would issue a report drawing similar conclusions about the relationship of media violence and aggressive behavior. Other reports provided additional evidence -- the Centers for Disease Control in 1991, the National Academy of Science in 1993 and the American Psychological Association, also in 1993 (Wilson et al., 1997). Most regulatory action remained elusive.

Hence, individuals and groups, both on local and national levels, have periodically organized grassroots campaigns targeting either those who create the programming or those who view it. Once a core avenue of political activity, the grassroots approach is experiencing a resurgence. "Although media, direct mail and tele-marketing will continue to dominate modern campaigns, grassroots politics may well provide the margin of victory. . ." (Young, Swirsky and Myerson, 1995, p. 34).

Very little evaluation has been done of grassroots campaigns, however. Several researchers (see Alcalay and Taplin, 1989; Hughes and Hasbrouck, 1996; Swinehart, 1997) have

pointed to the lack of evaluative efforts, despite the potential value of the information collected. This paper provides a case study evaluation of a grassroots campaign targeting parents that was conducted on a statewide level by the North Carolina Coalition for Pulling the Plug on Media Violence, a three-year-old advocacy group comprised of health care and education individuals and organizations concerned about the effects of media violence. Annual awareness campaigns served to educate parents about media violence and to encourage families to organize alternative activities to watching television. The campaign's effectiveness was assessed using data collected in a 1997 statewide telephone survey.

Background: The North Carolina Coalition for Pulling the Plug on Media Violence is an advocacy group formed in 1995 by a licensed pediatrician to address a growing concern about increased violence across the state and how media violence contributes to the problem. The grassroots, non-profit organization is formed of more than 35 child advocacy groups including health department officials, Kiwanis clubs, teachers, Parent Teacher Associations, health care providers and daycare organizations. Its mission is:

> We strive to raise awareness in North Carolina about the
> impact of TV and video game violence on children. We
> support any effort by the television industry or any other
> group that promotes active parental involvement in the
> viewing choices of children. (Coalition's History and
> Mission, 1996, p. 4)

The primary activity of the coalition has been an annual "Pull the Plug on TV and Video Game Violence Week" campaign, held each October for three consecutive years beginning in 1995. Objectives of the campaign include both attitude and behavioral change goals -- increasing awareness of the impact of violence and "offer[ing] suggestions to families and child-care givers on what they can do about it" (Coalition's History and Mission, 1996, p. 1).

During the first year, materials were provided through public schools with messages targeting kindergarten children and their parents. A parent flyer, given to each kindergartner to take home, included brief statistical and educational information as well as recommendations for reviewing family use of television and video games. For example, the materials reinforce Strasburger's (1997) point that children may not be able to delineate between the television world and reality. A key element of the campaign has been to suggest alternatives -- set limits for children's TV viewing; help children choose non-violent programs and video games, and then

watch and play with them; and, talk as a family about how violence makes you feel. The flyer includes a simplistic family viewing diary to permit families to briefly document for one week time spent watching television, playing video games, doing homework and participating in family time. This is designed as both a research tool and strategy planner. The diary reveals how time is spent -- a research step to gauge current behaviors. The expectation of the coalition is that this will influence parents to alter their family's behaviors regarding consumption violent television and video games.

In the second year, the coalition stepped up its efforts to reach a larger audience statewide, with a goal of "encouraging all North Carolina public elementary schools to participate in a variety of awareness activities about the impact of media violence" (Coalition, 1996, p. 1). The parent flyer and bookmark were distributed to 800,000 children in kindergarten through fifth grade throughout North Carolina's 100 counties. Lending "official" credibility to the program was a kick-off press conference led by the governor, which helped draw media coverage by television and radio stations and newspapers. The coalition also placed billboards and radio public service announcements for broader reach, and distributed 10,000 posters to libraries, park districts, schools and daycare centers that included tips on how parents can be active in their children's TV and video game use at home. A toll-free telephone line was established for families seeking additional information or assistance in family viewing activities.

In 1997, the campaign focused primarily on the public schools, with messages targeting children through fifth grade and their families. The informational flyer and bookmarks were circulated and media coverage sought during the one-week awareness campaign.

With three years of activities on its record, the coalition begun to seek evaluation of its programs, particularly regarding community awareness levels. As researchers, we saw the need to evaluate this type of grassroots campaign, in an effort to contribute data to the evolving body of knowledge about coping with media violence issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media effects. Violence continues to be a major public health crisis in the United States, and some researchers assert that a portion of what occurs on the streets is spawned at least in part by what is viewed on the television screen. Television is a pervasive medium, producing a

seemingly endless stream of messages that reach millions of people. As such, it can have a strong societal influence, particularly on children. Comstock and Strasburger (1993) explain the impact violent content can have, as a result of TV's pervasiveness:

> Television is by far the predominant medium by virtue of
> children's early and continuous exposure. Compared with
> other media, television and film can graphically and vividly
> portray complex events so that they are not only more likely
> to be recalled but also more available for emulation. (p. 502)

With these concerns raised since television's infancy, literally thousands of studies (see Comstock and Strasburger, 1993; Hughes and Hasbrouck, 1996; Wilson et al., 1997, 1998) have evaluated effects and influences of media violence. Researchers generally conclude that violent content may be a "significant factor," contributing to aggressive behaviors and serving as a desensitizer to future violence (Comstock & Strasburger, 1993, p. 495). Hughes and Hasbrouck (1996) take a more conservative approach, stating, "Although debate exists regarding the magnitude of the effect of television violence viewing on children's level of aggression, there is little disagreement that such an effect is real" (p. 147). Strasburger (1995, 1997), however, proclaims media influences between 15 and 20 percent of societal violence.

As a result, efforts have been made through the years to mitigate television's potential negative effects. Two primary pathways have been taken -- government regulation and grassroots efforts.

Government regulation. The television industry has faced some type of regulation since its inception, beginning with the Communications Act of 1934. However, early regulation had few teeth. "Although providing for governmental overview and supervision of broadcasts, this legislation clearly banned censorship of content," (Hughes and Hasbrouck, 1996, p. 136), a precedent that essentially has lasted throughout the 20th century. Efforts put in place in the 1970s were essentially wiped out during Reagan's deregulation era of the 1980s, however.

Eventually, public outcry led Congress to reconsider content regulations. The Television Program Improvement Act was passed in 1990, placing pressure on the television industry to assess its programming and reduce violent content. Senate and House hearings followed to monitor the progress and compliance. The 1995 Children's Media Protection Act was passed in 1995 and served to beef up the standards set five years earlier. FCC requirements called for

three hours a week of educational children's programming ("Efforts Continue," 1996; Hughes and Hasbrouck, 1996; Jessell, 1996).

The threat of regulation has motivated the television industry to monitor itself. Self-regulation attempts surface to counter public pressure and to avoid government restrictions. Through the years these have included family viewing hour, viewer discretion warnings before and during programs, the V-chip electronic screening device and ratings systems. In 1997, a much-maligned television ratings system was voluntarily implemented to gauge violence levels by age groups. Cantor, Harrison and Nathanson (1998), found, however, that ratings and advisories may actually increase a child's interest in inappropriate programs.

Because of the time-consuming nature of and the limited successes in creating regulations that effectively control content, advocates have sought other avenues to affect change. The primary method is through the use of grassroots strategies, which are designed to influence the attitudes and behvaviors of parent and children viewers instead of government regulators. Changes in media use patterns may have a more lasting effect on media content, strictly based on economics. If the demand for violent programs shrinks, the rationale for producing them may be reduced as well.

The grassroots route. Grassroots efforts used to be at the core of American political activity, but waned through the years, replaced by "wholesale", generic strategies of national parties and candidates. In recent years, however, there has been a resurgence in the use of grassroots approaches that have been highly effective. The greatest value of the grassroots approach is its emphasis on motivation and empowerment on the local level to overcome a pattern of apathy. "[V]oters have become more removed from and alienated by established parties and processes" (Young, Swirsky and Myerson, 1995, p. 34).

One group that has been particularly effective in using grassroots efforts is the Christian Coalition movement, which continually keeps its agenda in the public eye. "They engage voters not just every two or four years when there is a statewide or national election, but daily when there is a controversy involving local issues" (Young, Swirsky and Myerson, 1995, p. 34).

Likewise, grassroots approaches have been used to address concerns about effects of media violence. Action for Children's Television (ACT), for example, was formed in 1968 as a grassroots advocacy organization. ACT leader Peggy Charren called for regulatory changes as well as parent and child education about media and its effects, to affect change. (Charren, Gelber

and Arnold, 1994). "All we can do is provide enough choices and educate the public to where [the choices] are and educate children as to how they might enjoy them," Charren told Jessell (1996, p. 20). Her educational campaign included writing columns and speaking to the media about ways to advocate for change (See, for example, Charren, 1994; Szulc and Tchaicha, 1995).

Grassroots endeavors have taken a variety of approaches. In addition to efforts to affect regulation, organizations have sought change via preventive and inoculation strategies.

Prevention and inoculation. Grassroots leaders have taken their messages to communities, schools and parents in an effort to enlighten the public on negative effects that media violence may have on children. The strategy has been two-fold: Prevention techniques designed to help reduce the incidences of violence, and inoculation efforts to minimize the effects that viewing violence may have on children. According to Comstock and Strasburger (1993), "the primary goals must be education, training and guidance" (p. 505).

Some groups have been effective in "creating public awareness of issues related to the role of television on children," (Hughes and Hasbrouck, 1996, p. 145) through media literacy, program monitoring and research. These groups include ACT, Center for Media Literacy, Center for Media Education, Mediascope, National Telemedia Council, National Alliance for Nonviolent Programming, National Parent Teacher Association and Media Action Research Group, as well as smaller grassroots organizations on state and local levels. Huston, Watkins and Kunkel (1989) also identified options grassroots groups can take for motivating regulation, including funding research, holding legislative hearings and distributing reports to citizenry.

In addition to community action, mediation can occur in the home and in schools to educate children about how the media works and what effects it can have. Strasburger (1997) reinforces the need for this education, stating, "Many children cannot discriminate between what they see on television and what is real" (p. 353). Murray (1995) notes that parents' mediation of their children's viewing habits has been shown to reduce negative effects.

Manley-Casimir (1987) calls for a foundation of media education to prepare children:

> The challenge is nothing less than engaging children
> and youth in a process of radical criticism, a process
> that requires as a precondition a comprehensive program
> of media education, a process to cause students to under-
> stand the assumptions and world views purveyed by
> television, a process to lead each individual to full personal
> agency and to effective collective action. (p. 245)

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A variety of inoculation and mediation efforts can be employed. For example, parents can explain that violence shown in fictional dramas is faked. They should have children discuss options other than violence to solve a problem, as well as the consequences of violence (often excluded in television programs) for both the victim and perpetrator. (Heath, Bresolin and Rinaldi, 1989; Hughes and Hasbrouck, 1996; Huesmann et al., 1996). Wilson and colleagues (1997) recommend that parents understand the potential hazards of violent viewing on children, consider the age and development of their children and the context of the violence. Most importantly, they recommend viewing television with children.

> The only way to ensure that a child appreciates the
> contextual aspects of violence is to teach a child while
> viewing. Parents can help a child to understand that
> violence in the real world may result in more serious
> injury and may have more long-term repercussions than
> that is shown on television. Parents also can help children
> to recognize that non-violent strategies exist for solving
> problems in society. (p. 159)

Involving school teachers can enhance the inoculation process as well, particularly through media literacy efforts (Heath et al., 1989). Likewise, physicians have been called upon to guide and advise parents about media effects (Strasburger, 1995).

Grassroots strategies persist on many levels. A common element used in many grassroots movements is the communication campaign, designed to alter or reinforce attitudes and behaviors.

Communication campaigns. Whether trying to influence a mass audience or small groups, grassroots organizations have long advocated the use of communication campaigns to "inform, persuade, or motivate behavior changes" (Rice and Atkin, 1989, p.7). According to Rogers and colleagues (1979), a communication campaign is defined as:

> [A] preplanned set of communication activities designed to
> reach and motivate people using a particular type of message.
> Campaigns are conducted for a short period (usually from
> one week to three months) with specific attitudinal and
> behavioral objectives. [They] almost always use a multi-
> media approach. (p. 60)

Most campaigns are linear in nature. According to Rogers and Storey (1987), "information flows primarily in one direction from people who originate a message to those who receive it" (p. 830). Aspects for consideration in this linear model include audience, message, source, channel, and results.

Audience: Campaign developers should have a keen understanding of who their audiences are and how best to reach them. Atkin and Freimuth (1989) explain that, "[S]ensitivity to the background attributes, abilities and predispositions of individuals enhances the effectiveness of campaign stimuli" (p. 133). Characteristics of the audience that may help in message and channel definition can include age, education, intelligence, gender, ethnicity, personality, lifestyle and psychographic variables (See, for example, Eagle, 1981; McGuire, 1985; and Wells, 1975).

Building an audience profile can help define what is important to the target group(s) and what communication channel(s) can be most effective (Swinehart, 1997). Each member of the audience must see the personal validity of the issue and its consequence for maximum effect (Dervin, 1989; Rice and Atkin, 1989).

Message: Audiences tend to respond to messages that are relevant to their situations and adequately reflect their concept of reality. Dervin (1989) notes,

> [C]ampaign messages will be attended to only if the dangers
> and/or benefits associated with those actions have taken
> on some kind of personal reality or usefulness for that
> individual. . . . [A] connection between the individual and
> the campaign will be made only if the campaign messages
> are around to be attended to or have in some way become
> part of the individual's stored understandings of the world.
> (p. 68)

The message's relevance is both individualistic and societal, according to Paisley (1989). "The success of a campaign . . . depends upon public perception that the campaign's issue is an important one, as reflected by its position on the public agenda of issues, and that the group supporting or opposing the issue has an entitlement to advocate that view" (p. 19). At the heart of the communication campaign is the assumption that "information has truth value, that it is objective, and that when one acts on information the resulting actions must lead to better ends" (Dervin, 1989, p. 69).

Atkin and Freimuth (1989) propose that message receivers can move through five stages in the process of accepting and processing a campaign communication. These are (1) exposure to the message, (2) information processing, (3) cognitive learning (e.g., knowledge and skills), (4) yielding, in which an attitude and/or behavior is deemed acceptable, and (5) utilization, in which the behavior changes are assimilated and practiced.

Communication campaign message goals can vary based on the ultimate objective of an organization. Swinehart (1997) notes that "Campaign functions differ greatly -- e.g., giving people new information, reminding them of something they already know, persuading them to act, providing skills training, increasing public concern about a particular problem, and promoting new laws" (p. 352). Information-based campaigns tend to focus on knowledge and awareness, whereas action-based campaigns seek to create or change attitudes or "mobilize people toward a behavioral change" (Rogers and Storey, 1987, p. 822). Ultimately, the ability to modify behavior can be related to the issue itself. Specifically, this can include, according to DeJong and Winsten (1998), "its [the issue's] complexity; the level of public concern about it; at what stage in the behavior change process the target audience can be found; . . . and the personal, interpersonal, social, institutional, and societal barriers to change" (p. 6; see also Wallack, 1990).

A key element of message construction is the use of persuasion. According to Miller (1980), persuasion "refers to situations where attempts are made to modify behavior by symbolic transactions (messages) that are sometimes, but not always, linked with coercive forces (indirectly coercive) and that appeal to the reason and emotions of the intended persuadee(s)" (p. 15).

A number of factors can affect message success. These can include the style in which the message is delivered, type of appeals used, perceived image of the sponsoring organization, what is included or excluded from the content, as well as length and how often the message is repeated (McGuire, 1989).

Channel: Messages must be accessible to the audience. Although this may appear to be very elementary, it can be overlooked in an effort to gain widespread exposure. According to McGuire (1989), "Too often public persuaders choose the channel solely on the basis of the number of people it reaches . . . without consideration of differences in perceived credibility, likability and comprehensibility" of both the verbal and nonverbal cues (p. 47). However, Rogers and Storey (1987) argue that broad exposure can be crucial. "Although exposure to

campaign messages of a relatively high proportion of the audience certainly does not guarantee a campaign's success, a campaign will usually fail without it" (p. 836).

Although mass media are considered one of the primary means of disseminating messages (Atkin, 1981), credence is also given to interpersonal communication (Rice and Atkin, 1989). Ultimately, selection should be based on the organization's objectives. According to Rogers and Storey (1987), "While mass media may be effective in disseminating information, interpersonal channels are more influential in motivating people to act on that information" (p. 837).

Source: The perceived credibility of the source also plays an important role in the communication campaign (McGuire, 1989; Slater and Rouner, 1996). Rogers and Storey (1987) define source credibility as, "the degree to which a source or a channel of communication is considered knowledgeable or trustworthy" (p. 837). Traditionally, peers are considered the most trustworthy sources. Professional experts also possess credence as possessing knowledge.

Miller (1987) argues, "That certain perceived characteristics of sources exert a market impact on the effectiveness of persuasive messages is one of the most well-documented and widely accepted generalizations of persuasion research" (p. 464). Hovland and Weiss (1951) found that the acceptability of content was directly related to how credible the source was perceived to be.

Results: The ultimate success -- or failure -- of communication campaigns can be affected by numerous factors. According to Swinehart (1997), effectiveness can be affected at various points of a campaign:

> Many people will not even be exposed to it; many who are
> exposed will pay no attention; some of those who pay
> attention will not understand the message, or not believe it,
> or not feel that it applies to them; some of those who
> understand and accept it will not be motivated to act or will
> soon forget the message; some who intend to act will not
> have the opportunity to do so. (p. 352)

Rogers and Storey (1987) note that unrealistic objectives, incorrect targeting of an audience or inappropriate media channels can adversely affect a campaign. McGuire (1989) cautions, "[O]ne should guard against exaggerated expectations regarding the likely size of one's persuasive impact" (p. 49). Swinehart (1997), however, notes that, although an ultimate goal

may be missed, incremental successes -- such as increased public awareness and improved relationships with key audiences -- may help justify a communication campaign.

Many authors (e.g., McGuire, 1989; Rogers and Storey, 1987; Swinehart, 1997; Witte, 1997) stress the value of research and evaluation as keys to producing successful communication campaigns. Rice and Atkin (1989) explain that research includes "assessing needs, identifying relevant audiences, identifying program failures, and evaluating messages and effects continuously" (p. 8). Social scientists can contribute greatly to the research process, based on their understanding of what can influence or change behaviors (DeJong and Winsten, 1998).

Further, Alcalay and Taplin (1989) argue that not enough campaigns follow through with evaluations, despite the value of "find[ing] out which of the communication strategies worked." Swinehart (1997) notes that without assessing a campaign's effects, "no conclusions can be drawn concerning their impact" (p. 351).

Strategic planning can also play an important role in a campaign's success or failure. The plan should include identifying message strategies, audiences, social factors, and an appropriate mix of communication channels (Rice and Atkin, 1989). Likewise, the preferred behavioral outcome should be defined, as well as incremental stages leading to the change (Swinehart, 1997). Atkin and Freimuth (1989) argue, "As a means of attaining the behavioral objectives, campaign messages must first have an impact on preliminary or intermediate target variables along the response chain, ranging from exposure and processing to learning and yielding to actual utilization" (p. 137). Swinehart (1997) also notes the importance of defining potential barriers as part of the planning process, including, "psychological and situational factors that inhibit the taking of recommended actions, such as cost, fear, lack of social support, inability to visualize benefits, negative side effects, and lack of facilities" (p. 368).

Hughes and Hasbrouck (1996) note specifically that there is inadequate evaluation of grassroots efforts. This research paper begins the process of filling that void by assessing the "Pulling the Plug on Media Violence" campaign conducted in North Carolina schools. The research will help establish a foundation for long-term evaluations to enable tracking of progress of one specific public communication campaign over time.

METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the effectiveness of the grassroots, statewide campaign, "Pull the Plug on TV and Video Game Violence Week," some questions related to the awareness about the campaign and attitude toward media violence were incorporated into a Fall 1997 university-sponsored telephone survey.[1] The poll is conducted twice annually by a public southeastern university to capture the public's opinion on various issues. Undergraduate and graduate students at the university receive two hours of preliminary training in telephone survey techniques prior to working as interviewers. The Computer Assisted Telephone Instrument (CATI) was used to record responses within a database for analysis. The interview sample was drawn from across the state of North Carolina with a random digit dialing technique. A total of 1,374 residences were reached and 771 residential respondents from across the state completed the survey, for a completion rate of 54 percent. The sampling error rate was calculated at 3.5 percent, and the confidence level was 95 percent.

In the following analyses, we utilized the results generated from the survey to examine what demographic factors might lead to awareness of the campaign and might influence the level of concern toward violence portrayed on television. As suggested in most statistical guides, we first looked at the univariate output to detect whether the data represent the population. Secondly, correlation analysis was implemented to see the initial relationship between demographic factors and the two key variables -- awareness of the campaign and concern about media violence.

Independent variables that were found significantly related to dependent variables, based on the correlation matrix, were selected for the next statistical testing, multiple regression. Due to the exploratory nature of this testing, a "step-wise" method was used to sift through and sort out the predicting variables. All of the statistical procedures were conducted with SPSS for Windows, a statistical software for the personal computer.

Hypotheses: The following hypotheses have been posed for this study --

H1. Certain demographic attributes of survey respondents -- gender, education levelage, income level and whether the respondent is a parent -- will influence awareness of the "Pull the Plug on Media Violence" campaign and general concern about media violence.

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[1] The following campaign-related questions were posed: "How concerned are you about the amount of violence depicted on TV shows?" and "Have you ever heard of a campaign called 'Pull the Plug on Media Violence'?"

H2. Respondents who are most aware of the campaign will be more concerned about media violence.

FINDINGS

Analysis of the distribution of gender, race and age confirmed that the poll sample generally reflects the structure of the North Carolina population. Regarding gender, however, there were slightly more female subjects (57.5 percent) than males in the sample. Among the people who were interviewed in this statewide survey, 19.3 percent were minorities. People of all ages appeared evenly distributed. The largest age group represented was 25-44 year olds, constituting 41.1 percent of the sample, followed by 45-64 year old group, representing 31.4 percent.

According to the statistical output, about half of the people interviewed had at least a high school diploma, and about 30 percent of the respondents had some college or graduate/professional education. Because the "Pull the Plug" flyers were distributed primarily to elementary school students, knowing which respondents had children attending elementary school was important information. The statistics indicate that 21.4 percent of those interviewed have children in their households who are currently enrolled in elementary schools. Nearly 30 percent of the respondents reported that they had heard of the "Pull the Plug" campaign. It seems that this grassroots endeavor may have achieved a certain level of success by effectively propagating the campaign's slogan.

In order to detect the effectiveness of the campaign, it is important to identify who was reached and what kind of demographic characteristics they have. Based on the results of a correlation test, it was found that education level, gender, and whether the respondent had children attending elementary school were crucial to awareness of the campaign. This result was further confirmed by multiple regression (See Table 1).

Table 1 about here.

Education obviously plays an indispensable role in obtaining the message of this campaign. Various literature (e.g., Gaziano, 1997) indicate that education filters the processes of accessing, understanding and accumulating information. The results yielded from this study

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support an education-filter hypothesis. As shown in Table 1, respondents' having children attending elementary school is decisive to awareness of the campaign. Two possible explanations exist. First, the campaign may have successfully elevated the awareness of the campaign among parents. Dervin (1989), for example, notes the value going through the schools because children not only receive the message, but take the message home to their parents. On the other hand, people who have children in elementary school might be more likely to remember the campaign from its other tactical sources, such as outdoor billboards, publicized press conferences and public service announcements spanning from 1995 through 1997. Therefore, the net contribution of the 1997 campaign efforts toward escalating parental awareness is not entirely clear on its own; however, a cumulative effect could be possible. Swinehart (1997) explains the value of campaigns that are repeated year to year, reinforcing the message. "It is unrealistic . . . to expect very brief or limited campaigns to markedly increase public awareness of a particular problem or exert a sustained influence" (p. 367).

Additional findings show that gender determines who gets the information -- females are far more likely than males to learn of the campaign and obtain the message. McGuire (1985, 1989) cites gender as one audience characteristic that should be considered when designing communication campaigns. Perhaps mothers are still the primary child care giver in the respondent families and more apt to be responsive and/or responsible for the actions that the campaign addresses -- that is, reviewing or altering family use of television. Per Paisley (1989), "The more that values and perceptions of self-interest are shared in a population, the more effective an education campaign can be" (p. 17).

As communication effects literature suggests, there exists a vital distinction between awareness of a given issue and attitude shift. In this case we were particularly interested in investigating whether this campaign generated any impact on people's attitudes toward violence portrayed on television. People's awareness of the campaign did not necessarily elevate their level of concern about TV violence. According to the output of Pearson's correlation test, the association of campaign awareness with the concern toward TV violence is not statistically significant.

The next inquiry, then, was to identify what factors might influence people's level of concern toward TV violence. Five factors were found to correlate with concern about TV violence. First, as age increases, respondents were more concerned about ample acts of violence

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that fill TV programming. Second, the more respondents thought that their vote makes a difference politically, the more likely they were to be concerned about the volume of violence portrayed on the TV screen. It is interesting to discover that people's sense of locus of control had something to do with their concern about TV programming. Third, as found in examining campaign awareness, gender is a significant factor in concern about TV violence. Women were significantly more likely than men to be concerned about the issue.

Fourth, it is not surprising to note that parenthood played a role in molding respondent opinion about TV violence. This may be explained because parents, concerned with their children's welfare and psychological development, cannot help paying attention to TV content that their children may watch for hours each day.

The factor most related to TV violence concern, however, is the level of respondents' religiosity. That is, the more religious a person is, the more concerned he/she is about TV violence. The value system that most religions advocate is apparently at odds with the messages that violence programs convey. This is an area not greatly explored in research and deserves future attention.

From Table 2, it is apparent that religiosity is the leading predictor of concern about TV violence, followed by gender and parental factors. Note that the amount of variance explained by this model is rather impressive (R-squared is 0.142).

<u>Table 2. about here.</u>

Even though it is not clear whether this model has included all of the important predictors, we have a good reason to believe that future campaign efforts should broaden concentration on these three characteristics -- religiosity, gender and respondent's role as parent. Of particular importance is addressing the apparent role that religion plays in escalating people's level of concern toward TV violence. Perhaps consideration should be given to including churches as an additional message channel in the future. Furthermore, future waves of the campaign should aim at increasing the public's level of concern about TV violence, and then advocating a change of TV viewing behavior, so the campaign's fundamental goal may be achieved. The materials developed by the North Carolina Coalition for Pulling the Plug on Media Violence is activity-related and hence may, over time, be more effective in promoting behavior changes.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this evaluation study indicate that the grassroots approach by the North Carolina Coalition for Pulling the Plug on Media Violence of advocating for the elimination of violent media use has received some levels of success. A considerable percentage of people responding to this survey reported that they have heard of the campaign. With limited budget and human resources, the group's volunteer endeavor is impressive enough for communication researchers to ponder a possible direction shift to coping with the media violence issue.

This study also found that awareness of the problems about media violence does not necessarily lead to attitude change. In addition, certain demographic attributes -- gender, parenthood, education level and religiosity -- are crucial in determining whether the advocated message is received and the level of concern people have toward the problem. In light of these findings, future campaign efforts might need to target the people with certain demographic attributes and aim to alter their attitudes toward the problem with thoughtfully tailored information. Since gender was a contributing factor, campaign developers might consider using a tone that appeals to women, for example. Because religiosity also appears to influence awareness and concern, it may also be of value to target religious groups and organizations. The current campaign design already taps into parents through the state's school systems, which should be continuously maintained.

Future efforts also need to focus on attitude shift toward the issue of media violence and change in people's viewing behavior -- after all, extensive penetration of a campaign slogan is not equal to genuine success. In order to change people's views and behaviors toward media violence, opportunities to advance personal persuasion might be added to the campaign project. For example, special talks, guest presentations and theme workshops about media violence could be arranged and incorporated into various activities of existing organizations. The current close nexus between the local grassroots group and the state's education system should be maintained to continue reaching parents who are most involved in monitoring and changing children's media use behavior.

If people's television viewing behavior and program preference can eventually be shifted by those grassroots efforts, then the impact of violence portrayed on the silver screen will be

expected to diminish. This large-scale behavior change of media use may ultimately influence the media industries and force them to transform their current programming strategies. Since commercial media firms need to reach the audience in order to lure advertisers' endorsements, loss of audience share could result in modified programming to target new tastes or preferences. In other words, changing audience media use patterns can generate a "trickle up" impact on media content, such as curtailing the dose of violence in programming, a long-standing goal of child advocates.

As part of the literature review vividly indicates, government regulations and industry self-regulation have not been highly effective -- politics, media interests and cooperation and First Amendment protection all play a strong role. For example, the effectiveness of the V-chip technology is a function of media industry cooperation in upholding a ratings system. Therefore, a trickle-up endeavor through grassroots participation may be an effective alternative for the future.

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Table 1: Prediction Model of Campaign Awareness

	b	Beta	t	sig
Education	0.022	0.145	4.086	<0.001
Gender	-0.114	-0.124	-3.477	0.001
Elementary Children	0.128	0.115	3.223	0.001
Constant	0.014			

df = 3   F = 13.021   p < 0.001
R2 = 0.049   Adjusted R2 = 0.045

Table 2: Prediction Model of Concern About TV Violence

	b	Beta	t	sig
Religiosity	0.108	0.234	4.570	<0.001
Gender	-0.345	-0.185	-3.684	<0.001
Parent	0.320	0.145	2.852	0.005
Constant	0.014			

df = 3   F = 19.322   p < 0.001
R2 = 0.142   Adjusted R2 = 0.135

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THE AGENDA-SETTING PROCESS OF A DAILY NEWSPAPER:

A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

THE AGENDA-SETTING PROCESS OF A DAILY NEWSPAPER:

A CASE STUDY

In this case study, the agenda-setting process of a
Midwestern daily newspaper was examined through interviews with
staff members along with a content analysis and other indicators.
Five theoretical perspectives--socialization, shared news values,
definition of the situation, exchange theory and dominant
ideology--framed this study, and all were found to interact to
shape the agenda-setting process. In addition, this study found
that economic constraints, intermedia competition and role taking
by staff members also played key parts in agenda setting.

THE AGENDA-SETTING PROCESS OF A DAILY NEWSPAPER
A CASE STUDY

Students of sociology and journalism alike have long been concerned with the complex process of the influence of the mass media on public perceptions and opinion, and also with how the news media select the items they present as news. More than 25 years ago, the term, "agenda setting," was introduced to describe the media's impact on public concerns and issues (McCombs and Shaw 1972). Dearing and Rogers (1996: pp. 1-2) described the agenda-setting process as "an ongoing competition among issue proponents to gain the attention of media professionals, the public, and policy elites." Moreover, "agenda setting offers an explanation of why information about certain issues, and not other issues, is available to the public in a democracy, how public opinion is shaped, and why certain issues are addressed through policy actions while other issues are not" (p. 2).

While the bulk of studies in the years following the McCombs and Shaw study dealt with the perceived effects of the media agenda on the public and on policy shapers, scholars in more recent years have shifted their concerns to how the media agenda is crafted. In other words, the agenda becomes the dependent variable in these studies, in addition to being the independent variable that shapes public opinion. By the early 1990s, scholars like Burd (1991, pp. 291-294) were calling for more

qualitative studies that would look, for example, at how newsgathering routines impact the media agenda.

Over the years there have been a number of studies of the agendas of the mass media. Some studies (Miller, 1956; Shaw and Martin, 1992) have examined the mass media agenda in terms of inherent limitations such as the number of items that audiences can handle at any one time. Other researchers have looked at media agendas as a "zero-sum game" with an ongoing replacement process occurring as items are driven from the agenda by new items (Zhu, 1992).

Still other studies (Shaw and Martin, 1992; McComb, Einsiedel and Weaver, 1991) have examined the role of journalistic norms and conventions in shaping media agendas. Other researchers (Gandy, 1982) have looked at the influence of outside forces, in particular, news or press releases as influencing agendas. Another group of studies, such as that of Reese (1989) have looked inter-media influence, espeically the role of The New York Times in influencing the agendas of other media.

In response to the calls for a more holistic study of agenda-setting, this study undertook a case study of a midwestern daily newspaper to examine the process by which the agenda was shaped in this particular setting. The study was informed by Manheim's (1987, p. 50) definition of the media agenda--"those issues, actors, events, images and viewpoints that are available to a given audience."

COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY

Theoretical Perspectives

A literature review suggested that five theoretical perspectives might be helpful in explaining the formation of media agendas. The study followed the counsel of Denzin (1970) and Berg (1995) relative to theoretical triangulation that all relevant propositions should be considered and made explicit before investigation begins.

The first theoretical perspective deals with the socialization, both through education and on-the-job experience, that journalists undergo (Breed, 1955; Shoemaker, Chang, and Brendlinger, 1987; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).

In turn, this ongoing socialization fuels a network of shared news values and definitions of newsworthiness (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996; Shoemaker, Chang, and Brendlinger, 1987; Rich, 1997). These shared values and definitions provide the basis of a second theoretical perspective.

The third theoretical perspective draws heavily on the symbolic interactionist perspective in contending that the development of media agendas is somewhat akin to the social construction of social problems (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977, pp. 23-24). In creating a news agenda, journalists are engaged in a "defintion of the situation," which involves an interplay of self, mind, symbols, significant others, reference groups, past experiences, perspectives, interests and goals" (Charon: 192, pp. 131, 161).

The fourth perspective is that of exchange theory. One
aspect of this perspective contends that news sources provide an
"information subsidy" to the media of items that they otherwise
would not know about, or do not have the resources to determine.
In this exchange, both sets of actors gain benefits; the news
sources get their stories printed or aired, and the news media
get stories at a lower cost.

Finally, the dominant ideology perspective appears highly
relevant in explaining the development of mass media agendas.
Many scholars, including Qualter (1985), Shoemaker and Reese
(1996), and Herman and Chomsky (1988), have contended that the
interests of the ruling classes or those in the commercial
classes are most represented in the media agenda. The media are
seen as promoting and protecting the interests of the elites, and
are themselves an elite in a society.

Relative to these concerns, there is increasing debate, not
only by the general public and media critics, but also in
scholarly publications, about what is perceived as the increasing
emphasis on news of scandal. Tumber (1993) contended that the
increase of such coverage, though widely criticized from a
variety of perspectives (Bennett 1988, Johnson 1997, McCartney
1997) may, in fact, be a way of opposing the dominant ideology of
a society or a media system. This appeal to the somewhat
prurient interests of the general public may at the same time be
a way to resist the traditional dominant ideology as well as an
effort to simply sell more papers.

In sum, five theoretical propositions, deriving from the preceeding perspectives, guided this study:

1. The socialization of journalists, which is a function of training, background, and ongoing socialization in practice, produces journalistic norms and routines which contribute to media agendas.

2. Journalists acquire a number of shared news values that guide their work as reporters and editors. These values help define what is and is not "newsworthy." Implicit among these values is a concept of deviance. The reporting of deviance is a means of both making a judgment about what is functional to society and setting a product to the audience.

3. Agenda setting involves the definition of items as newsworthy through an interactive process in which journalists, with others, create a "definition of the situaiton."

4. Journalists engage in an exchange process not only with news sources but within the profession itself as the news agenda is created.

5. The ideas of the ruling classes constitute the dominant ideology of society. These ideas are most prominently reflectd in the agenda and news gathering routines of the newspaper.

In addition to the preceding propositions, the study remained open to emergent themes from the data, which are discussed later in this article. In attending to emergent themes, the researcher was guided by Glaser and Strauss' "grounded theory" approach (1967, pp. 3-4) which seeks

"systematic discovery of theory from the data of social

research."

                        Methodology for the Study

    Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the

editorial staff members of a daily newspaper, located in the

Upper Midwest, in a city of just over 100,000 population. The

newspaper under study is owned by the Gannett Corporation and has

a daily circulation of more than 48,000 and a Sunday circulation

of nearly 71,000. Permission to undertake the study was granted

by the executive editor.

    Of the 34 full-time journalists on staff for the news and

feature sections and for the copy desk, 31 ultimately were

interviewed. The sports section was not included in the study,

and staff members who served clerical or intern roles were not

included, as they are not a part of the decision-making process

for setting the news agenda of the newspaper.

    The interviews followed an interview guide, which was pre-

tested before the study began by three former reporters, who are

now journalism faculty members. The interviews, conducted (with

two exceptions) in the conference room at the newspaper building,

typically lasted about 20-25 minutes, with the shortest being 15

minutes and the longest 50 minutes.

    Because of corporate policies, this newspaper uses the News

2000 policy as a major agenda-setting device. As the company

newsletter explained in introducing News 2000, "At the heart of

News 2000 is community interest: finding out what topics are of most concern to the people in the community and then reporting on those regularly." Rich (1997: p. 17) describes News 2000 as a part of contemporary public journalism efforts to "redefine news to reflect the concerns of readers," with community interest as the base. The following graphic depicts News 2000:
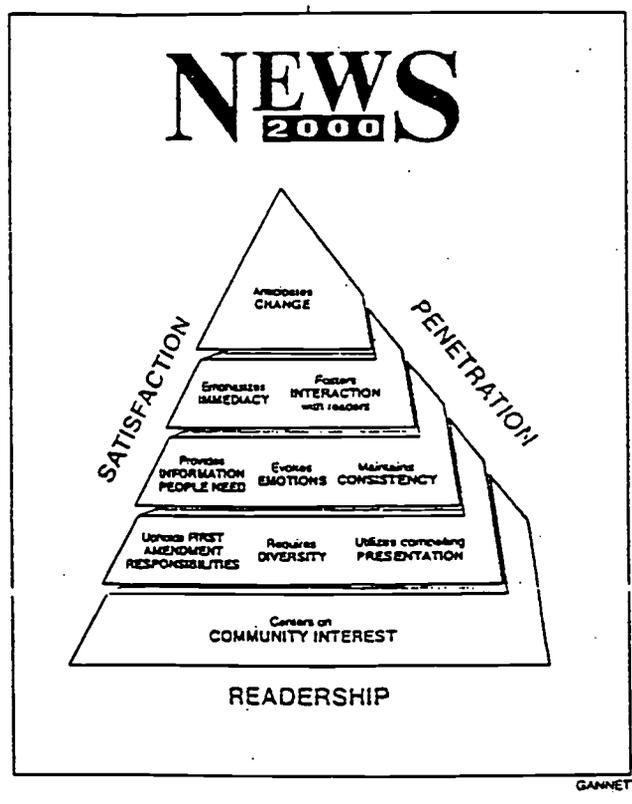

FIGURE 1. NEWS 2000

Because of presence of News 2000 as a deliberate agenda-
setting device, the study also included a content analysis of one
month's issues of the newspaper, during the time frame during
which most of the interveiws were conducted. The frequency of
items for each of the News 2000 components was tallied,
recognizing the fact that an item could fit more than one
category. The coding included the following items: anticipates
change, emphasizes immediacy, fosters interaction with readers,
provides information people need, evokes emotions, upholds First
Amendment responsibilities and requires diversity. In addition,
items were also coded for deviance, since the literature review
had suggested that there is an increased emphasis on deviance in
the reporting of contemorary news (Tumber 1993).

During the interviews, staff members were asked to rank
their personal perceptions of the importance of each category.
The relationship between these staff rankings and the content
analysis findings is discussed later.

Finally, data were also gathered via observation. In
particular, observtions were made of several of the daily late
afternoon budget meetings, at which section editors, key
reporters and the executive and managing editors negotiate the
items to be included in the next morning's paper, along with
decisions about length and placement of items.

FINDINGS

Findings Relevant to Theoretical Perspectives

All five of the theoretical perspectives received substantial support from the data.

Demographic data from the staff revealed that all but one were college graduates, and most of the staff (76 percent) were journalism majors. During the course of the interviews, more than half the staff made direct reference to their college training in helping them do their jobs at the newspaper. Once on the job, the socialization is much more informal than formal. Learning by "osmosis" was how several of the staff explained how they know what is expected of them. Or as one staff member put it, "Trial and error. Ninety percent trial and error and 10 percent training."

Approximately one third of the staff mentioned the role of mentors, such as professors or other staff members like editors, as helping them to learn what is expected. As one staff member put it, "Every place I've worked there have been some talented people whose expertise is in areas that mine's not, and so I learn a lot from them and I hope they learn a few things from me and working together."

A lot of the socialization at this newspaper appears to be self-initiated. As one reporter put it, "I had to watch. . . .I had to use all my senses, in a sense."

That this socialization process, both formal and informal, leads to shared news values was also clear. This was

demonstrated not only by fairly consistent rankings by staff of
the components of News 2000, but also by their equally consistent
reference to a limited number of criteria of newsworthiness. All
of the staff referred to a listing of similar news items or
components of newsworthiness. Nearly two thirds of the staff (65
percent) cited the value of "interest" as a news determinant.
"Impact" was cited by 42 percent, while the closely related value
of "relevance" was cited by 23 percent of the staff during the
interviews. The words of one reporter typify staff perceptions
of news values: "If it's going to affect someone's livelihood,
their daily living, their family, or their job, or their
neighbors. Really, the only guideline I use is if I think it is
interesting, other people will probably be interested too."

Staff members also cited common cues in helping to determine
newsworthiness, in particular from other newspapers and
television, with both of these cues mentioned by nearly half of
the staff. In the newsroom of the newspaper under study there
are six TV monitors, which are obviously much noticed during
times of local newscasts by the TV stations in the city. Staff
members cited TV as providing cues of "late breaking news" as
well as items that the newspaper "perhaps can tell better."

Taking of cues is also strongly related to the definition
of the situation process that is ongoing in the construction of
the news agenda each day. The two news values most commonly
cited were those of items being interesting and having impact.

The following table displays the results of the content analysis, using the News 2000 themes, and the staff rankings of these same themes:

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF NEWS 2000 THEMES IN PRINT AND STAFF
RANKINGS OF IMPORTANCE

Content Analysis		Staff Rankings*	
Theme	# of Codings	Theme	Composite Score
Change	167	Informative	1.48
Informative	140	Change	1.85
Diversity	68	Community	1.89
Immediacy	63	Immediacy	1.96
Interaction	40	Emotions	2.00
Community	34	1st Amendment	2.07
Emotions	18	Interaction	2.30
1st Amendment	2	Diversity	3.11

Copy Editors' Rankings*

Community	2.00
Informative	2.14
Emotions	2.28
Change	2.43
Immediacy	2.86
Interaction	2.86
1st Amendment	2.86
Diversity	3.43

* Staff rankings were done on a basis of a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 indicating most importance and 5 the least.

News 2000 was found to provide an influential framework for these news values. The content analysis revealed persuasive evidence of the News 2000 components as well of deviance. In the content analysis, there were 253 codings for deviance, higher than any of the News 2000 themes. However, many items were coded for more than one theme. Linking agenda setting with the news in print, news value rankings by staff and the actual content

showed a general consistency in such areas as the informational
component, covering or anticipating change, and immediacy.
Interestingly enough, the copy editors as a group ranked all of
the news attributes lower than did the staff as a whole.
However, the diversity component ranked last in value for staff
members, but third most frequent in the content analysis. The
content analysis also showed a fairly frequent coverage of items
that could be termed as coverage of deviance, although it must be
noted that many items in the content analysis that were coded for
deviance were as well coded for at least one other of the News
2000 themes.

A major discrepancy between the content analysis and staff
rankings of news values was that of First Amendment
responsibilities. This component ranked a distant last in the
content analysis, less than one percent of the codings, but in
staff rankings was sixth of the eight listings. Given the
emphasis typically placed on First Amendment rights and
responsibilities during most undergraduate journalism
instruction, the results of both the content analysis and staff
rankings might seem low.

The definition of the situation process occurs at two
levels--the formal and the informal. The formal part of this
process comes at the daily budget meeting, where the
representatives of each department of the newspaper meet with the
top editors to discuss and determine the items that will be
included in the next day's paper. From the complete list of

items--or budget sheet--that are identified--a list that includes items from several wire services as well as staff-generated items, staff members lobby their ideas, and, out of this joint negotiation, the final agenda begins to take shape, subject to late-breaking items occurring after the meeting and before the final deadline later in the night.

Staff members also showed a major awareness of the informal defintion of the situation that occurs, beyond the meetings. An overwhelming majority of reporters and all the city editors reported lobbying for or "pitching" story ideas. "We're always pitching our story ideas," a longtime reporter noted.

The gathering of tips is another part of the news construction process. Nearly two thirds of the staff members actually involved in the planning and writing of news stories mentioned getting story tips, with half of this number mentioning going outside the newspaper itself for such tips. For some staff members, this seeking of feedback was a very intentional process. A veteran reporter referred to "the network of sources" that he has developed during his years at the newspaper. "I feel real comfortable with them, and a lot of times as I start working on a story, if I have questions about whether this is a legitimate story, I'll do a lot of soul searching."

The ongoing definition situation process takes place in stages beginning with the potential definition of a news agenda in the preparation of budget sheets for the daily late afternoon meting. These budget sheets list all of the potential news items

available for the next day's publication. This listing includes

locally generted stories as well as those from several wire

services, both for regional and state news as well as for

national and international items. The next stage is the meeting

itself, and further definition occurs later in the evening with

the copy desk staff and top editors, particularly for news items

that emerge after the late afternoon meeting. It should be noted

that the ongoing definitions are not exactly among equals, in

that the top editors exert the ultimate decision-making

perogative. The final product or stage is what actually appears

in print the following morning.

In terms of the exchange perspective, there was an

overwhelming awareness by staff members who deal with press

releases of the information subsidy that these releases afford.

As one of the younger reporters put it, "I think they are

helpful. They have their place and you can derive a lot of good

information."

In addition, about a third of the staff acknowledged that

the sources of the actual releases also function as news sources

in general--in providing story ideas. When it comes to treatment

of news releases from political figures, there is substantially

less credibility afforded them than for the other releases.

There is also a mutual benefits process inherent in the use

of news releases, most generally for story ideas. The source

gains the benefit of at least potential publication of news

items, while the newspaper gains stories and ideas that it otherwise might not be aware of.

In terms of the dominant ideology perspective, there is simultaneously significant support both for the existence of such and for intentional resistance to such ideology. The staff (nearly three fourths) widely perceives the News 2000 policy as an imposed ideology coming from the top of the corporation into their local setting. One reporter, when asked about the impact of News 2000 on how she does her job, replied emphatically, "I don't even know what it really is. It's an amorphous, ridiculous concept that just seems to make editors crazy and irrational." Another staff member was even more critical. "News 2000 is a silly idea; it tells journalists to use a formula to be 'good' journalists--anything local is good."

The ambivalent nature of staff response to News 2000 can be found in this comment from a veteran reporter, "I think generally News 2000 is sound. But sometimes it seems it also puts blinders on us."

Interestingly enough, News 2000 tends to be perceived as more of a threat by those with less than 15 years experience in the profession and somewhat less so by those with 15 and more years of journalism experience.

The very ownership of this newspaper by a large media chain is an indicator of the potential influence of dominant ideology. Staff members frequently made reference to that ownership during the interviews. There was also reference made to the fact that

the top editors are in regular contact with the elites of the
community, and also reference to "flak" or reaction that elites
exert in reference to items in the paper.

Still another influence from the parent company is the
profit imperative. As one staff member put it, "I know that
sometimes I've heard at the meeting people say (when we're
discussing what will go on the front page), 'what is going to
sell this paper?' So when you work for John Corporation you have
to be concerned about money because our company wants us to be
concerned about money to boost our circulation."

At the same moment, there is also evidence of resistance to
the influence of dominant ideology. The News 2000 policy, with
its base of community interest, is ostensibly a direct attempt to
link more directly with ordinary readers and to spend less time
in covering the elites of the community. The same staff members
who were critical of News 2000 almost in the same breath pointed
to benefits that this policy provides in terms of appealing to
readers. In fact, the same less experienced stff members who
most strongly criticized News 2000 were also more supportive of
the community aspects than were the more veteran staff members.
As one staff member viewed News 2000, "it's both a blessing and a
curse," a statement that many of the staff would seem to agree
with.

Another reporter said, "In all candor I will tell you again,
I think I am one of the very few who thinks that News 2000 is
just good journalism. I really believe that. It just has a

different label." A veteran reporter, in assessing the pros and

cons of News 2000 said, "reporters used to be a little more

arrogant, I think, in determining what news was and now we're

listening to readers more than we used to." Another staff member

agreed, "I think it does help. We're making issues more

important to people."

Staff members also stated that they felt there are now

better serving ordinary readers and providing information that

people need--aspects that are reflective both of resisting

dominant ideology and of shared news values.

This researcher also observed evidence of other policies and

devices the newspaper is using to resist dominant ideology,

including changes in coverage of political campaigns and

government to include more impact on ordinary readers, the

appearance of top editors on call-in shows to solicit feedback,

and the development of advisory boards and focus groups to gain

public input. The newspaper is also employing the graphic device

of breakout boxes to provide information at a glance to readers

in an effort to make news more quickly accessible. These boxes

typically list phone numbers or e-mail addresses for more

information or else provide a summary of the longer item.

At the time of the study, the newspaper had just won a

national award for a public journalism effort in which the

newspaper's staff had not only reported stories of social change

efforts in a small town in the paper's circulation area, but had

also actively worked to organize meetings and forums in that community to effect change.

In sum, there was evidence on both sides of the dominant ideology perspective, both that the agenda-setting process at the newspaper under study is strongly influenced by dominant ideology, and that the newspaper is making conscious efforts to combat that influence. "The good thing is that it forces you to try to see news at a different way or different angle," one reporter said. Another said that a lot of News 2000 is "probably not new. . .it's just good newspapering." There is a sort of struggle for the soul of the newspaper in process.

Emergent Themes

Finally, several emergent themes, strongly tied to the five perspectives tested in this study, did emerge, mainly from the interview data. Those emergent themes include the following:

1. Economically based constraints such as increased costs of production, loss of news space and loss (or potential loss) of readers.

2. Competition from other media as a cue for news coverage.

3. The newspaper as an agenda setter for other media in the community.

4. Staff members consciously taking the part, or role, of readers, to determine potential interest in news items.

The inter-related themes of economically based constrants and competition with other media were acknowledged, and sometimes

lamented, by a number of the staff. One staff member called the results, "gotcha" journalism. "I don't appreciate this. I do think it has changed and I think it's too bad. I think it's driven a lot by the TV news, unfortunately."

Another staff member was also blunt about the current situation. He criticized what he considers to be a trend toward "infotainment," and added:

"I think every editor in the country right now wants to be recognized as the person who came up with the product that saved the daily newspaper and created this boom in circulation that we thought we would get with the Baby Boom Generation. As a result, we're mindlessly playing around with all kinds of little gimmicks that I think annoy a lot of people."

That competition with other media for story ideas is still fierce is typified in this comment from a staff member, who when asked what the reaction is if a local TV station is first with a story, said, "You really don't want to show up for work!"

This theme of conscious role-taking on the part of the staff was perhaps the most surprising finding, since the literature review had not suggested this. More than half the staff cited this role-taking process. This observation from one staff member sums up the thoughts expressed by many: "Something is newsworthy if I would read it. I try to think of a fake reader, something that gets to people. I think they should have some sort of emotional reaction to it."

The frequent rhetoric about serving the needs of ordinary readers and providing readers with information they need can also be viewed in the framework of active role-taking by staff. It should also be noted that this conscious role-taking is probably strongly linked to the overall effort to win newspaper readers lost to other media.

There are definitely strong links between these emergent themes and the News 2000 initiative, which has as its goal to serve or attract "ordinary" readers. The role-taking aspect, that more than half the staff mentioned during the interviews, can also be seen as an effort by staff to gain readership. More than two-thirds of the staff cited competition from other media as a factor in what shapes the news agenda at the newspaper.

Taking the theoretical perspectives as a whole, there was support for all of the theoretical perspectives that guided this study. Each of the perspectives was found to contribute to an explanation of the agenda-setting process of this newspaper. The process is an interactive one, with broad societal factors contributing to and interacting with more localized actor factors. In addition, competition and economic considerations as well as staff role taking emerged as factors that influence the news agenda at the newspaper under study.

The large-scale societal influences like dominant ideology and the elites of society, the normative standards of the society and community, and the various outside news sources like wire services, in turn, impact the interactional influences on agenda

setting. These interactional influences, which also impact the societal influences, include the socialization and ongoing news values of the staff, the definitions of the situation that are arrived at in the context of the perspective of the elites and the staff, and the exchange and negotiation that occur each day at the newspaper. The societal influences set boundaries for the interaction that occurs among the staff. There are also economic factors and constraints, influences from other media, and conscious role taking that play key parts in determining what actually appears in print.

Based on the findings of the study, the following model is presented to graphically depict the agenda-setting process:
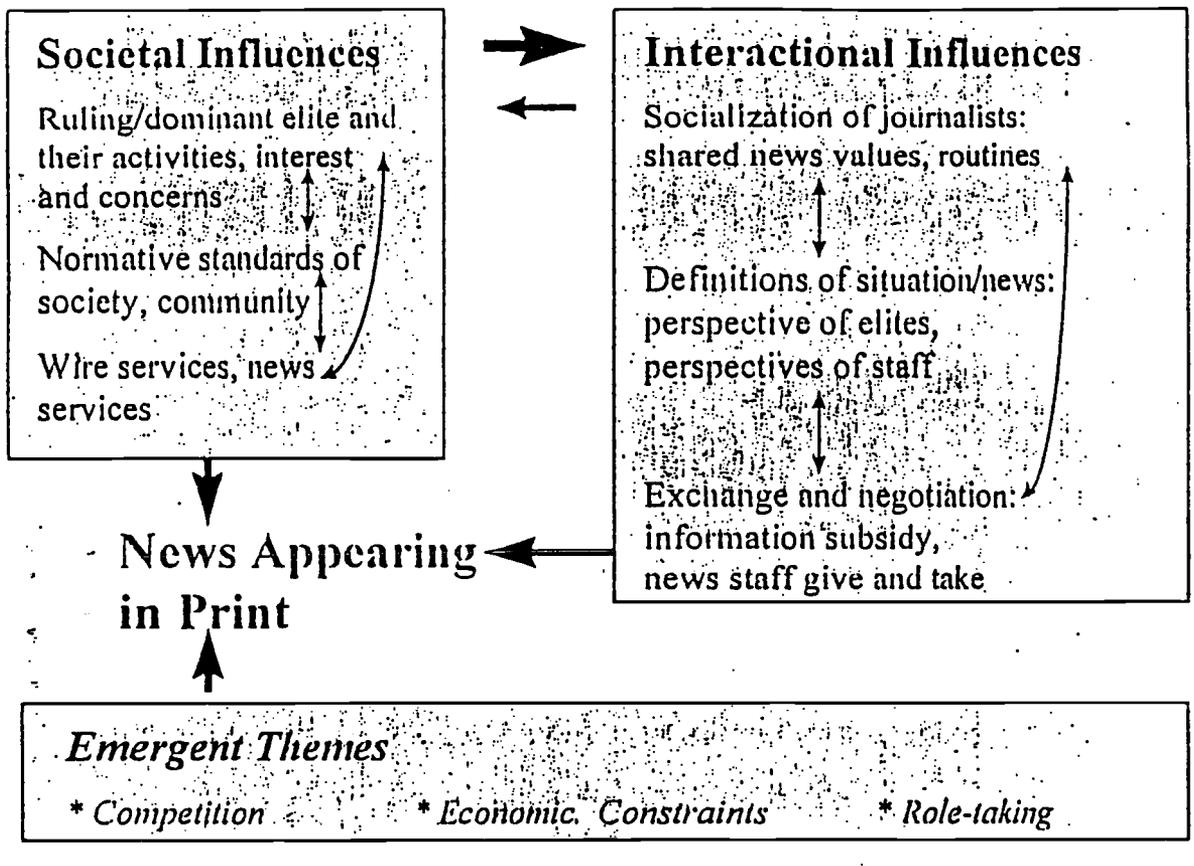
FIGURE 2.   MODEL OF THE AGENDA-SETTING PROCESS

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The Use and Abuse of Media-Sponsored Opinion Polls

in Two Presidential Campaigns:

A Critical Analysis of Network TV News and Six Prestige Print Media

by

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ABSTRACT

The Use and Abuse of Media-Sponsored Opinion Polls

in Two Presidential Campaigns:

A Critical Analysis of Network TV News and Six Prestige Print Media

This study is the first longitudinal critical analysis of media-sponsored opinion polls by three different categories of prestige news media---network TV, newspapers and news magazines. Poll stories from Campaign '92 and Campaign '96 were analyzed for conformity to AAPOR disclosure standards, and also for eight additional types of reporting/interpretation errors. Both the number of poll stories and the quality of poll stories were down in Campaign '96. Newspapers were the clear winners in conforming to AAPOR disclosure standards, and TV networks were the clear losers.

The Use and Abuse of Media-Sponsored Opinion Polls

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Polls have become a staple of American political news coverage---and more so in presidential races than at any other time. Even one political pollster himself has acknowledged, "The news media are obsessed with polls; almost every major newspaper and television station is conducting its own. Unfortunately, the increase in quantity has not produced better quality."[1]

To what extent have the major news media used opinion polls in recent presidential campaigns? To what extent have they abused those opinion polls---i.e., used them in fragmentary ways or used them incorrectly? And, if the media abuse of polls is common, to what extent is this important to the democratic process? This study is the first longitudinal critical analysis of media-sponsored opinion polls by three different categories of prestige news media---network TV, newspapers and news magazines. Cantril stated that ". . . polls sponsored by news organizations often get caught up in the swirl of events and too seldom are subjected to the scrutiny they may deserve."[2] This study is an effort by independent scholars to subject these polls to the scrutiny they deserve.

The most infamous media-sponsored opinion poll in a presidential campaign was the 1936 reader presidential preference survey conducted by Literary Digest.[3] This polling debacle, which predicted that Alfred Landon would win over President Franklin Roosevelt, has been used as a case history of what not to do by two generations of students

in journalism, political science, and sociology. In most presidential campaigns since then, the major polls have been reasonably accurate, and in some cases highly accurate, in predicting electoral outcomes.[4] However, the accuracy of final polling results and election outcomes are only one small part, and not even the most important part, of the controversy surrounding media-sponsored opinion polls---i.e., polls conducted on behalf of and paid for by the media themselves.

The AAPOR Standards

In any type of scholarly critical analysis the first difficult task is to determine which evaluative criteria to use. Against which standards should the news media be judged? And who says so? In the context of the present study, however, this problem is considerably reduced. In 1968 the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) published its "Standards for Reporting Public Opinion Polls." The basic standards were somewhat modified in 1986 and were listed in AAPOR's Code of Professional Ethics and Practice, Section III, titled Standard for Minimal Disclosure:

At a minimum, the following items should be disclosed:

1. Who sponsored the survey, and who conducted it.

2. The exact wording of the questions asked . . .

3. A definition of the population under study . . .

4. A description of the sample selection procedure . . .

5. Size of samples . . .

6. A discussion of the precision of the findings, including, if appropriate, estimates of sampling error, and a description of any weighting or estimating procedures used.

7. Which results are based on parts of the sample, rather than on the total sample.

8. Method, location, and dates of data collection.[5]

Even though, strictly speaking, the AAPOR standards apply only to the full technical research reports produced by AAPOR members, the standards have been so influential that even The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual states that essentially the same points "should be in every story based on a poll."[6] Likewise, the standards have been so influential that recent reporting textbooks have recommended that today's journalism students---the journalists of tomorrow---include almost the identical standards in their news stories.[7]

Review of Past Research

Scholars have criticized how the prestige press has been reporting public opinion polls for more than three decades.[8] One of the first content analyses to measure most of the variables suggested by the AAPOR standards was conducted by Paletz, Short, Baker, Campbell, Cooper and Oeslander.[9] They studied the reporting of polls by CBS-TV, NBC-TV, and the New York Times during 1973, 1975, and 1977, and concluded that ". . . the flawed public opinion polls presently purveyed by the media are inappropriate guides for public policy."[10]

Miller and Hurd focused specifically upon how well the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times, and the Atlanta Constitution conformed to the AAPOR standards in their reporting of opinion polls between 1972 and 1979. They found that conformity was highest for the standard of sample size (85%) and lowest for margin of error (16%).[11]

Salwen found "dramatic improvement" in conformity to AAPOR standards in two major newspapers (the <u>Detroit News</u> and the <u>Detroit Free Press</u>) in a longitudinal study of presidential campaign years from 1968 to 1984.[12] Smith and Verrall conducted a critical analysis of Australian television coverage of opinion polls in the 1980 Australian election. They studied conformity to the standards of three different professional organizations: AAPOR, the National Council on Public Polls, and the Australian Press Council. The authors concluded: "The results of this study confirm earlier American findings that poll coverage is extensive, superficial, and inaccurate."[13]

Lowry conducted a critical review of media-sponsored opinion polls during the 1984 presidential campaign to determine conformity to AAPOR standards. The media studied were the three major network TV newscasts, three major newsweeklies, as well as the <u>New York Times</u> and <u>Washington Post</u>. His major conclusion was that ". . . all of the news media were deficient in following the AAPOR standards in some respects, and some of them were deficient in most respects."[14]

Demers carried out a qualitative analysis of the reporting of opinion polls in 15 large daily newspapers, one magazine, and one news service from 1980-1987. Instead of an improved picture over time, he found four shortcomings: "1) problems in survey design, 2) lack of background information, 3) problems in analysis and 4) lack of insightful analysis."[15] Based upon their content analysis of six newspapers in Campaign '88, Rollberg, Sanders and Buffalo also ended on a critical note: "It is disturbing that the increase in the number of polls reported in these newspapers was accompanied by a decrease in thoroughness of reporting."[16]

The overwhelming conclusion from all of the above studies is that most of the news media are doing a relatively poor job in presenting the results of public opinion polls to the public in a way which (a) satisfies AAPOR's minimal disclosure standards, or even (b) provides educated viewers and readers with the basic information needed to interpret and evaluate the poll findings.

Research Questions

The present study was guided by five research questions.

1. Overall, did the number of media-sponsored polls increase between Campaigns '92 and '96? Impressionistic evidence and anecdotal comments indicate that each presidential campaign season produces more polls than the past campaign, but are these impressions actually supported by the data?

2. Overall, did the media do a better job conforming to AAPOR disclosure standards in Campaign '96 than in Campaign '92? Again, the purpose is to look for change, for improvements, over time.

3. Which of the three categories of media (network TV, newspapers, and magazines) did the best job of conforming to AAPOR disclosure standards? Network TV of course operates under the severe limitations of a much smaller "news hole" than do newspapers and news magazines. Therefore, do the print media demonstrate higher levels of conformity than network TV news?

4. To what extent did these major media voices provide their readers and viewers with additional cautionary information beyond the basic disclosure standards recommended by AAPOR? More than two decades ago, Wheeler cautioned:

In sum, though the theory of polling is scientifically sound, the actual practice is

not . . . . Polling is not the pristinely pure scientific process the pollsters want

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us to believe it is . . . . But as serious as these technical problems are, as

suspicious of polls as they should make us, they are not the only source of polling

error. The fundamental problem of polls lies in their analysis.[17]

Pollster Burns W. Roper also stated that the news media frequently mislead readers and

viewers---not by the facts they report, but by implication:

Partly because of their lack of deep expertise, reporters have overstressed

sampling error and understressed the other more important and considerably

greater sources of error. And, in the process of stressing sampling error, they

have not warned the reader or viewer of error as they have intended. Instead

they have implied an unwarranted degree of accuracy.[18]

Miller, Merkel, and Wang state that the AAPOR standards provide only a starting point

for reporters when preparing poll stories.[19] Also, Brady and Orren state that,

"Measurement and specification errors . . . are often five or ten times greater than

sampling error."[20] Cantril stated, "The larger---and much more important---

problem with reports of sampling error is that they imply that sampling is the

primary, if not the only, source of possible error in a poll."[21] Thus, for all of the above

reasons, it becomes very important to determine to what extent these prestige news

media provided additional cautionary information beyond the basic AAPOR disclosure

standards.

5. Apart from the AAPOR disclosure standards, what were the most common

reporting/interpretation errors introduced by the three categories of media? The

importance of this question was suggested by Smith and Verrall's critical analysis of

factual and logical errors in Australian television coverage of opinion polls.[22] The types

of reporting/interpretation errors are defined below.

Methods

Sample. The content universe for the TV portion of this study consisted of all weeknights from August 24 through October 30, 1992, and from September 1 through November 1, 1996. For each campaign, we drew a simple random sample of 25 network newscasts from ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC.

The 199 newscasts (one was lost from Campaign '92 due to a recording error) were viewed in entirety in two screenings. The purpose of the first screening was to locate every presidential and vice presidential campaign story. A campaign story was defined as being primarily about the national campaign. The next step was to view all of the campaign stories to locate opinion polls sponsored by the four networks.

For the three news magazines (Newsweek, Time, and U.S. News & World Report), poll stories were located simply by reading all of the issues for the periods defined above for the TV networks. Poll stories for the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Wall Street Journal were located by consulting the index published by each paper.

Coding categories. The coding categories closely followed the recommended AAPOR standard:

1. Sponsor---organization for which the poll was conducted

2. Question wording---complete wording provided for question(s) referred to in the news report

3. Population---definition of population from which sample was drawn, i.e., specific type(s) of respondents and where located

4. Sample size---total number of persons interviewed

5. Interviewing method---e.g., in person, telephone, or mail

6. Interviewing date(s)---i.e., when interviewing was done

7. Sampling error---estimated percentage of error (+/-) specified

8. Partial results specified---identification of and basis for results that use less than the total sample

In addition to the basic AAPOR standards, this analysis also coded the following variables:

9. Additional cautions---any cautionary references to additional sources of error or bias besides sampling error

10. Factual inaccuracy---clear misreporting of a factual detail

11. Overgeneralization---standard inductive fallacy, e.g., invalid generalization across polls, or generalization to a population different from that sampled

12. Modal force---any overstatement of the strength of a claim, especially drawing certain conclusions from probabilistic poll data

13. Conclusive swing---a species of model force error, the claim that some consequence would certainly (rather than probably or possibly) follow from a swing of some magnitude

14. Temporal transposition---reporting poll results in present (or future) terms, e.g., "The poll shows candidate X is ahead."

15. Speculation---fallacy of drawing a conclusion from a hypothetical situation---e.g., "If the election had been held last week, candidate X would have won."

16. Ambiguous comparison---reporting results in reference to an unspecified baseline---e.g., "The results show a 4% swing to candidate X." Erroneous because unverifiable and essentially ambiguous.

17. Evaluative description---reporting poll results in evaluative (rather than factual) terms---e.g., "The latest poll is more good news for candidate X."

Categories 1 through 9 were taken from Lowry[23], and categories 10 through 17 were taken from Smith and Verrall.[24] All coding was done by the authors, working from video tapes of the network TV news and from copies of articles from the print media. Although this study is a critical analysis of how the media reported polls, not a "scientific" content analysis in the normal sense of the term, coders did use clearly defined written categories and made every effort to apply them in ways that would be reliable and replicable. Thus, we followed Smith and Verrall's example in this respect.[25]

Results

Although, as noted by research question 1, impressionistic evidence and anecdotal comments indicated that each presidential campaign season produces more polls than the past campaign; however, we found that there were fewer media-sponsored polls stories in Campaign 96'. There were 70 poll stories in Campaign '92 and 48 in Campaign '96. At first this seemed surprising, but in light of the fact that other independent research has indicated that at least the TV networks had reduced the total amount of their campaign coverage by almost half from 1992 to 1996, this finding makes more sense.[26] If the print media likewise reduced their total amount of political coverage, then the reduction in poll stories, although not expected, would be easy to understand.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Research question 2 asked whether the media did a better job conforming to AAPOR disclosure standards in Campaign '96 than in Campaign '92. Was there

improvement over time? Although some categories of the media did improve in meeting the eight disclosure standards, in general the media did not do a better job in conforming to the AAPOR standards. Of the 24 cells (8 variables X 3 categories of media), there were no changes in five cells, improvements in seven cells, and lower scores in 12 cells. Furthermore, the magnitude of the improvements tended to be smaller than the magnitude of the lower scores.

Identification of sponsor. As Table 1 indicates, all of the media received perfect 100% scores on this standard, but these scores were an artifact of how the study was conducted. Since we analyzed only poll stories that were identified as being sponsored by the ten prestige media selected for analysis, these scores had to total 100%.

Question wording. This standard refers to whether the news media provided complete wording for questions reported in their poll stories. Table 1 provides very mixed results on this standard. It shows that, on one hand, the prestige newspapers improved their compliance from 44.4% to 50%. The networks doubled their compliance, but still remained at only 18.2%. The news magazines, on the other hand, dropped in compliance from 80% in Campaign '92 to 20% in Campaign 96.

Population specified. This standard required a definition (type of people sampled and geographic location) of the population from which the sample was drawn. News reports without information about the specific type(s) of respondents and from which geographic area, did not meet this standard. Table 1 indicates that newspapers reported this information in half of their stories in Campaign '92, but that the trend was in the wrong direction---down from 66.7% in Campaign '92. The prestige news magazines and TV networks provided this information in only three to five percent of their poll stories. To put it differently, they failed to meet the AAPOR standard in at least 95% of their poll stories in both campaigns.

Sample size. This standard requires the news story to report the total number of persons interviewed in the poll. As Table 1 indicates, all three categories of media performed worse in meeting this standard in Campaign '96 than in Campaign '92. Once again, newspaper poll stories were far superior to news magazine stories, and the news magazine stories were far superior to the TV networks. In fact, the networks reported sample size in none of their Campaign '96 stories.

Interviewing method stated. Network television news failed to meet this standard completely. In both campaigns, not a single poll story on the networks met this standard. News magazines were worse in 1996 than in 1992 . Again newspapers did by far the best job in conforming to this standard, with about two-thirds of their poll stories in each campaign reporting this information. The following statement from the New York Times is a good example of a paragraph explaining the interviewing method and selection of respondents:

> The sample of telephone exchanges called was selected by a computer from a computer list of exchanges in the country. The exchanges were chosen so as to assure that each region of the country was represented in proportion to its population. For each exchange, telephone numbers were formed by random digits, thus permitting access to both listed and unlisted numbers. Within each household one adult was designated by a random procedure to be the respondent for the poll.[27]

Interviewing date(s) stated. This standard requires that the date(s) when the interviewing was done be reported. The prestige newspapers improved on this standard, and ended with 75% conformity in Campaign .96. Both the news magazines and network TV declined seriously in Campaign '96, and ended with 20% and 40.9% compliance, respectively.

<u>Sampling error specified</u>. Network television news performed well in meeting this standard. In fact, this was one of the few bright spots for the networks, with 95.5% compliance in Campaign '96. Usually the sampling error was included as part of the graphic, but often in difficult-to-read fine print. The news magazines were worst, down from 45% compliance in Campaign '92 to only 20% compliance in Campaign '96---75% lower than the networks.

<u>Partial results unexplained</u>. This variable in Table 1 is the only variable where a <u>low</u> score is desirable. Since all of the percentages are low, this means that all of the media essentially were in compliance on this standard. These results are also an artifact, however, because almost none of the poll stories reported scores for sub-populations (e.g., men vs. women, or blacks vs. whites vs. Hispanics). Therefore the reason the media were in almost 100% compliance is that the standard simply didn't come into play; it was not applicable. One of the few good examples was the following:

One registered voter was selected from each household by a procedure aimed at providing appropriate proportions of male and females respondents. Certain questions were asked of all respondents and certain ones were asked of half the respondents. Among those questions asked of everyone, chances are 19 of 20 that if all registered voters with telephones in the U.S. had been surveyed, the findings would differ from these poll results by no more than 3.2 percentage points in either direction. The margin of error for questions asked of half the sample would be 4.5 percentage points. The margin for a subgroup would depend on the size of that group.[28]

Research question 3 asked which of the three categories of media (newspapers, news magazines or network TV) did the best job of conforming to AAPOR disclosure

standards. The overall results of Table 1 indicate that the prestige newspapers were the clearly in first place in compliance, and the networks were in last.

Research question 4 asked to what extent the prestige media provided their readers and viewers with <u>additional</u> cautionary information beyond the basic disclosure standards recommended by AAPOR. In absolute terms, all three categories of media did a poor job of supplying additional cautionary information. However, in relative terms, newspapers did much better than the other two categories of media, providing additional cautionary information of 33.3% of their poll stories in Campaign '92 and in 43.8% in Campaign '96. The corresponding scores for news magazines were 25% and 0%. The TV networks were again in last place, supplying additional cautionary information in only 9.4% of their poll stories in Campaign '92 and in none of their poll stories in Campaign '96.

One useful example of additional cautionary information was provided by the <u>New York Times</u>:

> In addition to sampling error, the practical difficulties of conducting any survey of public opinion may introduce other sources of error into the poll. Variations in question wording or the order of questions, for instance, can lead to somewhat different results.[29]

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px; text-align:center;">
TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE
</div>

Research question 5 asked about the extent to which the prestige news media introduced eight different types of reporting/interpretation errors apart from the AAPOR standards. Table 2 indicates that the biggest problem area was with temporal transpositions, and the TV networks were by far the most frequent violator of this type

of error. Polls always report the state of affairs at the time the polls were taken (past tense). The networks anchors and reporters tended to use present tense when reporting the results, far more so than did the prestige print media. However, it should be pointed out that the networks did make a 48% improvement in this respect between Campaigns '92 and '96.

The networks also had the worst scores in terms of making evaluative statements about the poll results of the various candidates---e.g., reporting the results as "good news" or "bad news" rather than simply as factual statements. Likewise, the networks had the worst scores in terms of making ambiguous comparisons of polling results.

The results for factual inaccuracies were somewhat mixed---ranging from a low of zero for newspapers in Campaign '96 to a high of 30% for magazines in the same campaign. Most factual errors resulted from discrepancies between statistics reported in stories versus in tables or on-screen graphics.

Discussion and Conclusions

Contrary to our expectations, we found that the total number of poll stories was down, not up, in Campaign '96. Of much greater importance, though, was our finding that the ten prestige media we studies did a poorer job of complying with AAPOR standards in Campaign '96 than in Campaign '92. And the Campaign '92 scores were not very high to begin with.

The news media in election years are frequently criticized of placing too much emphasis on "horserace journalism," of reporting in terms of winners and losers. If the same words were applied to this study in terms of between-media comparisons, the prestige newspapers were the clear overall winners, and the TV networks were the clear

losers. This does not mean, however, that the prestige newspapers did not have considerable room for improvement.

The standard we used for coding the media's reporting of their survey populations was quite rigorous, and did not give credit for implied geographic locations. What this means then, is that the scores on this standard, especially for the TV networks, were somewhat suppressed. For example, if the anchors or correspondents referred to "our latest survey of likely voters," with no additional information given about where the likely voters lived, then this was coded as not specifying the population. On the other hand, if the phrase had been "our latest nationwide survey of likely voters," this would have been coded as specifying the population, because if provides both the who and where of the population. Therefore, if one were to give the networks credit for implied information (e.g., nationwide), then the networks would look better on this standard.

On a different standard, reporting margins of error, however, the score of 95.5% for the networks in Campaign '96 actually makes the networks look better than they really were. The reason for this is that (a) the error margins were usually presented only on-screen as part of a graphic, and (b) most of the +/- scores were so small, or buried among stars, stripes, donkeys, elephants, and the much larger percentages being reported, that only a dedicated scholar analyzing video tapes would be likely to comprehend them. A typical news viewer does not analyze news graphics this closely, and therefore, without the anchor or correspondent actually mentioning the margin of error, this information would in the vast majority of cases not be perceived by the viewer. It would be on the screen, and the networks would be technically in compliance, but very few viewers would be better-informed. This would be a

worthwhile topic for future experimental research dealing with (a) the perception of and (b) comprehension of the information that is presented in on-screen graphics.

It is also ironic that the high network compliance on the standard of margin of error is also the standard which, when presented without additional disclosure information, can be misleading to news consumers. The reason, as pointed out above, is that it _implies_ more precision for the overall survey than is actually warranted. Most viewers are not researchers or polling specialists, and do not realize that the total error of a survey is the sum of sampling error and measurement error. One of the most important conclusions of this critical analysis, then, is that all of the prestige media were deficient in reporting additional relevant disclosure information---i.e., deficient in not going beyond sampling error.

Although the news magazines were not the worst among the three categories of media, they were the most disappointing. The reason is that all three news magazines for this study were of course weeklies; therefore, in terms of news writing, layout and any other editorial decisions, the editors had the luxury of more editorial time than the newspaper editors or TV news producers to include "the right stuff." However, the news magazines, with weekly deadlines, did not outperform the newspapers, with daily deadlines, in meeting the AAPOR standards.

Can the media do a better job of reporting opinion polls? Yes. Should the media do a better job? Yes. Cantril stated, "As reading and viewing audiences are exposed to more polls, and as political analysts and commentators draw on polls with growing frequency, it would seem that poll consumers could be treated to more sophisticated forms of poll analysis."[30]

Will the media do a better job in Campaign 2000? Probably not---at least not without additional encouragement from AAPOR, from NCP, and possibly even from a

special outside committee of <u>independent</u> scholars and journalism educators, perhaps created under the auspices of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Crespi stated, concerning the apparent lack of concern of those who are involved in media-sponsored polls, ". . . that the prospects for improvement in the near future must be rated as dim."[31] In light of the decrease in compliance we found in this analysis between Campaign '92 and Campaign '96, we share Crespi's pessimistic view.

While we are not arguing that our democratic form of elections and self-government will stand or fall depending upon what the prestige media do in this respect, we are arguing that these media do have a responsibility to raise the level of campaign reporting by providing reasonably full disclosure of polling methods. Along with the privilege of reporting timely polling information to millions of readers or viewers should go the responsibility of providing those increasingly better-educated readers and viewers with the basic information necessary to interpret the poll stories for themselves.

Table 1: Percentage Conformity with AAPOR Standards by Year and by Three Categories of Media

	Campaign '92			Campaign '96		
	Papers (N = 18*)	Magazines (N=20)	TV (N=32)	Papers (N=16)	Magazines (N=10)	TV (N=22)
AAPOR Standards						
Identification of Sponsor	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Question Wording Provided	44.4	80.0	9.3	50.0	20.0	18.2
Population Specified	66.7	5.0	3.1	50.0	0.0	4.5
Sample Size Given	77.8	45.0	12.5	75.0	20.0	0.0
Interviewing Method Stated	66.7	40.0	0.0	68.9	10.0	0.0
Interviewing Date(s) Stated	66.7	60.0	71.9	75.0	20.0	40.9
Sampling Error Specified	77.8	45.0	81.3	75.0	20.0	95.5
Partial Results Unexplained	5.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.5

*Column N's refer to the number of poll stories reported.

Table 2: Percentage of Reporting/Interpretation Errors Introduced by
Year and by Three Categories of Media

	Campaign '92			Campaign '96		
	Papers (N = 18*)	Magazines (N=20)	TV (N=32)	Papers (N=16)	Magazines (N=10)	TV (N=22)
Types of Errors						
Factual Inaccuracy	11.1%	15.0%	3.1%	0.0%	30.0%	9.1%
Overgeneralization	11.1	10.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Modal Force	0.0	10.0	0.0	18.8	0.0	0.0
Conclusive Swing	22.2	10.0	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0
Temporal Transposition	5.6	10.0	84.4	6.3	0.0	36.4
Speculation	0.0	10.0	3.1	12.5	0.0	4.5
Ambiguous Comparison	11.1	15.0	34.4	0.0	0.0	13.6
Evaluative Description	11.1	10.0	28.1	12.5	0.0	36.4

*Column N's refer to the number of poll stories reported.

[1] Frank Luntz, "All Polls Are Not Created Equal," U.S. News & World Report, Sept. 28, 1992, p. 24.

[2] Albert H. Cantril, The Opinion Connection: Polling, Politics, and the Press, Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1991, p. 237.

[3] See Irving Crespi, Public Opinion, Polls, and Democracy, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989, p. 15.

[4] For examples of this body of literature, see: Mack C. Shelley II and Hwarng-Du Hwang, "The Mass Media and Public Opinion Polls in the 1988 Presidential Election: Trends, Accuracy, Consistency, and Events," American Politics Quarterly, 19: 59-79 (1991); John Bare, "Truth about Daily Fluctuations in 1992 Pre-election Polls," Newspaper Research Journal, 15: 73-81 (1992); Andrew Gelman and Gary King, "Why Are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls so Variable When Votes Are so Predictable?" British Journal of Political Science, 23:409-451 (1993); Richard R. Lau, "An Analysis of the Accuracy of 'Trial Heat' Polls During the 1992 Presidential Election," Public Opinion Quarterly, 58:2-20 (1994).

[5] American Association for Public Opinion Research, Code of Professional Ethics and Practices, 1986.

[6] Norm Goldstein, ed., The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1996, pp. 161-162.

[7] See Donald L. Shaw, Maxwell McCombs and Gerry Keir, Advanced Reporting: Discovering Patterns in News Events, Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1997, p. 133.

[8] See Gerhart D. Wiebe, "The New York Times and Public Opinion Research: A Criticism," Journalism Quarterly, 44: 654-658 (Winter 1967).

[9] David L. Paletz, Jonathan Y. Short, Helen Baker, Barbara Cookman Campbell, Richard J. Cooper, and Rochelle M. Oeslander, "Polls in the Media: Content, Credibility, and Consequences," Public Opinion Quarterly, 44:495-513 (1980).

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Participation in Community Organizations and Consumption of TV and Newspaper News

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Participation in Community Organizations and Consumption of TV and Newspaper News

Abstract

This study examined how habitual and "special" news consumption was related to three measures important for indexing how people are integrated with their own communities: participation in community organizations, voting, and knowledge about issues and occurrences important to their community. The hypothesis that news consumption is an important variable in how people relate to their communities was tested in five U.S. cities, each of which had experienced some kind of news media intervention (i.e., the "special news"). The data consisted of approximately 600 random-digit-dialed phone interviews in each city. The results showed that indeed the classic belief that news makes a difference was clearly supported, even after stringent statistical controls for demographic variation were introduced. Perhaps more importantly, the special news contributed to the dependent variables even after habitual news consumption was controlled. There was little widening of sociocultural gaps that typically occur as a function of such variables as race, gender, and time a person has lived in the city, but there were a few examples of both gap widening and gap diminishing. Of course the gap diminishing effects are especially intriguing as they suggest a socially positive role that "special news" can play.

Participation in Community Organizations and Consumption of TV and Newspaper News

When people consider community activity and its antecedents, they usually begin the discussion by referring to one of American's most prestigious visitors, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville. Tocqueville wrote in the 1830's that

Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types--religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute. . . . Nothing, in my view, deserves more attention than the intellectual and moral associations in America. (de Tocqueville, 1969, pp. 513).

Researchers from a great variety of areas have pointed to the importance of this tendency to form associations, and indeed, the idea of participation in associations has come to form a central feature of what has been termed social capital. Friedland, Sotirovic and Daily (in press) define social capital as "those stocks of social trust, norms and networks that people can draw on to solve common problems." They go on to note that:

Networks of civic engagement, such as neighborhood associations, sports clubs and cooperatives are essential forms of social capital. The denser these networks, according to social capital theory, the more likely that members of a community will cooperate for mutual benefit. (p. 6).

Unfortunately, considerable evidence has been accumulating that participation in community activity has been on the decline for the last thirty years (e.g., Burnstein, 1972; Teixeira, 1987, Rosenston & Hansen, 1993; Putnam, 1995a; 1995b). On the other hand, some argue that civic life is not declining. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) reported a massive study of civic participation in which they looked at a range of political participation: voting, getting involved in campaigns, making political contributions, working informally in the community; attending protests or demonstrations, serving without pay on local boards, and being politically active through voluntary organizations. Interestingly, they found that almost half of their interviewees reported being associated with an organization that takes stands in politics, and almost 20% reported having working with people in the neighborhood on some problem. Almost 15% attended local board meetings. Their study seems to indicate a rather high level of participation in community activities. Friedland et al have discussed a number of other arguments against the notion that social capital is declining (in press).

For our purposes, however, the issue is not whether community participation is declining, but rather what antecedent variables are associated with various levels of community participation. Putnam has argued that television is the cause of diminished participation (1995a and 1995b). Merritt (1995) argues that traditional journalism uses definitions of news that primarily come from outside a community and that this causes feelings of detachment from the news and the issues in one's own community. He and others argue that "civic journalism," which has been called a "reform movement within journalism institutions" (Friedland et al., in press), "invites people to become a public" and "calls on the press to help revive civic life and improve public dialogue (Rosen, 1995, p. 1). Thus the news has also been argued to be relevant to community participation.

But is there any evidence that news consumption is related to civic participation? The relationship between local news use and community involvement has been examined for a long time, although the number of studies is quite limited and review of them shows we really do not know much about the linkage. In the early 1950's, Janowitz (1952) conceptualized the community press as an instrument for integrating the individual into society. The news media were thought of as providing social significance for local communities whose identity and cohesion were threatened by industrialization.

Nearly 30 years later, Tichenor, Donohew and Oilen (1980) looked at how 19 communities in Minnesota dealt with issues of conflict (e.g., whether to allow the location of a nuclear power plant in their town) and how that behavior related to the news media in their own community. The research asked whether citizens in isolated rural communities would have the same amount and quality of information as citizens in an urban area. Weekly newspapers were not seen to provide the same kind of information as dailies and to suppress citizen use of the newspaper as a source of critical

information that would enable them to make decisions about controversial issues. In other words, the idea was that different kinds of media provide different quality of news and the quality of news has a major impact on citizen activity and effectiveness in the face of important decision-making.

Stamm and Fortini-Campbell (1983) looked directly at the correlations between various measures of community ties and newspaper use. They found that subscribing to a newspaper and the amount of reading an individual reported were correlated with how closely people perceived themselves as tied to communities. For example, homeowners were more likely to subscribe than non-homeowners. Homeowners also perceived newspapers as being more useful than did non-homeowners. Stamm and Fortini-Campbell also considered the idea that newspaper consumption might foster the development of community ties. They argued that if this were so, there would be growth in community ties after individuals became subscribers. The researchers found that, indeed, the longer people had been subscribing, the more they perceived themselves as close to and involved in their community.

Last year, Stamm and his colleagues (Stamm, Emig, & Hesse, 1997) returned to this issue by looking at the linkage between news media consumption and interpersonal communication, and involvement in the community measured by variables like paying attention to community matters, having ideas for improving community, working for change, and getting people together to talk about issues. They found that newspaper and TV news correlations with community involvement were higher for those who were drifting or setting into a community than for those who were settled. Interestingly, however, the correlations between community activity and interpersonal communication were high for all the categories of community linkage (drifting, settling, settled and relocating), and Stamm et al conclude that perhaps interpersonal communication is therefore more important than news media consumption at all stages of involvement in a community.

On the other hand, Martinelli and Chaffee (1996) showed that the political knowledge of those who had just become US citizens and were coming up on their first election was very well predicted by newspaper and television news exposure and attention, and by their level of recall of political ads. Although it should be noted that there was only a 20% response rate in this study, these results show lend credence to the idea that media affect at least the cognitive aspects of community involvement.

It should be noted, however, that most of the studies examining the link between media consumption and community participation look at perceptions and knowledge. They do not involve measures of behavioral participation, even as self-reported. It is that gap that the present paper attempts to begin to fill.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine in five very different communities, the linkage between activity in community organizations and two measures of consumption of the news. The first is best called "habitual consumption," which is how often people report watching and reading their broadcast and print local media. The second might be termed special news awareness. For our purposes, "special news" is simply any domain or issue that is talked about a lot. It could be something that is a news event that gets a lot of time or ink, or it could be a "project" that the news media do, here, some of our cases involving civic journalism projects. In fact, however, what the special news is, is not critical. It simply has to get enough coverage that a sizable enough number of people report awareness of it that those people can be studied. In the secondary analysis that we report here, data from three of the cases resulted from attempts to measure the impact of civic journalism special projects; data from two of the cases resulted from attempts to measure the impact of a community health campaign.

It should be noted prominently that we know that correlations are only one element of a cause-effect relationship. The data reported here are cross-sectional, so we cannot answer questions about time-order, nor can we fully rule out (even with control measures that are quite elaborate) alternative explanations. On the other hand, it is important to note that if media consumption and community activity are uncorrelated, the question of time order and causal linkage are irrelevant. A cross-sectional survey that measures all variables the theorist considers relevant is a good way to test the viability of a number of effects hypotheses. Those that survive can then be subjected to methodologies that allow causal inferences to be made (Chaffee, McDevitt, & Thorson, 1997).

Hypotheses

The basic approach here is to examine via multiple regression analyses in which stringent demographic controls are first applied, the contributions of news and special news consumption to (1) how many community organizations people report belonging to; (2) self-reported voting behavior

(either being registered or having actually voted in the last election); and (3) knowledge of the content of the special news manipulation. These linkages are reported in five quite different cities (shown in Table 1). As can be seen, there is variation in population, percentage of minorities (and the ethnic background of these minorities), area of the country they are located in, and the kind of "special news" that their community was exposed to.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics of the Five Cities

City	Population (in thousands)	Race (white)	% Voted	Special News Topic
Binghamton	50	89.9	87.2	community problems
Kansas City	150	85.6	89.4*	second-hand smoke
Madison	215	94.1	88.2	juvenile delinquency & urban growth
San Francisco	750	65.2	85.2	mayoral race
Wichita	304	80.7	80.7*	second-hand smoke

Note: *Sample included only those registered to vote

Because there has not been any study of the amount of community participation that people engage in as a function of what city they live in, we had no apriori expectations about finding differences in amount of community participation in our five cities. We also had no particular expectations about the amount of self-reported voting. Finally, we had no way to compare the effectiveness of the "special news" that occurred in each city, and thus, we did not expect specific differences in the amount of knowledge people had about the special news content.

We hypothesized, however, regardless of community participation and voting levels, we'd find similar patterns in the:

H1: linkage between habitual and special TV and newspaper news consumption and community participation;

H2: linkage between habitual and special TV and newspaper news consumption and voting;

H3: linkage between habitual and special TV and newspaper news consumption and topic-specific knowledge.

It should be noted that there were nine knowledge items in the San Francisco questionnaire, 13 in the Binghamton and 15 in the Madison one. But because there were only four knowledge items in the Kansas City questionnaire and five in the Wichita, we had less reason to expect that we would successfully be able to link that variable with news media consumption.

In view of the literature that has suggested that those who consume both television and newspaper get the advantage of having their attention caught by television and then getting the details from newspaper (e.g., Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992), we thought there would be an interaction between special TV and special newspaper consumption in that if people consumed both, the impact would be greater. Thus:

H4: Special TV and special newspaper news consumption will show a significant interactive effect even after stringent controls for demographics and main effects of special TV and special newspaper news consumption are applied.

Finally, because an increasing social structural gap so often occurs in response to mediated messages targeted to a whole population, we wondered if media exposure would interact with demographic features such as how long respondents had lived in the city, their gender, race, income, education. The social structural gap literature suggested that:

H5: There will be significant indication that the linkage between media consumption and measures of community involvement depends on demographic features of individuals. Findings of a widening gap between those with higher and lower levels of socioeconomic status are likely.

The Five Cities

The five hypotheses were tested in each of five cities. Although we contend that the exact nature of the "special news" in each of the cities is not critical, we briefly describe here the situation in each of the five cities.

Madison

Madison is the capital of Wisconsin, a mid-sized city of approximately 215,000 in the Midwestern home of Progressivism. Madison was recently ranked the America's most livable city by *Money* magazine. It has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the United States (hovering around 2 percent). Its predominantly white, middle-class population is employed in a wide and stable variety of industries: state government, education, insurance, and, increasingly, high tech and bio-tech research. There are relatively few manufacturing jobs, but agriculture is still a major industry in Dane County.

"We the People" has been a joint initiative from its beginning in late 1991. Stimulated in part by the Kettering Foundation report *Citizens and Politics, State Journal* Editor Frank Denton and Associate Editor Tom Still and Wisconsin Public Television News and Public Affairs Director Dave Iverson began planning joint election coverage for 1992 using the idea of deliberative citizens' forums. The *State Journal* and WPT teamed up in April 1992 with Wood Communication, a local public relations firm and important coordinating partner, to broadcast an upper midwest presidential primary debate using citizen panels. Citizens sent in newspaper coupons and were selected to form panels demographically representative of Wisconsin as a whole. Although the Madison project had involved 16 previous projects in total, the research reported here looked only at two, one on land use and the other on juvenile crime.

San Francisco

San Francisco is a city of roughly 750,000 in a metropolitan region of two and a half million. San Francisco is a major hub for banking in the Pacific Rim, a city that personified the term "yuppie," but is also stratified by layers of class and race and marbled by immigrant groups of almost every nationality. It is the most expensive city in the United States, but still retains large pockets of middle-class home owners struggling to maintain their foothold.

The San Francisco *Chronicle*, is the dominant newspaper in the region, with a daily circulation of about 490,000, Sunday about 650,000. It competes with both the afternoon *Examiner*, and to a lesser extent with Bay Area rivals the San Jose *Mercury News* and the Oakland *Tribune*. KRON-TV, an NBC affiliate, was the television partner.

San Francisco's "Voice of the Voter" project was primarily deliberative, seeking to inform voters about a series of elections, beginning with the California Democratic gubernatorial primaries in 1994 and continuing with the general election that fall. The most recent project preceding the collection of the data reported here was on the San Francisco mayoral election of October 1995, which took the form of a focus on neighborhoods. While it was formally about city-wide politics, it targeted and followed politics in specific neighborhoods, focusing on those neighborhoods' needs in relation to the mayoral campaign.

Binghamton

Binghamton, a small city of just over 50,000 in upstate New York's southern tier, can best be described as a community in disarray. (In fact the Binghamton case represents a 13 communities with a population total of just over 200,000). The rapid decline of the area's defense and electronics industry in the eighties and early nineties left a community in shock, trying to redefine its core economic identity while simultaneously trying to rebuild in every way. Binghamton's media structure was typical of small cities. The *Press & Sun Bulletin*, with a daily circulation of 68,000 and Sunday of 88,600, is the only major paper in the area. WBNG-TV, the CBS affiliate was the leading station in the market, and the commercial television partner. WSKG-TV, the PBS affiliate was a relatively strong partner, but did not produce daily or weekly local news.

The core of the project was eleven action teams that had been organized directly out of a partnership survey in Fall 1995 by Binghamton University asking citizens about the most important problems facing the area. The eleven areas included such topics as business development and venture capital; tax burdens; government cooperation; job training; transportation; energy; needs of seniors; community morale and beautification; tourism; youth; and needs of working parents. The teams were charged with coming up with a specific set of recommendations that would be presented to the entire community in September, 1996.

Each of the areas was the subject of extensive reporting by the paper. Because economic collapse had been the major community issue for a number of years, there had been several cycles of major enterprise reporting on Binghamton's economic future. This was the first to involve citizen teams in the development of solutions.

Kansas City, KS and Wichita

These two cities were part of a public health campaign created and funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. Kansas City has a population of 150,000, and Wichita's population is 304,000. The topic of the campaign was second hand smoke's danger to children. There was a considerable media advertising component to the program, but our focus was on the newspaper and television coverage of the topic and the campaign. In both cities, the news coverage was extensive and ongoing. The stories and editorials reported many of the statistics concerning the damage second hand smoke does to children, how many people in the cities smoke, and how many children are estimated to be exposed. In addition, the news coverage talked about the campaign itself. In both cities the survey reported here was administered approximately two months after the campaign began.

Method

This study analyzed data from five separate samples previously gathered by a survey research center at a large midwestern university in 1997. Although the questionnaires had many similarities, there were several differences in question wording, which is noted below. Households were sampled by random digit dialing. The response rates were between 55% and 65% across the five cities.

Dependent variables

The dependent variables analyzed in this study were community participation, voting behavior, and knowledge about a community problem that received substantial coverage in local media before the surveys were conducted.

Community participation was an index of the number of organizations in which respondents reported to be members. Organizations included business, religious, charity, ethnic, neighborhood associations, PTA, political social and youth groups. Respondents were given one point for each group they reported belonging to. Community participation was somewhat consistent across the five surveys.

Voting behavior varied among the five surveys. In three of the cities, Binghamton, Madison, and San Francisco, respondents were asked if they had voted in the most recent election. In Kansas City and Wichita, respondents were asked if they were registered to vote. As shown in Table 1, respondents reported a high level of both activities, ranging between 80 and 90%.

Knowledge was an index of the number of correct answers respondents gave to questions about the items obtained from the special news coverage in each community. The Kansas City and Wichita questionnaires had only 4 and 5 knowledge questions respectively, while Binghamton, Madison, and San Francisco, had between 9 and 15 questions.

Independent Variables

Demographics: The demographic variables used in this analysis are typical of studies of this kind, and included gender of respondent, education level, income level, race, and length of time respondents lived in the community. Gender and race were coded as two-category nominal variables, such that female and white were given the value of 1, and male and non-white given the value of 0. The other three demographic variables were measured as continuous variables and coded such that a higher value indicated more education, income, or living in the community longer.

Habitual media consumption: Two measures were employed to indicate habitual media consumption. In each survey, respondents were asked the number of days they typically read the local newspaper and the number of days they typically watched local television news.

Special media consumption: To measure consumption of the special media projects in each city, respondents were asked two questions, one for TV news and one for newspapers. For TV news, respondents were asked if they saw news stories about the specific topic of coverage on the specific television station that carried them. For example, respondents in Binghamton were asked "Did you see any stories or programs about 'Facing Our Future' on WBNG-TV Channel 12?" A similar question was asked for newspapers, "Did you read any stories about 'Facing Our Future' in the *Press & Sun-Bulletin?*" These items were coded so that a "yes" received a score of 1 and a "no" received a score of 0.

Results

Descriptive aspects

Community participation levels: As can be seen in Table 2, there appears to be a fairly consistent distribution of people reporting various participation levels in the five cities. The percent of people who reported participating in no community groups varied from a low of 16% in Kansas City to a high of 24% in San Francisco. Wichita had the second highest percent of non-participants with 23%. Those who reported participating in 1, 2, or 3 organizations varied between a low of 55% in Wichita to a high of 58% in Binghamton and Madison. The last quarter of individuals in each city reported participating in four or more organizations. However, there was a statistical difference in number of organization respondents reported belonging to and the city in which they live.

Table 2: Community Participation in Organization by City

City	Number	of	Organizations
	0	1-3	4+
Binghamton	21	58	21
Kansas City	16	56	28
Madison	18	58	24
San Francisco	24	57	19
Wichita	23	55	22

Note: Cell entries are percentages. Chi-square (8) = 27.10, p < .001.

Voting: It should be noted again that in Kansas City and Wichita the question was whether people were registered; whereas in the other cities they were asked if they had voted in the last election. The percent of non-voters in each city varied from 19% in Wichita to 11% in Kansas City.

Knowledge: The knowledge scales for each city varied so much that comparing the distributions is probably not informative. From a statistical perspective, however, it is important to note that there was considerable variance in the number of questions that people got correct and therefore it is appropriate to try to parse the variance in these scores.

Exposure to the news media: Table 3 shows the self-reported habitual exposure to television and newspaper news. Table 4 shows self-reported exposure to the special news. In Binghamton only 4% (Table 3) of the people habitually consumed neither of the media, but 58% (Table 4) never heard of the special project.

Table 3: Habitual Media Exposure by City

	Neither TV nor Newspaper	TV Only	Newspaper Only	Both
Binghamton	4	11	18	67
Kansas City	3	11	6	79
Madison	9	11	20	59
San Francisco	12	15	29	44
Wichita	5	13	8	74

Note: Cell entries are percentages. Chi-square (12) = 248.0, p < .001.

In Kansas City, only 3% habitually consumed neither of the media, but 53% never heard of the special project. In Madison, only 9% habitually consumed neither of the media, but 55% never heard of the special project. In San Francisco, only 12% habitually consumed neither of the media, but 73% never heard of the special project. Finally, in Wichita, only 5% habitually consumed neither of the media, but 54% never heard of the special project. In general, then, about 88-97% of the people had the opportunity to be exposed, but only half or less reported being exposed to the special news.

Table 4: Special Media Exposure by City

	Neither TV nor Newspaper	Only One Medium	Both
Binghamton	58	24	18
Kansas City	53	37	10
Madison	55	32	13
San Francisco	73	16	11
Wichita	54	36	10

Note: Cell entries are percentages. Chi-square (8) = 110.0, p < .001.

Tests of the hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a significant association between habitual and special media consumption and community activity. To test this hypothesis, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted for each of the five communities. Five demographic variables—education, income, race, gender, and length of time respondents reported living in their community—were entered in the first block. Then, habitual media consumption, both TV news and newspapers, were entered in the second block. Finally, the special media—TV and newspapers—were entered in the third block. This permits the analysis of the R-square change from one block to the next, while controlling for the variables in the previous equations. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Demographics, Habitual Media Consumption, and Special Media Consumption as Predictors of Community Activity for Five Communities

Community Participation	Binghamton	KC	Madison	SF	Wichita
Demographics R-sq ch	8.23***	8.55***	13.16***	9.78***	11.94***
TV News	.00	.09	.09	.07	.19**
Newspaper	.08	.18*	.12*	.01	.23**
R-sq ch	2.10**	2.78***	0.99*	0.86*	4.05***
S TV news	.099*	.09*	.02	.09*	−.01
S Newspaper	.11*	.12**	.08	.12**	.15***
R-sq ch	2.69***	2.25***	0.72	3.05***	1.93***
Tot R-sq	13.02***	13.58***	14.87***	13.69***	17.92***

Note: *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights), except where R-square change is noted. R-square change and Total R-square are in percentages.

For the first block, the R-square values across the five cities for the five demographic variables are somewhat consistent. Demographics accounted for the least amount of variance in community participation in Binghamton (8.23%) while they accounted for the most in Madison (13.16%). For the second block, habitual exposure to media account for significant amounts of variation in community participation in each of the five cities. When the special media items were entered into the equation, additional variance in community participation was explained in four of the five cities, above that accounted for by habitual media consumption. This shows a significant and positive relationship, even under tightly controlled conditions, between seeing special news stories on television and in the newspapers and community participation. Thus, there is ample evidence to support Hypothesis 1.

Table 6: Demographics, Habitual Media Consumption, and Special Media Consumption as Predictors of Vote for Five Communities

Vote	Binghamton	KC	Madison	SF	Wichita
Demographics R-sq ch	17.62***	3.65**	19.33***	20.80***	7.56***
TV News	.14*	.16*	.14*	−.11*	.01
Newspaper	.22***	.11	.16**	.07	.08
R-sq ch	3.73***	2.00**	1.75**	2.00***	2.54***
S TV News	.05	.04	.04	.11*	.01
S Newspaper	.06	.06	.08*	.06	−.02
R-sq ch	0.74	0.54	0.87*	1.90***	0.04
Tot R-sq	22.09***	6.19***	21.95***	24.70***	10.14***

Note: *$p < 05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights), except where R-square change is noted. R-square change and Total R-square are in percentages.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be a significant association between habitual and special media consumption and voting behavior. The analytic strategy was the same as reported above for community participation, and is shown in Table 6. Demographics were significantly associated with vote in all five cities, but the associations were smallest in Kansas City and Wichita, which both asked respondents if they were registered to vote. Habitual media consumption was significantly associated with vote in all five cities. However, the special media consumption was associated with vote in only two cities—Madison and San Francisco. In Madison, seeing the special coverage in newspapers was associated with vote, while in San Francisco, seeing the special coverage on TV news was associated with vote. Thus, there is support for Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be a significant association between the media measures and knowledge about the special coverage. As shown in Table 7, demographics were significantly associated with knowledge in each of the five cities. The habitual and special media consumption items were associated with knowledge in three of the five cities—Binghamton, Madison, and San Francisco. The lack of variance explained by the media items in the Kansas City and Wichita samples may have been due to the reduced number of knowledge items in the questionnaire. Thus, there is support for Hypothesis 3.

Table 7: Demographics, Habitual Media Consumption, and Special Media Consumption as Predictors of Knowledge for Five Communities

Knowledge	Binghamton	KC	Madison	SF	Wichita
Demographics R-sq ch	6.75***	3.48**	10.36***	6.56***	3.75**
TV News	.11	−.01	.08	.10	.08
Newspaper	.18**	.01	.13*	.10	.06
R-sq ch	8.43***	0.27	2.95***	2.23***	0.33
S TV News	.23***	.07	.12**	.08	−.01
S Newspaper	.36***	.03	.06	.12**	.06
R-sq ch	20.99***	0.60	1.90**	2.65***	0.30
Tot R-sq	36.17***	4.35**	15.21***	11.44***	4.38**

Note: *$p < 05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights), except where R-square change is noted. R-square change and Total R-square are in percentages.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the special media consumption would show a significant interaction even after controlling for demographics, habitual media use, and main effects of special TV and newspaper consumption. Table 8 shows the contributions of the interactions between both

special news consumption to each of the three dependent variables. It should be noted that the controls for demographics, habitual media consumption, and main effects for special TV and newspaper consumption were not included in Table 8. Those effects appear in Tables 5 through 7. Counter to Hypothesis 4, only two of the 15 tests were significant at the $p < .05$ level, just about the level of chance. In the Binghamton sample, the interaction term was negatively associated with knowledge. In the Wichita sample, the interaction term was negatively associated with community participation. Thus, in the two cases where the interaction between special TV news and special newspaper consumption were significant predictors, the impact was negative, not positive, as prior literature would predict.

To test Hypothesis 5, a series of hierarchical multiple regressions were run. All possible interactions between each of the five demographic variables and the two special media consumption items were examined, on each of the three dependent variables for each city. First, one demographic variable and one special media consumption variable were entered in a multiple

Table 8: Special TV News and Newspaper Consumption Interactions as Predictors of Community Participation, Voting, and Knowledge

Community Participation	Binghamton	KC	Madison	SF	Wichita
STV News by SNewspaper	-.06	-.07	.01	.02	-.16**
R sq ch	0.01	0.23	0.00	0.01	1.02**
Vote					
STV News by SNewspaper	.01	-.02	-.04	-.13	.01
R sq ch	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.43	0.01
Knowledge					
STV News by S Newspaper	-.33***	.00	-.08	-.05	.03
R sq ch	2.72***	0.00	0.24	0.06	0.03

Note: *$p < 05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights), except where R-square change is noted. R-square change and Total R-square are in percentages.

regression equation. Then, an interaction term was created by multiplying those two variables together. Of these 150 tests (50 per 3 dependent variables), 25 interactions were significant at the $p < .05$ level, greater than would be expected by chance. The significant interactions for community participation are shown in Table 9. Similarly, the significant interactions for vote are shown in Table 10; and for knowledge in Table 11.

Table 9. Significant Interaction Effects of Specific Media Consumption in Five Cities on Community Participation

Community Participation	Binghamton	Kansas City	Madison	San Francisco	Wichita
race (white) by STV News R sq ch				-.15* 0.68*	
race (white) by SNewspapers R sq ch				-.17* 0.81*	
gender by STV News R sq ch				.33** 1.17**	.24* 0.62*
income by STV News R sq ch		.41 1.90***			.33** 1.54**
income by SNewspaper R sq ch	.24* 0.61*	.48*** 2.18*			.28* 0.83*
education by STV News R sq ch					.29** 1.55**

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights), except where R-square change is noted. R-square change and Total R-square are in percentages.

When a media consumption variable significantly interacts with a demographic variable while predicting a desirable outcome, it has been taken to mean that the interaction is an indication of a decreasing or increasing gap between individuals based on the specific demographic variable, or sociostructural characteristic. A positive association between the interactions in Tables 9, 10, and 11 and the outcome variable indicates that the specific media helped to increase the gap and a negative association indicates a decreasing gap. As such, not all positive associations (indicating an increasing gap) may be considered detrimental. For example, because gender was coded for female, a positive R-square change indicates that media were beneficial to that group. Therefore, because there was a significant positive association between gender and special TV news consumption such that women who reported seeing the special coverage in San Francisco learned more than men, it can be said that the media helped a group that is known to respond less actively to politics—and thus, narrows a sociostructural gap. Generally, gap-narrowing media effects are considered favorable for creating a more equitable society.

A glance at Tables 9, 10, and 11 also shows that the media helped to increase some gaps (most notably income), but helped to reduce some as well (most notably gender). The media helped to increase the gap due to education in two cases and decrease it in one. Also, the media helped to decrease the gap due to race in three cases and increase it in two.

Table 10. Significant Interaction Effects of Specific Media Consumption in Five Cities on Vote

Vote	Binghamton	Kansas City	Madison	San Francisco	Wichita
race (white) by STV News	-.36*				.19*
R sq ch	0.71*				0.69*
gender by STV News			-.25*		
R sq ch			0.53*		
live by STV News			-.30***	-.11*	
R sq ch			1.83***	0.67*	
live by SNewspaper			-.16*		
R sq ch			0.54*		

Note: *p < 05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights), except where R-square change is noted. R-square change and Total R-square are in percentages.

For length of time lived in a particular community, the significant interactions show that media better served relative newcomers in four of the cases. In one case, the media better served those whom lived in a community longer.

Table 11. Significant Interaction Effects of Specific Media Consumption in Five Cities on Knowledge

Knowledge	Binghamton	Kansas City	Madison	San Francisco	Wichita
race (white) by STV News			.61*		
R sq ch			0.88*		
gender by STV News				.32**	
R sq ch				1.10**	
gender by SNewspaper		.49***			
R sq ch		2.52***			
income by STV News			.30*		
R sq ch			1.00*		
income by SNewspaper			.50***		
R sq ch			2.48***		
education by STV news		-.21*			
R sq ch		0.64*			
education by SNewspaper				-.38**	
R sq ch				0.95**	
live by STV News		.17*	-.17*		
R sq ch		0.68*	0.58*		

Note: *p < 05; **p < .01; ***p < .001. Cell entries are standardized regression coefficients (beta weights), except where R-square change is noted. R-square change and Total R-square are in percentages.

Finally, Tables 9, 10, and 11 show that the fewest significant interactions between specific media consumption and one of the sociostructural variables occurred in the Binghamton sample (two

significant interactions). The Madison sample had the most significant interactions (seven). The San Francisco sample had six significant interactions; Kansas City and Wichita had five each.

Discussion

The results of this study first of all provide strong support for Stamm's and others' contention that news consumption is strongly related to community activity (and here, also knowledge about issues in the news). The contribution that habitual news consumption made even after highly stringent controls are removed was impressive. But the present study goes beyond the classic results to show that when "special news" appears in television and newspapers, consumption of that material contributes to explained variance in community activity, voting, and knowledge, even beyond demographic controls and habitual news consumption as well. This result demonstrates that the material contained in the "special news," which varied extensively in content in this study, has an effect that is different or "on top of" the effects of just habitual consumption of the news. For the producers of this special news, in three cases those involved in "civic journalism" and in two cases presumably straight-forward reporting of a major public health information campaign, the news is encouraging.

An additional finding that is impressive is that the impact of the "special news" did not always favor those higher on the socioeconomic hierarchy. Seventy-five percent of the tests of whether exposure to the special news interacted with individual demographic characteristics were not significant. This means that the effects of consumption of the special news were affecting everyone in the sample fairly consistently. On the other hand, there were important examples of sociostructural gap widenings and narrowings (Table 12). For community participation, there were four instances of gap narrowings, two for race and one for gender in San Francisco, and one for gender in Wichita. In San Francisco, which used a neighborhood-specific approach to talking about a mayoral race, there was more impact on minorities and women than on whites and men. In Wichita, where the concern was for children exposed to second-hand smoke, there was more impact on women than on men. The other gap effects for community activity were gap-wideners, and they all acted on higher income or higher education-level people than on lower. This finding is indeed what is very commonly seen for almost any media event, that is, having more effect on the more well-to-do and the more highly educated. It is actually surprising that more of this kind of effect was not observed.

For voting, there was slightly more gap-narrowing than widening. In Binghamton there was greater vote contribution for non-whites than whites; in Madison on those who had lived in Dane County a short time than those who had lived there a long time. In San Francisco there was more impact on those who had lived less time in the city. The other two significant effects involved gap widening.

For knowledge, there was just about the same number of gap-widenings and narrowings. Women were more affected than men in Kansas City. Those of lower education level were more affected than those with higher levels in Kansas City as well. In Madison, those who had lived in the city less long were more affected than those who had lived there longer. And in San Francisco, women and those with lower education were more affected than their opposites.

Table 12: Demographic Gaps Due to Interactions with Special Media Consumption

	Gaps		
	Widen	Narrow	Neither
Education	1	2	27
Income	7	0	23
Race (white)	2	3	25
Gender (female)	1	4	25
Length lived in community	1	4	25
Total	12	13	125

In general, then, it was clear that the "special news" studied here had a fairly consistent effect on all who consumed it. In various cases, however, there were interactions with socioeconomic variables. Interactions with education were just about evenly split between widening and narrowing

gaps, as were the interactions with race. For time lived in the cities, the gap effect was primarily to narrow it, and the same held true for gender. On the other hand, all seven interactions with income were in the direction of widening gaps between the more and less wealthy. Thus we cannot say that there was complete "success" in these projects, particularly if our criterion was to narrow most socioeconomic gaps. But at the very least this analysis may demonstrate an excellent additional way to track the impact of news, and particularly of specific news that may be designed specifically to aid people by informing and activating them.

The descriptive aspects of the data are also interesting. There certainly are variations in how many community activities people engage in across our five cities, and that fact may indeed relate to "how well cities work." It takes human hours and dedication to work in the schools, to work with businesses, and with youth organizations. And the more hours that are dedicated to these activities, then presumably the better the community looks, runs, and is a pleasant place to be. Much further work needs to be done to examine community activity in a variety of areas, cities and towns—and of course whether the media are related in important ways to that activity is a critical question for those of us in the news or persuasion business.

The main caveat in this study is one typical of all cross-sectional data. Although we made careful use of control demographics, the linkages we found between habitual and special news with community activity, voting and knowledge are simply correlational. They support the first requirement for causality, that is the necessary correlations, but because there are not time differences involved, the second criterion of inferring causality cannot be met. Thus a next important step is to somehow look in an experimental way at how news consumption links with an individual's integration into his/her community.

Even within the correlational realm, however, the present results are encouraging for those who believe that the news can be structured so that it does make a difference. In each of our five cities, sometimes to a greater extent of course than other times, the special news contributed to the measures we considered important—being active, voting, and knowing something about what was going on. What we must strive for are more opportunities not only to create news that makes a difference, but opportunities to evaluate the extent and type of that difference.

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Print Mass Media Coverage
of the Promise Keepers:
The First Five Years

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Print Mass Media Coverage of the Promise Keepers: The First Five Years

"Think about something tender. Think about something sacred. Think about something that makes you cry. Think about a romance that made you love every living creature, a loss you didn't think you could bear, a death that opened the bottomless pit of mortality below you. Now imagine talking about it to someone you barely know standing in a noisy bar in Grand Central Station at rush hour. That's what it's like trying to discuss what's called 'the men's movement' in the media.[1]

Promise Keepers, founded in 1991 by then-Colorado University football coach Bill Mc-Cartney, is a metropolitan Denver-based, fundamentalist-led national Christian men's organization. Growing (or was, since its recent near shutdown) through huge public meetings (usually tens of thousands of men in a stadium), books and other written materials, a magazine, and local chapters, it asks American men to make and keep commitments to their God, themselves, their wives, their children, their parents, their friends, their worship and fellowship, their work, their neighbors and community, those in need, and for the future, all within the context of a literal reading of the Bible[2]. PK is just one of many Men's Movement organizations, which began forming about 25 years ago, and many Christian men's organizations. (PK also has various similarities to earlier religious revivals, such as the Social Gospel era's Men and Religion Forward Movement; the earlier Muscular Christianity generally, and the Rev. Billy Sunday and his followers in particular; and Dwight L. Moody and his.)[3]

McCartney founded PK with a summer 1991 meeting of 4,200 men in Boulder, CO. By 1996, it had an annual budget of $65 millon, 300 employees, and a national network of representatives and offices. In 1997, it expanded into several other countries, and in October 1997, it held a Washington, D.C.,"rally" called "Stand in the Gap" that attracted half a million men. PK and Strang Communications co-publish the bi-monthly New Man magazine, and various books--What Makes a Man?: 12 Promises That Will Change Your Life, From Ashes to Glory, Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper--have sold thousands of copies. All emphasize a literal reading of the Bible, love, optimism, forgiveness, friendship, ethics, morals--including criticism of materialism and racism. More controversial have been directions to reverse the church's "feminization"; criticism of "political, social, entertainment, homosexual, and occult movements" and "the sexual revolution";

and male assertiveness, self–control, independence, stability and self–confidence.[4]

James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, attributes this latest Christian men's movement to men "who are recognizing that success in business, achieving all their goals, and making huge amounts of money are not going to satisfy them." Christian Business Men's Committee spokesman Robert Tamasy noted that "today's economic insecurities, epitomized by corporate downsizing, look a lot like the Depression era, when CBNC began amid a heightened spiritual need." Historian Timothy Weber said PK is an attempt to slow or stop trends seen as destructive, such as divorce and illegitimacy.

PK received its first Lexis–Nexis recorded mention in second quarter 1992, but was mentioned by U.S. print media only four times per quarter or less until second quarter 1994 (35 mentions). Coverage quantity increased dramatically if unevenly after that, with 153 and 112 mentions in the last two quarters of 1994; 91, 279, 380 and 382 mentions, respectively, during the four quarters of 1995, and 303 during first quarter, 1996. Additional coverage of PK may be hindered by its apparent lack of cooperation with the media. Many PK articles contain little or no comment from PK spokespersons, and a Christianity Today article noted: "PK did not respond to numerous requests to be interviewed for this story."[5] McCartney's books say little about media coverage, but what they do say is negative.

The purpose of this study was to formulate hypotheses based on past research on religious and social movements and test them through content analysis of newspaper and magazine stories.

Agenda–Setting Theory

What kind of coverage PK has received is important because of PK's size and scope, in addition to and in combination with media's ability to set agendas for the public, policymakers, and other media--processes predicted and analyzed through agenda-setting theory. Studies have concentrated generally on whether an agenda–setting process exists, how it works, who it effects, and other rather "technical" questions. Theory has evolved, however, to include how sources influence the media's agenda, intermedia agenda–setting, and studying the practices, values and traditions of

journalism that influence news content, thus launching what McCombs calls a "new, dynamic and theoretically–based media criticism." As he explained, "News is not just rational discourse, not just educational presentations on the issues of the day. News is tone and drama. News communicates much more than the facts. A psychologist would say that news messages are both cognitive and affective. A journalist would say that the news is a blend of information and entertainment."[6]

McQuail said that the "agenda–setting hypothesis" is summarized by four main points: public debate represented by action agenda, public opinion and political choices forming that agenda, mass media content reflects those issues' substances and priorities, and mass media content about those issues affects the ways in which the issues are considered.[7] The agenda–setting model has four major characteristics: it concerns the importance or salience of public issues; topics studied are usually constructed by researchers, not audiences; studies have a dual focus on media content and audience perception; and studies deal with ranking a list of issues or the rise and fall of one issue.[8] Studies conducted over 20+ years connect the importance attached to various issues by the media and that attached to them by the public and politicians.[9]

The present study is based on several specific aspects of agenda–setting theory and previous research findings: that an agenda–setting process does exist; that how the media covers a subject is important because that coverage has effects on what facts, opinions and attitudes the public has; that the media's coverage, and thus the agenda it is setting, can be predicted based on factors that influence media coverage; that changes in coverage and agenda–setting over time are both a cause and result of agenda–setting processes; and that an intermedia agenda–setting process does occur. An extensive literature review argued that media vary in credibility, thus meaning some media may set agendas more than others; that media reports and personal experience may diverge, meaning members of the public may ignore or oppose the implicit media agenda; and the public may not have the same values about news events as the media.[10]

Hoover, Hanley and Radelfinger found that readers think media don't cover religion much unless it is "hard news" and also understood that logically, lack of coverage doesn't necessarily mean media are non– or anti–religious. But readers faulted print media for not covering religion

enough (apparently concluding that media frequently don't consider religion stories to be "hard news" when audience members do). Readers understood that religion stories are more likely to be covered when they could be structured like, or framed as, political or economic stories, or when they are sensational or controversial. Hoover et al. also found that church media relations person-nel preferred religion news be covered as hard news, because they believed that when journalists think of religion news as feature story material, they will feel less compelled to cover it.[11]

Research also has indicated that the agenda–setting process affects not only various sub-jects, but also individual attributes of those subjects.[12] Such findings are related to the notion of framing.[13] Page and Shapiro echoed Gitlin's suggestion that how media cover a subject can affect the public's opinions, and it is now increasingly accepted that "as a latent consequence of telling us what to think about, the agenda–setting effect can sometimes influence what we think."[14] Gandy, writing on how sources set agendas, noted how cooperativeness often leads to positive coverage.[15]

Coverage of Men/Masculinity, Religion, and Social Movements

Academic journal literature on other news coverage of men, men's movements and mascu-linity, particularly in print, also is extremely limited. Fejes complained that only five mass commu-nications studies in the previous decade had "focused primarily on men and masculinity," with scattered studies suggesting that men are misrepresented in media: fictional entertainment television shows, TV and print ads, and even some newspaper stories and photos.[16] Only a few Men's Movements–oriented articles have focused on mass media—almost entirely on film.[17]

Both professionals and academics have devoted more attention to religion coverage during the past 25 years, and continue to give mixed, uncertain and/or critical reviews for coverage that was deemed insufficient, inaccurate, late, negative or otherwise biased.[18] But one critic enjoyed quoting 1930s New York Herald Tribune City Editor Stanley Walker: "They [clergy] are the most touchy set of quibblers who ever plagued a well–intentioned editor. Some will even find fault with a stenographic report attested by a dozen albino notaries swearing on a Gutenberg Bible."[19] Only a few scholars have given religion coverage a generally favorable report card.[20]

Key articles developed basic theories on media coverage of social movements that said, in a nutshell, that media are slow to cover movements, and not very good at it because, among other limitations, they represent the status quo.[21] In one case, for example, feminists received essentially no coverage in 1966–69, mostly sensationalist coverage in 1970–72, and then selective and less prestigious coverage in 1973–77—a result of the status quo's efforts to ignore, then ridicule, and then minimize and mainstream the movement, respectively; this suggested a sort of cycle for news coverage for social movements.[22] Tuchman added that media transmit both selected facts and opinions, and a construction of ideas and activities, about a social movement, and that both transmissions are affected by media idiosyncrasies.[23] Shupe and Bromley, based on their cults/sects studies, said that quoting former movement participants who are now opposed is a major way in which media coverage of social movements becomes more negative.[24] Lieb found that the quoting of anti–feminist sources in women's movement coverage increased much more quickly than the quoting of feminist sources in feminism stories (presumably for "balance"), but Barker-Plummer found, contrary to Gitlin, that movements and media have a dialogic relationship that allows a movement to analyze its coverage and change strategies accordingly.[25]

Literature Review Conclusions and Hypotheses

Agenda-setting theory suggests that PK coverage is likely to be positive and detailed because it is growing quickly, positive or negative depending on how seriously media choose to treat it; that coverage of earlier men's movements may have influenced how the media would cover PK- -both positively, both negatively, or differently based on a perception that PK deserved opposite treatment; different media will cover PK differently, but patterns will emerge; and the less cooperative PK is with media, the more negative its coverage will be. Studies of U.S. print media religion coverage overwhelmingly suggest that PK coverage would be negative, incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. Studies of men and masculinity coverage suggest that PK coverage would be negative to the extent that media perceive PK members at not being typical men. Studies of social movements coverage suggest that PK coverage would lag behind its growth and significance; the more

journalists perceive PK as being atypical, the more negative coverage will be; PK would be covered as news if media could identify its events, leaders, supporters and opponents, and perceive internal homogeneity; PK would be covered seriously as news because it concerns men, not women; coverage would be selective, therefore incomplete and to some degree misleading or inaccurate; coverage could follow a pattern of initial black-out, then sensationalistic or ridiculing coverage, then decreasing but more moderate coverage; PK coverage would exaggerate disagreements and divisions within the group; PK coverage would become increasingly negative over time as opponents emerged; the less successful PK is at convincing media that men's roles and issues need to be examined, the less coverage it would receive. Based on the literature, this study tested three hypotheses:

H_1: The majority of print media coverage of the Promise Keepers has been negative.

H_2: Print media coverage of the Promise Keepers has become increasingly negative.

H_3: Print media coverage of the Promise Keepers has been treated as "news" by newspapers and magazines.

Method

Articles on PK were separated into three groups by media type: elite media (Group One), other newspapers (Group Two), and other magazines (Group Three). Articles about PK and McCartney were searched for with the words "Promise Keepers and McCartney or Christian***" (allowing for "Christian," "Christians," or "Christianity" to be found) in the Lexis–Nexis database (NEWS, then ALLNWS). No beginning date for the search was designated, but the ending date was specified as March 31, 1996. Group One, the elite media, includes The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Monitor, The Los Angeles Times, Time and Newsweek . Group One included all articles on PK except those about Bill McCartney that included very little or no substantive content about PK. This found 402 paragraphs in 15 articles on PK. Group Two included a systematic random sampling of other U.S. daily newspapers that are indexed by the Lexis–Nexis database. Every fifth article was chosen for coding after ex-

cluding: articles appearing in Group One; all articles published outside the U.S.; obituaries, letters to the editor, calendars of events, and bestseller lists; all articles with fewer than 500 words; all magazine articles (almost all of which were included in Group Three anyway); all articles that did not include substantive content about one or more men's movements; and all articles appearing about PK in The Denver Post and the (Denver) Rocky Mountain News. Articles about PK published in The Denver Post and Rocky Mountain News were excluded because of the large quantity of coverage about PK and Bill McCartney appearing in those newspapers would have skewed the group of articles analyzed away from being a geographically distributed national sample; because McCartney was a winning football coach at the University of Colorado, and PK is headquartered in the Denver metropolitan area, local coverage of McCartney and PK was extensive. This search resulted in 1,371 paragraphs in 53 articles. Group Three was all articles concerning PK indexed in the Readers Guide to Periodical Literature, except Time, Newsweek and The New York Times Magazine (all were included in Group One). Subject headings searched in the Readers Guide to Periodical Literature were Men's Movement, Christian Men's Movement, Bill McCartney, and Promise Keepers. This search resulted in 446 paragraphs in 17 articles about PK. The search of all publications found 2,219 paragraphs in 85 articles about PK.

The earliest PK story was from the Sept. 14, 1992, issue of Christianity Today, the last from the March 24, 1996, issue of the Kansas City (MO) Star. PK received coverage during 12 of the 22 quarters included in this study. The first article was not until the third quarter of 1992, and PK also received no coverage during the first, second and fourth quarters of 1993. The highest quarter for coverage was the third quarter of 1995 (20 articles), followed by the second quarter of 1995 and the first quarter of 1996.

The paragraph was selected as the primary context unit for two reasons. It allows for easy tracking of positive and negative content in each story. Second, in current U.S. print journalism—newspapers in particular—a single paragraph is seldom more than two sentences and usually presents related views or facts. The content analysis instrument, closely based on Lieb, coded for the following: Date (calendar year quarter); Medium by Group; Type of Story (news or non–news

story; location by section and page also was recorded to help determine whether story was news or non–news); Topic (primary) of the story (Leader, Secondary Leader, Literature, National Organi-zation/Move-ment, Local Events/Organizations, Reaction to the Movement, Opposition to the Movement, Sociocultural Context, and Other); Story Sources (Men's Movement Top Leader--such as McCartney; Men's Movements Secondary Leader; Current Participants; Former Participants; Government Officials; Religion Officials; Business Executives; Educators/Intellectuals; Mass Me-dia; Medical Personnel--physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists; Miscellaneous--specified (later was further broken down into Feminists, Spouses, and Others, for purposes of data analysis); Numbers of paragraphs rated on each point of a five–point Likert scale (Extremely Positive, Somewhat Positive, Neutral, Somewhat Negative or Extremely Negative, based on information and/or opinions about the Men's Movements, its leaders, philosophies, goals, methods, and other salient characteristics).[26] To be understood, a negative statement about an opponent of the Men's Movements was scored as Positive.

Following van Driel and Richardson, Extremely Positive means the paragraph defends and supports the group, and/or allegations of opponents are rejected; there is no sign of suspicion or rejection of the group.[27] Somewhat positive indicates a somewhat positive approach to the group or unfavorable approach to its opponents; some reservations and/or suspicions are implicitly or ex-plicitly evident, however. A Neutral ranking indicates that position–taking on issues is avoided; no support for either the group or its opponents is voiced. A Somewhat Negative ranking suggests that, although the group is not severely criticized, it does meet with ridicule, suspicion, and/or doubts; no clear–cut support exists for the group's opponents. An Extremely Negative ranking means the group is rejected and attacked, and/or opponents of the group receive sympathy and support. A Kansas State University assistant professor of journalism and mass communications pretested the instrument.

To establish intercoder reliability, a trained graduate student coded 10% of the articles on each subject from each of the three article Groups. Wimmer and Dominick recommend that a Scott's pi coefficient of .75 is necessary to demonstrate a sufficient level of reliability (p. 180). In

this case, a Scott's pi calculation produced a coefficient of .86.[28]

Results

H1. The data do not support this hypothesis. The mean average of 2,219 paragraphs composing 85 articles was 1.75. The mean is significantly positive (t=-50.17; p < .05). For the 85 articles, the highest score was an average of 1, which 3 articles were scored as. The lowest score was an average of 3.71, which 1 article was scored as. The mean average score of the 85 articles' mean averages was 1.79. This mean is significantly positive (t=-18.67; p < .05). Coverage overall was positive regardless of various factors.

Likert Scale Ratings by Medium Type. Paragraphs. As shown in Table 1, more paragraphs received a rating of 1 than any other rating, regardless of medium, and paragraphs rated as 1 or 2 grouped together made up at least 69% of all coverage regardless of medium. A cross-tabulation (8, N=2218) of medium type by Likert scale ratings produced a chi-square statistic of 56.68, p < .05--suggesting a statistically significant relationship. A one-way analysis of variance with medium type as independent variable and Likert rating as dependent variable supported this (F=13.46, with D.F.=2, p < .05, N=2219). *Stories.* A one-way analysis of variance, using Likert values as the dependent variable and medium type as the independent variable, showed the mean average of elite publication articles to be 1.71 (t=-10.72, n=15, p < .05), for other newspapers to be 1.789 (t=-13.45, n=53, p < .05), and for other magazines to be 1.85 (t=-8.89, n=17, p < .05). The F value equaled .23, p<.8 and therefore the relationship between medium type and rating was not statistically significant.

Likert Scale Ratings by Article Length. A regression analysis of Likert scale ratings and article length (as measured by number of paragraphs) was performed. Although a fitted line (Y=1.84 - .00X; R2=.00) showed coverage tended to be slightly more positive the longer the article, the relationship between article length and Likert scale ratings is not statistically significant. A one-way analysis of variance also showed no statistically significant relationship (F=.69, D.F.=39, p=.88).

Print Mass Media Coverage of the Promise Keepers: The First Five Years

Likert Scale Ratings by Story Type. Paragraphs. Coverage was generally positive regardless of whether it was handled as news or as other types of news-editorial content. News coverage overall (mean average of 1.65, n=847) was slightly more positive than non-news coverage overall (mean average of 1.82, n=1372). A cross-tabulation of story type by Likert scale ratings produced a chi-square statistic of 19.35, with $p < .05$; D.F.=4 (n=2219), suggesting a statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance, treating story type as the independent variable and Likert scale rating as the dependent variable, confirmed this, as it revealed F=11.55, with D.F.=1, $p < .05$. Table 2 details Likert scale ratings of paragraphs by story type. *Stories.* The mean Likert scale rating of news articles was 1.73 (n=30), and the mean Likert scale rating of non-news articles was 1.82 (n=55). Story type did not have a statistically significant impact on Likert scale ratings of articles; a one-way analysis of variance between story type and mean Likert rating revealed F=.46, with D.F.=1 and p=.5.

Likert Ratings by Source Type. Chi-square statistics and one-way analyses of variance all showed no statistically significant relationships between average Likert Scale ratings of articles and various types of story sources.

H2. The data do not support this hypothesis.

Likert Scale Ratings by Time Period. Paragraphs. Of the 12 quarters in which the PK received coverage, the highest average score by paragraph for a quarter was 1.46 (between extremely positive and somewhat positive) in the second quarter of 1994. The most positive four-quarter period was calendar year 1994 (1.55, 1.46, 1.54, and 1.84, respectively). A cross-tabulation of Likert scale ratings with quarters (44, N=2219) produced a chi-square statistic of 169.58, $p < .05$, suggesting a statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance was performed (11, N=2218), using Likert scale values as the dependent variable and time periods (quarters) as the independent variable. This also suggested a statistically significant relationship (F=4.37, $p < .05$). However, a regression analysis of these two variables was performed and produced the fitted line: Y=1.47 + .01X (R^2=.00), where Y=average Likert values

and X=time period. Although the line shows coverage becoming slightly more negative over time, the slope of the line, and therefore the relationship between these two variables, is not statistically significant. *Stories.* A regression analysis of articles' average Likert values by quarter was performed and produced the fitted line: $Y=1.83 - .00X$ ($R2=.00$), where Y=average Likert values and X=time period. Although the line shows coverage becoming slightly more positive over time (in contrast to the regression by paragraph, which again, showed coverage becoming slightly more negative over time), the rate of change, and thus the relationship between these variables, is not statistically significant. A one-way analysis of variance, with time as the independent variable and Likert scale rating as the dependent variable, also did not show a statistically significant relationship ($F=1.39$; $p=.19$; N=84).

H3. The data do not support this hypothesis. Overall, 847 news paragraphs were published about PK versus 1,372 non-news paragraphs.

Medium Type by Story Type. Paragraphs. PK coverage was handled differently by medium. While non-elite newspapers and magazines handled PK coverage almost entirely as non-news, elite publications handled it mostly as news. A cross-tabulation (2, N=85) of medium type with story type produced a chi-square statistic of 380.58, $p < .05$. A statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance (2, N=85) also indicated a statistically significant relationship ($F=229.37$, $p < .05$). See Table 3. *Stories.* Elite publications published the highest percentage of news, and other magazines published the least. A one-way analysis of variance (2, N=84) established the statistical significance of this relationship ($F=4.34$, $p < .05$).

Article Length by Story Type. To find any relationship between whether an article was treated as news and its length, a cross-tabulation (39, N=85) was performed of story types and article length (by number of paragraphs). It produced a chi-square statistic of 48.88, $p=.13$; no statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance (39, N=84) also showed no statistically significant relationship ($F=1.36$, $p=.08$).

Topic Type by Story Type. PK coverage was treated as non-news for every topic type except Local Events/Organizations, which included the organization's stadium rallies. A cross-tabulation of topic types by story types produced a chi-square statistic of 12.51, with $p < .05$; D.F.=5 (N=85). A statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance (5, N=84) also indicated a statistically significant relationship (F=2.73, $p < .05$). See Table 4.

Time Period by Story Type. Paragraphs. The number and percentage of news paragraphs did increase overall over time. A cross tabulation (11, N=2219) of story type with time period produced a chi-square statistic of 626.57, $p < .05$. A statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance (11, N=2219), with time period as independent variable and story type as dependent variable, also showed this (F=78.94, $p < .05$). See Table 5. *Stories.* News and non-news articles seemed to go through cycles, with news articles dominating the Third Quarter 1992 through Fourth Quarter 1993, then news for two quarters, then non-news for four quarters, then news, non-news, and news, respectively, for one quarter each. The reason for this pattern has not been determined, but may be related to the launching and timing of the huge stadium events, which tended to get news coverage. A cross tabulation (12, N=85) between type of story and time period by article produced a chi-square statistic of 30.77, $p < .05$. A statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance (12, N=84) also indicated a statistically significant relationship (F=3.4, $p < .05$). See Table 6.

Source Type by Story Type. The two story types were cross-tabulated with each of the article source types. Only two statistically significant relationships were revealed. The fewer the religion sources quoted or cited, the more likely a story was to be non-news. A cross-tabulation (8, N=85) of story types and use of religion officials as sources produced a chi-square statistic of 16.98, $p < .05$. A one-way analysis of variance (8, N=84) also showed a statistically significant relationship between these two variables (F=2.37, $p < .05$). Perhaps oddly, news articles tended to quote 2 to 5 religion officials, while non-news articles tended to quote either less than 2 or more

than 5. See Table 7. In addition, the fewer the feminists quoted or cited, the more likely the story was to be a non-news article. A cross-tabulation (2, N=85) of story types and use of feminist sources produced a chi-square statistic of 8.74, p < .05. A one-way analysis of variance (2, N=84) also showed a statistically significant relationship (F=4.7, p < .05). See Table 8.

Story Type by Likert Scale Rating. Paragraphs. PK articles were treated generally as non-news, regardless of whether they were positive or negative. A cross-tabulation (4, N=2219) of story type by Likert scale ratings for paragraphs produced a chi-square statistic of 19.35, p < .05. A statistically significant relationship exists between these two variables. A one-way analysis of variance (4, N=2219) confirmed the statistically signficant relationship between these two variables (F=4.87, p < .05). In short, although Likert scale values of paragraphs did not differ very much, non-news articles were more likely to contain negative paragraphs. See Table 9.

Discussion

U.S. print media types are consistent over time in how they cover certain subjects. This finding contradicts agenda-setting theory in several ways. Much agenda-setting research and theory indicate that once a subject gets covered a certain way, that later coverage will be similar, which suggests that coverage would stay consistent. But it is just as possible that a certain tone has a snowball effect on coverage, and that, for example, a subject that received 75% positive coverage initially may over time see that coverage, all other factors being neutral, become even more positive. Agenda-setting theory indicates that as an individual, group or movement involved in a social issue gets more coverage, its opponents will be sought out by the media to "balance" stories, and that opponents will identify themselves and make themselves available to the media. This should result in stories becoming less positive over time. This did not happen in PK's case.

Agenda-setting theory indicates that as a social movement organization receives coverage, it will review that coverage and adjust its media strategies accordingly to attempt to get better coverage in the future. Groups can respond to coverage overall and the emergence of opposition

sources, to slow down or reverse a trend toward more negative coverage, or, ideally, help get even more positive coverage when they already are receiving positive coverage. But few patterns of any kind emerged in sources in PK coverage, and patterns that did emerge linked number of sources to length of article--no surprise since journalists writing longer stories also usually have the luxury of more time to find more sources. It is highly unlikely that PK altered their media strategies just enough to keep otherwise increasingly negative coverage steady in terms of tone. Again, anecdotal evidence suggests that PK, while not uncooperative with the media, is not nearly as cooperative as it could be.

The public agenda set by the media apparently is the result of media work-ers weighing and prioritizing a subject's characteristics in covering it. Thus, when characteristics conflict with each other with regard to how news media usually cover those stories, it should be possible to tell which characteristics were assigned a higher priority in determining the coverage's nature. For example, it was hypothesized, based on past research, that PK would re-ceive negative, and increasingly negative coverage. But data did not support this hypothesis.

PK should have received negative coverage because members were men not acting in stereotypical ways; they were not advocating a stereotypical male message, nor expressing a mes-sage in typical ways (Christian teachings, rather than as politics, business or sports); they ques-tioned the status quo in criticizing the U.S. culture for being too unethical, immoral, racist, materi-alistic, unfriendly, etc., and possibly represented a growing social movement within the country's most powerful demographic (almost all white, middle-class men); they were yet another conserva-tive Christian organization emerging in the public sphere; and for other reasons. Yet PK has re-ceived overwhelmingly positive coverage.

One or more considerations in the minds of media workers must outweigh a theorized pre-disposition to give PK negative coverage. Perhaps conservative Christians are now seen by many media workers as the status quo or part of the status quo, rather than as a threat to it. Perhaps me-dia workers found it difficult to be critical of an organization that is public, Christian, anti-racist and promoting racial reconciliation, growing in popularity, causing men to renew family and com-

munity commitments, denying that it is sexist and saying as little as possible about homosexuality. As Silk argued, media are not nearly as hostile or apathetic about Judeo-Christian values as popular belief and commentary about mass media would suggest.[29] Perhaps some media workers were unaware of how conservative PK is, and would have written or edited stories differently had they known. Perhaps media workers believe that the state of society has become so grim that an organization like PK--even if the media workers don't agree with all of the ways in which it has framed social problems, causes, consequences and solutions--can only do more good than harm.

One characteristic of many PK articles was of note with regard to professional norms and practices: every paragraph would be neutral or positive until about two-thirds or three-quarters through the article, then would come one or two negative paragraphs, followed by a positive conclusion. Other articles mentioned criticism and opposition only in the middle; in any case, the pattern of a positive beginning, positive ending, and mostly positive coverage overall persisted. One sees in this pattern reporters believing that skepticism toward, or opposition to, PK can't be ignored, but they don't want to give skeptics or opponents more attention and certainly not more visible attention. It should be noted that skeptics and opponents to PK have not been limited to isolated individuals or extreme groups; they have included mainstream Protestant clergy and seminary professors as well as authorized representatives of major feminist, gay rights and other national organizations.

Social movements' coverage (conservative Christian revivals in particular) may not be as negative as is commonly believed and as research and commentary indicates. Whether this is because the media have changed, the movements have changed, or both, is unknown and could be the subject of future research. **Print media are not yet taking PK seriously, although this may be changing.** When media believe a subject can affect the status quo, they begin covering it more skeptically and often negatively, which is assisted and reinforced by opposition's emergence; PK has been covered generally positively and superficially. An alternative explanation is that media's experience with mythopoetism "primed" them to cover PK more positively. *A relationship may exist between how media cover a subject and how popular it is.* PK

has many more followers than many previous social movement groups ever did, and received more positive coverage than many. Perhaps media illogically assume that anything that is more popular must be more effective, or of higher quality, or otherwise of more merit. Or perhaps local editors didn't want to have the 40,000 to 50,000 unhappy readers and would-be readers that might result from negative coverage. (This possibility is compatible with both indirect public agenda-setting, and sociology of news theory, by suggesting that media sometimes may be as likely to cover something a particular way, in addition to making a decision whether to cover the subject at all, based on existing or expected public pressure and reaction.)

Future research is possible in many directions. Topics that can be explored include how closely public attitudes and knowledge about PK match media coverage; the exact nature of PK's media relations policies and practices, and how they affected coverage; the role of journalists' personal feelings about PK in how and whether PK received coverage; public attitudes about PK coverage; and the quality of PK coverage as measured by professional norms (accuracy, completeness, timeliness, fairness, etc.); reasons for the lack of coverage of other Christian men's organizations; and explanations why PK received significantly more and more positive coverage than earlier men's movement groups.

Print Mass Media Coverage of the Promise Keepers: The First Five Years

Table 1: Promise Keepers Coverage Paragraphs by Publication Type, by Likert Scale Rating

	Ratings				
Medium Type	1	2	3	4	5
Elite	279	44	27	48	4
Newspapers	917	128	170	127	29
Magainzes	252	59	37	77	21
Totals	1448	231	234	252	54

Table 2: Likert Scale Ratings for Promise Keepers Coverage Paragraphs, by Story Type

	Ratings				
Story Type	1	2	3	4	5
News	586	91	66	92	12
Non-news	862	140	168	160	42
Totals	1448	231	234	252	54

Table 3: Promise Keepers Coverage Paragraphs, by Story Type by Medium Type

	Medium Type			
Story Type	Elite	Newspapers	Magazines	Total
News	277	551	19	847
Non-news	125	820	427	1,372
Totals	402	1371	446	2219

Table 4: Promise Keepers Coverage Articles by Story Type, by Topic Type

	Story Type		
Topic Type	News	Non-News	Totals
Top Leaders	0	7	7
Literature	0	1	1
Overall Movement	7	22	29
Local Event/Org.	22	21	43
Opposition	1	1	2
Sociocultural	0	3	3
Totals	30	55	85

Table 5: Promise Keepers Coverage Paragraphs by Story Type, by Time Period

	News	Non-News	Totals
3rd Qtr. '92	0	31	31
4th Qtr. '92	0	6	6
1st Qtr. '93	0	0	0
2nd Qtr. '93	0	0	0
3rd Qtr. '93	0	41	41
4th Qtr. '93	0	0	0
1st Qtr. '94	22	0	22
2nd Qtr. '94	105	0	105
3rd Qtr. '94	20	71	91
4th Qtr. '94	0	170	170
1st Qtr. '95	0	155	155
2nd Qtr. '95	107	253	360
3rd Qtr. '95	260	258	528
4th Qtr. '95	57	201	258
1st Qtr. '96	276	186	362

Table 6

Promise Keepers Coverage Articles by Story Type, by Time Period

	News	Non-News	Totals
3rd Qtr. '92	0	2	2
4th Qtr. '92	0	1	1
1st Qtr. '93	0	0	0
2nd Qtr. '93	0	0	0
3rd Qtr. '93	0	1	1
4th Qtr. '93	0	1	1
1st Qtr. '94	1	0	1
2nd Qtr. '94	3	0	3
3rd Qtr. '94	1	5	6
4th Qtr. '94	0	8	8
1st Qtr. '95	0	4	4
2nd Qtr. '95	4	11	15
3rd Qtr. '95	11	9	20
4th Qtr. '95	1	9	10
1st Qtr. '96	9	4	13

Table 7: Numbers of Religion Officials as Sources in Promise Keepers Coverage, by Story Type

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	13	totals
News	6	8	8	3	3	1	0	0	1	0	30
Non	30	12	7	3	0	1	1	0	0	1	55
Totals	36	20	15	6	3	2	1	0	1	1	85

Table 8: Numbers of Feminists as Sources in Promise Keepers Coverage, by Story Type

	Story Type		
Feminist Sources	News	Non-News	Totals
0	24	54	78
1	4	1	5
2	2	0	2
Totals	30	55	85

Table 9: Likert Scale Ratings for Promise Keepers Coverage Paragraphs, by Story Type

	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
News	586	91	66	92	12	847
Non news	862	140	168	160	42	1,372
Totals	1448	231	234	252	54	2219

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Daily Newspaper Editors' Audience Construction Routines: A Case Study

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Abstract

This case study identifies several routines used by editors at a large daily newspaper to construct audience substitutes and to predict audience reaction to story selections. While some of these constructed audiences included input from the newspaper's readers and editors' acquaintances outside the newsroom, the editors preferred to consult a "near" audience composed of their colleagues who attended news budget meetings. Editors also used typifications to predict how readers would react to stories. Typifications using unfavorable language indicated items selected to satisfy the mass readership; favorable typifications indicated stories that the editors valued.

Newspaper Editors' Audience Construction Routines: A Case Study

Sixty years ago, *New York Herald Tribune* city editor Stanley Walker claimed that news in its "most spectacular manifestations" may be as easily identified by the man in the street as the editor. The rules of news work were simple: "Get all the facts and write them clearly. Women, wampum and wrongdoing are always news."[1] Mass communication researchers since have found that defining what constitutes news is problematic for editors and reporters, whose work isn't governed so much by straightforward rules as by routines designed to manage uncertainty.[2] Shoemaker and Reese define these routines as the "repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs."[3] Media ethnographers have described several of these routines, including reliance on story typifications,[4] on other media,[5] and on bureaucratic institutions that subsidize news preparation.[6]

Most of these studies have focused on reporters and their interactions with sources or editors.[7] Less effort has been invested in understanding the routines that editors use to reduce their uncertainty about readers and viewers that they have little contact with and generally mistrust.[8] Like most news workers, editors also differ from their audiences in educational level, political philosophy, and other factors.[9] Daily newspaper editors make these audience-related decisions in news budget meetings or conferences.[10] These meetings allocate front page space to the most "important" stories of the day, and by default, determine the placement of all other stories. Reisner, who observed 64 such meetings at nine newspapers ranging in circulation size from 20,000 to 750,000, described this format:

A senior editor, usually the managing editor, leads the meeting and organizes the speakers. During the first portion of the news conference, section editors deliver lists of story descriptions that, for the purposes of the conference, establish story newsworthiness. In the second portion of the conference, the senior editor selects the day's front page stories.[11]

Budget meeting studies usually pursue research questions about social control within the newsroom,[12] competition among peers for resources,[13] and a variety of other small group processes.[14] These studies do not explain how editors select stories for readers that they know little about. However, their findings about audiences and work routines provide useful starting points. Gans found that editors at national broadcast and print media were aware of several, possible audiences.[15] They rejected feedback from an "unknown," mass audience represented by market surveys and unsolicited letters and phone calls for two reasons. The editors mistrusted statistics, and they felt the "unknown" audience was incapable of determining what news it truly needed. The same editors valued feedback from three other groups: Their superiors within the news organization, a "known" audience composed of family, friends, neighbors, and casual social acquaintances; and a "near" audience composed of journalistic and non-journalistic colleagues who adopted the role of readers to respond to a story. Jacobs encountered a roughly equivalent near audience in his ethnography of a Los Angeles television station.[16]

Other researchers have found that some routines, like the typification schemes used by members of most small groups to control their work, also are common in news rooms. Groups use typifications to solve new problems by sharing and categorizing knowledge of past experiences.[17] Schutz called

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typifications "trustworthy recipes for interpreting the social world and for handling things and men in order to obtain the best results in every situation with a minimum effort. . . ."[18] The reporters and editors studied in earlier ethnographies built their typifications by talking.[19] In the course of their conversations, they matched stories to examples or categories developed in past conversations. For example, Berkowitz noted that television producers and reporters referred to an airplane crash as a "what-a-story."[20] The "what-a-story" typification indicated that the accident was an unexpected event that could only be processed efficiently as news by selecting from a repertoire of previously used, but now routine work strategies. In this case, the news workers treated the crash as a fire story, a prototypical event for which they had ready-made methods. Besides adapting routine coverage strategies to unexpected events, editors and reporters use typifications to construct shared definitions of news,[21] to apportion newsroom resources,[22] and to cope with organizational requirements that conflict with professional norms.[23] The ubiquity of this routine in newsroom ethnographies indicates that editors likely use typifications to solve their audience-related problems.

I designed this case study to explore the routines daily newspaper editors use to reduce uncertainty about their audience and to predict its reaction to story selections.

Method

I observed editors at a large daily newspaper, The News, for six weeks and interviewed them about their work.[24] The News, an AM with a circulation in the range of 150,000 to 200,000, publishes in the capital of a Southwestern state and employs 180 editors, reporters, graphic artists, photographers, and page designers. In some respects, The News is much like the newspapers that the "average" reporter or editor works for[25] and the

"average" American reads. It is owned by a corporate chain and has no direct, print media competitor. Although two-thirds of daily U.S. newspapers are PMs, most have a circulation of 50,000 or less.[26] They represent unattractive targets for this study because editors generally proliferate as circulation size increases.[27]

I observed a variety of editing activities at *The News*, but my fieldwork focused on the editors who proved most influential in selecting front page stories during twice daily budget meetings. While eighteen to twenty-two editors, page designers, graphic artists, and photographers usually deliberated about *The News'* front page during a 4:30 p.m. meeting, a smaller group refined the selections at 6:30 p.m. During the first week of my fieldwork, I identified a dozen editors who always recommended page one stories during the 4:30 p.m. meeting or always attended the 6:30 p.m. meeting. They are listed by pseudonym and job title and description in Table No. 1.[28] For the next four weeks, I observed how these editors reached their decisions about page one stories. I also asked the editors to explain their decisions during lengthy, tape recorded interviews usually conducted outside of the newsroom. To test the stability of my conclusions, I returned to *The News* six months later, observed the budget meetings for a final week, and reinterviewed eleven of the twelve editors.

Constructing the audience

Because of the time that they invested in their jobs, the editors maintained few social connections with non-news workers. Cathy, the deputy managing editor, and Robert, the assistant managing editor, usually began their days at 5 a.m. or 5:30 a.m. by reading the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and other publications. They arrived in the newsroom at 9 a.m. and stayed until 7 p.m. They worked weekends. Among their other duties,

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they alternated as chair of the budget meetings and functioned like the senior editors described by Reisner. Other editors followed similar schedules. Their lack of community ties made the editors susceptible to repeating the story choices made by non-local elite or reference media. Robert compared these other media to a vacuum that pulled *The News*' editors toward a "pack" definition of news. The editors tried to balance this Breedian arterial effect,[29] which drew them toward national and international stories, by constructing imaginary, local readers. Various sources contributed to the construction of these fantasy readers. For a time, editors listened to local talk radio broadcasts but abandoned that practice after deciding that the people who called in had little in common with the newspaper's readers. Brian, the metro editor, required his reporters to eat lunch once a month with people who were not routine story sources and then to report the conversations to him. The editors also depended upon their spouses, chance encounters with strangers, and telephone calls and letters from readers to build a model of the audience's interests and reactions.

These socially constructed readers often resembled the interests and demographics of the people in the newsroom. For example, Brian, whose wife worked and who had two children, thought of *The News*' readers as Joe and Joleen Sixpack. They were another married, working couple with children:

> They are folks who probably watch TV, some TV, so they've probably
> heard about this (story on page one). And they are folks who don't
> have a lot of time, so they are always asking, "Why should I care?"
> And so you need to tell them why they should care real early in every
> story. And, uh, they're folks who like a good laugh so that if you can
> give them something that's kind of light, that's good. They are people
> who really dislike waste in government, and so any of those stories you

track down — because, by God, they are out there working every day
— is good. Joe Junior and Joleen Junior are, you know, in school all
the time so they are ticked off about the way school goes so you want to
bring them stories that talk about education. Bring them stories that
matter to them because they just don't have much time.

While their imaginary or constructed readers incorporated some
aspects of Gans' known and unknown audiences, the editors also frequently
consulted a near audience composed of fellow editors. These consultations
could occur anywhere in the newsroom, but they routinely happened in the
budget meetings. The editors preferred this method because they believed
their interests mirrored those of the man and woman in the street without
being tainted by private agendas. The senior editors, however, recognized
that consulting the near audience had limitations. Cathy, for instance, said
the content of newspapers like *The News* often reflected a lack of age and
economic diversity on the part of editors:

> If you look at newspapers around the country today, at least the ones I
> know and where I know people, we're all kind of the same age. So
> everything you read in the newspapers is being filtered through this
> 45-year-old's prism, to pick an age. An awful lot of those folks are just
> now having kids. . . .You can test this. Pick up a paper; there are
> plenty of stories about how to raise 3-year-olds.

To avoid these near audience pitfalls, the senior editors relied on what
they called "instinctive" judgments. When they referred to instinct, they
meant their past experiences in successfully selecting stories at *The News*
and at other newspapers where they had worked. The editors saturated the
newsroom with reminders of these past choices. Copies of previous editions
of *The News* festooned the walls of the conference room where budget

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meetings were held. Stories that senior editors considered exemplary were displayed at key points. Cathy also issued a daily, e-mail critique of previous editions. Editors who emulated Cathy's and Robert's "instinctive" judgments advanced in the newsroom hierarchy much like the reporters who were socialized successfully through editorial revision in Breed's and Sigelman's studies.[30] Those who did not were corrected publicly. For instance, one editor failed to include a story on the front page about property damaged caused by a late night thunderstorm. The next day, Cathy told editors at the budget meeting to: "Put a bug in her ear. Weather is always important."

Predicting audience reaction

Focused interviews with the influential editors found that they shared three, key assumptions about budget meetings: (1) Because they substantially agreed on the criteria for a page one story (see Table No. 2), the editors believed the chances were small that any of their colleagues would recommend an ineligible story for the front page. (2) They believed it would be difficult to modify a page one story or to obtain fresh stories after the 4:30 p.m. budget meeting because most reporters and their sources departed for home between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. (3) They believed their task at the budget meeting was not to make newsworthiness decisions but to select a set of stories for page one with maximum audience appeal. This could be a complex effort because The News only used five stories on its front page, and editors sometimes suggested a dozen or more candidates. To simplify the selection process, editors accepted budget meeting conversations about stories as being roughly equivalent to the readers' reactions. Conrad, the state editor, summarized it this way: "If you can sell the story to the editors, you can sell the story to the readers. . . ."

Test audience reactions. As a test audience, the editors were sensitive to who recommended a story, how enthusiastic the recommendation was, and the frequency and type of comments made by other editors. Senior editors sometimes revised their opinion of a story on the basis of a budget meeting conversation. Robert, for instance, initially was not impressed by a wire story about scientists conducting sleep deprivation experiments with cats. The experiments required that the cats be kept awake for eighteen hours. Other editors were fascinated by the story, mentioned their own pet cats, and pointed out the extreme difficulty of keeping these pets awake. Their interest in the story convinced Robert to re-evaluate his. Cathy sometimes polled editors from specific gender or age groups for additional comments. In one case, she solicited the reactions of editors who also were mothers of small children to a photograph of a firefighter cradling the body of an infant.

Tom, the assistant news editor, said who talked in the budget meetings also was important. He pointed out that enthusiastic story endorsements by the business and sports editors might indicate a story that was too esoteric for other readers. Brenda, Tom's supervisor, said conversation that included mostly questions about the story could indicate a poor job of reporting, not interest. On the rare occasions when an editor recommended a story not meeting the near audience's criteria, other editors would ask, "Why should I care?" Those stories usually were withdrawn from consideration.

Typification as prediction. During the budget meetings, the editors did not use the "hard news, soft news" or "routine, non-routine" typifications reported by Tuchman and Fishman.[31] They were, however, familiar with those distinctions, and when prompted in focused interviews, could incorporate them in their answers. They generally meant the same things

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that Tuchman's and Fishman's participants meant — hard news contained important information; soft news, interesting information. The former needed speedy delivery; the latter did not. Routine news came from predictable sources or events; non-routine news did not. The editors, however, did not find these categories and distinctions helpful in performing their work. Instead, the typifications they used predicted audience reaction. Favorable typifications generally referred to a near audience reaction; unfavorable typifications referred to a reaction from the unknown audience.

Favorable typifications included "readers" and "talkers." Tom had a simple test to determine if a story qualified as a reader: "Did I read it all the way through?" "Talkers" were "readers" that editors discussed with other editors. Stories fitting both requirements often earned a "Hey, Montana" typification from Cathy. This label is an adaptation of the venerable "Hey, Martha!" typification used in many newsrooms to refer to stories that "grabbed" the readers' attention. As Buchanan repeats the apocryphal story, Martha's husband used this exclamatory address followed by the question "Have you seen this story?" while reading the newspaper at the breakfast table.[32] Women editors at The News had substituted the androgynous "Hey, Montana!" for the sexist "Hey, Martha!" tag. When the editors discussed these stories, they often began the conversation by asking one another, "Hey, did you see this?" "Hey, Montana" stories that Cathy asked other editors if they had seen included an item about a museum devoted to conspiracy theories and a story about how budget cuts in a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program could increase recidivism rates.

Because of competition from other, non-print media for hard news stories, The News' editors also sought out items that were "Oozing In Context." These stories were required to answer the question "Why should I

care?" for both the near and unknown audience. Cathy provided perhaps the best illustration:

> When a plane crashes at 5 in the afternoon and kills 100 people, we don't want to give them (readers) a story that says it happened. We want to answer the question whether it can happen to them.

Brenda said "Oozing in Context" stories were also "good issue stories." "It's a story that sort of captures the various angles or the various sides of an issue that's in the news or in the public eye like crime or abortion or people running traffic lights or whatever." Brenda felt compelled to read these stories because they were interesting; the writing was good, and the details were complete.

The mix. Editors used other typifications to describe whether the collection of stories on the front page represented an optimum range of topics for attracting readers. Stempel speculated that making this optimum selection might be a more critical test of news judgment than selecting specific stories for page one.[33] Editors at *The News* described this collection of story topics as the "mix." They routinely apportioned one of the five page one slots to a story that enhanced this collection because it concerned a topic unrelated to those in the other four items. Editors often referred to these stories as "Cute Little Features" and "Brights," which Tom described as a good, but quick read. A recently published story about a long distance telephone company fit into the "Cute Little Feature" category. Because of an error in an advertisement about the company's help line, some customers dialed a sex chat line instead. The story focused on the amusing results. To find these mix-enhancing stories, the twelve editors often checked the budget listings for items that had not been recommended for page one by others.

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Senior editors or their most trusted subordinates almost always decided which of these stories should be used.

Reader "must" stories. The editors recognized two kinds of "must" stories, but they did not consider these items to be "serious" journalism and selected them for page one only to stave off reader criticism.

One variety, unfavorably referred to by editors as "Only-in-Capital-City" stories, had both soft and hard news variations. When applied to a hard news story, the label often typified what Tom called "stupid political stories." "This issue would come up, and it gets debated and talked to death in the city council. Or, it'll inspire people to file a petition about something or the other." The soft news version resembled the symbolic, audience identity-creating stories described by Kaniss.[34] She found that newspapers used these stories to knit together large audiences, particularly those including suburban readers. In this study, the "only-in" typifications applied to stories about Capital City's year-long cycle of street and park festivals or other popular, public events. Tom explained:

> Everybody is out-of-doors doing something. And that's the only news peg to it: This is another heavenly weekend in the city. People are involved in a variety of events. Five hundred people gather in a park for one of those Frisbee golf tournaments. That alone doesn't say much, but combine it with five other things that are going on at the same time and they paint a picture of the city. If you took each of those components out of the story, they'd be routine, inside metro stories.

Brian equated this category of "must" story to marginal items expected on a regular basis by the readers: ". . .they are things that people attend and go to

so they are looking for us to give them some sort of guide as to how they can participate."

Financial or legal stories about *The News* and its parent company or stories promoting the newspaper's civic activities like scholarship funds also fell into the "reader must" category. Editors did not consider these items to be "front office musts" because: (1) The business office exerted no pressure on them to use stories that presented the newspaper in a favorable light, and (2) they feared the unknown readers would accuse them of favoritism if unflattering stories about the newspaper or its parent corporation were not used.

Focused interview questions about these "must" items almost always elicited comments about "controversial" stories. Editors defined controversial stories in terms of reader reaction. Brenda said controversial stories "make both sides mad"; Tom said they "upset somebody or several somebodies" with partisans from both sides seldom satisfied with the newspaper's coverage. Editors primary concern in editing these stories was mitigating criticism. Like the reporters in Tuchman's 1972 study,[35] the editors at *The News* sought to ensure the objectivity and the accuracy of controversial stories. This required a considerable investment in time and effort because these stories had to reflect both sides of an issue and could contain no errors. Copy editors were discouraged from putting "clever" headlines on such stories because readers might perceive them to be evidence of slanted or biased coverage.

Discussion and Conclusion

Tuchman argued that news workers used routines, particularly typifications, to help them "process idiosyncratic phenomena." "It (the news organization) must reduce all phenomena to known classifications. . .".[36] *The News* shows that editors can not process idiosyncratic audiences without the

aid of routines anymore readily than reporters can process idiosyncratic events or people. However, the editors used routines to construct audiences and to predict their reactions to stories, not to construct newsworthiness.

Some of these social constructions helped slake what Gans termed audience hunger for information about unknown readers, but the editors clearly perferred input made during budget meetings by a near audience of their colleagues. For this near audience, who recommended a story, how enthusiastically they made their recommendations, and the types of response made by others were important. Editors also used typifications to predict how audiences would react to a story selection. When editors typified stories grudingly selected to please the unknown audience, their explanations of those categories often used unfavorable terms. Typifications of a favorable nature designated stories that the near audience found appealing. Senior editors employed instinctive judgments when a particularly difficult decision about story selections had to be made. Subordinate editors who advanced in the newsroom hierarchy studied these instinctive selections and mimicked them.

This exploratory work suggests several other studies. A multi-site case study could be useful in determining whether editors at newspapers with larger, the same, and smaller circulations use similar audience construction and reaction routines. Stempel's work and this study also indicate a limited, but interesting exception to the assumption within our research community that newspapers, even within the same market, edit to conformity.[37] At *The News*, editors reserved a portion of their front page for a mix story that differed from the other topics on the page. Finding this story required creativity, particularly on the part of senior editors, who relied on instinctive judgments. Would these "instinctive" judgments by senior editors at a

sample of newspapers of similar circulation size yield the same or idiosyncratic mix story selections? A properly constructed content analysis could answer that research question.

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Table No. 1

Pseudonym, Title, Duties By Editors

Editor's Pseudonym	Editor's Title	Editor's Duties
Cathy	Deputy Managing Editor	Function as editor; chair budget meetings; supervise other editors. Write daily critiques.
Robert	Assistant Managing Editor	Function as managing editor; chair budget meetings; supervise other editors.
Nancy	Special Projects Editor	Coordinate Saturday, Sunday, Monday newspapers with other editors.
Brenda	News Editor	Supervise Tom and Harold.
Tom	Assistant News Editor	Supervise Joe and several page designers. *De facto* editor at night.
Joe	Copy Chief	Supervise copy editors.
Harold	Wire Editor	"Supervise" the wire services.
Conrad	State Editor	Supervise two deputies and state reporters.
Brian	Metro Editor	Supervise one deputy and five assistants.
Cynthia	Deputy Metro Editor	Supervise general assignment reporters and other assistant city editors.
Jason	Business Editor	Supervise one deputy and several reporters.
Shelia	Sports Editor	Supervise one deputy and several reporters.

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Table No. 2

Attributes of "Best" Page One Story By Editor

Editor's Title	Page One Story Attributes
Deputy Managing Editor	Proximity, broad context, scope, and superior writing. How the story complements the mix of stories on the page is also important. Some selections are instinctive.
Assistant Managing Editor	Too abstract to define. Editor's instincts, marketing constraints are considerations. Picking stories for page one is like solving a puzzle.
Special Projects Editor	Relevant to the reader. Is it funny? Is it interesting? Is it well written? How the story complements the mix of stories on the page is also important.
News Editor	Interesting, entertaining, or compelling.
Assistant News Editor	Ultimate page one item is a well-written, hard news story. It must be interesting to me. Some selections are instinctive.
Copy Chief	Should be the best stories in the newspaper and should have broad appeal.
National Wire Editor	Obviously important, obviously interesting, or obvious local connection.
Metro Editor	Superior writing, solid reporting, details no one else has. Relevant to the reader.
Deputy Metro Editor	Broad appeal. Leads the news marketplace by letting readers know what is going to happen next.
State Editor	Broad appeal. Relevant, interesting, and accessible to the reader.
Business Editor	Relevant and interesting to the reader. Some selections are instinctive.
Sports Editor	Relevant to the reader. Superior writing. Rare, breaking scoops.

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19. Tuchman, "Making News by Doing Work."

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20. Dan Berkowitz, "Non-Routine News and Newswork: Exploring a What-a-Story," *Journal of Communication* 42 (winter 1992): 82-94.

21. Marilyn Lester, "Generating Newsworthiness: The Interpretive Construction of Public Events," *American Sociological Review* 45 (December 1980): 984-994; Tuchman, *Making News*.

22. Berkowitz, "Non-Routine News."

23. Tuchman, *Making News*.

24. Throughout this article, the case study newspaper is referred to as *The News*. The city of publication is referred to as Capital City; the editors are identified by pseudonyms.

25. Weaver and Wilhoit, "Journalists — Who Are They, Really?"

26. *Editor & Publisher International Year Book Part 1* (NY: Editor & Publisher, 1995), 1-449, I453-I460.

27. R. G. Picard and J. H. Brody, *The Newspaper Publishing Industry* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997).

28. All the editors listed in Table No. 1 supervised other editors or frequently substituted for editors who did. However, Cathy, Robert, Nancy, Brenda, Tom, and Joe routinely performed this task. These six also were the most frequent participants in the 6:30 p.m. news conference.

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The value of the journalistic identity on the World Wide Web

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Abstract

An experiment found that content providers on the Web associated with journalism, e.g., an online newspaper or a television network online, were perceived as most credible, compared to a content provider that had nothing to do with journalism but was delivering news and an unidentified content provider. In content providers that had a journalistic identity, stories and ads were perceived as most credible. Stories were liked the most and likelihood of subscribing was the highest in the newspaper as perceived source.

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Problem

The growth of the Internet and its graphics-based component, the World Wide Web, epitomizes the concept of technological convergence -- the integration of systems that store, process and retrieve text, sound, image, and animation. With the joining of computer technology, communication networks, and content production, traditional journalistic media have faced the challenge to survive and fit within the new media consumption environment. They have had to add to their traditional product a range of new, interactive functions and services, a process that has also involved questioning, scrutinizing, modifying and redefining their identity.

Ghosh ("Opening the gate," 1997, p. 157) includes in his predictions about business on the Web "an identity crisis" for all information companies. First, newspapers and magazines with established "brands" have, some may argue, obscured their identity by placing themselves within larger Internet services, such as America Online, CompuServe, Infi.Net, or the "push" online product PointCast, which is delivered on computer screen savers. These services can be compared to crowded newsstands where it is difficult for individual brands to stand out. The Web gives unprecedented opportunities for identity blurring. In the new medium, radio and television stations have ventured into the territory of print media, providing "an interesting and useful reading experience" (Levins, 1997, p. 27). In turn, newspapers online offer video footage and audio on their Web sites. But the stepping over boundaries is not only across media categories. The *Boston Globe*, for example, made a calculated decision to submerge its identity into the electronic communication conglomerate *boston.com* of over 30 media and non-media partners serving Boston in general.

Second, in addition to offering their specialized product--news--newspapers have become providers of Internet access and service, a territory that used to be reserved for computer and telephone companies. Readers are inundated with ads from their local newspapers, identifying themselves as ISPs (Internet service providers).

Third, traditional newspapers and magazines placed on the Web have taken advantage of the technology's interactivity, offering services unrelated to journalism, for example, bank transactions and travel reservations. Such services raise logical questions about the identity and brand of the news media both within them as institutions and among audiences. Referring to Time Warner's *Money* magazine, whose online edition offers bank transactions, Ghosh ("Opening the gate," 1997, p. 157) asks:

Where does Time Warner end and where does the bank start? Where does Time Warner end and where does the retailer start?... Where does Time Warner end and where does America Online start?

On the other hand, telephone and computer software companies have begun to offer news, in turn invading the journalistic media's area of specialty and the boundaries that guarded their identity. Advertisers have ventured in the online environment on their own, both in their corporate home pages and in partnerships with search engines and personal home pages, expanding their presence far beyond online versions of journalistic media. Some advertisers even offer their own news services on the Web, the content of which has nothing to do with their products. Bulletin boards, chat rooms and other interactive forums on the Internet distribute a variety of information that users consume. Computer software, such as autonomous intelligent agents, allows the vision of "The Daily Me," a personalized information "boutique" containing news and ads matched with each individual consumer's interests and idiosyncratic message preferences. Computer software exists that can write journalistic stories on its own. In these cases, not only is the traditional boundary of journalism blurred, its role of gatekeeping is entirely bypassed. The Internet and the Web have become an enormous carrier of information whose source in many instances may remain unidentified and unknown.

Blurring the boundaries of specialization for content providers, communication network providers and advertisers is not a unique Web phenomenon. In the early stages of radio, advertisers did not just sponsor programs directly promoting their products, they produced shows and controlled the programming. In the late 1980s, when telephone companies argued for a right to deliver information without government restrictions, the newspaper industry immediately saw the potential risk of losing advertising revenue and felt a need to reinforce its constitutionally protected identity and role in society. About the same time, computer companies, such as IBM, ventured into the electronic publishing and distribution fields, stepping into the territories of both newspaper and telephone companies. The problem of blurring the boundaries of editorial content and advertising is not new at all. But with the penetration of the Web and its vast capacity to host and bring information from anybody to anybody, source credibility and the role of news media has taken on a greater importance than ever before; it has become an issue that may help shape the future of journalism.

How do media consumers react to the potentially confusing redrawing and blurring of specialists' territories? First, are newsreaders and viewers sensitive to the credibility of Web

sources? And second, if they are, do audiences discriminate among sources, placing more credibility on those traditionally associated with journalism? Do the old identities and specializations they are familiar with influence audience members' processing of information from the World Wide Web? Is there such a concept as a "brand name" of journalism? If so, what is the equity associated with it? Do consumers evaluate online information as critically as they are generally expected to? Meeks (quoted in "Emerging journalism," 1997, p. 278) argues: "People aren't stupid. People playing journalist on the Net and spouting off unconfirmed facts will be branded as such." Jeffrey (quoted in "Customer relations," 1997, p. 407) suggests: "I think it's the enormity of the information [on the Internet] that makes brands even more important in some respects." "We believe customers are not going to behave differently on the Web than they do with any other traditional channel of communication and distribution," adds Biro ("The new economics," 1997, p. 416). But there is no evidence so far to support such assumptions. This study sought to investigate these questions empirically.

Study objectives

The study's main objective was to determine whether and how the perceived credibility of a content provider of an online news service and especially its identity affect audience cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral responses to the news service as a whole and to its content. The specific responses studied here were readers/viewers' perceptions of the credibility of the news stories and ads placed in an online news service and brands promoted in it; attitudes toward the news stories, ads and brands; memory for them; purchase intentions for the advertised products and brands; and self-reported likelihood of subscribing to the medium.

The study looked at the impact of various online environments on consumers/readers' perceptions of credibility. The term "online environments" refers to what kind of media source people think they are using: newspaper, the Internet/the World Wide Web, television, or some new kind of combination. The study manipulated which environment people thought they were in. The manipulation allowed an opportunity to compare the perception of the journalistic environment to the perceptions of other, non-journalistic or unidentified environments.

Theoretical framework and concept explication

The overarching theory that informs this research is schema or knowledge structure theory from cognitive and social psychology. The construct of knowledge structures can be traced back to Plato. In trying to answer the question of how people gain knowledge, the ancient Greek philosopher postulated that knowledge builds upon *forms*. *Forms*, in Plato's

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theory, were the general ideas summarizing the main characteristics of every category of things that people think about. Thus, by dividing the world into classes of objects, people could understand it and know it (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

Thousands of years later, scholars continue to ask the same epistemological question of how we know what we know. Social psychology has investigated expectancy effects, the influence of prior knowledge and beliefs for many years, as early as Gestalt psychology. In contemporary models of social information processing there are many types of knowledge structures that are similar to Plato's *forms*: Schemas, scripts, frames, causal or hierarchical knowledge structures, categories, exemplars, and prototypes are all structures for organizing personal and social knowledge and experience (e.g., Cohen, 1981; Ellis & Reed, 1993; Goffman, 1974; Minsky, 1975; Schank & Abelson, 1977; Smith, 1989). They contain information about the relationships among the attributes of social objects, governing perception, memory, judgments and inferences. In general, the theories that involve these terms are collectively called schema theories (Alba & Hasher, 1983). In this study, the terms "schema" and "knowledge structure" are used interchangeably but the more general "knowledge structure" is preferred.

The creator of the term schema, British psychologist F. Bartlett, defined it in 1934 as "an active organization of past reactions or past experiences" (Best, 1989, p. 211). More recently, a schema has been described as a representation of "categorical knowledge according to a slot structure" where the slot summarizes the attributes of a category (J. Anderson, 1995, p. 155). Thus, a schema is like a template, a blank that is gradually filled with information. When laypeople encounter a new stimulus configuration, such as, for instance, a newspaper delivered on computer screen, they look for an existing memory template that fits the new stimulus.

Norman (1988, pp. 115-116) summarizes the components of schema theory as follows: "(1) that there is logic and order to the individual [knowledge] structures...; (2) that human memory is associative, with each schema pointing and referring to multiple others to which it is related or that help define the components ...; and (3) that much of our power for deductive thought comes from using the information in one schema to deduce the properties of another." Such deductive thought power can be illustrated in the concept of a default value, an inference in which a general knowledge structure fills in the blanks for unobserved instances (e.g., Crocket, 1988; Norman, 1988). The default value is so powerful that people often do not know if a conclusion they made is based on actual observed evidence or default inferences. But when people encounter instances that are exceptions to the knowledge structure rules, they

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simultaneously revise the knowledge structures and relocate the instances to other knowledge structures; thus one's knowledge structures are constantly evolving.

Studies on audience processing of media have widely used schema theories, mainly to show how audiences rely on knowledge structures to make inferences from news stories and thus make sense of them (e.g., Becker, 1987; Edelman, 1993; Entman, 1989, 1993; Fredin & Tabaczynski, 1994; Fredin, Monnett & Kosicki, 1994; Garramone, Steele, & Pinkerton, 1991; Geiger & Newhagen, 1993; Graber, 1988, 1989; Grimes, 1990; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Swanson & Neuman, 1994; Woodall 1986). In this study, knowledge structure theory was used to explain how people process information from a novel medium in general, and specifically from a news service provided by a journalistic source, by a source with a specialization irrelevant to journalism or online information delivery, and by an unidentified source. It was expected that people's preexisting knowledge structures about news media, computers, and other relevant stimuli from their environment would affect the perception of each news service's credibility. Knowledge structure theory is particularly applicable to the study of novel media and their perceived credibility because both concepts, novelty and credibility, can be explicated in terms of knowledge structures.

Media novelty explicated in terms of knowledge structures

The concept of media technology novelty represents an interaction of audience cognitions and attributes of the media. On the one hand, novelty is an attribute of the medium--the medium has specific objective features that have not existed before. On the other hand, novelty of a medium is a perception (Becker & Schoenbach, 1989). What is new to one person may be old to another, depending on their individual experiences. Brockman (1996, p. xxiii-xxiv) has argued that "new technologies = new perceptions." The role of perception is illustrated in Becker and Schoenbach's (1989, p. 5) example of cable television: it was a new medium to the industry, but to the audience it was merely "more 'plain old television.'"

Because of such differences in perception, Becker and Schoenbach make a distinction between two types of new media --"new storage media," which replicate the functions of older media, only with less noise, and "veritable new media," which are new because they address new senses or new combinations of senses. How would the online news service fall into these definitions? Clearly, it is a new medium to the print newspaper and the television news industries. But does it address new senses or combinations of them to be seen as a different medium by the audience? It is reasonable to expect that it does. The combination of distinct features of an online news service, such as interactivity, unlimited news hole, unconstrained access (as opposed to the morning delivery of a paper or the set times for newscasts in

television and radio), and regular updates should make the online news service a new medium from the audience's perspective.

In general, a novel stimulus is defined as one that laypeople have not encountered before and in order to make sense of it, they have to somehow incorporate it in their mental web of prior experience or knowledge. In the spirit of McLuhan (19964), Rice & Williams (1984, p. 56) argue that "new media, like previous media, are basically extensions of human senses and effectors." They even refer to hearing, seeing and speaking as traditional media. This definition represents a matching of a new stimulus with an already existing knowledge structure. Minsky (1975) explains the matching of a novel stimulus with an existing knowledge structure as a request to memory. In his argument, the memory system is driven by two complementary needs. One is the need of novel stimuli to be categorized by being incorporated into larger knowledge structures. The other is the need of underdeveloped knowledge structures to be completed or reassigned. These needs are coordinated by the specific goals activated at the time of a new stimulus encounter.

If this is true, the case of processing information from an online news service, for example a digital newspaper, brings the question of which knowledge structure the new stimulus is placed under. That is, which part of the stimulus "digital newspaper" do people use to categorize it and eventually develop a knowledge structure for it, *digital* or *newspaper*. If people think of a digital newspaper as *digital* newspaper and place the new medium under their knowledge structure for a computer, then a digital newspaper is seen as closer to a computer and somewhat different from a newspaper. In contrast, if people think of a digital newspaper as a digital *newspaper* and place the new stimulus under their knowledge structure for a newspaper, then a digital newspaper is likely to be perceived as more similar to a print newspaper and different from a computer. This is an important distinction because it is likely to influence perceptions of the medium as a whole and of its content.

Media credibility explicated in terms of knowledge structures

"One man's credibility is not another man's," said Don Hewitt, executive producer of *60 Minutes* (quoted in Fry, 1985, p. 93). Media credibility can also be conceptualized as an interaction between audience cognitions and attributes of the media. By definition, the concept of credibility is grounded in already established expectations and set images of what is believable, trustworthy, or reliable. The root of the word "credibility" is the Latin *credibilis* or "worthy of belief" (Barber quoted in Fry, 1985, p. 93; Webster's new universal unabridged dictionary, 1983, p. 428). Dimensions or operational definitions of media credibility include accuracy, believability, trustworthiness, reliability, honesty, expertise, safety, qualification,

dynamism, knowledgeability, fairness, completeness, lack of bias, objectivity, responsibility, role in criticism of government, independence of special interests, and acceptability of message sources (e.g., Gaziano, 1988; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; McCombs & Washington, 1983; Self, 1996). Similarly, dimensions of advertiser credibility include attractiveness or likability, trustworthiness, prestige, competency, perceived competitiveness or success (VandenBergh, Soley, & Reid, 1981). In addition, perceptions of the media as having an institutional or political bias, too much negativism, not telling certain stories, unequal coverage, and unethical behavior of the journalists may be sources of diminished credibility (Gaziano, 1988; McCombs & Washington, 1983; Weaver et al., 1979).

Obviously, most of these criteria for evaluating credibility depend on readers'/viewers' personal attributes and, therefore, on their individual preexisting knowledge structures. Gunther (1992), for example, has examined how audience members' personal involvement in social groups influences their perceptions of media credibility. Attractiveness or likability is an individual-specific criterion reflecting personal tastes. People's individual media use patterns determine their differential assessments of media credibility (e.g., Rimmer & Weaver, 1987).

Attributes of the media or the content do, of course, influence perceptions of credibility, too. There are different credibility perceptions for different media, for example, TV vs. newspaper (e.g., Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Newhagen & Nass, 1989). Perceptions of credibility differ for various topics, such as local vs. international news (Abel & Wirth, 1977; Reagan & Zenaty, 1979). These attributes form the basis for evaluation. But the evaluation itself depends on the audience's knowledge structures for what a medium should be and what makes it credible.

This conceptualization of credibility is important to the study of the perceived credibility of a new medium, such as computer-mediated news environment, at this time. Depending on how the actual and the perceived identity of that environment match, which traditional medium it is seen as close to and what evaluative dimensions people use to compare the new media environment with a traditional one, perceptions of credibility--of the medium as whole and of its content--may vary.

Knowledge structures and differential processing of identical content

There are several reasons for expecting differential processing of the same content, depending on the perceptions of the medium. First, research on social cognition has shown knowledge structure-driven differential processing of the same content. Studies on the priming of certain knowledge structures suggest they direct readers' elaboration. In the

process of reading, people add plausible information consistent with their preexisting knowledge structure applied to the presented material, which leads to different inferences made from the same text by different readers (Bower & Cirilo, 1985). In essence, the activated knowledge structure supplies information to fill in the blanks which will otherwise be left unfilled (Novick, Fratianne, & Cheng, 1992).

In a media effects context, Reeves, Chaffee, and Tims (1982) have predicted that the knowledge structure activated prior to information exposure would determine how the content would be interpreted and stored. Specifically, they have suggested that, if, for example, a broadcast of a political debate is aired as an entertainment program, viewers would interpret the content within an entertainment schema and would not store any amount of information that the broadcast contained but that was not consistent with their entertainment schema, in this case, political information.

Differential processing of almost identical messages has been documented in communication research in studies on consumer beliefs about advertising. Preston and Scharbach (1971) demonstrated that almost identical verbal content was perceived differently, depending on whether it was presented to participants in an experiment as an ad, a personal letter, an office memo, or a news story. One of the most interesting results was that logically invalid statements were more likely to be perceived as accurate if they were seen in an ad rather than in a news story. The explanation was that people looked at advertising differently from news, tolerating and expecting illogical statements from advertising, especially when they served the persuasive purposes of the advertiser.

In a similar line of research, Owen and Karrh (1994) tested the perceived credibility of the same message presented as either a video news release or an ad. Viewers perceived as more credible the video news release, due to the greater credibility they placed in news programming as opposed to advertising.

While Preston and Scharbach and Owen and Karrh tested effects of the label of messages, other research has tested effects of the label of a medium. Winick (1962) found that identical ads were rated as more believable and liked better if only the manipulation identified them as coming from one magazine versus another. For television channels specifically, Leshner (1994) has shown that schemas about specialists and generalists that people usually have for members of the professions also apply to and influence the processing of media. Participants in an experiment invariably perceived as more newsworthy stories that were presented on a "specialist" channel airing only news. Those stories were also remembered better and liked more than the identical stories shown on a "generalist" channel airing both

news and entertainment. In the same pattern, entertainment segments seen on a "specialist," entertainment-only channel were perceived to be more representative of entertainment, were remembered better and liked more than the identical entertainment segments shown on the "generalist" channel. These findings were replicated in another study (Nass, Reeves, & Leshner, 1996), which specifically compared responses to a generalist TV (one set airing both news and entertainment) and specialist TVs (two sets, one airing news only, the other airing entertainment only).

Finally, within the online context, Sundar and Nass (1996) investigated effects of the communication source on perceptions of identical content. When the source of stories was labeled "other [online news] users," participants in an experiment were significantly more likely to perceive the stories as newsworthy, to like them, and rate their quality higher than participants in a condition in which they were told they had selected the content themselves. In addition, if the perceived source of information was the computer, participants also ranked the quality of stories higher than in the condition in which they were told they had selected the content. Interestingly, although that study included a condition of news editors as source, its effects were not in a direction of leading to greater perceived credibility, quality, newsworthiness, or liking. But the study did not appear to control for any variables that could intervene in the perceptions of communication source and its effects.

What these studies suggest is that the label or identity (of a message, medium, and source) matters in directing people's processing of media information. The identity effect is not only consistent across messages, media, and sources, it holds across symbol systems (e.g., print in the Preston and Scharbach study; video in Leshner's research and in the Owen and Karrh study) and across technology (the Sundar study). Such differential processing of identical content can be reasonably expected then as a result of the identity of different content providers on the Web. Depending on which knowledge structure that identity activates, a newspaper one, a computer one, or something else, people may perceive the content differently.

The next section examines the concept of the journalistic identity.

The journalistic identity

In the United States, it can be argued, the institution of journalism has a special image. The institution of journalism fulfills a variety of normative roles, without which the realization of a democratic society may be impossible. First, journalism is expected to perform the role of a reliable messenger, providing accurate, timely and complete information. An important part of this role is the reputation of a neutral observer, of an objective informer who in no case

takes sides and strives for utmost veracity in presenting events and issues to the public. Although motivations for the objectivity norm of the news media have been questioned (e.g., Ognianova & Endersby, 1996), no other institution in society seems to be able to fulfill the role of an unbiased witness of daily events.

Second, the libertarian normative theory of the press (e.g., Rivers, 1970; Rivers, Miller, & Gandy, 1975; Schramm, 1957; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956) outlines the role of journalism as an adversary to authority, a means for monitoring and challenging the actions of the politically and economically powerful, and representing and protecting the public's interest. The watchdog metaphor and the popular phrase "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable" succinctly summarize this role of journalism. This role has been the one perhaps most strongly embraced by journalists themselves since the 1970s (e.g., Johnstone, Slawski, & Bowman, 1972-73; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991, 1992). For example the main principles outlined to guide journalists in their work include: "Be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting, and interpreting accurate information;" "Give voice to the voiceless;" "Hold the powerful accountable" (Black, Steele, & Barney, 1993). Research has shown such principles are shared by the audience in judging the quality of a news medium (Gladney, 1996).

Third, the literature on roles of the media identifies a role for journalism as an educator--in the United States, too, not only in developmental press systems. The newspaper in education program popular in newspapers across the United States is one example of using journalism as a "teaching tool" (American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, 1990). A form of journalism's educational role is the vision of it as a catalyst in strengthening civic culture (e.g., Lambeth, 1992; Neuman, Just & Crigler, 1992). The recent civic or public journalism movement, intended to make people more interested and involved in civic affairs and democratic participation is another example of education via journalistic media. The civic journalism movement can also be seen as an example of journalism's role to facilitate and stimulate political socialization, a process extensively researched in mass communication (e.g., Kim, 1988; Lee, 1984; Roberts, Hawkins, & Pingree, 1975). There are other separate lines of research investigating the educational role of journalism in certain areas of life and society. The health communication literature, for example, focuses on the role of news media as disseminators of health and environmental messages (e.g., Brenner & Quesada, 1977; Reardon & Richardson, 1991; Romer & Kim, 1995; Wechsler, DeJong, Shapiro, & Lavin, 1992). The literature on the diffusion of innovations (e.g., Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971) investigates, among other issues, how news media contribute to the dissemination of new concepts in

society. Related to the educational normative role of journalism is the role of journalism as an agenda setter, bringing certain issues to the forefront of the public sphere (e.g., Goldstein, 1985; Nelson, 1984).

In addition, despite the academic debate about the exact status of journalism, whether it is a business, a profession, or a craft (e.g., Goodwin, 1983), journalists are also known as professional storytellers (e.g., Fry, 1985; Maynard, 1988). Newspapers with strong traditions of unique, vivid storytelling are seen as individual personalities who have become part of people's daily lives (Brown, 1991).

Finally, journalism fulfills the role of an information filter and interpreter. Among their other responsibilities, journalists are expected to be professional information gatekeepers, capable of choosing the type of and order in which information flows to the public. As part of that role, journalism provides the explanation and context that are much needed for making sense of the news (e.g., Kim, 1989; Neuman, Just & Crigler, 1992; Wilhoit & Drew, 1991).

In this study, all these assigned roles of journalism are integrated in the term of "journalistic identity." The validity of such a concept is illustrated, to some extent, by the special constitutional protections journalism in the United States enjoys (e.g., McQuail, 1992; Schramm & Porter, 1982) and by the public's perceptions of journalism. Although we often hear about declining credibility of news media in general, confidence in journalism as an institution has been considerably higher than confidence in other societal institutions, e.g., businesses or government. Since the 1970s, the American public has ranked journalists fairly high in terms of their commitment to ethical standards and serving the public good (McCombs & Washington, 1983; Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press, 1995).

Especially relevant to this study is a 1978 survey of 1,347 adults that compared their perceptions of newspapers to perceptions of other industries, such as telephone companies, banks, airlines, health care and insurance companies, oil, liquor, and steel industries (cited in McCombs & Washington, 1983). Newspapers were rated from two to fourteen points higher than these companies. If this perception transfers to the online context, the site of an established media company on the Web should be perceived more favorably than the sites of other companies, including telephone companies, especially when it comes to evaluating news content.

Based on the above review, it can be argued that, from a consumer behavior perspective, the journalistic identity is in fact an established brand image. "What Turner Broadcasting really has is customers, and what it has that's marketable to a group of customers is brand identity," says Doug Carlston, chairman and CEO of Brodbund software (quoted in

Brockman 1996, p. 44). "Those who will dominate the news in the twenty-first century will be those who overcome clickermania. They will do it by creating brands of news that fill the needs of particular viewers," predicts the writer Teller about the cable industry (quoted in The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation, 1995). Fidler (1997) points out newspapers have established brand name identities that are recognized instantly. The equity that comes with these names is that of professional information gatherers, processors, validators, and organizers, using criteria, such as the public interest, right and need to know.

But would the equity associated with the journalistic identity transfer to the context of Web media and, if so, how?

The value of the journalistic identity online

There are intuitive suggestions that the journalistic identity would preserve and perhaps increase its value in the Web environment. First, the role of an independent and unbiased voice, presenting verified, accurate information is especially important in the online environment, with its persisting lack of credibility. "You don't trust everything you read on the Net. Journalism brings its standards and some sense of credibility. There is a big difference between raw information and people who check out the facts," says Denise Caruso, director of Digital Commerce for the *New York Times* (quoted in "Emerging journalism," 1997, p. 278). The reputation of the news media as credible sources may be at the center of their survival in the Web future. It's an intangible value that has upheld their existence as an institution through many years of technological revolutions. Rheingold (quoted in The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation, 1995) sees credibility as the core of today's news media:

> Present-day news organizations can do away with the buildings; they can do away with the business structure. If they maintain a Network of trained and trustworthy observers whom you can trust today because what they said yesterday was accurate, then those news organizations are going to stay in business.

Second, the role of journalism in serving and protecting democracy should remain vital in the Internet world. Certainly no business company online can adequately take on the watchdog role of journalism. This is how a journalist reminded readers of her main professional role, which should extend to the Web world: "The real reason we are protected by the First Amendment--and the Home Shopping Network isn't--is that we have to do good. We shine light in dark places, find out things people don't want us to find" (McKenna, 1993, pp. 21-22).

Related to that role is the perception that, no matter how much non-journalistic companies advance in the field of news content supply on the Web, their credibility would be lower than that of established traditional news media companies venturing online (Isaacs, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Fitzgerald, 1995). One of the first reactions to Microsoft's announcement of plans for its own news service, Microsoft Network, were met with the expectation that, because Microsoft does not specialize in journalism, its news service would be like "a discount store with a lot of products at low prices, but of mediocre quality" (Feola & Brown, 1995, p. 34). Another reason for expected lower credibility of a news service coming from a company not associated with journalism has to do with the idealized vision of news media and their foremost commitment to fulfilling the public's right to know--and the perceived lack of such commitment in a company whose top priority is business. Concerns about conflict of interest were raised immediately when Microsoft announced the news service, with the reasonable question of how it would cover stories about the company itself (Webb, 1995).

In addition, the mission of journalism to serve and protect democracy is complemented but not entirely substituted by the variety of civic networks online (e.g., Koch, 1996). Individual contributors to electronic networks face the same credibility problems that hurt the Internet as a whole, and the growing opportunities for anyone to publish would further require a reliable information filter. This suggests a third important role of today's news media in the future Internet world.

The professional gatekeeping role of journalism becomes more important than ever in the Web environment. One statement exemplifies the importance of journalistic sources on the Web: "The good news about the Web is everyone has a voice. The bad news about the Web is everyone has a voice. Unfiltered voices is not necessarily what we have time for... There is a role for good journalists who can make sense of some of those voices" (Caplan quoted in "Press and the new media," 1997, p. 289). The technology does change some of the traditional filtering of information by journalists. For example, the Web now adds to their responsibilities the obligation to also provide credible links to other sites (Steele, 1997). But the essence of the gatekeeping and filtering role for journalism remains the same in the Web environment.

Fourth, for advertising needs specifically, the role of journalism as providing exposure to large audiences (not mentioned above because it is not a normative role; e.g., Bennett, 1988; Bogart, 1991; Gandy, Jr., 1990; Hoynes, 1994; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) does not seem to change on the Web at all. One way for online advertisers to reach large audiences and at the same time be associated with a credible and useful context is to place

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their messages in online news services, especially those with established journalistic names. While the number of users is important, perhaps even more critical is the association with a trusted brand, such as a credible news medium. A 1996 Advertising Age survey of 1,000 US adults found that education ranked as the most popular type of things people expect from interactive media, with 72% of the respondents citing it. Because one of the missions of a journalistic product in a democratic society is to inform and educate *and* because audiences are used to seeing advertising in journalistic products (even public broadcasting has its sponsorship drives), online advertising should be resisted less if it is placed in a journalistic product.

The next section lists the specific hypotheses tested in this study.

Hypotheses and rationale

Perceived credibility of the content provider, stories, and ads hypotheses

As early as Aristotle's time, the vision of a trusted source was named *ethos*: it included good sense, goodwill, and good morals or character (McGuire, 1969; Tan, 1981). Machiavelli (cited in Tan, 1981, p. 103) saw as a desirable source a person who could be considered an authority in a certain area of knowledge, with an established prestige in it. In modern times, Aristotle's good sense was translated as competence, knowledge or expertise; and good morals or character were translated as trustworthiness (Miller, 1987). Hovland's classic studies on persuasion (Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953) showed a credible source was one with both expertise in a particular field and trustworthiness. Expertise referred to such characteristics as level of training in a certain area, experience in it, and professional prestige. Trustworthiness meant the source was seen as having the motivation to deliver a message without bias, intention to manipulate, or protection of a special interest (Tan, 1981). These two dimensions of source credibility have held consistent across studies (summarized in Miller, 1987). The two dimensions suggest the journalistic identity described above may imply a unique credibility of journalism to inform the public, which can be articulated in the following hypothesis for news services online:

H1: An online news content provider with a journalistic identity (e.g., a newspaper or a TV network), will be perceived as most credible, compared to a content provider whose identity is unknown and a content provider whose identity is not associated with journalism.

If audience members do indeed have a concept in their minds of a journalistic identity, as argued, the literatures on source credibility and context effects suggest the following set of hypotheses about news and advertising in online news services and the influence of the content provider's credibility.

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H2: Perceptions of the online content provider will significantly influence the perceived credibility of news stories placed in its service so that:

a) stories in an online news service that is seen as most credible will also be perceived as most credible.

b) stories in an online news service that is associated with journalism will be perceived as most credible.

The same hypothesis can be articulated for the ads.

H3: Perceptions of the online content provider will significantly influence the perceived credibility of ads placed in its service so that:

a) ads in an online news service that is perceived as most credible will also be perceived as most credible.

b) ads in an online news service that is associated with journalism will be perceived as most credible.

Memory hypotheses

Research on consumer psychology has shown that people tend to better remember information they have encountered in a source that is perceived as important or credible. Perception of the source as credible should lead to greater attention allocated to the message (e.g., Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953), and greater involvement on the part of the receiver. This should lead to central or systematic processing of the message, which in turn should lead to better memory (e.g., Chaiken, 1980, 1987; Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Gotlieb & Sarel, 1991; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983; Petty, Unnava, & Strathman, 1991; Thorson, 1989). This can be articulated in the following hypotheses about stories and ads.

H4: Perceptions of an online content provider will significantly influence memory for the news stories placed in its service so that:

a) stories in an online news service that is perceived as most credible will be remembered best.

b) stories in an online news service that is associated with journalism will be remembered best.

H5: Perceptions of an online content provider will significantly influence the memory for ads placed in its service so that:

a) ads and brands promoted in an online news service that is perceived as most credible will be remembered best.

The value of the journalistic identity   15

b) ads and brands promoted in an online news service that is associated with journalism will be remembered best.

Attitude hypotheses

Related to the above hypotheses, persuasion and source effects research has shown that a source perceived as credible also (usually) leads to better attitudes toward messages (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981; Kim, 1996; McGuire, 1981). And there is evidence that perceived ad credibility specifically is among the predictors of attitude toward advertising (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). This evidence suggests the following hypotheses:

H6: Perceptions of an online content provider will significantly influence attitudes toward the news stories placed in its service so that:

a) stories in an online news service that is perceived as most credible will be liked the most.

b) stories in an online news service that is associated with journalism will be liked the most.

H7: Perceptions of an online content provider will significantly influence attitudes toward the ads placed in its service and the brands promoted in them so that:

a) ads and brands promoted in an online news service that is perceived as most credible will be liked the most.

b) ads and brands promoted in an online news service that is associated with journalism will be liked the most.

Behavioral response hypotheses

The persuasion literature is still unclear about the exact influence of source factors on attitudes and behavior (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1981; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Learning models of persuasion, linking a stimulus with a particular response, such as classical conditioning (e.g., Hull, 1943; Shimp, 1991; Spence, 1956) and instrumental conditioning (e.g., Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953), suggest sources perceived as more trustworthy are more likely to influence behavior than sources perceived as less trustworthy. It has been shown specifically that source credibility positively influences purchase intention of organizational buyers (Wynn, 1982). In addition, if the general positive internal processes hypothesized above as a function of source credibility do occur indeed, they can be predicted to lead to favorable behavior intention (e.g., Reibstein, Lovelock, & Dobson, 1980; Stang, 1977)--based on the general expectation of attitude-behavior consistency (research summarized in Perloff, 1993), and Fishbein and Ajzen's belief model of persuasion (1975)

that shows attitude leads to behavior. With this rationale, it is reasonable to posit the following hypotheses, related to the attitudinal hypotheses.

H8: Perceptions of an online content provider will significantly influence self-reported likelihood of subscribing to the news service so that:

a) subscription likelihood will be the highest for the service of a provider that is perceived as most credible.

b) subscription likelihood will be the highest for the service of a provider that is associated with journalism.

H9: Perceptions of an online content provider will significantly influence self-reported purchase intention for products, services, and brands advertised in its service so that:

a) purchase intention will be the highest for products, services, and brands advertised in an online news service that is seen as most credible.

b) purchase intention will be the highest for products, services, and brands advertised in an online news service that is associated with journalism.
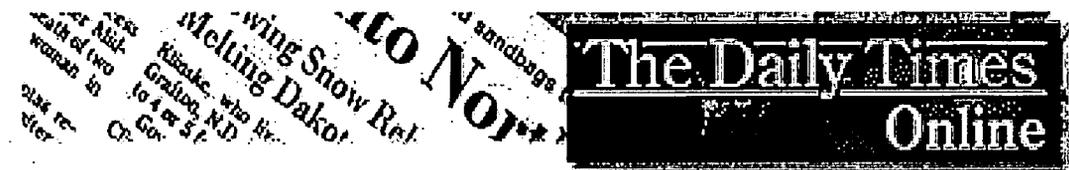
Method

To test the above hypotheses, an experiment was conducted with a sample of 471 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university *and* a general sample of 402 Midwestern community residents above the age of 21. A professional survey research company recruited the general sample randomly and from community associations. Students received extra credit toward a class from which they were recruited; participants in the general sample received individual payment in cash or a donation to their organization.

Four conditions were chosen to manipulate perceptions of the online environment for participants in the experiment. In the first condition, participants saw the stories and ads placed in an online newspaper, with a masthead resembling a print newspaper and a fictitious, but realistic name, *The Daily Times*. In the second condition, participants saw the same stories and ads placed in a fictitious television network's news service on the Web. The name, Central Television Network, or CTN, was expected to evoke analogies with a traditional TV network. These two conditions had a clearly defined journalistic identity but a comparison between responses to them allowed a test of whether people's perceptions of traditionally used media are transferred to the online context. In the third condition, participants saw the same content placed in the Web site of a travel company, the Travel Center. This condition had a clearly defined identity, but it had nothing to do with journalism, and, at least intuitively, should not be expected to be credible in delivering news. In the no identity, or control, condition, participants saw the same stories and ads on the Web, but without any content

provider's identity attached to them. This condition made it possible to tap into the users' "pure" perceptions (or default inferences) of the Web as a communication medium, unaffected by a label that implies a certain identity.

The three treatment conditions included an opening screen that reiterated the identity of the content provider with a logo and a picture designed to evoke the specific expectations people have about a particular institutional identity. The same icons, together with the logo of the individual content provider, were placed in a frame on top of each of the following screens that included the stories and ads. Participants could see the logo and the icons at all times, while scrolling down to read the story. This was expected to reinforce the identity of the content provider throughout the experiment.

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This is
The Daily Times
An Online Daily Newspaper

This is
CTN
AN ONLINE TELEVISION NETWORK

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In all conditions, there were six screens, with a story on the right side of the screen and an ad on the left side. The stories were laid out identically in a column format. The ads were boxed next to them in a frame. Stories took about 65% of the screens, ads took about 35%. The screen background was white, the text was black, the pictures in the ads, the icons for the identified content providers, the opening screens, and separate screens thanking for participation in the study, were in full color, forming an attractive set of pages. Professional Web page designers working for an online newspaper designed the stimulus materials.

Each condition included the same six stories, two national, two local, and two travel, together with ads for six products: two ads for shelf or inexpensive products, e.g., toothbrush, beer; two for medium-level products, e.g., clothing, telephone service; and two for high ticket or luxury products, e.g., cars, computers. In addition, the ads varied in type: image and information. An image ad is usually one heavy in visual elements; any verbal information in it has very little to do with a description of the product's attributes. An information ad, in contrast, focuses on describing specific attributes of the product or service promoted, including in the headline. This allowed generalizability of results across various stories, products, and advertising types. The text for the stories and the text and images for the ads were all collected from actual pages on the Web maintained by news services or advertisers, thus lending them external validity.

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All participants viewed the screens on IBM computers with identical 12" monitors, using the Netscape 3 Web browser, resolution set to identical parameters. Each participant was exposed to one content provider only (a between-subjects design). Participants were randomly assigned to a condition.

Measures

Independent and dependent variables

Two independent variables were used to measure the overall concept of content provider. One was simply the condition to which participants were exposed: newspaper, TV network, travel agency, or unidentified source. The other was perceived source, the source to which participants assumed they had been exposed, which might not necessarily coincide with the condition. Perceived source was measured with a question immediately after participants viewed the stimulus material, asking them who produced the stories they just viewed. The answer options were constructed to correspond to the four conditions: a newspaper, a TV network, a travel agency, and "Don't know" for the no identity/control condition.

Perceived source credibility was measured with five 7-point semantic differential items (e.g., Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1971): believable/not believable, trustworthy/not trustworthy, unreliable/reliable, informative/not informative (alpha coefficient = .78 for the students, .79 for the general sample).

In the construction of a scale to measure story credibility many different sources were reviewed and compared (e.g., Andsager, 1990; Bogart, 1984; Gaziano, 1988; Gaziano & McGrath, 1986; Jacobson, 1969; Leshner, 1994; McCombs & Washington, 1983; Meyer, 1988; Newhagen & Nass, 1989; Rimmer & Weaver, 1987; Self, 1996; Shaw, 1973; Sundar, 1997; Times Mirror Center, 1995; VandenBergh, Soley, & Reid, 1981; Wilson & Howard, 1978). The study used a nine 7-point semantic differential items that, from the examined literature, seemed to be consistent components of the credibility construct and measure it in a reliable and valid way. The nine items were: factual/opinionated, unfair/fair, accurate/inaccurate, untrustworthy/trustworthy, balanced/unbalanced, biased/unbiased, reliable/unreliable, thorough/not thorough, informative/not informative. This variable was measured separately for each of the six stories participants viewed (average alpha coefficient = .89 for the students, .92 for the general sample).

Perceived ad credibility was measured with a shortened version of Beltramini's television ad credibility/believability scale (Beltramini, 1982, 1988; Beltramini & Evans, 1985). The scale had to be modified, however, because the ads in this study appeared in print (though on a computer screen). Some items were omitted and an item about perceived

veracity of the ad's claims based on Putrevu and Lord (1994) was added. The scale consisted of four 7-point semantic differential items: has false claims/has true claims, trustworthy/untrustworthy, good/bad, and convincing/unconvincing (alpha coefficients =.89 for the students and .91 for the general sample).

Memory for stories and ads (dependent variables) was measured both with free recall and recognition tests (Thorson, 1989b). It is now standard in advertising research to use both measures when necessary (Krugman, 1985, 1986) because the two kinds of tests may reflect different types of mental processes, different stages of information processing, and may measure processing of different types of messages. For example, Krugman (1972; 1986) suggested recall tests may measure information retention of advertising that requires only close attention (high involvement), while recognition may measure retention of ads that call for minimal attention (low involvement) or subliminal effects of advertising (Thorson, 1990). This logic has become dominant in advertising research (Singh & Rothschild, 1983). In addition, Lang and Friestad (1993) found partial support for the hypothesis that recognition taps into amounts of information encoded, while free recall measures amounts of information retrieved. Because any of the hypothesized effects should occur both during the processing and the retrieval of information (e.g., Gardial, Schumann, Petkus, Jr., & Smith, 1993), both recall and recognition were measured for the stories and the ads.

The study included many concepts of interest, measured in a variety of ways, so the length of the questionnaire did not permit the inclusion of a distracter test. To allow sufficient time and distraction after viewing the stimulus materials and before querying memory (Thorson, 1989a), all questions about demographic variables (except for media use), the 15 proximity ratings, and 19 questions measuring attitudes toward the news media appeared first on the questionnaire. Only after that were participants asked to list the topics of the six stories they had viewed, though not necessarily in the order they had seen them. Similarly, participants were asked to list the product, brand, and claim of the six ads they had seen (based on Gilmore & Secunda, 1993; Norris & Colman, 1992; Singh, Rothschild, & Churchill, 1988). An example was provided because the pretest showed participants tended to skip the product, even if they remembered it, going straight to the brand. After the free recall questions, recognition questions followed (participants were instructed not to turn the page in the questionnaire) both about the stories and the ads. Three multiple choice questions were asked about each story. Single multiple-choice questions were asked to test recognition of the brands and the ad claims separately.

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Attitude toward each of the six ads was measured with a four-item scale based on traditional Aad measures commonly used in advertising, marketing, and consumer research (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Gunther & Thorson, 1992; Lutz & Belch, 1983; Machleit & Wilson, 1988; MacKenzie, Lutz, & Belch, 1986; Mitchell, 1986; Mitchell & Olson, 1986; Phelps & Thorson, 1991; Putrevu & Lord, 1994; Thorson & Coyle, 1993). The four 7-point semantic differential items were: unpleasant/pleasant, irritating/not irritating, boring/interesting, and dislike/like (alpha coefficient = .85 for the students, .91 for the general sample).

Attitude toward the stories was measured with a modification of the above scale, specifically three 7-point semantic differential items suited for news stories. For each story, the items were: boring/interesting, appealing/not appealing, and dislike/like (alpha coefficients = .88 for both the student and general sample).

Attitude toward the brand was measured with three items for each of the advertised brands: good/bad, unfavorable/favorable, and like/dislike, based on Machleit and Wilson (1988) and Yi (1991) (alpha coefficient = .93 for the students, .96 for the general sample).

Likelihood of subscribing to the online news service was measured with a scale adopted from the advertising literature (e.g., Schumann, Thorson, Wood, Wright, & Dyer, under review). Participants were asked to "rate the probability that you would subscribe to (name of online news service for the three treatment conditions; the Web pages you viewed today for the control/no identity condition), if you could." The statement was deliberately left ambiguous in terms of whether the service is free or paid, to reflect the online news reality mixture of paid and free services. Three answer options were given as 7-point semantic differential scales: unlikely/likely, probable/improbable, and impossible/possible (alpha coefficient = .86 for the students, .92 for the general sample).

The other behavioral response, purchase intention for the advertised products and brands (a dependent variable), was measured with a scale previously tested by Putrevu and Lord (1994). Participants were asked, assuming they could buy any of the products they saw advertised, to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly agreed with each of three statements: "It is very likely that I will buy (brand);" "I will purchase (brand) the next time I want/need a (product);" and "I will definitely try (brand)" (alpha coefficient = .88 for the student sample, =.94 for the general sample).

Control variables

Involvement with each of the ads was measured with a shortened version of Zaichkowsky's most recently revised and tested Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1990). That scale had been shortened to 10 items already. But because ad

involvement was measured for each of the six ads, in addition to a number of other measures, the scale needed to be shortened further. The ad involvement scale used here consisted of five 7-point semantic differential items: enjoyable/not enjoyable, entertaining/not entertaining, important/not important, relevant to me/irrelevant to me, and appealing/unappealing (alpha coefficient = .89 for the students, .91 for the general sample).

The 1994 Zaichkowsky Personal Involvement Inventory was also modified and used to measure story involvement. Three items were used for each of the six stories: entertaining/not entertaining, important/not important, and relevant to me/not relevant to me (alpha coefficients = .62 for the students, .54 for the general sample). These were the lowest reliability coefficients among all scales, perhaps because the personal involvement inventory was originally designed for advertising. Nevertheless, it appears to be adequate for stories, but more so in the student sample.

Frequency of using the Web was measured with a question about how often participants used computers: every day, often, sometimes, rarely, or never. Length of using the Web was measured with a question about whether participants had used computers for more than two years, between one and two years, between six months and a year, between three and six months, less than three months, or not at all. Self-assessed Web experience were measured with a semantic differential item, asking participants to choose an option between 1) very experienced and 7) not experienced at all. Attitudes toward the Web was measured with six 7-point semantic differential items: easy to access/hard to access, frustrating/not frustrating, fun to use/not fun to use, boring/interesting, informative/not informative, and enjoyable/not enjoyable. Use of, experience with, and attitudes toward the Web formed a single scale (alpha coefficients = .82 for the students, .80 for the general sample).

For all variables measured with semantic differential scales, the valence of the anchors was randomized in the questionnaire to control for acquiescence, but the statistical analyses reversed some items so a higher value would mean more positive attitude or perception.

Media use questions were asked toward the end of the questionnaire, long after all credibility questions. Shaw (1973) has found that media use and perceived credibility questions are correlated, so if a media use question is asked before the credibility questions, the response may be distorted. Both exposure and attention to news in daily newspapers, television and newsmagazines were measured as recommended by Chaffee and Schleuder (1986). The wording of the questions was based on other research by Chaffee (Chaffee, Moon, McDevitt, McLeod, Eveland, & Horowitz, 1996; Chaffee, Moon, McDevitt, Pan, McLeod, Eveland, & Horowitz, 1995; Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994; McDevitt, Chaffee,

Moon, McLeod, Eveland, Horowitz, & Pan, 1996; Zhao & Chaffee, 1995), as well as Drew and Weaver (1991) and Weaver and Drew (1993). Specifically, participants were asked to indicate in two separate questions how many days per week (from zero to seven) they read a daily newspaper and watched news on television in an average week. In a similar way, they were asked how often they read news magazines, such as *Time, Newsweek, US News & World Report*: every week, every other week, once a month, less than once a month, or not at all. Additionally, participants were asked in three separate questions how much attention they generally paid to news in each of these media: a lot of attention, some attention, only a little attention, or no attention at all (the answer options were reversed for the different questions to control for acquiescence).

Attitudes toward the news media were measured with 19 statements tested in a study by McLeod, Kosicki, Amor, Allen, and Philps (1986). They found that the statements were a reliable measure of perceptions of/attitudes toward the news media in six categories: 1) quality of news; 2) overall pattern of news; 3) negativity of news content; 4) control of news media and dependency on them; 5) news media as serving special interests; and 6) news media significance in society. These measures appeared to be well suited for controlling for attitudes toward the news media. Participants were asked to indicate whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, or strongly agreed with each of the 19 statements.

In this study, however, for both samples, most responses to the 19 statements loaded in an interpretable fashion on two factors (some responses did not load on any factors and one statement loaded on its own factor). Careful examination of the pattern for the student sample revealed the two factors were most likely negative and positive attitudes toward the news media. The first factor included statements about the news media as pursuing their own interests and acting as spokesman for special groups instead of serving the public, failing to cover most important stories, reflecting journalists' biases, and sensationalizing news coverage to sell more copies and improve ratings. The second factor included statements about the news media providing a service essential to democracy, including thorough and complete information, and presenting an accurate picture of what they cover. Factor 1 explained 30% of the variance, Factor 2 explained 27%. Alpha coefficients for these factors in the student sample were .71 for the negative attitude scale and .57 for the positive attitude scale. It must be noted that when a six-factor solution reflecting McLeod et al.'s six dimensions was forced, the alpha coefficients for each factor were lower than the above values.

For the general sample, the 19 items did not load on the originally found six factors, either. Again, two distinct factors were formed (again, some statements did not load on any

factors and one statement, not the same as in the student sample, loaded on its own factor). But there was a noteworthy difference in the two factors for the students and the two factors for the general sample. Inspection of the items loading on each factor showed the dimensions were somewhat different from the simplistic negative vs. positive attitudes toward the news media. Rather, the first factor for the general sample seemed to tap specifically into people's criticism of the actual operation and quality of the news media, while the second factor seemed to tap into perceptions of the normative role of the media.

The specific statements loaded on F1 (operation or content) were about the news media having too much control, pursuing their own interests, not covering most important stories, reflecting the biases of journalists, and sensationalizing coverage to make profit. So far, these statements were all part of Factor 1 for the student sample. But Factor 1 for the general sample also included, with a negative correlation, the two statements that the information in the media is thorough and complete and that news stories present an accurate picture of what they cover.

But it was items in Factor 2 for the general sample that suggested the interpretation of the two factors as criticism of the actual operation and quality of the news media vs. perceptions of their normative role. As with the student sample, Factor 2 included the statement that the media are essential to democracy. In addition, it included perceptions about the meaning of news and its pattern, such as "individual news items may seem fragmentary but in the long run the news forms a meaningful pattern" and (with a negative correlation) "news is mostly a series of unconnected events that don't add up to much." This factor also included the statement that people can obtain a diversity of points of view if they use a variety of media. Factor 1 for the general sample explained 31% of the variance and Factor 2 explained 11%. The alpha coefficient for criticism of the news media's operation/content scale was .73; the alpha coefficient for perceptions of the news media's normative role was .56. Again, a solution forcing six factors to follow McLeod et al.'s original categories yielded less satisfactory coefficients.

Results

The data were analyzed separately for the student and general samples to allow comparisons between them. Although, the demographics, computer and Web use and experience, and news media use and attitudes of the two samples shared some characteristics, they also exhibited several notable differences. The main differences were in the students' greater use of and experience with the Web and in the general sample's greater use of daily newspapers and television news.

Statistical tests used included t-tests, Analysis of Variance, Analysis of Covariance, hierarchical multiple regression, and repeated measures multiple regression controlling for a number of possible confounding variables and the two-way interactions between them and the main effect. Various commands in the SAS programming language were used to perform these tests.

One of the most interesting findings, even before testing the hypotheses, was that the condition to which participants were exposed did not always match the perceived source of content. For example, in the newspaper condition, 86% of the general sample perceived the content provider to be a newspaper. In the television condition, the match between experimental condition and perceived content provider was lower, which is reasonable, given that no audio or video was used. In the no identity condition, the biggest group (50%) perceived it to be a newspaper. This is an important finding because it shows the default value for this study was a newspaper. It is not surprising as the stimulus material looked like a newspaper, with its column format. Therefore, this finding shows the critical role of the format of online news services. Even if the actual content provider is unknown or may not have anything to do with journalism, a newspaper-like format may cause some people to perceive it as associated with journalism and therefore more credible.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that an online news content provider with a journalistic identity (e.g., a newspaper or a T network) would be perceived as most credible, compared to a content provider whose identity is unknown and a content provider whose identity is not associated with journalism. In the general sample, the newspaper was seen as most credible. In the student sample, the television network was seen as most credible. These results are especially strong because they emerged in stringent statistical analyses that controlled for demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media. Thus, H1 was supported.

Part (a) of hypotheses 2 and 3 predicted that stories and ads in an online news service perceived as most credible would be seen as most credible. As hypothesized, the overall perceived credibility of the content provider would determine the perceived credibility of both the stories and the ads in the online news service. This result is also from a statistical test that controlled for the effects of demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media. Thus, parts (a) and (b) of H2 and H3 received full support

Part (b) of hypotheses 2 and 3 further predicted that stories and ads placed in an online news content provider that is associated with journalism would be seen as most credible.

Again, as hypothesized, the identity of the content provider played a role in participants' perceptions of story credibility. Local and national stories provided by a source perceived as a newspaper (for the general sample) and seen in the television condition (for the student sample) were rated as the most credible, as predicted in H2. For the general sample, there was evidence that a content provider with a journalistic identity enhanced perceptions of ad credibility, as predicted in H3. For example, for five out of the six ads, mean credibility ratings were the highest when the content provider was perceived to be a newspaper. And for the sixth ad, the mean credibility rating was the highest when the content provider was perceived to be a television network. These effects did not reach statistical significance, however, and could not be confirmed in tests that controlled for demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media.. Thus, part (b) of H3 received full support, while part (b) of H3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that stories in an online service perceived as most credible (part a) and associated with journalism (part b) would be remembered best. As predicted, the greater the perceived credibility of the content provider overall, the better the recall for the stories was, but only in the student sample. There was also evidence that a content provider associated with journalism had an effect on story recall. For example, in the student sample, story recall was the highest for newspaper as perceived content provider, and in the general sample, story recall had the highest mean for television network as perceived content provider. But these results did not reach statistical significance and were only found in analyses that did not control for demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media. Thus, part (a) of H4 received support, but part (b) did not.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that ads placed in and brands promoted in an online news service perceived as most credible (part a) and associated with journalism (part b) would be remembered best. One measure of memory for ads was the likelihood of giving neutral responses to questions about the ads. It was observed during the experiment that participants from both samples who claimed they did not remember the ads they saw tended to systematically give neutral ratings to the ads. The statistical analyses revealed that the less credible the content provider was perceived to be overall, the greater the likelihood of giving neutral ad ratings was. The result was obtained from analyses controlling for the effects of demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media in the general sample, but not in the student sample. Whether the content provider was associated with journalism or not, however, did not matter in terms of

producing a statistically significant difference in giving systematically neutral ad ratings. Thus, part (a) of H4 was supported, but part (b) was not.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that stories in an online news service perceived as most credible (part a) and associated with journalism (part b) would be liked the most. In the general sample, attitudes toward the stories were enhanced if the content provider overall was perceived as credible, as predicted in part (a). In addition, as further predicted in that hypothesis, there was evidence in both samples that the perceived identity of the content provider influenced attitudes toward the stories. For example, in both the general and the student samples when the content provider was perceived as a newspaper, five out of the six stories were liked the most. In the student sample, the one story for which the newspaper did not have the highest mean was when television was the perceived content provider -- indicating a positive effect of the journalistic identity. In the general sample, the only mean that differed was for a travel story and it was the highest for the travel agency as a content provider. This makes sense; a content provider specialized in travel is reasonable to be associated with better attitudes toward a story on a topic within the specialization of the source. It must be noted, however, that these results were obtained only in tests that did not control for the effects of demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; or news media use and attitudes toward them. But it is important that they were significant and consistent across the two samples. Thus, parts (a) and (b) of H6 were supported.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that ads placed in and brands promoted in an online news provider perceived as most credible (part a) and associated with journalism (part b) would be liked the most. Part (a) was supported for the student sample -- the more credible the content provider was perceived to be, the better the attitude toward the ads was. But the results for part (b) were more complicated. Specifically, in a statistical analysis that did *not* control for the effects of demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media, five out of the six ads were liked the most when newspaper was perceived as the content provider. That was the case in the general sample. On the other hand, for both the general and the student samples, when the statistical analyses controlled for the effects of demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media, attitude toward the ads was best when the travel agency was the actual or perceived content provider. That is, when all participants were made "equal," the travel agency online enhanced attitude toward the ads the most; newspaper came in second. What this notable discrepancy between the two analyses means is that attitudes toward the ads in online environments vary with demographics and individual

differences, such as age; experience with and attitude toward the Web; and use of news media. It is likely that people who are older, who have a formed habit of using newspapers and news magazines, but also those more regularly using the Web and with a positive attitude toward it, tend to have a more positive attitude toward the ads when the content provider is a newspaper.

Consistent with H7, effects on attitudes toward the advertised brands were also investigated. In both the general and the student samples, there was evidence that greater perceived credibility of the content provider overall was associated with better attitude toward the brands. This was true both for a model that did not control for other variables and for a model that controlled for demographics; use of, experience with and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media. And in the general sample, for five out of the six ads, attitude toward the brand was the highest when the content provider was a television network and for one ad, newspaper as perceived content provider significantly enhanced attitude toward the brand. These effects were not observed in the student sample.

Hypothesis 8 predicted that likelihood of subscribing to the online news service would be the highest for the content provider perceived as most credible (part a) and associated with journalism (part b). Both parts of this hypothesis received full support. First, the greater the perceived credibility of the content provider was, the better the likelihood of subscribing to the online news service. This was true for *both* the general and the student samples. In addition, for *both* samples, the mean likelihood of subscribing to the online news service was the highest when the content provider was perceived to be a newspaper. This occurred even in stringent statistical analyses, controlling for the effects of demographics; use of, experience with, and attitude toward the Web; and use of and attitude toward the news media. In the student sample, the mean likelihood of subscribing to the online news service when the content provider was a newspaper was significantly higher than for the other content providers. The results were in the same direction for the general sample, but the differences in the means did not reach statistical significance.

Hypothesis 9 predicted that purchase intention would be the highest for products and brands advertised in an online news provider that is perceived as most credible (part a) and associated with journalism (part b). The hypothesis was not supported in its entirety. Neither perceived credibility nor identity of the content provider had an effect on purchase intention for the products, services and brands advertised in the online services to which participants were exposed. This is not surprising -- earlier studies of source credibility effects on purchase behavior in general have not shown an association even for traditional advertising.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study used both a highly controlled research method and statistical analyses that controlled for the effects of a variety of possible intervening variables in the hypotheses-testing process. But the design and samples of the study also allow insights across diverse populations, as well as generalization across various types of news stories, product categories, and advertising messages. Many interesting and encouraging findings for the journalism industry emerged. As with any medium, perceptions of the online news service and its content were strongly influenced by demographics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, income, education, and ideology. In addition, use of, experience with, and attitudes toward the Web; and exposure and attention to and attitudes toward the news media had consistent effects on the participants' perceptions of the online news service, and the stories and ads in it. The study showed in varying degrees that the perceived credibility of the online content provider positively influenced the perceived credibility of the stories and ads, memory for stories and ads, attitude toward the stories, the ads, and the brands, and the likelihood of subscribing to the online news service (but not purchase intention for the advertised products, services, or brands).

These are important findings because they show audiences in general do not just blindly take information from the Web, but they have the ability to and do critically assess Web sources, according to their perceived credibility. Audiences may very well be transferring their skills in processing traditional media to the new medium. Most important for journalism as an institution, there were several findings that show people assign greater credibility to content providers associated with journalism than to news providers that have nothing to do with journalism and its legacy.

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Social reality effects of the mass media in Japan:
Media coverage in the *Aum Shinrikyo* case

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Social reality effects of the mass media in Japan:
Media coverage in the *Aum Shinrikyo* case

Abstract

During 1995 the so-called The *Aum Shinrikyo* cult case got heavy mass media coverage. The media was severely criticized for allegedly exaggerated and biased reports. This study examines the impact of media coverage of the issues surrounding the Aum cult on audiences. The results show that the more the respondents were exposed to media coverage, the more they felt social anxiety or the worse their images became of new religions. Their implications from the cultivation perspective were discussed.

Social reality effects of the mass media in Japan:
Media coverage in the *Aum Shinrikyo* case

Introduction

A series of crimes committed by the *Aum Shinrikyo* cult, including the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway system on March 20 in 1995, shocked Japan. The mass media in Japan spared no trouble to inform the terrified public about the suspects in the case, the Aum Shinrikyo members and their leader, *Shoko Asahara*, even before the police had completed thorough investigations. During that period, most of the media reports relied on limited sources, such as police leaks, and they treated Shoko Asahara and the cult members as if they had been already convicted.

In addition, the quantity of reports was so great that it created a situation unparalleled in recent Japanese history. From late March to August 1995, almost every mass medium focused its entire attention on the Aum issues even from the day after Shoko Asahara was arrested on May 16. The only recent example in the U.S. comparable to the Aum coverage in Japan was probably that of O.J. Simpson's case, although the media in the Aum case was much more biased against the suspects.

Arai (1979) introduced the concept of *Sou Journalism Jokyo (Blanket Journalism Phenomenon)*, which refers to a situation where the entire mass media in a country focuses on one particular issue, and reports the issue as much as possible from a similar biased point of view. Under such circumstances, the media not only gives audiences only one viewpoint about the issue, but also the audiences are not informed about other important news in the society. The over-concentrated and uniform media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case is a quintessential example of Sou Journalism Jokyo.

Many scholars and former journalists have severely criticized this media practice. However not much research has been done to date about the impact of the Sou Journalism Jokyo in the Aum case. The main purpose of this study is then to examine the impact of media coverage of the Aum issues upon perceptions of the Japanese audience. In doing so, the study is based on the perspective of cultivation theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1994), which is one of the major media effect theories focusing on the contribution of the media upon audiences' perceptions of social reality.

Cultivation perspective

Cultivation theory attempts to shed light on the unintended influence of TV

upon viewers. The theory postulates that the more time people spend watching television, the more likely it is that their conceptions of social reality will reflect what they see on television. Although many studies concerning cultivation theory deal with perceptions about violence and crime, the theory also has been applied to a wide variety of topics including sex role stereotypes (Morgan, 1982), political orientations (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982, 1984), or beliefs about racial integration (Matabane, 1988).

While some studies basically follow Gerbner's assumptions and analytical procedures (e.g., Matabane, 1988), a number of researchers have questioned or challenged Gerbner et al.'s assumptions, methodologies, and findings. Many of the cultivation studies focus on the revision of the original theory as formulated by Gerbner and his associates. An extensive review of such criticisms is beyond the scope of this article (For more extensive review of the criticisms, see Potter, 1993, Saito, 1995). The objective of this study is rather to attempt to extend the range of cultivation. The important point is whether the theory can apply only to the *long-term* influence of *television*.

In the over-20 year-tradition of cultivation research, there have been many arguments about how the theory is defined. Some researchers used experimental methods to test the cultivation hypothesis (e.g., Bryant, Carveth, & Brown, 1981; Ogles & Hoffner, 1987), in which the effect they found was inevitably the short-term one because of the methodology. Although Gerbner and his associates have emphasized that the theory focuses on "the long-term and cumulative" influence of television exposure, it is not made clear in their original formulation how long is meant by "long-term." Ogles & Hoffner (1987) also argue that the theory can be applied to mass media other than television. In this study, we propose that the cultivation perspective may be extended in situations like the above-mentioned Sou Journalism Jokyo to other media and to mid-term (a couple of months or more) media coverage.

Media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo Case

Before reporting the result of the survey, we will briefly look at how the mass media in Japan reported the Aum Shinrikyo case and its related issues. Critics pointed out that there were many problems with media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case, which include, but are not limited to, the overemphasis on the case over other important issues, over-reliance on information leaked by the police, and reports based upon conjectures and only one point of view (e.g. Asano, 1995; Iimuro, 1995; Kamei, 1995; Nakagori, 1995).

Mizuno et al. (1995) conducted a content analysis of media coverage regarding the Aum Shinrikyo issues, including how the TV coverage changed over time during 1995. Their findings demonstrate that the amount of TV report was the heaviest from late March to early July. According to Mizuno et al., the total amount of time allocated to the Aum issues by six major TV stations in Tokyo reached more than 10,000 minutes a week during the period between March 27 and May 28.

Until Shoko Asahara, the leader of the Aum, was arrested on May 16, every commercial TV station broadcast special programs about Aum-related issues. According to *Broadcasting Report, No. 135* (Media Soken, 1995), five network stations located in Tokyo broadcast 34 specials on the Aum issues from April 1 to May 15, which included 12 programs by Fuji TV, 11 by NTV, 5 by TV Asahi, and 3 by TBS and TV Tokyo respectively. Many of those programs recorded high audience ratings (mostly over 20% and some even over 30%). Such high audience ratings for the special programs might reflect viewers' sincere interest in the issues. However, the programs attempted to attract viewers' interest by using exaggerated titles, even when little new information was provided.

As for the so-called *Wide Shows* (day-time entertainment programs mainly targeted to housewives), which feature gossip and scandal surrounding celebrities, the situation was even more out of the ordinary. According to the data provided in one program, *Broadcaster* (TBS), on May 20, 1995, during that week the total amount of time Wide Shows (broadcast by five commercial TV network stations) set aside for the Aum case was about 51 hours. The second biggest issue in that week (the terrorist bombing that targeted Mayor Aoshima) was broadcast for only 32 minutes. A similar situation continued from late March to early July.

Although not as extreme as television, daily newspapers' coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case also deserves criticism. For example, according to *Broadcasting Report, No. 135* (Media Soken, 1995), three major dailies (*Asahi Shimbun, Mainichi Shimbun* and *Yomiuri Shimbun*) dealt exclusively with the Aum Shinrikyo case on their first pages as the top news during the two months from March 20 to May 20. During this 2-month period, there were only two issues in the three main dailies without the Aum articles on their top pages. A similar situation was also observed in local newspapers. And the reporting was more unbalanced for so-called *Sport Papers*, which are roughly the equivalent of tabloids in the U.S. and largely targeted to salary men.

Besides the tremendous quantity, the Aum Shinrikyo coverage was marred by exaggerated content. The reports were full of conjecture by journalists, who relied

on limited sources, such as leaks by the police (Asano,1995; Iimuro, 1995; Nakagori, 1995). Every mass medium described the Aum Shinrikyo cult as dubious or marginal group, and after the sarin gas attack warned the audience that the Aum members still hid poisonous sarin and were waiting for the next chance to scatter it. What impact did this media coverage have on the audience? To address this issue, we conducted a survey in Japan.

Method

Procedure

The sample of this study was drawn by a quota sampling method from the Tokyo Metropolitan area (including Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama Prefectures). Questionnaires were administered from July 10 to July 20 in 1995 by 38 trained research assistants, who were enrolled in a survey method course and were instructed to contact approximately equal numbers of male and female adults in the following age categories: 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and over 60. Two hundred ninety two usable questionnaires were returned. The sample included 48.1% males and 51.9% females: 22.7% were 20-29 years old, 18.9% were 30-39 years old, 20.6% were 40-49 years old, 21.3% were 50-59 years old and 16.6 % were 60 or over.

Survey questions

The following types of questions were asked in the survey: (1) the amount of the audience exposure to various types of mass media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case, (2) the audience evaluation for the various media reports about the case[1], (3) the variety of opinions, such as the level of social anxiety, image of new religions, attitude toward the police investigation in the Aum case, (4) the demographic variables. The questionnaire contained many items assessing a wide variety of opinions related to the Aum Shinrikyo issues. Because of space limitations, here we will report only the results of selected items. Most of the items assessing a variety of opinions were measured on a five-point scale.

Hypotheses

This study was guided by the following hypotheses in order to examine the impact of media coverage of the Aum Shinrikyo case.

Hypothesis 1

Two hypotheses are related to the rumor that some incidents like another

sarin gas attack would happen in *Shinjuku*, one of the biggest commercial districts in Tokyo, on April 15, 1995;

(H1-1)The more people were exposed to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo issues, the more likely they were to believe that something would occur on April 15.

(H1-2)The more people were exposed to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo issues, the more likely they were to think that others believed that something would occur on April 15.

Hypothesis 2

The following hypotheses are related to social anxiety;

(H2-1)The more people were exposed to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case, the more likely they were to feel uneasy about society.

(H2-2)The more people were exposed to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case, the more likely they were to think that others felt uneasy about society.

Hypothesis 3

Two hypotheses are related to images of new religions in general;

(H3-1)The more people were exposed to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case, the worse their image becomes of new religions in general.

(H3-2)The more people were exposed to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case, the more likely they were to think that others' images of new religions became worse.

Hypothesis 4

(H4-1)The more people were exposed to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo issues, the more favorable they felt toward the heavy police investigation into the Aum case.

Regarding to H1, H2 and H3, we asked respondents not only about themselves but also about their perceptions of others' opinions for the following reason. Some investigators point out that television messages could influence societal-level but not personal-level beliefs. Doob and MacDonald (1979), for example, concluded that "television may well act as a source of information with regard to questions of fact, whereas it does not change people's view of how afraid they should be" (p. 179). Tyler and Cook (1984) further examined this *impersonal impact hypothesis* of mass media across various areas of risk judgment. Their experimental studies demonstrated that (a) personal- and societal-level perceived risks are distinct and (b) mass media influences judgments primarily on the societal level, not on the personal level. Like Doob and MacDonald, Tyler and Cook concluded that "mass media reports often have an impact upon views about the

seriousness of a problem as it affects society in general but not in altering views about personal risk" (1984, p. 707). In the review of the cultivation literature, however, Saito (1995) pointed out that this impersonal impact hypothesis gained only limited support. Thus, in this study, it seemed worthwhile to further examine this hypothesis.

Results

Hypothesis 1

First, we examined the influence of the mass media reporting on the rumor that an Aum attack would occur in Shinjuku on April 15[2]. The respondents were asked two questions whether *they* believed the rumor (personal question), and whether they thought that *other people* believed it (impersonal question). Most of the respondents knew the rumor through TV or magazines or a similar source (only 6.2% of the respondents didn't know it).

Data shows that 9.3% of the respondents thought that something would happen, while 19.4% answered that they thought *other people* believed the rumor. Similarly, 11.1% answered that they did not believe it, but only 3.1% of the respondents said that they did not think others believed the rumor. This result seems to support the *third-person effect* hypothesis proposed by Davison (1983). Davison postulates that people think that the effect of persuasive communication is greater on others than on themselves, and tend to overestimate the impact of the mass media on others. Our results show that the respondents tended to think the impact of the media report to be stronger on others than themselves.

In order to examine the relationship between the items related to the rumor and the amount of exposure to various media coverage, we conducted cross-tabular analysis. First, we found a significant relationship between the personal question and the amount of exposure to the magazine coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case (χ^2 =24.5, p<.01; gamma=.391): the more the respondents read the magazine articles about the Aum Shinrikyo issues, the more likely they were to believe the rumor. But there was no clear relation between the item and levels of exposure to other media reports.

Table 1 demonstrates the result of our cross-tabular analysis between the item and the amount of reading magazine articles related to the Aum issues within various subgroups. Although the pattern is slightly different depending upon each subgroup, there is a basic tendency that the more the people read the Aum coverage in magazines, the more people think something will happen.

Insert Table 1 around here

As for the other item relating to the rumor (impersonal question), no significant association was found between the item and amounts of total television viewing, television news viewing, special program viewing, or newspaper reading. However, significant associations were observed between this item and the amount of Wide Show viewing and magazine reading: the more the respondents were exposed to that kind of media coverage on the Aum issues, the more likely they were to think others believed the rumor.

Table 1 also shows the result for the impersonal question where the amount of magazine reading was used as the measure. This table shows percentages of the respondents who said that "many people thought something would happen." The pattern of the association differs somewhat here depending on the subgroup. For example, the percentages choosing the answer that many people thought something would happen were 92.3 % of males who were most heavily exposed to the magazine coverage, but 77.8% among those who read magazines moderately, and 51.9% among those who didn't read the magazine at all (χ^2 = 12.0, p<.01; gamma=.447). A similar tendency was observed in the highly educated subgroup.

In Table 1, our data demonstrates that both personal and impersonal questions were significantly correlated with the amount of magazine reading. Thus the data contradicts the impersonal impact hypothesis.

In the cross-tabular analysis, we controlled only one variable at a time. Therefore we also conducted the multiple regression analysis controlling for several variables simultaneously. First of all, since the two items on the rumor (the personal and impersonal questions) showed a relatively strong correlation (r=.491, p< .01), we combined these two items into a single scale called *the rumor scale* (the higher points the respondents got, the more they believed the rumor). Table 2 shows the result of the multiple regression analysis using the rumor scale as the dependent variable.

Insert Table 2 around here

As the table shows, the amount of exposure to the Aum coverage in magazines was significantly associated with the rumor scale (β=.261, p<.01). The television evaluation scale was another significant predictor variable (β=.175, p<.01):

the higher they evaluate the Aum coverage on television, the more likely they were to believe the rumor. To sum up, H 1-1 and H 1-2 were supported when the amount of magazine reading on the Aum issues is used as the predictor variable.

Hypothesis 2

As for the personal question, there were significant associations between this item and the amount of TV news viewing, special program viewing, or newspaper reading: the more people were exposed to these kind of media reports, the more they felt uneasy about society. Table 3 shows the result of the cross-tabular analysis when the amount of exposure to TV special programs on the Aum Shinrikyo issues was used as the predictor. The females, the younger respondents, those with lower education, and the respondents whose evaluation for TV reports is higher, show an significant association between this item and the amount of viewing. Similar results were observed with some other media exposure variables such as total TV viewing, TV news viewing or newspapers reading. Thus, the results supported Hypothesis 2-1.

Insert Table 3 around here

As for the relation between levels of the media exposure and the impersonal question (the perceived opinion about others' anxiety), the result of the cross-tabular analysis showed that the amount of TV news viewing was the only variable that significantly associated with the item. The percentages of the respondents who thought that others had felt social anxiety were: 42.7% for those who did not watch TV news so much, 59.7% for those who frequently watched, and 70.8% for those who watched TV news very frequently (χ^2 =12.5, p<.01; gamma=.339). Table 3 shows that while not every association in the subgroups is significant, there indeed are significant relations between the two variables in many subgroups. That is, for the amount of TV news viewing, Hypothesis 2-2 was supported. The results also indicate that the impersonal impact hypothesis does not seem to be supported because there were significant relations even between the personal item and the media exposure measure.

We also conducted the multiple regression analysis. First, because the personal and impersonal questions were significantly correlated (r=.498, p< .01), we combined them into the *social anxiety scale* (The higher point on the scale corresponds to higher social anxiety). We used this scale as the dependent variable in the regression analysis. As table 4 shows, the level of TV news viewing was

significantly related to the scale, even simultaneously controlling for several third variables (β=.172, p<.01). The more the respondents watch TV news about the Aum Shinrikyo case, the higher their points on the social anxiety scale are. In addition, the table shows that those with higher education felt less social anxiety (β=-.127, p=.05).

Insert Table 4 around here

Hypothesis 3

We asked the respondents if their images of new religions in general changed after being exposed to media coverage of the Aum Shinrikyo issues. The reason for asking this was that, during the massive media coverage of the Aum issues, the mass media tended to report or depict new religions in general, not just the Aum Shinrikyo cult, in a negative way.

Understandably, none of the respondents said their images of new religions became better. Respondents said that their own images were unchanged (43%) or became worse (57%). As for perceptions of others' images of new religions, the result shows that except for one respondent who said others' images changed positively, more than 85% of the respondents thought that other people's images of new religions became worse. This finding indicates that the respondents thought that others were influenced by media coverage and changed their images of new religions negatively, but their own images were not affected so much. That is, they overestimated the impact by the media content on others. The data shown in Figure 1 thus provides further evidence supporting the third-person effect hypothesis.

Insert Figure 1 around here

Table 5 shows a comparison of the respondents' images of new religions before and after being exposed to media coverage of the Aum issues. The results indicate that the more negative images the respondents had prior to the coverage, the more likely their images were to worsen. Only 4% of the respondents whose prior image was neutral developed a negative image. However, 28% of those whose prior image was somewhat negative and 40.7% of those whose prior image was negative, changed their images still more negatively. That is, those who had negative images of new religions in general were more likely to develop a worse image.

Insert Table 5 around here

Next, we examined the relationship between these image items and various media exposure measures. Again, we conducted the cross-tabular analysis. The results show that only the amount of TV Wide Show viewing was significantly associated with both the personal and impersonal items of the images of new religions.

The percent of the respondents who changed their image negatively (personal item) was 20.5% of the light viewers and 35.2% of the heavy viewers (χ^2 =15.94, p<.05; gamma=.169). Thus, the more they watched the Wide Shows, the more their image of new religions worsened (See Table 6). Even after controlling for a third variable at once, significant associations were observed among some subgroups such as those with lower education (χ^2 =13.02, p<.05; gamma=.306) or those who talked about the Aum issues with friends or family members less frequently (χ^2 =13.92, p<.05; gamma=.356). To sum up, Hypothesis 3-1 was partly supported when the amount of Wide Show viewing was used as the predictor variable.

Insert Table 6 around here

Table 6 also shows the results of the cross-tabular analysis for the impersonal item. As in the case of the personal item, the more the respondents watched the Wide Shows, the more likely they were to think that others had developed a negative image of new religions. For example, in the subgroup of the less educated, 34.8% of the light viewers of the Wide Shows but 60.7% of the heavy viewers chose the answer that other people's images of new religions worsened (χ^2 =10.87, p<.05; gamma=.319). Thus, Hypothesis 3-2 was also partly supported when the amount of Wide Show exposure was used as the predictor variable.

We also conducted the multiple regression analysis. First, we combined the personal and impersonal questions about images of new religions into a single scale called *the religion image scale* (two items were significantly correlated; r=.498, p< .01). Higher points on the scale mean more negative images of new religions. We used this scale as the dependent variable.

As a result of a series of multiple regression analyses, we found that within the highly educated group, none of the variables entered into the equation was significant. But in the less educated group, as table 7 shows, the amount of Wide

Shows viewing was marginally significant (β=.191, p<.08). In addition, in the equation model of this multiple regression analysis, sex was also a significant variable (β=-.234, p<.05): the female respondents developed more negative images.

Insert Table 7 around here

Hypothesis 4

Among the problems with the media report of the Aum case, one of the most serious issues was that the mass media relied heavily on the information leaked by the police. Critics argue that the media played a kind of the publicity role for the police (e.g., Asano, 1995). Regarding this issue, we hypothesized that the more people were exposed to the mass media report on the Aum Shinrikyo issues, the more positive their attitudes toward the police investigation became.

Before analyzing our data, we briefly look at the results of surveys by *Yomiuri Shimbun*. In May and June in 1995, Yomiuri Shimbun conducted the public opinion surveys including the questions about the police investigation into the Aum Shinrikyo case. According to the surveys, 63.3% (in May) and 69.2% (in June) of the respondents said that the police were doing well. Although some critics pointed out that the police investigation was extreme, for example in their arresting of Aum members on unrelated charges or minor charges, the general public's attitude was rather tolerant to the police use of authority. Only 3.5% (in May) and 2.7% (in June) of the respondents answered that the police did too much, and one fourth of the respondents said that the police should investigate harder (27.8% in May and 24.4% in June).

As for our data, only 4.1 % of the respondents answered that the police did too much. 32.8% said that the police did a little too much but it could not be helped, and 17.2% said the police did their investigation in a proper way. 12.1% of the respondents answered that the police should investigate a little harder and as much as 27.2% of the respondents said that the police should do more.

We examined the relationship between the respondents' attitudes toward the police investigation and the various media exposure measures, but no significant association was found. We further tested the following indirect effect model of the media because there were some relationships between the amount of media exposure and the level of social anxiety.

(A) [Exposure to media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case] → (B) [Feel social anxiety] → (C) [Positive attitude toward the police investigation]

However, none of partial correlations between the media exposure measures and attitudes toward the police investigation controlling for the level of social anxiety reached the significant level at p <.05 (partial correlations ranged from .01 to .08). Therefore hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Although we didn't find any significant relationship between the media exposure measures and the attitudes toward the police investigation, there were significant associations between levels of evaluation of media coverage and the attitudes toward the police investigation. As table 8 shows, except for the evaluation of daily newspapers, the higher the respondents evaluated media coverage, the more positive their attitudes toward the police investigation were.

Insert Table 8 around here

Such associations were also found when simultaneously controlling for other variables such as the amount of media exposure, sex, and age. Table 9 shows, as an example, the result of the multiple regression analysis when we entered the evaluation scale for television and the amount of viewing TV programs on the Aum issues into the regression equation.

Insert Table 9 around here

Discussion

Critics pointed out that there were many problems with the massive media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case and its related issues. In this study, we addressed the issues of whether the audiences felt anxiety about the society, whether their images of the new religions became worse, or whether they formed positive attitudes toward the extreme police investigation.

The results of the survey indicate the following: the more the respondents were exposed to the various media reports on the Aum Shinrikyo case, the more they felt social anxiety; the more the respondents read the magazine articles about the Aum Shinrikyo, the more likely they were to believe the rumor that something would happen on April 15; the more the respondents watched the Wide Shows about the Aum issues on television, the more their images of new religions in general became negative. Moreover, these tendencies were found not only on the items about themselves (personal questions) but also about other people (impersonal questions),

although the associations found were somewhat weaker for the impersonal questions. In sum, these results would provide empirical evidence for Japanese journalists to consider their way of handling of major social issues.

The results also showed that the higher the respondents evaluated the television coverage on the Aum issues, the more they had positive attitudes toward the police investigation into the Aum Shinrikyo case. How can we interpret this? One possible explanation might be as follows: We can assume that a person with a critical mind would turn a critical eye on both the media and the police. Thus two factors have a pseudo-association. Our results, however, show that there was no significant correlation between a negative evaluation of the *newspaper* and a negative evaluation of the police investigation. Thus this explanation does not seem to be convincing enough. Alternatively, the following reasoning could be possible: those who have positive attitudes toward media coverage are more likely to accept the image presented in the media (in this case, they form a more positive attitude toward the police investigation). Thus the level of evaluation for media coverage, not just the amount of exposure, could be a predictor variable for the media effect. For examining this issue in more detail, further research is required.

As we noted earlier, this study focused on the mid-term rather than long-term influence of the mass media, by examining the impact of media coverage during several months and by employing various media exposure measures, not just total television viewing, as the predictor variables. Therefore, according to Gerbner et al.'s original definition, the analysis in this study might not be a test of cultivation theory. Gerbner and his associates insisted that message elements which lead to cultivation should be those which cut across a wide spectrum of programs and genres. As we already pointed out, the Aum Shinrikyo case and its related issues got not only massive media coverage but also nearly the entire mass media presented a uniform message on the issues to the general public. The media reports and depictions of the Aum issues were intensive and exclusive to the extent that virtually all other important issues disappeared for the period. Almost no one in Japan could escape from those media coverage[3]. Under this Sou Journalism Jokyo, we assume that cultivation perspective can be extended to the impact of the mid-term (several months) media coverage and to mass media other than television.

Footnotes

[1] As for the variables of respondents' evaluation on the Aum Shinrikyo media coverage, we made evaluation scales by combining three variables, (1) " the amount of the coverage," (2) "the content of the coverage," and (3) " the way to report the coverage" for television and newspaper respectively. In each question, we coded positive answers (such as "the amount of coverage was not excessive", or "the content was not biased") as - 1, negative answer (such as "the amount of the coverage was too much" or "the way of reporting was unfair") as +1, and DK answer as 0. Then we combined the three items into the evaluation scale.

[2] It should be noted that not all mass media reported on this rumor. For example, some of the mainstream media such as Asahi Shimbun or NHK did not cover it.

[3] It should be noted that although we assumed that the media reports may have had a strong influence on the audience because of the Sou Journalism Jokyo, we cannot claim that the audience would be uniformly influenced by the media content. Our data shows that the degree of media influence differs depending upon the individual's social situation.

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Table 1

Percentages of respondents who believed the rumor that something would happen, by the amount of magazine reading:

A comparison between personal and impersonal questions

	Personal question				Impersonal question			
	Not at all	Not very much	Sometimes	Frequent[a]	Not at all	Not very much	Sometimes	Frequent
	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)	% (N)
Overall	50.0 (70)	48.7 (78)	68.8 (77)	84.1 (44) **	64.1 (64)	77.3 (75)	79.5 (73)	86.7 (45) *
Sex								
Male	48.1 (27)	44.4 (36)	69.0 (42)	83.3 (24) **	51.9 (27)	77.8 (36)	76.2 (42)	92.3 (26) **
Female	51.2 (43)	52.4 (42)	68.6 (35)	85.0 (20) *	73.0 (37)	76.9 (39)	83.9 (31)	78.9 (19) n.s.
Age								
20-39	69.6 (23)	55.0 (40)	69.0 (29)	88.0 (25) #	77.3 (22)	84.2 (38)	85.7 (28)	88.5 (26) n.s.
40 and over	40.4 (47)	42.1 (38)	68.1 (47)	78.9 (19) **	57.1 (42)	70.3 (37)	75.6 (45)	84.2 (19) *
Education								
Low	50.0 (38)	60.0 (30)	75.8 (33)	72.2 (18) n.s.	73.5 (34)	76.7 (30)	76.7 (30)	82.4 (17) n.s.
High	50.0 (32)	43.5 (46)	65.1 (43)	92.3 (26) **	53.3 (30)	77.3 (44)	81.0 (42)	89.3 (28) #
TV evaluation[b]								
Low	40.0 (40)	40.6 (32)	60.0 (35)	68.8 (16) #	56.4 (39)	71.0 (31)	73.5 (34)	76.5 (17) #
High	60.7 (28)	54.3 (46)	75.6 (41)	92.3 (26) **	73.9 (23)	81.8 (44)	84.6 (39)	92.3 (26) n.s.

# p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01 (χ2-test)

[a] Frequent = "Read frequently + Read very frequently", [b] The level of evaluation for the Aum coverage on TV

Table 2

Result of multiple regression analysis: regressing the rumor scale

	β	Simple r
Sex	.070	.046
Age	-.122#	-.090
Education	.010	.042
Amount of magazine reading	.261**	.259**
Amount of talking with others	-.024	.074
TV evaluation scale	.175**	.170**
Multiple R	.336*	

# p<.10,　* p<.05,　** p<.01

Note: Male coded as 1; female coded as 0

Table 3

Percentages of respondents who felt anxious about the society, by the amount of TV viewing:

A comparison between personal and impersonal questions.

	Personal question: amount of special program viewing			Impersonal question: amount of TV news viewing		
	light+medium % (N)	Frequent % (N)	Very frequent % (N)	light+medium % (N)	Frequent % (N)	Very frequent % (N)
Overall	18.1 (155)	32.5 (83)	40.0 (50) **	42.7 (75)	59.7 (139)	70.8 (72) **
Sex						
Male	19.2 (78)	28.6 (42)	38.9 (18) n.s.	34.1 (41)	63.4 (71)	66.7 (27) **
Female	16.9 (77)	36.6 (41)	40.6 (32) **	52.9 (34)	55.9 (68)	73.3 (45) n.s.
Age						
20-39	18.2 (77)	32.4 (34)	50.0 (10) *	41.0 (39)	67.9 (56)	72.0 (25) *
40 and over	18.2 (77)	32.7 (49)	37.5 (40) n.s.	45.7 (35)	54.2 (83)	70.2 (47) #
Education						
Low	17.5 (57)	43.2 (44)	40.7 (27) #	46.7 (30)	65.1 (63)	75.0 (32) #
High	18.9 (95)	20.5 (39)	39.1 (23) n.s.	40.9 (44)	54.7 (75)	66.7 (39) #
TV Evaluation[a]						
Low	16.5 (79)	30.6 (36)	42.9 (14) n.s	31.6 (38)	58.5 (65)	72.0 (25) **
High	20.3 (74)	35.6 (45)	40.0 (35) *	57.1 (35)	62.5 (72)	69.6 (46) n.s.

# p<.10; * p<.05; ** p<.01 (χ2-test)

For purposes of space, non viewers, light viewers and medium viewers are combined into one category in this table.

[a]The level of evaluation for the Aum coverage on TV

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Table 4

Result of multiple regression analysis: regressing the anxiety scale

	β	Simple r
Sex	.068	.103
Age	-.090	.013
Education	-.127#	-.122*
Amount of TV news viewing	.172**	.204**
Amount of talking with others	.098	.122*
TV evaluation scale	.092	.139*
Multiple R	.284**	

p≤.10,   * p≤.05,   ** p≤.01

Note: Male coded as 1; female coded as 0

Table 5

The respondents' images of new religions in general:

A comparison between before and after being exposed to the massive media coverage of the Aum Shinrikyo issues

Before After	Somewhat Positive image % (N)	Somewhat positive image % (N)	Neutral image % (N)	Somewhat negative image % (N)	Negative image % (N)	No specific image % (N)
Unchanged	100.0 (1)	75.0 (3)	58.0 (29)	34.4 (43)	44.4 (36)	46.2 (12)
More or less became worse	----	25.0 (1)	38.0 (19)	37.6 (47)	14.8 (12)	38.5 (10)
Became worse	----	----	4.0 (2)	28.0 (35)	40.7 (33)	15.4 (4)
Total	100.0 (1)	100.0 (4)	100.0 (50)	100.0 (125)	100.0 (81)	100.0 (26)

$\chi^2=35.6$ (d.f.=10), p<.001

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Table 6

Percentages of respondents whose images of new religions in general became worse, by the amount of Wide Show viewing: A comparison between personal and impersonal questions.

	Personal question:			Impersonal question:		
	Overall %(N)	Light[a] %(N)	Heavy[b] %(N)	Overall %(N)	Light %(N)	Heavy %(N)
Overall	26.3 (281)	20.5 (88)	35.2 (108) *	59.2 (267)	57.1 (84)	63.8 (105) n.s.
Education						
Low	27.6 (123)	7.7 (26)	37.9 (58) *	50.0 (112)	34.8 (23)	60.7 (56) *
High	25.8 (155)	25.8 (62)	32.7 (49) n.s.	67.1 (152)	65.6 (61)	68.8 (48) n.s.
Talk about the Aum case						
Not frequent	28.2 (103)	18.9 (37)	43.8 (32) *	54.3 (94)	44.1 (34)	67.7 (31) *
Frequent	25.3 (178)	21.6 (51)	31.6 (76) n.s	61.8 (173)	66.0 (50)	62.2 (74) n.s.
TV evaluation						
Low	26.8 (127)	25.0 (44)	34.2 (38) n.s.	61.0 (123)	55.6 (45)	70.3 (37) #
High	26.5 (151)	16.3 (43)	36.8 (68) #	57.4 (141)	60.5 (38)	59.1 (66) n.s.
Prior image[c]						
Neutral	8.2 (73)	4.2 (24)	16.0 (25) n.s.	43.3 (67)	54.5 (22)	29.2 (24) n.s.
Negative	33.0 (203)	25.8 (62)	42.0 (81) n.s.	64.6 (195)	56.7 (60)	75.9 (79) *

# p<.10; *p<.05; **p<.01 (χ2-test)

[a]light = Did not watch at all + Did not watch very much, [b]"Heavy = Watched frequently + Watched very frequently

For purposes of space, medium viewers are omitted from this table.

[c]Prior image = Images of new religions in general before media coverage of the Aum Shinrikyo case

Table 7

Result of multiple regression analysis for the less educated group:
regressing the "image of new religion" scale

	β	Simple *r*
Sex	-.234*	-.300**
Age	-.070	-.013
Amount of *Wide Show* viewing	.191#	.251**
Amount of talking with others	.023	.036
TV evaluation scale	.020	.024
Multiple R	.336*	

# p<.10,   * p<.05,   ** p<.01

Note: Male coded as 1; female coded as 0

Table 8

Correlations between the attitude toward the police investigation and the level of evaluation

for various media coverage on the Aum Shinrikyo case

	TV evaluation scale	Newspaper evaluation scale	TV news evaluation	Special programs evaluation	Wide show evaluation	Daily newspapers evaluation	Sports newspapers evaluation
Attitude toward							
the police investigation	.178**	.082	.128*	.189**	.202**	.032	.217**

* p<.05, **p< .01

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Table 9

Result of multiple regression analysis: regressing the police evaluation item

	β	Simple r
Sex	.057	.051
Age	- .081	-.117#
Education	- .012	.063
Amount of the Aum report viewing on TV	.072	.037
Amount of talking with others	- .102	.096
TV evaluation scale	.165*	.178**
Multiple R	.229*	

# p<.10, * p<.05, ** p<.01

Note: Male coded as 1; female coded as 0

Figure 1. Change of new religions' image:
A comparison of respondents' own images and their perceived others' images

In the Olympic Tradition:
Sportscasters' Language and Female Athleticism

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In the Olympic Tradition:
Sportscasters' Language and Female Athleticism
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Abstract

Citing hegemony theory, the author argues that sports media reinforce patriarchal ideologies and dominant definitions of "femininity" and "masculinity." Through a quantitative content analysis, comparing the way announcers on U.S. broadcasts of the 1996 summer Olympics spoke of female and male athletes, the author tests the hypothesis that sports announcers try to make female athletes seem more feminine and therefore more appealing. The hypotheses are not supported, indicating that media coverage of female athletes may be changing.

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INTRODUCTION

When Baron Pierre de Coubertin revived the Olympics Games in 1896, he deliberately excluded women from the competition. He believed that it was against the "laws of nature" for women to participate in sports, and he saw women's sport as "the most unaesthetic sight human eyes could contemplate" (quoted in Hargreaves, 1984, p. 17). In 1912 he wrote: "The Olympic Games must be reserved for men. … We must continue to try to achieve the following definition: the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism with internationalism as the base, loyalty as the means, art for its setting, and *female applause* as its reward" (italics mine, quoted in Cohen, 1993, p. 169).

Despite de Coubertin's best efforts, however, women did compete in the Olympics, and in the summer Olympics of 1996 they enjoyed the opportunity to participate in 108 events. This is an indication of how far female athletes have come in their struggle for rights, respect, and social acceptance. However, the fact that there were 64 *more* events open to male competitors in the 1996 games hints at a sex-based discrimination that continues to exist in the world of sport. My concern here is with the role that the sports media may play in perpetuating the ideology that leads to discrimination against females in athletics.

Using the theoretical approach of hegemony, I will argue that the realm of sport is a site of gender inequity in which patriarchal notions of women's inferiority are perpetuated and dominant definitions of "femininity" and "masculinity" are reinforced, to the detriment of female athletes.

To investigate how, if at all, the sports media participate in this process, I conducted a content analysis of NBC's U.S. broadcasts of the 1996 Olympic Games with a particular focus on announcers' comments regarding male and female competitors in a number of Olympic events. Announcers' language is important because announcers direct our attention, provide us with background information,

tell the athletes' stories, and characterize what we see on the screen. While doing all this, they also express American values and beliefs and perpetuate them by speaking authoritatively to a very large audience (estimated by NBC to be 200 million for the '96 summer games).

THEORY

Hegemony, as defined by Antonio Gramsci (1927/1971) and elaborated by Raymond Williams (1980/1991), is the means by which ruling groups within a society maintain their dominance. This is not accomplished by force but by a process of leadership and negotiation that fosters the consent of the dominated through shared ideology and culture. Dominant definitions of reality are taken as "natural" or as common sense by the majority, though minority views and oppositional stances do arise. The dominant forces resist these oppositional views through "annihilation, accommodation, and appropriation" (Creedon, 1993, p. 10), such that some of these views are squelched and others are absorbed into the dominant culture, often in a watered-down form (Gitlin, 1980). Sport, as Messner (1988) described it, "is a dynamic social space where dominant (class, ethnic, etc.) ideologies are perpetuated as well as challenged and contested" (p. 198). Hargreaves (1994) concurs: "Because sports are vastly popular, and can be compelling and enjoyable, they are important vehicles for the transmission of ideology" (p. 22).

Dominant ideologies in the U.S. include patriarchy, capitalism, consumerism, competition, and rationalism (Messner, 1988). The dominant ideology of interest in this paper is patriarchy, or the ideology of male supremacy. Many social scientists have argued that sport perpetuates patriarchal ideology by making men's power and privilege over women seem "natural" (Daddario, 1994; Bryson, 1987; Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988; Messner, 1988; Kane & Snyder, 1989; Birrell & Cole, 1990; Duncan, 1990; Kane & Parks, 1992; Kane & Greendorfer, 1994).

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One of the ways in which men's power and privilege are naturalized is by linking "athleticism" with "masculinity" (Bryson, 1987; Sabo & Jansen, 1992).[1] Dating back to the first Olympic games of ancient Greece in the 7th century B.C., organized sports have played a "masculinity-validating" (Messner, 1988, p. 200) role in Western culture (Mandell, 1976). Today, we understand the term "athletic" in much the same way as "masculine"—strong, aggressive, competitive, powerful (Rohrbaugh, 1979; DiIorio, 1989; Roloff, M. E. & Solomon, 1989). Not surprisingly, "traditional definitions of 'female' have been antithetical to traditional definitions of 'athlete'" (Kane & Greendorfer, 1994, p. 32). As Judith DiIorio (1989, p. 51) further explains:

> There has been considerable research analyzing the definitions and values associated with sports and athletics in this culture—research that clearly reveals the patriarchal ideologies embedded therein. Hence, we know that the definitions and ideals traditionally associated with athletics emphasize strength, aggression, competition, and winning and are virtually synonymous with masculinity but antonymous with femininity (Hart, 1971; Felshin, 1974; Oglesby, 1978).

These definitions both create and reinforce the hegemonic notions that "real women" (i. e., women who look and act in accordance with hegemonic, or dominant, expectations and definitions of women) are not athletic and are incapable of being good athletes, that those women who are athletic are *not* "real women," and that athletic pursuits are simply inappropriate for women (Hargreaves, 1994). These conceptions have resulted in females being discouraged from participating in sports and in discrimination against those females who do participate.

Duncan (1990) has argued that any emphasis on sexual difference in sports or in the sports media serves to undermine and trivialize the efforts of female athletes. Certainly, any emphasis on the feminine qualities of a female athlete serves to "de-

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[1] I share Margaret Carlisle Duncan's (1990) stance "that although 'male' and 'female' are biological terms signaling reproductive differences, 'masculine' and 'feminine' correspond *not* to natural, universal differences but rather to culturally and historically specific constructions of differences" (p. 25).

athleticize" her and therefore detract from her abilities and accomplishments, due to the antonymous relationship between the concepts of "athletic" and "feminine."

The Role of Sports Media in the Reproduction of Gender Inequities

In the framework of hegemony, the mass media are generally seen to reflect, reproduce, and perpetuate dominant societal values, definitions, and beliefs (e. g., see Tuchman, 1978 &1981; Messner, 1988; Creedon, 1994). Thus, the sports media transmit the ideologies associated with sports, including the ideology of male supremacy and all of the language that supports it (Williams & Rowe, 1985; Wenner, 1989; Sabo & Jansen, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994). Halbert & Latimer (1994) have outlined a number of ways in which the sports media have helped to "perpetuate male dominance" (p. 299). These include:

> (a) excluding women completely from coverage, (b) having very little coverage of female athletes (which distorts the public's image of the percentage of women interested and participating in sports), (c) covering only those events such as figure skating and tennis that reinforce stereotypical feminine images of female athletes, and (d) minimizing women's athletic achievements through sports commentaries" (p. 299).

This list is corroborated by many of the research findings in this area.

Review of Research Findings

A number of researchers studying the treatment of female athletes by the sports media have argued, based on their findings, that "women athletes (when they were reported on at all) were likely to be overtly trivialized, infantilized, and sexualized" (Messner, Duncan & Jensen, 1993, p. 123; also Felshin, 1974; Boutilier and San Giovanni, 1983; Graydon, 1983; Bryson, 1987; G. Dyer, 1987; Duncan, 1990; Klein, 1988).

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The underrepresentation of women's sports in the sports media has been well documented—in U.S. sports pages (Theberge & Cronk, 1986), in BBC Television and British newspaper coverage of major international athletic championships (Alexander, 1994a, 1994b), in the sports pages of West German newspapers (Klein, 1988), in *Sports Illustrated* feature articles (Lumpkin & Williams, 1991), in sports magazines targeted to children (Rintala & Birrell, 1984; Duncan & Sayaovong, 1990); and even in the official newsletter of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) (Shifflett & Revelle, 1994).

Efforts by the media to trivialize women's sports have been documented, as well. In an analysis of 3,000 sports articles from four West German papers, sampled from the years 1979, 1985, and 1987, Klein (1988) found that "the press functioned as a normalizing agent in the discourse of sport, which, amongst other things, legitimises the marginal position of women in sport by invoking the apparently natural differences between the sexes" (p. 139). Mechanisms of this process include: exclusion of women from sports reports, "trivializing women's sports, making them into 'non-sport,' or use of irony" (p. 139).

Duncan and Hasbrook (1988) compared the live television broadcasts (narratives and visuals) of women's and men's competitions in "sports that have traditionally been considered men's sports" (p. 4), including the final games of the men's and women's 1986 NCAA basketball championship tournaments, a 1985 pro surfing championship, and the 1986 New York City Marathon.

The researchers found that "each television broadcast included fundamentally contradictory depictions of female athletes" (Duncan & Hasbrook, 1988, p. 19). In the narrative of the women's basketball game they found an emphasis on *individual* identity, effort and success, rather than on *team* identity, effort and success. They also found an emphasis on the aesthetic appeal of players' movements, while physical skills were not mentioned, and discussions of strategy

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and technical aspects of the game were minimal, quite unlike the narrative accompanying the men's game.

In the surfing and marathon broadcasts, the researchers found incongruities between the narrative and visual depictions of the female competitors, such that one element often undermined the positive message offered in the other. They did not find such incongruities in the depictions of male competitors.

Messner, Duncan and Jensen (1993) reported similar findings in their study of the language used by television broadcasters to call three men's and three women's games in the 1989 NCAA basketball championship tournaments, as well as several matches from the 1989 U.S. Open tennis tournament. While the researchers found "less overtly sexist commentary than has been observed in past research" (p. 121), they noted several ways in which women athletes and their games were trivialized. The basketball commentary was marked by asymmetrical "gender marking" (p. 121), meaning that women's gender was referenced 77 times in the three games (e.g., "the *women's* Final Four"), while men's gender was never referenced in their three games. The commentary was further marked by ambivalence toward the female players, evident in such phrases as "big girl" and "her little jump hook" (p. 129), which combine a legitimate aspect of the sport with a demeaning noun or adjective, often reducing the player to a prepubescent state.

In the broadcasts of tennis matches, Messner, Duncan and Jensen (1993) discovered a "hierarchy of naming" (p. 121); in six matches each, women tennis players were referred to by their first name far more often than men (304 vs. 44), they were referred to by their last name far *less* often than men (166 vs. 395), and they were referred to by their full name somewhat less often than men (107 vs. 127). Also in tennis, the researchers found that spectacular plays made by women tended to be attributed to luck, implying a lack of athleticism, while those made by men were attributed to will.

In the commentary of both basketball and tennis the researchers found that

> two formulas for success appeared to exist, one for men, the other for women. Men appeared to succeed through a combination of talent, instinct, intelligence, size, strength, quickness, hard work, and risk-taking. Women also appeared to succeed through talent, enterprise, hard work, and intelligence. But commonly cited along with these attributes were emotion, luck, togetherness, and family. (p. 130)

In other words, their *feminine* characteristics (being emotional, being vulnerable to luck, being cooperative, and being relational and dependent on others) were emphasized by the announcers more than *athletic* characteristics, such as size, strength, speed, and instinct.

In her rhetorical analysis of U.S. television coverage of the 1992 Winter Olympics, Daddario (1994) identified several ways in which the language of CBS announcers and commentators trivialized and infantilized female athletes. Sexist descriptors were used to characterize women engaged in more "feminine" sports, such as figure skating. Apologies were made for men's errant behavior and poor performances much more than for women's. Adult female athletes were often constructed "according to an adolescent ideal" (p. 275) or reduced to a childlike state by framing them as "America's little sister," in the case of Bonnie Blair (p. 282), or as their mothers' daughters rather than adult competitors. Similarly, Daddario found that female athletes were often depicted as driven by human connection (especially to parents and siblings) rather than by sports competition, unlike their male counterparts. Thus, announcers were again found to emphasize feminine characteristics when speaking of female athletes.

Finally, Halbert and Latimer (1994) applied the research model used by Messner, Duncan and Jensen (1993) and examined the language used by television announcers in a 1992 exhibition tennis match between Martina Navratilova and Jimmy Conners ("The Battle of the Champions"). They, too, found asymmetrical

gender marking and a gendered hierarchy of naming in the narrative accompanying the tennis match. Navratilova's gender was called to attention 11 times, while Connors' was only mentioned twice. Connors' last name was used five times more often than Navratilova's last name; his first name was used half as often as hers; and his full name was used twice as often as hers. Navratilova was called a lady three times and a girl four times. In contrast, Connors was called a gentleman once and was never referred to as a boy.

Halbert and Latimer (1994) also assessed praise-to-criticism ratios and found that Connors was praised 30 times and criticized five times, while Navratilova was only praised 7 times but was criticized 12 times. In addition, the researchers reported that character portraits were drawn of Navratilova as vulnerable, relational, and dependent on her coach (again, feminine characteristics) and of Connors as confident and independent. They noted further that the commentary and interviews shown before the match indicated that Navratilova was obviously the inferior competitor, though she was the top-ranked woman at the time and had never competed against Connors, thus reinforcing the hegemonic notion that all women are inferior to all men in the athletic arena.

Theoretical Hypotheses

Though the studies described above did not set out to find ways in which sports announcers characterized female athletes as "feminine," many of them found just that. The present study focuses specifically on this means of trivializing the efforts of female athletes. Our shared understandings of the terms "masculine," "feminine," and "athletic," and the long-standing dominance of men in sport (in terms of participation, performance, administration, and media coverage) have worked together to perpetuate the hegemonic notion that athletic competition— except in its most "feminine" forms, such as gymnastics and figure skating—is

inappropriate for women and girls. Thus, our society has trouble accepting women's foray into sport. We struggle with the contradictory nature of the term "female athlete." We find women who are strong, aggressive, and competitive to be unappealing—unless they also have some readily discernible feminine characteristics, such as long hair, painted fingernails, a weakness of some sort, or a tendency to cry on the medal stand, which may compensate for the women's athletic prowess. Many people even make assumptions about female athletes' sexuality—specifically, that they are lesbians—simply because they look and behave like athletes.

During the Olympics, when national pride is at stake, we (audience and broadcasters alike) feel a need or a desire to embrace our nation's athletes, to root for our team, whether they be men or women. American broadcasters who have covered the Olympics in recent years have found a way to help us embrace not only our own countrywomen, but also the best female athletes from other countries. One might call it linguistic compensation: they make assessments and observations that soften the athletic qualities of female athletes and highlight any feminine qualities that the announcers perceive in these women and girls. They do this through spontaneous discussion about the competitors and through pre-packaged personality profiles, both of which shape the audience's understanding of the athletes and, potentially, make them more appealing. A prime example of this is the characterization of Bonnie Blair as "America's little sister" (at 32 years of age) by CBS broadcasters during the 1992 Winter Olympics (Daddario, 1994).

This softening of the athletic image and heightening of the feminine image makes female athletes seem more like "real women" (i. e., women who exhibit hegemonic femininity), which makes them more likable because they come closer to fulfilling our hegemonic expectations with regard to gender. In summary, I propose that, in an effort to compensate for female athletes' athleticism, broadcast

announcers draw attention to these athletes' femininity by using descriptive language that corresponds with our shared ideas of hegemonic femininity. In some cases announcers may make such comments to the exclusion of comments that acknowledge the athlete's athletic prowess. In extreme cases, they may not treat her like an athlete at all, but as the main character in a fairy tale.

In addition to the reasoning provided above, support for this proposition can be found in the literature. For example, in their review of coverage of women's 1984 Olympic events in Australian newspapers, Williams, Lawrence & Rowe (1985) cite newspaper sports reports that demonstrate "the desire by the journalists to show that *despite* their athleticism, women [competitors] still manage to remain 'women'" (p. 642). The women who were admired in the articles for crying as they received awards or for wearing lots of jewelry "were emotional and/or attractive in a 'feminine' way. The description of women was framed by considerations not principally of their status as athletes, but by culturally prescribed gender characteristics" (p. 642).

Thus, in the present study I expected to find that female athletes at the Olympics were often described by broadcasters in language that pointed out the "feminine" characteristics they possessed, including those that are not valued in athletics, and to find that their athleticism was downplayed by announcers, through both criticism (e. g., she is not strong or not fast) or through silence (not describing female athletes as athletic, strong, fast, etc.).

Because our shared definitions of "masculine" and "athletic" are nearly synonymous, announcers' comments about men can be used as a benchmark of sorts. By comparing the way sports announcers speak of women to the way they speak of men, we can learn whether women have achieved the level of social acceptance *as athletes* that men have enjoyed for over a hundred years. If female athletes have achieved this level of acceptance, it should be apparent in the way that

announcers speak of them; the announcers should point out feminine and athletic characteristics about as often as they do when they announce men's events. However, my expectation is that, despite the great strides that women athletes have made in their struggle for acceptance, they have not yet reached parity with male athletes. This is reflected in the hypotheses below.

Research Hypotheses

In order to test the overall hypothesis that sports announcers try to make female athletes seem more feminine through their comments, I planned several specific comparisons. The first of these is:

> H1) In broadcasts of comparable sporting events in the 1996 Olympics, NBC broadcasters describe the <u>personal appearance</u> of female athletes more often than they describe the personal appearance of male athletes.

Personal appearance is theoretically defined as all of the visible attributes of an athlete except those which are relevant to the athlete's ability to excel in his or her sport. In other words, personal appearance includes the affectations people make in order to be more attractive, to be stylish, or to make some sort of a statement. Personal appearance includes hairstyle, make-up, fingernail polish, jewelry, tattoos, clothing, other adornments, possessions, and mannerisms—unless the element serves an athletic purpose in the athlete's quest for an Olympic medal, such as a shaved head for a swimmer.

As I argued above, Americans seem to be better able to embrace female athletes if there is some readily discernible femininity about them; announcers try to accommodate this conditional acceptance by drawing attention to the feminine characteristics of female athletes. One of the easiest ways for announcers to do this is by commenting on the athletes' personal appearance because our culture so strongly equates female beauty with femininity, as Margaret Carlisle Duncan (1990) explains:

> In contemporary American culture, the ideology of patriarchy proclaims the feminine ideal to be cosmetic perfection or glamour, a quality that builds on sexual difference. ...The features of a woman's face, her body, her clothing, makeup, fingernail polish, adornments, and hairdo come together to proclaim her sexual difference and therefore her femininity. In contrast, our definitions of masculinity are not so intimately connected to physical appearance. We are much more likely to evaluate a man on the basis of his actions and accomplishments (p. 25).

Duncan's implication is that women are more likely to be *evaluated* on the basis of their beauty and glamour, rather than their actions and accomplishments. This provides another reason why announcers would more frequently comment on the personal appearance of female athletes; they are evaluating female athletes on this basis as well as on their athletic prowess, or they may be offering up information on the women's appearance so that viewers can make their own evaluations.

Further support for this hypothesis comes from Jan Graydon (1983), who observed that "reports of women's success can in many instances appear to be superficially positive. The woman is praised for her achievement, her event is accurately described and her skills described. But somewhere in the reportage— usually in the beginning if it is a press report—remarks are made about the woman's physical desirability" (p. 8). Sabo & Jansen (1992) also observed that media "coverage [of women's sports] is often framed within stereotypes that pertain more to appearance and attractiveness (from the perspective of the male gaze) than to athletic skill" (p. 176).

Hypothesis 2 pertains to the number of athletic descriptors announcers use regarding male and female athletes.

> H2) In broadcasts of comparable sporting events in the 1996 Olympics, NBC broadcasters will describe and discuss the <u>athletic characteristics and performance</u> of female athletes less often than they will describe and discuss the athletic characteristics and performance of male athletes.

Here, "athletic characteristics and performance" is theoretically defined as all of the physical and mental qualities that we associate with and value in athleticism. Included among these are physical and mental strength, power, swiftness, agility, skill, fitness, endurance, control over one's body and mind, determination, mental and physical toughness, competitiveness, bravery, aggressiveness, strategic skill, a strong drive to achieve, and the ability to effect one's purpose or get the job done.

In the course of any given Olympic event, announcers have a limited amount of time to discuss individual athletes. For this study, men's and women's separate events in the same sports were compared, so announcers of the men's and women's events had just about the same amount of time to comment on the competitors. If Hypothesis 1 is true and the announcers took more time to comment on the personal appearance of competitors during the women's events, they would have had less time to comment on the women's athletic characteristics and performances. Such silence or minimal discussion of the athletic characteristics of female athletes would result in a "softening" of their athleticism.

Furthermore, given our collective cognitive dissonance over women in athletics, we might expect announcers to more readily describe a male hurdler's powerful legs or a male tennis player's aggressive serve than to mention these characteristics in a female athlete. There is no conflict involved in using these descriptors with regard to male athletes; in fact, it seems "natural" to do so. In our hegemonic view, "real men" (i. e., men who exhibit hegemonic masculinity) should be powerful and aggressive, while women, once again, should not.

While Hypothesis 2 pertains to the *quantity* of comments about competitors' athleticism, Hypothesis 3 pertains to the *quality* of those comments. That is, Hypothesis 3 is concerned with how announcers evaluate the athleticism and performance of Olympic competitors.

H3) In broadcasts of the 1996 Olympics, NBC broadcasters describe women's athletic characteristics and performance as less athletic than men's.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that television announcers' evaluations of Olympic athletes' performances and athletic characteristics (such as strength, power, fitness, competitiveness, determination, bravery, etc.) will vary depending on the sex of the athlete. I call the dependent variable in this hypothesis "attributed athleticism," and I define it theoretically as the extent to which an athlete is credited with athletic characteristics (as defined above) by the announcers of that athlete's event. The hypothesis assumes some variability in announcers' comments, such that they may assert or imply that an athlete is very athletic (very strong, very fast, etc.), very unathletic (very weak, very slow, etc.) or somewhere in between.

As was argued earlier, one of the ways that announcers are able to emphasize the femininity of female athletes is by softening their athleticism. In addition to simply offering fewer comments about their athleticism, announcers may offer more direct criticism of female athletes (she's weak, she's not aggressive enough) or more subtle comments that make female athletes seem less capable than their male counterparts or even unathletic ("She's trying to be brave" versus "He's very brave"). These kinds of comments could be expected because hegemonic notions of femininity include such descriptors as physically weak, vulnerable, passive, powerless, cooperative, dependent, tender, gentle, and emotional (DiIorio, 1989; Duncan, 1990). These characteristics, though considered undesirable in athletes, are generally considered desirable (or at least acceptable) in women and are thus more likely to be said of female athletes than of male athletes.

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METHOD

Source/Sampling Design

The method employed here was quantitative content analysis. Segments of NBC's exclusive U.S. broadcasts of the 1996 Olympic Games, which were aired from July 19 through August 4, 1996, were viewed and analyzed. The focus of the analysis was on the language used by commentators to describe and discuss competitors. The recording unit was utterance (whole sentences and sentence fragments). Each phrase spoken by an announcer that included a notation or a description of an athlete's physical appearance (not relevant to athletic performance) or an evaluative comment about an athlete's athletic characteristics or performance was included in the study. The unit of analysis was athlete, as each comment being analyzed was a description or an evaluation of a particular athlete. The events included in the study were selected on the basis of several criteria. First, the sport had to have male- and female-counterpart events. Therefore, gymnastics events were not included in the study because the men's and women's versions are very different, but the 400-meter hurdles were included because both men and women run this event.

Another criterion was variety. By selecting a variety of events, many of which had several competitors involved in the action simultaneously, I hoped to draw a large sample of athletes. Variety was also important for capturing variability in announcing styles and in the language and history associated with different sports. Thus, track events were included because they are among the oldest Olympic sports and because women are well established in these events (Hargreaves, 1996); beach volleyball was included because it is a new event in the Olympics. Originally, the discus and javelin events were to be included because they require great strength and power and might be considered "masculine" sports[2]; to balance this, segments of

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[2]The discus and javelin events had to be eliminated because neither the men's nor the women's versions were televised.

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the tennis competition were included because tennis has traditionally been viewed as a "feminine-appropriate" sport (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 210). Segments of the semifinal and final basketball games were included because this is such a high-profile sport in the U.S. (judging by the amount of pre-Games press attention the two U.S. teams received), and segments of the mountain bike races were included because mountain-biking is a relatively low-profile sport, even in the U.S., where it was invented.

The final criterion for inclusion was availability via NBC broadcasts; only events which were televised could be included in the study. Furthermore, if only one version of an Olympic event—for example, the men's and not the women's—was televised, that event was excluded from the study. Likewise, if the men's and women's events were not comparable (e. g., if one was aired live in its entirety and the other was shown as edited highlights), both events were dropped from the study. This criterion eliminated the 5,000-meter foot-race, the discus, the javelin, the shot-put, and single-sculls rowing.

Ultimately, forty events (from qualifying rounds through finals), representing ten sports, were included in the study. The sports were: the 100-meter dash, the 400-meter foot-race, the 4x400-meter relay, the 400-meter hurdles, beach volleyball, tennis, basketball, mountain biking, 10-meter platform diving, and pairs rowing (without coxswain). From these 40 events came a sample of 209 athletes, of which 109 were women and 100 were men.

The content to be analyzed included any discussion among the announcers immediately preceding and following the event as well as the event itself, unless the event lasted more than thirty minutes (such as beach volleyball, tennis, basketball, and mountain biking), in which case approximately fifteen minutes of the event were coded. For events in which the women's and men's versions were broadcast in unequal lengths, the shorter of the two provided a time limit for the

longer version, which was then coded for the same number of minutes as the shorter version. This resulted in approximately 150 minutes of men's and 150 minutes of women's events being included in the study.

Operational Definitions

The independent variable for all of the hypotheses was sex of athlete, which was operationally defined as male or female.

The dependent variable for Hypothesis 1 was "comments about an athlete's personal appearance." This variable does not include comments about physical attributes that are relevant to athleticism, such as height for basketball players, shaved heads for swimmers, or muscle size for competitors in just about any sport because these characteristics may determine an athlete's ability to excel in his or her sport. "Personal appearance" refers specifically to attributes which *do not* contribute to (or detract from, if not present) an athlete's ability to perform well. Thus, "personal appearance" comments are defined as any remarks about an athlete's hairstyle, make-up, fingernail polish, jewelry, body piercings, tattoos, clothing, other adornments, possessions, and mannerisms.

In order to link this hypothesis directly to the proposition that announcers emphasize the femininity of female athletes in a way that they do not do with male athletes, only gender-appropriate appearance comments were included in the study. For example, a comment about the shaved head of a female runner would not be included because a shaved head is seen in this culture as inappropriate for women and is thus unfeminine. A comment of this sort is not relevant to the hypothesis because it would not serve to make a female athlete seem more feminine. Likewise, a comment about the painted blue fingernails of a male athlete would not be included because painted fingernails are considered inappropriate for men and are thus not masculine. The hypothesis pertains only to the comments that make

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athletes seem more appealing (more feminine for females and more masculine for males).

Coding for Hypothesis 1 consisted of recording in count form every utterance in which an announcer noted, described, or otherwise commented upon the personal appearance of an individual athlete, as defined above. A separate tally was kept for each athlete.

The dependent variable for Hypothesis 2 was "comments about athletic characteristics and performance." This variable includes comments regarding all of the physical and mental characteristics that we associate with and value in athleticism, such as physical and mental strength, power, speed, agility, skill, fitness, endurance, control over one's body and mind, determination, mental and physical toughness, competitiveness, bravery, aggressiveness, a strong drive to achieve, and the ability to effect one's purpose or achieve one's goals. As before, coding consisted of recording in count form every utterance in which an announcer noted, described, or commented upon an athletic characteristic or evaluated the performance of an individual athlete. Again, a separate tally was kept for each athlete.

The dependent variable for Hypothesis 3, which predicts that announcers will describe women's athletic characteristics as less athletic than men's, is "attributed athleticism." This refers to evaluative words or phrases that describe the physical and mental characteristics that are generally valued in an athlete (as described above). Athletes display these characteristics to varying degrees, and when announcers assess the athletes competing in a game or a race, they credit the athletes with having these characteristics to varying degrees. Thus, the variable "attributed athleticism" was operationalized through the use of a semantic differential scale, ranging from not athletic at all (coded as a 1) to highly athletic (coded as a 5). This scale was used to score announcers' comments about all of the athletic characteristics described above, e. g., strength (ranging from very weak to very

strong), fitness (from very unfit to very fit), skill (from very unskilled to highly skilled), self-control (from out of control to very controlled), ability to effect or achieve one's goals (from incapable to very capable), endurance (from not having endurance at all to having great endurance), competitiveness (from very cooperative or uncompetitive to very competitive), and so forth. Every comment that involved an evaluation of an athlete's athleticism was given a score indicating how positive or negative the comment was. Again, a separate tally was kept for each athlete.

Coding and Intercoder Reliability

Formal coding duties were performed by the researcher. However, prior to formal coding, the researcher and another coder independently viewed[3] and coded a subsample of the taped material in order to assess the reliability of the instrument. The subsample consisted of broadcast segments from women's and men's basketball, preliminary rounds of beach volleyball, and the women's 200-meter freestyle swimming competition. Each coder was provided with written instructions and a coding sheet to fill out for each athlete discussed by the announcers (see attachments). As indicated above, coders kept a count of personal appearance comments and attributed athleticism comments. Coding instructions were further clarified and the coding sheet revised after a training and practice session.

According to Holsti (1969, p. 142), "defining an acceptable level of reliability is one of the many problems in content analysis for which there is no single solution." Shoemaker (P. J. Shoemaker, personal communication, January, 1996) recommends that, as a general rule, content analysts consider a reliability score of .8 or above to be "very good." In light of this, I determined that acceptable reliability scores would be

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[3]To avoid reliability problems caused by inconsistent starts and stops of the tapes, the coders viewed them simultaneously. However, no discussion was allowed during viewing of the tapes.

.8 or above for the personal appearance and athletic characteristics cooments and a score of .7 or above for the attributed athleticism score (because this requires subjective judgment and has a higher probability of chance agreement due to the limited size of the scale). Holsti's coefficient of reliability (1969, p. 140) was used to test coder agreement, and the results were as follows:

Hypothesis 1:
Number of personal appearance comments: = 1.0
Hypothesis 2:
Number of athletic characteristics comments: =   .89
Hypothesis 3:
Scores of attributed athleticism comments: =   .80

These reliability results were deemed to be sufficiently strong to warrant proceeding with the study without further training of the coders or adjustment to the coding instructions and method.

Statistics Used in the Analysis

Though the sample used in this study was not randomly selected, an assumption of randomness was made on the grounds that sampling bias was actively avoided—through the selection of a variety of sports, which were broadcast on many different days (and during many different day-parts) and through the inclusion of data from all levels of competition (qualifying rounds, quarterfinals, semifinals, and finals). Furthermore, it was thought that any remaining sampling bias was likely to be constant across the men's and women's versions of the events because the events were so closely and because the team of broadcasters at each Olympic venue announced both the men's and the women's events.

Based on this assumption of randomness, then, statistical tests of the hypotheses were planned. The independent variable in all three hypotheses (sex of

athlete) can only be measured at the nominal level, which limits the statistics that can be used in the study. However, the dependent variables in Hypotheses 1 and 2 can be measured at the ratio level, as they are numerical counts with a true zero point and equal intervals between values. And the dependent variable in Hypothesis 3 can be measured at the interval level, as the scales used in coding them are rank-ordered and can be assumed to have equal distances between adjacent points on the scale. Thus, each of the hypotheses could be—and were—tested with independent samples t-tests in order to compare the means (average number of personal appearance comments, average number of athleticism comments, and average attributed athleticism scores) associated with male and female athletes.

RESULTS

The hypotheses being tested here asserted that Olympic-broadcast announcers comment on the personal appearance of female athletes more often, on average, than they comment on the personal appearance of male athletes and that announcers comment on the athletic characteristics and performance of female athletes *less often*, on average, than they comment on the athleticism of male athletes. The third hypothesis further stated that when announcers do speak of the athletic characteristics and performances of female athletes, they do so less positively, on average, than when speaking of male athletes, thereby attributing less athletic prowess to female athletes than to male athletes. It was argued that these anticipated differences in coverage of the men's and women's Olympic events result from the desire of broadcasters to make female athletes seem more feminine and thus more appealing to audience members.

Prior to hypothesis testing, descriptive statistics were run and evaluated. These statistics revealed a great deal of variability in the data associated with "personal appearance comments" and "athleticism comments," as indicated by the

large standard deviations of these dependent variables (Table 1). In addition, these distributions did not appear normal; both were positively skewed, the distribution of "appearance comments" quite severely so, due to the fact that 187 athletes out of 209 had no comments made about their personal appearance. The large spread associated with the counts of athleticism comments was at least partially caused by the fact that the athleticism of many athletes was only commented upon once or twice, whereas those favored to win the event (or otherwise deemed of greater interest by the broadcasters) were commented upon many times. The "attributed athleticism" scores showed less variability, due in part to the limited range of possible scores (one to five, based on the average of all the scores for each athlete), and the distribution of data appeared normal, except for a spike (of 42 cases) at value 4.

After a review of these descriptive statistics, the hypothesis tests were conducted. The independent-samples t-tests revealed no significant differences between the comments made about female Olympians and male Olympians (Table 2). Hypothesis 1 predicted that in broadcasts of comparable sporting events in the 1996 Olympics, NBC broadcasters would describe the personal appearance of female athletes more often than they would describe the personal appearance of male athletes. This was not supported. In fact, the mean for personal appearance comments made about female athletes was slightly *lower* than the mean for comments made about male athletes, indicating that, on average, announcers commented on the personal appearance of male athletes somewhat *more* often than they commented on the personal appearance of female athletes. However, it should be noted that the means for both groups were well below one comment per athlete and that this result did not approach statistical significance (Table 2).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that in broadcasts of comparable sporting events in the 1996 Olympics, NBC broadcasters would describe and discuss the athletic

characteristics and performance of female athletes less often than they would describe and discuss the athletic characteristics and performance of male athletes. Again, the means ran contrary to the direction predicted. Announcers actually commented on the athleticism of female athletes *more* often, on average, than they commented on the athleticism of male athletes, though the difference was not significant at the 95% confidence level (Table 2).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that NBC broadcasters would describe women's athletic characteristics and performance as less athletic than men's. Once again, though the difference was not statistically significant, the data ran contrary to the hypotheses, such that female athletes received *higher* athleticism scores, on average, than male athletes. Thus, I cannot reject the null hypothesis (of no difference) for any of the three statistical tests.

In summary, none of the hypotheses was supported by the t-tests, leaving us no statistical evidence that announcers of the Olympics broadcasts on NBC in the summer of 1996 attempted to make female athletes seem more feminine and appealing through the verbal techniques analyzed in this study.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Problem, Theory, Method, and Results

This study attempted to document quantitatively several ways in which sports announcers might perpetuate hegemonic notions of women's inferiority to men and dominant definitions of "femininity." Hegemony theory was introduced as a way of explaining how the dominant ideologies of a culture can influence media content and how such media content can then perpetuate or reinforce the values, beliefs, definitions, and understandings associated with those ideologies. I argued that hegemonic understandings of appropriate behavior and characteristics for women in the United States preclude athleticism, which has traditionally been

associated with the behavior and characteristics that are considered appropriate for men. I further argued that one way in which the sports media have come to deal with the incongruity of female athletes is by characterizing them as feminine. The hypotheses predicted that announcers of television sports broadcasts would say certain things to make female athletes seem more feminine and thus more appealing to the television audience. To test these hypotheses, a quantitative content analysis was conducted on selected segments of the 1996 summer Olympics broadcasts on the American television network NBC. The hypotheses were not supported, as comparisons of the number and nature of comments made about the personal appearance and athleticism of male and female athletes revealed no significant differences in the way announcers spoke of female athletes as opposed to male athletes.

Contributions of the Study

Results of this kind are sometimes disheartening to researchers, as null findings do not support or strengthen the theory on which the research was based. That is the case here, but this study has a silver lining. Null findings in this case may indicate a change in the way sports announcers speak about female athletes. Perhaps today's announcers do not trivialize female athletes in the ways that so many have in the past, as documented by the many studies of sports media cited earlier in this paper. Though the null findings in this study may be attributable to the sampling method or to the operationalization of the concepts under investigation (both of which are, admittedly, flawed), I have reason to believe that we are, in fact, beginning to see a shift in the way women's sports and female athletes are treated by the sports media.

This is the second study of 1996 U.S. television broadcasts of men's and women's sports in which I have found no statistically significant differences in the

way that sports announcers talk about male and female athletes and men's and women's sports. In the prior study (Weidman, in press), I utilized many of the concepts and operationalizations established in earlier studies to analyze broadcasts of the men's and women's NCAA championship tournaments, yet unlike the researchers who came before me, I found very limited evidence of subordination of the women's games. Recent advances in the popularity of women's and girls' sports—among participants, live audiences, and media audiences—are further indications of the increasing acceptability of female athleticism and improved status for women's sports. This improved status in the minds of participants and fans may be part of a hegemonic shift that could be reflected in sports media content, such as the broadcasts analyzed in this study and the basketball study.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The sampling method used in this study did not begin with random selection of athletes from the population who participated in the Olympic Games. This would have required previewing the entire set of Olympic broadcasts (comprising 20 six-hour tapes) and cataloging every athlete who was shown in competition during those broadcasts. Needless to say, that would have been impractical, given the scope of this study. Nonetheless, the sampling method used weakens the reliability of the statistical tests and, some would argue, throws their very use into question.

Another limitation of this study, as mentioned above, was the method of operationalizing the concept of linguistic compensation for female athleticism, or making female athletes seem more feminine. The indicators chosen to measure this concept (the number of personal appearance and athleticism comments and the valence of the latter) may not have been adequate to capture all of the possible ways that announcers could soften the athleticism of female athletes. Additional measures could have—and in future research, should—be employed. Such

measures as feminine descriptors (e.g., nurturing, caring, demure, relational) or images of athletes' family members might have been more appropriate ways to assess whether NBC broadcasters tried to make female Olympians seem more feminine.

Perhaps an examination of the personality profiles that NBC aired throughout the Olympics broadcasts would have yielded more support for my conceptualization of hegemony theory. These notoriously melodramatic vignettes were designed to show aspects of the athletes that were not visible during competition, presumably to make them more interesting and appealing to audience members (especially female audience members). These pre-edited representations of athletes, in which broadcasters had more of an opportunity to develop character portraits, may contain more obvious attempts to feminize female athletes or to perpetuate other hegemonic values regarding gender and athleticism.

I believe this issue warrants further investigation. First, we must address the question of whether television broadcasters—in the United States, at least—really have begun to treat female athletes with the same respect given to male athletes. If broadcasters have begun to treat female athletes with more respect, we should find out why and how this change has occurred. Longitudinal studies would be useful for tracking the treatment of female athletes over many years and in various media. Such studies could assess whether changes in media coverage of women's and girls' sports are correlated with changes in the dominant ideologies of the culture.

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Table 1. Means and standard deviations for dependent variables.

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Personal appearance comments[a]	.17	.58	209
Athletic characteristics comments[b]	10.81	9.54	209
Attributed athleticism scores[c]	3.63	.69	209

[a]The number of comments announcers made about the personal (non-athletic) appearance of each athlete.

[b]The number of evaluative comments announcers made about the athletic characteristics and/or performance of each athlete.

[c]The amount of athleticism attributed to the athletic characteristics and performance of each athlete in comments made by announcers (calculated by giving a score to each comment and averaging each athlete's scores).

Table 2. Independent t-tests for sex of athlete.

Sex of Athlete

Variables	Female Mean & SD (N=109)	Male Mean & SD (N=100)	t value	df	significance
Personal Appearance	.13 .51	.21 .64	-1.02	207	ns
Athletic Characteristics[b]	11.97 11.30	9.55 7.00	1.88	207	ns
Attributed Athleticism[c]	3.66 .75	3.58 .62	1.74	206	ns

aThe number of comments announcers made about the personal (non-athletic) appearance of each athlete.

bThe number of comments announcers made about the athletic characteristics and/or performance of each athlete.

cThe amount of athleticism attributed to the athletic characteristics and/or performance of each athlete in comments made by announcers (calculated by giving a score to each comment and averaging each athlete's scores).

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Surviving the FCC:
The Legacy of UHFs

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Surviving the FCC:
The Legacy of UHFs

In the fall of 1945, a group of Madison, Wisconsin, businessmen – two contractors, two merchants, an engineer, a real estate agent and an attorney – decided to launch a radio and television station. Incorporated on Sept. 14, 1945, the group issued stock at $100 per share and promptly changed its name from the Madison Broadcasting Company to the Monona Broadcasting Company in honor of one of the capital city's beautiful lakes. Less than three years later, in January 1948, the businessmen got WKOW-AM on the air at 1070 on the radio dial; their television station, WKOW-TV, began regular broadcasts on Channel 27 on July 8, 1953. By 1955, a scant decade after its first board meeting, the Monona Broadcasting Company boasted an extremely profitable radio station and the largest television audience in the area. But the company's early success was short lived. Competition for advertisers and viewers was vicious; the local owners were buffeted by the unpredictable Federal Communications Commission, and in May 1960, the Monona Broadcasting Company was sold to Midcontinent Broadcasting Company.[1]

WKOW-TV survived – but just barely – to offer local television viewers a choice of programming throughout the 1960s until the present. It was born, prospered, and then faltered during television's so-called "Golden Age," the decade between 1948 and 1958 characterized by innovative, often high-quality entertainment and public affairs programming. James L. Baughman argues that "the more romantic interpreters of television's past contend that industry leaders (during the Golden Age) initially held to a standard of service characterized by the airing of not only less-profitable informational programming, but by creative risk-taking in entertainment as well." On the contrary, Baughman says, "Television's managers *always* set their schedules with the goal of larger profits and markets," adding: "A set of entrepreneurial imperatives (and not high-mindedness) first created and then closed the Golden Age of Television."[2]

Although Baughman was concerned with the owners and managers of national television networks, his argument can be extended to owners and managers of local television stations as well. And "entrepreneurial imperatives" may not even be strong enough to describe the driving force for local owners of UHF stations; for the most part,

their financial survival was defined by daily triumphs of spot advertising sales and successful second-guesses about the FCC's next move.

The story of one group of pioneers in local television unfolds in the minutes of the WKOW board of directors' meetings, held at least once a month from 1946 to 1960, against the background of sweeping technological change and unpredictable government regulation. That their business survived at all is somewhat remarkable; WKOW-TV was broadcast on an Ultra High Frequency (UHF) band at a time when Very High Frequency (VHF) stations were thought to be much superior in terms of potential audiences, broadcast quality and profitability. The board's records reveal a single-minded devotion to the bottom line; repeatedly, the directors' decisions kept labor costs to a minimum and maximized their business interests, cutting every possible corner to keep their new TV station from "going dark." Their corporate contributions to the community were limited and were often made after great urging from their business colleagues. Although these businessmen kept tabs on the radio and television programs that they could sell to advertisers, the records of their meetings reveal little concern about the content of their shows. Their official actions reflect almost no interest in "public service" despite guidelines provided by the FCC that strongly advised owners to provide noncommercial programming to offset the influence of advertisers on the content of shows.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief historical review of the development of television, emphasizing the FCC actions in assigning television frequencies and the lip service the FCC paid to its own public service requirements. The second section traces the fortunes of one local corporation, the Monona Broadcasting Company. This section also provides, through anecdotal evidence offered by some of those who were there, a view of WKOW's public service commitment to the community of Madison. The concluding section explores the legacy of WKOW-TV, shaped by its struggles as a pioneer television station and a rare UHF survivor of the Golden Age of Television.

Television flickers on

Television developed in fits and false starts beginning with the earliest broadcast experiments in the 1920s. Its story is one of corporate and technological competition complicated by politics, war and peace.[3] The idea of television had occurred to inventors along with the idea of wireless sound transmission, but television's development was hindered not only by its more complicated technology

but by the need to standardize broadcast and reception equipment so that it would be interchangeable.[4]

The invention of television also added intensity to an already-fierce corporate fight to dominate the exploding communications industry. "AT&T wanted to use telephone lines to broadcast television into homes, whereas RCA wanted to use wireless, over-the-air broadcasting to maintain control of radio and to secure control of television," writes Douglas Kellner. "... In the 1930s and 1940s AT&T and RCA reached a compromise, dividing between themselves and other big corporations the field of communications."[5] The result: AT&T got the phone lines and RCA was allowed to dominate broadcasting.

RCA was eventually forced to give up one of its two NBC networks, which simply left its stronger network in hot competition with CBS and the ever-struggling ABC (RCA's castoff) playing catch-up. Eager to get a jump on their rivals, RCA launched its major television field tests in 1936, and NBC had a mobile television unit in action in New York City the next year. CBS was also experimenting with telecasting in New York City in 1939-40, as was a station put on the air by electronics pioneer Allen B. Du Mont. In 1940, RCA persuaded the FCC to allowed experimental commercial broadcasting; by May of 1940, there were 23 stations broadcasting in the United States, but they were doing so under very limited conditions. The FCC forbade the broadcasters to sell air time to advertisers, although some experimental programs could be "sponsored" to help pay for them. [6] Finally, in 1941, the FCC adopted industrywide engineering standards for black-and-white broadcasting, opening the way for commercial television on a broad scale. Construction of the first 18 commercial stations was authorized on July 1, 1941, but broadcasting hours were reduced from the experimental allowance of 15 hour per week to four hours per week. Most of the experimental stations promptly went off the air. Then, on December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II, interrupting the issuance of new broadcast licenses as well as the manufacture of receiving sets for the next four years. During those war years, only six broadcast stations survived: two in New York City and one each in Schenectady, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles.[7] The war did not, however, preclude research and development of the new medium, and more than 150 applications for television licenses were submitted to the FCC during those years.

Immediately after the war ended in 1945, the expected push for approval of the backlogged applications did not materialize. Many applicants were uncertain about committing their companies to a huge equipment investment (well over $300,000 in most cases) until the FCC decided how it would allocate broadcast frequencies and

whether the whole process would be held up until the technical problems with color broadcasts were resolved.[8] In March 1947, however, the FCC announced it would not be adopting color standards in the near future. About the same time, the coaxial cables needed for network transmission of programs were being rapidly installed by AT&T. These developments helped prompt the rush to television; within the year the number of stations skyrocketed to 48.[9]

The FCC, however, had not foreseen the overwhelming need for space on the broadcast spectrum. It quickly became clear that the wide-band requirements of television and the need to avoid interference among signals meant that the original 12 channels allocated to television (VHF channels 2 through 13) could not begin to accommodate the skyrocketing demand.[10] The FCC responded by freezing new licenses for six months while it tried to figure out how to award channel assignments.[11]

Six months may have been enough to solve the problem technically, but it was not nearly long enough to resolve it to the satisfaction of CBS and NBC, who used the nearly four years before the freeze was lifted to solidify their positions as the dominant networks.[12] During the freeze, which lasted from September 1948 to April 1952, only 108 stations – all VHF, including those whose construction permits had been approved before the freeze – were eligible to broadcast. CBS and NBC monopolized 80 percent of the 60-plus markets where television stations were on the air, "establishing themselves," George Comstock points out, "among advertisers and audiences alike as preeminent. ... The freeze helped maintain the hegemony of control in broadcasting and froze out outsiders."[13]

During the freeze, the number of television sets in use grew to about 15 million by 1952, representing about 34 percent of all homes. And those numbers doubled in the next three years, to about 31 million sets representing about 65 percent of homes, with about 3 percent of those households sporting more than one receiver.[14] This explosion of consumer buying was somewhat amazing; the cost of a set, plus antenna and installation, was a major investment for many.[15] Sears Roebuck offered the first television set to be sold in its catalog in 1949 for $149.95 ($15.50 down, $7 a month);[16] and in the early 1950s, console sets sold for several hundred dollars, easily a month's wages for many people.

When the freeze was lifted, the FCC added UHF channels 14 through 83 to accommodate the demand for new stations. With the new UHF channels, the number of available channels increased to 1,873 (542 VHF channels and 1,331 UHF channels).[17] Stations broadcasting on the same frequencies were located far enough apart geographically to avoid interfering with each other. The UHF channels had a

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brief, hopeful burst of popularity, especially in markets where there was no local competition from a VHF channel. Overall, however, UHF channels were usually considered less desirable by both local owners and the powerful networks. Many television sets were not equipped to receive UHF; the FCC did not have the authority to require UHF tuners until 1962 and did not do so until 1964. In 1956, only 22 percent of the sets nationwide could tune in a UHF channel,[18] although in communities where the only local stations were UHF, the reception and conversion rates were much higher.[19] UHF's inferior broadcast signal limited its range, and non-UHF television sets limited the audience. The combination made it much more difficult for UHF channels to persuade advertisers to buy time or sponsor programs.

Network affiliation was crucial for the fledgling local stations; the networks provided entertainment and the national advertising to support it. The networks wanted established audiences, and the VHF channels authorized before the freeze provided them. In markets where VHF stations were granted licenses after the UHFs went on the air, not only did the UHFs lose their audiences to the stronger, more reliable signal, they often also lost their affiliations with the powerful and popular CBS and NBC networks as well. When it became clear in the mid-'50s that the FCC was not in a position to regulate the networks,[20] affiliations in a number of cities – including Miami, Florida, in 1956; Jacksonville, Florida, in 1957; Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1957; and Madison, Wisconsin, in 1956[21] – were switched from UHF to VHF channels.

With the NBC and CBS networks capturing the coveted VHF channels, their competitors were, for the most part, relegated to UHF outlets. The FCC's 1952 decision to allow UHF and VHF channels in the same communities probably doomed the Du Mont network and perhaps would have been a fatal blow to ABC had it not merged with United Paramount Theatres.[22]

By 1957, more than two thirds of the UHFs on the air were operating at a loss, many sustained by a still-profitable radio station. By 1960, more than 90 UHF channels had left the air and the only economically successful UHF channels were in all-UHF communities.[23] In the interim, notes John M. Kittross, "the UHF operators who survived ... had little on their side but hope. Faced with competition from VHF stations ... and facing the problems of obtaining network affiliations, sponsors, and the conversion of ... receivers, the UHF operators lived from day to day."[24]

As the owners and managers of the new television stations grappled with FCC edicts on channel assignments, they also had to contend with meeting licensing rules and requirements. In March 1946, the FCC had issued the "Blue Book," a programming policy document formally titled <u>Public Service Responsibility of</u>

Broadcast Licensees but nicknamed for its bright blue cover. It provided examples of radio stations that were not meeting their public service obligations, a concept based on the idea that the airwaves were public and that a commercial entity granted the right to use a portion of those airwaves was obligated to operate in the "public interest, convenience and necessity." It also outlined the FCC's rationale for imposing such responsibilities, which rested chiefly on the fact that the commission had to choose among competing applicants for a limited number of frequencies. Their rationale was supported by a Supreme Court ruling in May 1943 that affirmed the FCC's right to establish program objectives.[25] The Blue Book took stations to task for airing public service programming at hours when few were likely to be tuned in, and it included a section showing how owners, many of whom had very profitable radio stations, could finance the suggested improvements. Finally, the Blue Book made it clear that the FCC would favor renewal applications from stations that had met their public service responsibilities, which included offering shows with no advertising (to encourage innovation, serve minority interests and provide balance to sponsored programs), shows that originated locally and were broadcast live, and shows that provided discussions of public issues. The FCC also suggested that stations make an overall commitment to avoid "excessive advertising." The Blue Book was not presented as a book of rules to be followed but more as a guide to the FCC's thinking. It was attacked as a violation of Constitutional guarantees of free speech and criticized as a government takeover of radio. Nevertheless, Sterling and Kittross suggest, the ideas of public service embedded in the Blue Book were carried forward into the licensing criteria for television.

But the guidelines actually were just that; no station was ever shut down for violating them.[26] The FCC has historically been reluctant to regulate the communications industry, a product, perhaps, of its "responsibility with little authority" burden complicated by its political roots. Its jurisdiction is unclear and it has little power to enforce rules; in addition, its rulings have been subject to and victim of court reversals. The concept of operating a television station in the "public interest, convenience and/or necessity" has remained somewhat fuzzy.[27] As Kellner points out, "Although this concept has guided communications law and public policy for five decades ..., it has never been adequately clarified or specified by official FCC policy or rulings, or by presidential and congressional policy and statements."[28] Television stations that ignored the public service guidelines were not punished; stations that tried to follow the guidelines found themselves at a competitive disadvantage. The

FCC's refusal to provide a clear definition of "public interest" left the broadcasters in a position to define and fulfill it as they saw fit.[29]

Not only were the public service guidelines relatively toothless, but FCC actions were frustratingly unpredictable. "The FCC failed to abide by a consistent procedure in new license cases, even after promulgating one in 1952," Baughman writes. "Instead, applicants competed against one another by stressing various strengths, any one of which might be the basis for a grant. In one instance, the placement of the men's room entered deliberations."[30] The FCC was not immune, of course, to political pressures and corporate incentives, a situation that further exacerbated its unpredictability.[31]

Related to the public service guidelines was the notion of localism, the idea that local business people should own television stations because they were uniquely situated to divine and respond to local needs. This idea contributed to the FCC's decision to open UHF frequencies for television and to intermix UHF and VHF channels in a single market, despite the obvious market advantage enjoyed by the VHFs. The FCC's reasoning was that as many communities as possible should benefit from having local outlets responsive to local needs.[32] The FCC concepts were rooted in several assumptions: first, that local owners have a stake in the community and are more likely to be concerned with its welfare; second, that local owners are familiar with social and economic conditions in the community; third, that local owners should be established enough in the community to assure a full range of views on local issues; and fourth, that local owners, by virtue of their interconnected business and social networks, would be held accountable for the performance of their stations.[33]

The FCC publicly supported the prospects for UHF stations, announcing in its Sixth Report and Order (1952) that "we are convinced that the UHF band will be fully utilized and that UHF stations will eventually compete on a favorable basis with stations in the VHF."[34] Nevertheless, the FCC continued to discuss moving all television broadcasting to UHF,[35] leaving local applicants and owners scrambling to reposition themselves on short notice if necessary. When it became apparent by the late 1950s that UHF channels were mired in the financial mud, one FCC commissioner made it clear that the FCC was accepting no responsibility for the disaster. "I do not believe the Commission can be blamed for those who display bad business judgment in trying to move in on the UHF channels without making a thorough assessment of the availability of equipment both for receiving and transmitting as well as the economic factors which they might be confronted within the communities in which they proposed to establish service." Critic Vincent Mosco adds: "(The commissioner) did not discuss the Commission's own rosy forecasts for UHF, nor its own contribution to the creation

of a system where, in most cases, the only good business judgment for prospective UHF operators would (have been) to stay out of the market."[36]

WKOW-TV: First in Madison

Local Fortunes and the FCC Follies

WKOW-TV prided itself on being "First With Television in Madison."[37] The directors of the Monona Broadcasting Company had gone to some lengths to be able to make that claim. When shipment of the transmission tower was delayed in April 1953, the board sent director and contractor George Icke to Pittsburgh to try to expedite it. The station's debut had been set for June 21; but by the end of May, the tower had still not arrived. Icke was again dispatched east to help hurry matters along.[38]

The tower finally arrived on June 30 and was erected; a test pattern was broadcast successfully for several days, and July 8 was set for the official opening program. It was planned as a 30-minute introduction, featuring the board of directors rather than all of the 30-odd stockholders, as it was determined that the studio would not comfortably contain them all. The "studio," as it turned out, was simply a small office in a building at Icke's construction yard – the WKOW-TV building was not yet finished. "We were first on the air – and it probably cost us several thousand dollars to set it up there," Icke recalls.[39] The next day, newspaper reports said the "dedicatory" program began at 5 p.m. and lasted 15 minutes. The members of the board of directors were introduced as planned: President Stewart Watson, vice president E. B. (Ted) Rundell, treasurer E. C. (Ole) Severson, George Icke, Otto Sanders and Jacob Feldman. (Board secretary and company attorney Benjamin Huiskamp was in Europe and missed the historic event.) The dedication program was followed by a five-minute broadcast of "Crusader Rabbit"; news, sports and entertainment filled the next seven hours, and WKOW-TV was officially on the air.[40]

WKOW-TV was just a week ahead of another local UHF, WMTV, Channel 33. WMTV (now Channel 15), began broadcasting its test pattern on July 8, 1953, the same day that Channel 27 inaugurated its regular programming. Both stations were right in the middle of the great rush of stations jockeying for FCC licenses during 1952 and 1953, just after the freeze was lifted. The number of stations jumped from just over 100 in 1952 to 350 by the end of 1954, but Madison's WKOW-TV and WMTV were among only 41 UHF stations operating by the end of July 1953.[41]

Madison merchants made the UHF channels easily accessible for those TV set owners and new buyers who wanted to get the local stations and could afford to do so. Large display advertisements for the converters and UHF-equipped sets ran in the Wisconsin State Journal as Channel 27 debuted.[42] This cooperation among businesses made sense, of course, and was probably not unusual in all-UHF markets. Leo Bogart notes that in areas where UHF stations began broadcasting before the "V"s, set manufacturers provided retailers with UHF-equipped sets.[43] Some Madison-area set owners, however, had been receiving seven VHF channels, such as Channel 2 from Chicago and Channel 3 from Milwaukee. UHF converters were needed, and WKOW kept its test pattern on the air during the day to help local servicemen get converters and antennas installed properly for the best reception.[44]

By December 1953, a front-page story in the Wisconsin State Journal was headlined: "Record Christmas Buying Splurge, Rush on TV Indicated in Madison." The story, a typical holiday-buying booster piece, reports that with "the advent here of better viewing facilities, TV dealers in Madison are experiencing the first major holiday rush to purchase of new sets." A television set represented a major investment for many. "Cash is apparently a little short for large purchases," the story continues. "About three quarters of TV sets are purchased on contract, most of them running 18 to 20 months."[45] Perhaps not so coincidentally, the WKOW stockholders, at their annual meeting just six days before the front-page story appeared, had heard from WKOW-TV manager Vincent Vanderheiden, who asked "if they all had TV sets and about four-fifths of those present indicated they had. It was suggested that a banner Christmas present for 1953 would be a TV set."[46]

During that Christmas season in 1953, Monona Broadcasting Company's financial future was relatively bright. The owners and managers had established a successful radio station, navigated their way through the FCC freeze on television licenses and the resulting scramble for channel assignments, and reluctantly accepted their lot as a UHF station. WKOW radio was profitable enough to offset the losses the new television operation was sustaining, and the directors were assured by an optimistic manager that soon both would be operating in the black. It looked as though the founders' years of careful money management would pay off handsomely in the "Golden Age of Television.

In fact, however, the radio station carried the television station for nearly all of the next seven years, building on its early success in dominating the Madison radio market. WKOW radio had nurtured its rural Wisconsin audience from its first days on the air in 1948 and capitalized on its affiliation with CBS, "The Stars' Address," to

become the top station in the Madison area. The directors had initially hired a well-known farm expert, former director of the state department of agriculture Ralph Ammon, to manage their new radio station. Ammon also owned the monthly <u>Dairyland News</u>, which shared office space and some staff with WKOW radio.[47] <u>The Dairyland News</u> carried large display advertisements for the radio station, emphasizing its farm coverage and keeping the station well connected throughout the years to its rural listeners.[48]

The radio station's eventual success was hard won. In July of 1949, four years after the new company incorporated, it was still struggling financially. Ammon reported to the board of directors that the radio station had lost $6,000, despite paring expenses such as the engineers' salaries down to a minimum. Ammon was hopeful the fall advertising contracts would improve the balance sheet, however.[49] Nearly 50 years later, former board member George Icke recalls that the managers were always upbeat. "Money-wise, every meeting the manager would say, 'Well-l-l, things went good but you know we're running out of money' and there were always requests for more money. But always he was optimistic, saying things were going good ...," Icke said. "(We) felt like quitting a good many times! It was hard to keep pouring money in because it was bleeding us."[50] Nevertheless, at that same meeting in July 1949, the directors authorized Ammon to prepare an FCC application for a television license[51] after learning that the FCC had decided to make several television channels available in Madison.

The fledgling radio station continued to struggle. A new manager and the directors provided a full report to the stockholders at their annual meeting in December 1950. (Although Ammon had survived a small uprising from unhappy stockholders in December 1949,[52] he was replaced in September 1950.) Financial losses continued, but the company had hired Atlass Amusement Company of Chicago as consultants, agreeing to pay them half of their profits for five years.[53] Atlass had helped WKOW radio get out of its contract with the weaker Mutual Broadcasting Company and affiliate with CBS, the premier radio network.[54]

But it was the potential of television that intrigued the stockholders. At the end of their annual meeting, the floor was opened to questions. According to the minutes, "The only question asked was whether the station was considering television."[55] President Watson answered that WKOW, along with two other Madison stations, had television license applications in to the FCC[56] but that "because of the present war picture a freeze on any new television installations would probably again be going into effect."[57] The stockholders were warned that starting a television station would cost at

least $300,000 and the company would have to be prepared for "substantial" losses at first.[58]

In May 1951, as the FCC was still vacillating on how to allocate channels across the broadcast spectrum, the directors voted to lobby for the allocation of three UHF channels to Madison and to ask that VHF Channel 3 be reserved for educational purposes to remove it from commercial competition. Stockholder and company engineer Walter Kean of Chicago was employed to carry out the necessary feasibility studies.[59] At their February 1952 meeting, two months before the FCC licensing freeze was lifted, the directors authorized a down payment on a 10KW transmitter, cameras and other equipment, an expenditure of more than $300,000 excluding the needed land and building.[60]

By May 1952, the company had been showing a profit consistently for several months. But the board was keeping a close eye on the company's finances; the manager was asked to explain why the advertising salesmen were "getting considerably more in total wages and commissions than any of the other employees." The manager was requested to check into it and come back the next month with "some scheme of keeping our sales expense down."[61]

The directors also learned in May 1952 that the FCC had assigned to Madison Channels 3, 27 and 33 for commercial use and Channel 21 for educational use and instructed all previous applicants to reapply. Although this would lead the board in future meetings to try to outguess the FCC on WKOW's chances of winning the prized VHF station, it decided to authorize up to $300,000 in debenture bonds to finance a television station and deal with the channel assignment later.[62]

The June 1952 minutes reflect a report by the station manager that WKOW had its "best month in its history in May, with a profit before consultant's fees of over $7,000." The minutes then noted flatly that expense accounts for the salesmen had been cut as requested.[63]

The next month, July 1952, the directors spent considerable time debating the advisability of applying for Channel 3, the preferred VHF position, versus Channel 27. They learned that the FCC order reserving Channel 21 for educational purposes was not final; there was still some talk that Channel 3 would be assigned that spot. The directors opted to complete a second application for Channel 27, to be held at the ready should Channel 3 be reassigned.[64]

By midsummer, business was booming for the radio station, with a net profit before the Atlass commission of about $8,000 and an audience survey that reported that WKOW radio was the top station in the five-county area. The board was also doing

its best to prepare for the FCC's final decision on television channel allocation, but it was a complicated plan. Competitor WISC had switched its application from Channel 3 to Channel 27; an out-of-town group, Bartell Broadcasting Company of Milwaukee, had applied for Channel 33. Finally the board decided to prepare applications for all of the available frequencies, submit the Channel 3 application if that frequency was finally assigned for commercial use, and let the executive committee make a quick decision on the alternative UHF applications if Channel 3 went to education.

In September 1952, the matter of the salesmen's compensation was also addressed again. "The manager then stated that since we appeared now to be the leading station in Madison, it seemed no longer necessary to be paying the salesmen 12% commission when (local competitor) WIBA operated upon a 10% commission." The board approved the change, and "the manager requested that he be allowed to break this to the salesmen in his own way, which was very acceptable to the Board."[65]

Meanwhile, the game of musical chairs that the FCC's indecision had provoked was somewhat resolved; the Channel 3 controversy had gone to court and Monona Broadcasting had opted to submit its application for Channel 27.[66] And, the financial news was good; the second week of October was the best sales month ever.[67] At their annual meeting that December, the directors had more good news for the stockholders. The company had a net profit for 1952 of about $30,000. The contract with Atlass Amusement had been canceled because the FCC frowned upon the profit-sharing arrangement. Although the Atlass-WKOW contract contained explicit language explaining that the duties of Chicago consultants were to "advise and conduct studies of our business, not to direct or control it," and Atlass had not exercised its stock-purchase option,[68] the board did not want to complicate its FCC applications. Left unsaid was the fact that the company would now retain 100 percent of its profits.

The directors then tried to disentangle the FCC application mess for the stockholders, finally assuring them that "the whole matter of the development of TV was a question requiring further study and action by the directors, and stockholders were assured that careful attention was being given to the matter." The manager acknowledged that with three TV stations in the Madison market, "aggressive salesmanship" would be needed to make WKOW successful, and that although a UHF channel assignment would make the job more difficult, it could be done.[69]

Eighteen days later, Dec. 20, 1952, the directors met to hear officially that WISC (owned by the Badger Television Group) had filed for Channel 3, leaving Monona Broadcasting Company as the only applicant for Channel 27. Despite "some sentiment to the effect that Channel 3 would always be the big TV station with the widest

coverage and that it was worth battling over," the directors voted 4-1 to put their efforts into getting Channel 27 on the air as soon as possible. From between the lines of attorney Benjamin Huiskamp's carefully typed minutes wafts a feeling of the directors' general exhaustion with the whole affair and their relief at finally making a decision.[70]

At the same December meeting, the directors, ever mindful of their business relationships, canceled their advertising contracts with a local business, the Towell Agency, "as the president, ... Arthur Towell, was affiliated with the Badger Television group," the successful Channel 3 bidders.[71]

During the first few months of 1953, as the company geared up to get its television station on the air, various members of the board and the manager visited UHF stations in California, Oregon, Indiana, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The manager reported in January that he'd already had inquiries from advertisers about sponsoring local shows and in February he would talk to CBS about extending the radio station's affiliation to the new TV operation. By the end of February, the CBS affiliation had been cemented, and in one of the few discussions about program content recorded throughout the years, the manager told the board that rival network Du Mont's national programs would "dovetail well" with the CBS offerings and could be used to fill any programming holes.[72]

WKOW's experience was being repeated across the nation as companies scrambled to get their new stations on the air. For the Monona Broadcasting Company, prospects were good. The radio operation was getting stronger all the time; WKOW had the highest radio penetration in the most counties of any Madison station and a new audience rating had "dissipated sales resistance" among advertisers. The listening audience had grown by 42 percent in three years, one of the highest rates in the nation.[73]

A profitable radio operation was clearly crucial to the company's success in introducing television, which was expected to operate at a substantial loss for some months. Construction was to begin on the television station and tower on March 1, 1953. About a third of the roughly $300,000 investment was to be financed by RCA, which was providing the equipment, and a shortfall of about $35,000 was to be met by calling in a portion of the directors' subscriptions in the amount of $5,000 each. As the company's TV debut date approached, business was looking good. The manager reported in May that the company had an April profit of about $8,500; May, he said, was running ahead of April and could be the biggest month in the history of the company. The CBS affiliation contract had been signed; WKOW would get shows on kinescope and broadcast them one week later than their original broadcast dates in

New York. Enough advertising had been sold to cover 50 percent of the television station's operating costs; and, the manager reported, "Although WMTV (Channel 33) is working hard using high pressure, with our CBS affiliation and the opportunity of showing the best TV shows, we are able to sell spots around these shows with little or no sales resistance."[74]

In June, the transmission tower finally arrived (hurried along by George Icke's visits to the Pittsburgh builder), and on July 8, 1953, local television came to Madison. For the next couple of years, WKOW-TV prospered financially. A new manager, Ben Hovel, was creative in promoting the station, trying out advertising contracts that combined radio and TV spots. By early 1956, the television station was outperforming the radio station. Then disaster hit. CBS canceled its longtime contract with WKOW-TV and affiliated with WISC, Channel 3, the VHF station that was just getting on the air. Hovel was not particularly surprised; after all, the powerful CBS and NBC networks were abandoning the pioneer UHFs in droves as the FCC "intermixed" more markets, leaving many of the "U"s, including WKOW, in the hands of the ABC.[75]

Hovel understood at the time that CBS was making a good business decision. The new VHF channel had a stronger, more reliable signal and could deliver a bigger audience. "They had the right in our contract with them to give us six months' notice of their intention to cancel it, which they did," Hovel recalls, but not before notifying the station informally and giving their Madison affiliate a chance to respond. "I said, 'Well, if you've decided you're going to do it, I'm not going to assume you'll change it regardless of what we have to say, but I have a problem,'" Hovel recounts. "I said, 'We owe contracts for equipment payments for installment payments and it will take us at least nine months to clear those up before we have to take the nose dive,' as I referred to it." CBS responded by giving WKOW the requested nine months before handing their top-ranked programs over to Channel 3. "They were very good to us, the network," Hovel says now. "We had no fault to find with them at all." [76]

When WKOW-TV lost CBS, Hovel and the board decided that second place in the Madison area would still be a profitable spot. "We settled on a sort of theme for the entire staff and that was... our GQ – our Good Quality, as we referred to it. Our Good Quality was that our signal reached the primary Madison trade zone – five or six counties (and) our signal was equal to Channel 3 in the primary Madison trade zone. (We had) sales meetings every Saturday morning and we forgot all about our competition and concentrated on doing what we had to do – that was the kind of atmosphere we worked in, which was ideal for surviving the transitions."

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Hovel was also adept at establishing a "family" feeling among the staff, most of whom worked at a variety of jobs in front of and behind the camera, that helped compensate for the long hours and low pay. Peter Mortenson was a part-timer on the production staff when the television station went on the air; for him, the family connection was real. He remembers driving his mother, Luella, to the station for her first television broadcast. Luella Mortenson had been a mainstay of women's programming on WKOW radio for years and as soon as she took her cooking and interview programs live on camera, she became even more popular as a local television celebrity. Mortenson says that Channel 33 tried to woo his mother away from Channel 27 before the rival UHFs went on the air, but she opted to stay with WKOW where she would be able to do both radio and television programs.[77] Advertising was easy to sell for Luella Mortenson's programs and airing them was always profitable for the station.

Getting the station on the air was very exciting for young Mortenson and his coworkers; he had a number of jobs at the station during the next decade, from burning the trash to writing the news. "I loved the work, loved being out there," Mortenson says. "I had no interest in being on camera – that was not my thing – but I loved the production side of it. You knew you had to have it right because there was no retaping!"

Although he wasn't privy to the financial status of the station, Mortenson recalls the first few years as reasonably successful. He remembers a colleague reacting to a statement about how much money the station was making with the exclamation, "Well, it doesn't show up in *my* paycheck." It's a comment that has stuck with him for four decades. And Mortenson is still indignant about the seemingly endless demands from the engineers for wage increases, especially during the lean years that followed Channel 3's arrival on the scene. "I was very incensed about how much the union engineers made," Mortenson says. "It was terrible, terrible. It always hurt me because I thought 'You're hurting the company, you're hurting the people who are trying to keep this company going.' I thought they were overcompensated. Other stations just hired kids off the street."

The directors did try to hold the line with the engineers, often going months without signing a new contract until Hovel could negotiate an agreement acceptable to both sides. But meanwhile, the "nose dive" the manager had anticipated at the loss of the CBS affiliation steepened. Director Ole Severson reported that sales of all-channel television sets – those that could tune in both UHF and VHF stations without converters – were dropping.[78] On-the-air personalities were leaving for better-paying

jobs at VHF stations in other cities.[79] The company made less than $3,000 in 1957,[80] and the directors wanted out. Some even voted to form a separate corporation to handle the television operation; resolutions were passed, incorporation papers were drawn up but never filed. Severson resigned at one point, stating that the duties of treasurer and board member "had been aggravating a highly nervous condition."[81] He remained active as a stockholder, however, and was reelected to the board nine months later at the annual meeting.

The staff's willingness to work long hours for low pay was rewarded by well-attended summer picnics at Benjamin Huiskamp's lakeside home and lavish Christmas parties in the good years. As the company's fortunes dipped, the Christmas parties turned into potlucks; but the directors continued to present the staff with health insurance as a holiday bonus. Altruism gets little of the credit for the latter: "Well, we were all in business and we knew that would help!" George Icke recalls. "Some of those people we didn't even know."[82]

For the next three years, the board members looked anxiously – and very discreetly – for a buyer. Their official minutes contain no hint of the strong desire to sell and the relief at finding a buyer that is still vivid in the mind of George Icke. "We were way in the hole. We were tickled pink to find somebody who would buy it and ... we got this offer from the company out in the Dakotas (Midcontinent Broadcasting). We had a little meeting there and Ole Severson, one of the directors, was there and I voted 'Let's sell!' We hadn't made a penny. Let's sell, I said, because there was a chance to get back our investment. I told Ole Severson, 'Sit down and write the letter and I'm going to drive you over to the mailbox and pull your ear until you put that offer in there.' It was an offer I never dreamed of would go through. Well, it went through, one of the happy moments of my life, and that was the beginning of my giving away to my children. I took that money and divided it into four parts and I gave it to my kids. That was the end of TV for me."[83]

Midcontinent Broadcasting paid $925,000 for WKOW radio and television in 1960. When Peter Mortenson first heard the details of the sale, he was shocked. "When Midcontinent bought the station, I was frightened frankly because I thought oh-h-h-h, this is a change; it's outside people coming in here. ... When that announcement came through I can still remember just being panicked. When I found out the (sale) figures, they didn't make a lot of sense to me. I found out the radio station was valued at something like $600,000 and the TV station was only $325,000. Oh my heavens (I thought), this little thing I'm working for is worth only half the radio station (and) I began to realize that this (had been) a tough situation."[84]

Public Service and Politics

If there was a concern for public service in WKOW's programming, it came more from the station staff than from the owners or managers. George Icke says he paid little attention to what the station put on the air; his job was to monitor his investment. The directors did record in their minutes a number of compliments to various telethon efforts.[85] Director Jacob Feldman commended the staff on raising more than $20,000 in January 1957 in a weekend "Poliothon," and he compared the effort most favorably to that of arch-rival WISC, which had managed only a paltry $3,000 for their Christmas fund a month earlier. But overall, the directors' concern for politics and community involvement was reflected more in their notes about advertising revenue and corporate contributions than in philosophical discussions about the role their station could play in the civic life of the community. For example, in February 1952, the directors discussed the need to develop a policy for political advertising on the radio station. The next month they adopted a voter-friendly policy: They ordered the salesmen not to sell less than five minutes of ad time to any one speaker, to refuse to air "dramatizations," and to limit political advertising for any one candidate on the day before the election.[86] In September 1952, the minutes of a special meeting report, "It was mentioned by one of the directors that our policy on political advertising has lost us a considerable amount of political business prior to the primary election and he suggested that this might call for a reexamination of our policy." [87] But two weeks later, at the board's regular monthly meeting, the manager reported WKOW and WTMJ of Milwaukee were the only two stations not selling political "spots" (ads of less than five minutes). "The manager stated that we could not make a sale to some without sales to others and our regular advertising business was sufficiently good and the spots so taken up that there would not be enough to go around among all candidates," reported board secretary Benjamin Huiskamp in the minutes. The policy remained unchanged.[88] In the end, their decision paid double dividends. "Our policy to refuse spot political announcements, although appearing at first to hurt us, was now paying off with many political sales for longer periods," Huiskamp concluded in October.[89]

In February 1952 the directors succumbed to the manager's persuasive argument that other stations were making pledges to the Red Cross of $100 and authorized the same. (In other decisions, the directors routinely ensured that their business connections were mutually beneficial. Icke's construction company got the contracts for building the station and erecting the towers.[90] The directors divvied up their bank account between Bank of Madison, which had spent about $4,000 one year

in advertising on the radio station, and American Exchange Bank, which was willing to give the company a letter of credit in support of its TV application.[91] As noted earlier, when Monona Broadcasting was competing with Badger Television Group for an FCC license, the Monona directors dropped an advertising contract with a company whose owner was a stockholder in the rival television group.[92])

Even the highly successful telethons served a dual purpose. Recalls Peter Mortenson: "Channel 27 did more of that than anybody else. It was really very costly for the station, but they did it – they just insisted that was something they wanted to do for the community. It was *not* something you had to do for your FCC license but it certainly looked good, I'm sure. It was a civic thing that the station did that involved a lot of people, and probably it was also good from a business standpoint because we were able to have some of the wealthier people in town on who then might sponsor something."[93]

Throughout the late '50s and beyond, Mortenson and his coworkers continued to work the long hours needed to keep the station on the air. He believes his mother, Luella, who not only continued with her radio and television shows but taught at the University of Wisconsin, saw that television could be an opportunity to educate people and he remembers the station as a whole "bending over backward" to provide viewers with information on the community and "not only because they had to because of the FCC rules."

"We had a series on every Saturday night at 6:15 or something like that, the mayor's report, and the mayor came out (to the station) and did a live show 15 minutes every week ... There was (also) a county government show. The television stations made time available – and not (just) twilight or the early hours of the morning either. I think the stations did as much as they possibly could to promote things that were going on in the community. I know because I wrote a lot of the stuff myself; (I) would take whatever community service messages that were local and promote those ahead of something that was national."

Conclusion:
WKOW-TV: Surviving against the odds

The Monona Broadcasting Company was actually remarkably successful. Nationally, few of the UHFs of its generation survived. The year WKOW went on the air, 1953, was the last year that new UHFs outnumbered abandoned ones, 123 to 2. In 1954, 29 UHFs "went dark" and only 25 took the plunge. By mid-1959, just about the

time Monona's owners were getting frantic to sell, only 75 UHFs remained on the air out of the 165 who had started broadcasting after July 1952.[94]

This group of local businessmen, embodying the very qualities that the FCC had philosophized would ensure responsive and responsible local programming, took every curve ball the regulators threw and managed to stay in the game long enough to recoup their investment and leave Madison with a legacy of competitive news and programming. Caught between the major players – CBS, NBC, and the FCC – and unable to do much except react, the Monona investors kept their attention riveted on the ledger sheets. Many of the recorded minutes open with the notation that a financial report "had been prepared on five multigraphed sheets";[95] although the directors were often less than happy with the bottom line, they regularly complimented the fine presentation of the bad news.

The political and corporate maneuverings of the FCC and the national networks buffeted all the struggling UHFs for more than a decade, but in the end, politics saved the investors in the Monona Broadcasting Company. According to Blake Kellogg, who was hired by Midcontinent to run the stations' news department in 1960, the new owners bought WKOW-TV because they thought they had enough political power to get the Madison market de-intermixed,[96] that is, to get Channel 3 removed from commercial use and reassigned to a UHF spot. Kellogg recalls that Midcontinent had "some kind of pipeline" to Newton Minow, who had been tapped by President John F. Kennedy to head the FCC;[97] WKOW's new owners were confident that de-intermixture was possible and potentially very profitable.

They were mistaken. In 1967, the FCC rejected WKOW's plea to move WISC-TV from Channel 3 to a UHF band. The FCC said its 1964 "all-channel" ruling that required new television sets to be equipped for both UHF and VHF would rescue the surviving UHFs. The FCC was unmoved when WKOW's owners pointed out that Madison's sole VHF channel, WISC-TV, made nearly a million dollars in 1965; WMTV made about $90,000, and WKOW-TV lost $100,000. During the hearings, said the newspaper report, "WKOW insisted the all-channel concept 'hasn't worked in Madison and will never work anywhere.'"[98]

Although the story of this hardy UHF television station opens just a small window on the history of early television, it might be argued that had the FCC equalized the broadcast playing field across the country by limiting the VHF band to educational programming, television might have developed quite differently. Local programming might have developed on a number of UHF channels, diluting the

influence and power of the networks and nurturing a sense of local community through public service.

WKOW probably survived on the strength of its local programming. Popular personalities such as Luella Mortenson were synonymous with WKOW and delivered the audiences needed to sell advertising. Marsh Shapiro, who became a local legend as kid-show host "Marshall the Marshal," arrived at WKOW after Monona Broadcasting sold the station, but he inherited Channel 27's good reputation in the community. "When I got into the broadcast business back in 1960," he points out, "most of the on-the-air people were local, people who had come up through the ranks. They had a basic background in what Madison was, they knew people, they had good news contacts, they were able to make judgments that could relate to the community interest."

Shapiro firmly believes the two UHF stations did a better job of covering the local community than did the more powerful VHF station, Channel 3. "We had to work twice as hard to get to where Channel 3 was," he recalls. "We were constantly climbing the mountain because they had oodles of money (but) their news and sports and weather were really kind of inferior at the time. Generally 15 and 27 were super competitive. (Channel 3) was more the regional station because they had the VHF; they were more the snobby kind of station. (Channel 3 owner) Morgan Murphy had deep pockets, but he didn't even have to get into his deep pockets just by the mere fact that they were here and they were the 'V.' They could have put a chimp on the air and they would have got the same ratings."[99]

The story of WKOW-TV suggests that, had the FCC handled the UHF vs.VHF problem differently, many more local television stations might have emerged from the heady days of the Golden Age of Television financially sound, committed to public service, and filled with local programming. The frustration of such a counterfactual, however, is that history cannot tell us the ending of a story that never happened. Perhaps other events would have conspired to snuff out local television's potential; perhaps not. But clearly, understanding how the politics and power of government regulation so effectively limited local use of a new medium may inform our thinking about the challenges of new media that lie ahead.

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[1] Monona Broadcasting Company document collection, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, Boxes 1-2. All subsequent references are to the official minutes of board meetings, numbered sequentially in the collection.

[2] James L. Baughman, "Television in the 'Golden Age': An Entrepreneurial Experiment," The Historian 47

(February 1985),180.

[3] For a highly readable overview, see Erik Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[4] Sydney W. Head and Christopher H. Sterling, *Broadcasting in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1982), 179.

[5] Douglas Kellner, *Television and the Crisis of Democracy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 37-38.

[6] Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty*, 83-92.

[7] Head and Sterling, *Broadcasting in America* , 184.

[8] Christopher H. Sterling, *Electronic Media* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), 16-18; Head and Sterling, *Broadcasting in America,* 184. The fight between RCA and CBS to get their rival color technologies endorsed by the FCC is fascinating and well-chronicled in Christopher H. Sterling and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A Concise History of American Broadcasting* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1978), 296-298.

[9] Head and Sterling, *Broadcasting in America,* 187.

[10] Leo Bogart, *The Age of Television* (NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1972), 302.

[11] Sterling, *Electronic Media,* 16.

[12] George Comstock, *Television in America* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991), 15.

[13] Ibid., 15.

[14] Sterling, *Electronic Media* , 236.

[15] Ibid., 235.

[16] Barnouw, *Tube of Plenty,* 113.

[17] John Michael Kittross, *Television Frequency Allocation Policy in the United States* (NY: Arno Press, 1979), 3.

[18] Ibid.,319.

[19] Ibid.,342. For example, in 20 all-UHF communities in 1956, the conversion rate averaged 74 percent.

[20] See Kittross, *Television Frequency Allocation Policy*, 324-344, for a comprehensive chronology of the affiliation disputes.

[21] Kittross, *Television Frequency Allocation Policy*, 337; Monona papers, Box 2, Folder 2, 512.

[22] Gary Newton Hess, *An Historical Study of the Du Mont Television Network* (NY: Arno Press, 1979), 217.

[23] Kittross, *Television Frequency Allocation Policy*, 9, 298. Beginning in 1954, the number of UHF channels that went off the air exceeded the number going on the air every year until 1959.

[24] Ibid., 288.

[25] James L. Baughman, *Television's Guardians: The FCC and The Politics of Programming, 1958-1967* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985), 10.

[26] The preceding discussion draws heavily on the description provided by Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 304-305.

[27] Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned,* 463.

[28] Kellner, *Crisis of Democracy* , 185.

[29] Baughman, *Television's Guardians,* 36.

[30] Ibid., 13.

[31] For a concise summary of the political follies of the FCC, see Baughman, *Television's Guardians,* 3-19.

[32] Vincent Mosco, *Broadcasting in the United States* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1979), 75.

[33] Richard Bunce, *Television in the Corporate Interest* (NY: Praeger Publishers, 1976), 17-18.

[34] Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned,* 317. This was in direct contradiction to the assessment in the report of the President's Communications Policy board, issued a year earlier, which stated flatly: "There is little possibility that a UHF station can compete successfully with a VHF station." (Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned,* 303).

[35] Ibid., 325.

[36] Quoted in Mosco, *Broadcasting,* 77.

[37] Display advertisement,*Wisconsin State Journal*, 9 July 1953. This small 2-column advertisement appeared only once in July 1953, the day after WKOW began broadcasting. It was embedded in the

television listings.
[38] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1, 394-397.
[39] George Icke, interview by author, tape recording, Madison, Wisc., 28 April 1997.
[40] "WKOW-TV On 7-Hour Schedule," Capital Times, 9 July 1953. "Today's TV Highlights," Wisconsin State Journal, 8 July, 1953, 1, 8.
[41] Kittross, Television Frequency Allocation Policy, 297.
[42] Wisconsin State Journal, 8 July 1953.
[43] Bogart, Age of Television, 303.
[44] Report to the board prepared by Vincent Vanderheiden, Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 2, 10 March 1954. Vanderheiden also noted that dealers kept television sets tuned to the WKOW test pattern and gave favorable mention to the advertising message that appeared with it.
[45] Wisconsin State Journal, 6 December 1953.
[46] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1, 420.
[47] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1. "Ammon named WKOW Manager," Wisconsin State Journal, 14 October 1948.
[48] See, for example, display ads for WKOW, Dairyland News, January 1952, February 1952, May 1952, April 1954.
[49] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1 , 243.
[50] Icke interview.
[51] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1, 243.
[52] According to an article in the Wisconsin State Journal following the 1949 meeting, headlined "Ammon Given Approval on Job/Stockholders Defeat His Foes at WKOW," a small group of stockholders tried to replace several members of the board of directors, apparently in an attempt to gain enough support to fire Ammon. The body of the article fails to explain the "foes" of the headline, although the company's engineering consultant, Walter Kean of Chicago, was one of the unsuccessful candidates for a board seat.
[53] This arrangement proved problematic when the station's FCC license came up for renewal. According to an article in The Capital Times, published June 14,1950, the FCC questioned the Atlass contract because of the commission's "well-established ... principle that a local corporation, granted an FCC operating permit under one set of conditions, cannot later turn over virtual control of the station and federal license to an outside corporation."
[54] The radio contract with CBS was important because it gave WKOW an advantage in securing its television affiliation with the powerful network.
[55] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1, 298.
[56] Ibid., 343. The company's original FCC application was submitted in 1948.
[57] The "war" reference is to the Korean conflict, 1950-1953. This discussion took place midway through the 1948-1952 FCC freeze on new television licenses, which likely had less to do with wartime restrictions than with national politics and network maneuvering.
[58] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1 , 298.
[59] Ibid., 312.
[60] Ibid., 339.
[61] Ibid., 345.
[62] Ibid., 345.
[63] Ibid., 348.
[64] Ibid., 350.
[65] Ibid., 356.
[66] Ibid., 356.
[67] Ibid., 359.
[68] Ibid., 296.
[69] Ibid., 369.
[70] Ibid., 372.
[71] Ibid., 372.

[72] Ibid., 382.
[73] Ibid., 382.
[74] Ibid., 396.
[75] The Du Mont Television Network officially disbanded in September 1955. For a full accounting, see Hess, *An Historical Study of the Du Mont Television Network.*
[76] Ben Hovel, interview by author, tape recording, Madison, Wisc., 26 April 1997.
[77] Peter Mortenson, interview with author, tape recording, Madison, Wisc., 22 April 1997.
[78] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 2, 525.
[79] Ibid., 542.
[80] Ibid., 559.
[81] Ibid., 539.
[82] Icke interview.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Mortenson interview.
[85] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 2, 539.
[86] Ibid., 340.
[87] Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 1, 354.
[88] Ibid., 355.
[89] Ibid., 359.
[90] Ibid., 375.
[91] Ibid., 356.
[92] Ibid., 372.
[93] Mortenson interview.
[94] Kittross, *Television Frequency Allocation Policy*, 298.
[95] For an example, see Monona collection, Box 2, Folder 2, 593.
[96] Blake Kellogg, interview by author, tape recording, Madison, Wisc., 15 April 1997.
[97] Baughman, *Television's Guardians,* 57-59. Minow was a native of Milwaukee.
[98] "FCC Says No to Plea by WKOW," *The Capital Times*, 9 March 1967.
[99] Marsh Shapiro, interview by author, tape recording, Madison, Wisc., 29 April 1997.

Agenda-Setting and Spanish Cable News

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Agenda-Setting and Spanish Cable News

Abstract

A survey conducted in a highly Hispanic area examined whether exposure to Spanish-language cable news had an agenda-setting effect. Results show that level of exposure was associated with agenda-setting effects for Spanish cable news, but perceived media credibility and media reliance were not related to the strength of agenda-setting effects. Exposure, credibility and reliance were not associated with agenda-setting effects for English-language newscasts -- perhaps because English-speakers had more news options in our survey area.

Agenda-Setting and Spanish Cable News

With approximately 30 million people, the Hispanic population in the United States is the fifth largest in the world (Avila, 1997). Hispanics represent approximately 12 percent of the total U.S. population (Turner & Allen, 1997). Currently, according to Nielsen's Hispanic People Meter, there are 7.51 million Hispanic households in the U.S. (Avila, 1997).

Since 1980, the Hispanic population has increased by 39 percent, a rate five times greater than the rate of increase of the general population (Goodson & Shaver, 1994). The diverse Hispanic population, in fact, will become the largest minority group in the U.S. by the turn of the century (Knopper, 1996, Roslow & Nicholls, 1996).

Yet despite this booming growth in population, relatively few mass communication researchers have examined Hispanics and their media use patterns -- especially investigations of possible media effects on the Hispanic population. This study attempts to fill this important void in mass communication research. Specifically, the present study will explore the agenda-setting effects of Spanish-language media and possible differences between agenda-setting effects for Hispanics and non-Hispanics. Through a telephone survey conducted in a community with a high Hispanic population, we will examine whether issue coverage in Spanish cable news broadcasts influenced the perceived importance of issues held by Spanish-speaking individuals -- in other words, whether Spanish cable news set the issue agenda for Spanish-speakers.

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While mass communication researchers have been slow to investigate the Latino population, the $178 billion buying power of the U.S. Hispanic market (Kerwin, 1993) has not gone unnoticed by advertisers. Hispanic advertising budgets are estimated at $640 million, and $1.2 billion are spent annually on all Hispanic media outlets. Spanish-language television consumes half of the Hispanic advertising budget with Univision controlling 77 percent of the U.S. Spanish TV market and Telemundo 23 percent (Avila, 1997). According to Mendosa (1996), the advertising revenues for Univision grew from $316.5 million to $345.2 million and Telemundo's advertising revenues increased by 21% between 1995 and 1996.

About 19 million American Hispanics tune into Spanish-language media on a daily basis (Roslow & Nicholls, 1996). Some researchers like to point out that Spanish-language media serve as a niche for recent immigrants and do not reach all Hispanics because 22 percent of Hispanics do not speak any Spanish (Avila, 1997). According to Frase-Blunt (1991), the audience for Spanish-language television is predominantly younger immigrants who prefer Spanish to English.

In some specific areas, Spanish-language media are dominant. In Miami, for instance, Univision has surpassed ABC, NBC, CBS and Fox (Avila, 1997). A Spanish-language radio station (KVLE) reached the number one spot in Los Angeles, and another Spanish station (WSKQ) went up to number two in New York (Knopper, 1996).

Given the increasing importance of Spanish media, an examination of the processing of Spanish news media content is timely and warranted. The main research question examined here, then, is: Do Spanish news broadcasts perform the same agenda-setting function that has been found consistently in studies of the U.S. English-speaking networks?

Hispanics and the media

Several researchers have examined Hispanics and the media through content analyses. Differences in news coverage, for example, were observed by Turner and Allen (1997) in their comparison of the daily Latino and mainstream newspapers in Los Angeles. They examined the coverage for three days following the 1996 presidential election and found that the *Los Angeles Times* took a global perspective while *La Opinion* concentrated on the election only as it related to challenges facing the president. *La Opinion* stressed the size of the Latino vote more than the *Los Angeles Times*.

In terms of media behavior, Dunn (1975) conducted a study to determine if clusters of relevant subgroups of social characteristics, media habits, and preferences might be identified within the Mexican-American community. He found differences between traditional and nontraditional clusters and between housewives and out-of-home workers.

Lewels (1981), on the other hand, examined the differences in attitudes toward the media between Mexican-Americans with no media experience, those with some exposure and those who are employed as media professionals and found some distinct differences between the groups. The alienated minority seems to harbor the deepest resentment and antipathy toward the media. He also found a deep-seated distrust of the media and a suspicion that minority interests are not a prime concern of the media.

Several other examinations of differences between racial groups in mass communication research have produced a mixed bag of results. The question of potential differences in mass media consumption, for instance, is not clear cut. While Fielder and Tipton (1986) found that minority populations tend to use newspapers less than whites, Cranberg and Rodriguez

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(1994) note that the percentages of adult minority readership mirror the overall U.S. population. Cranberg and Rodriguez (1994) argue that little difference exists in the newspaper readership between African-Americans and whites. They compared the distribution of adult population by race (white, 85.48%, African-American, 11.36%) and the distribution of newspaper readers by race (white 86.35%, African-American 11.25%) and found little difference. While percentages on Latino readership differed, the authors credited that difference to language barriers.

Language provides no such barrier in the present study. In fact, because of the Spanish cable network, Spanish-speaking individuals potentially could be highly influenced by this network's news coverage for a number of reasons.

First, since this network provides information in Spanish, individuals with Spanish as their first language may attend to the Univision messages more closely. Attention has been found to correlate highly with mass media effects. Semetko, Brzinski, Weaver and Willnat (1992), for example, found that attention to international news more strongly influenced opinions about foreign countries than did simple exposure. Similarly, Drew and Weaver (1990), Chaffee and Schleuder (1986) and McLeod and McDonald (1985) all found that attention to news more strongly predicted opinion formation than mere exposure to news.

Second, Spanish-speakers may use the Spanish network news to learn what is happening in the world around them. With only one Spanish channel from which to learn about important issues, Spanish-speakers have fewer options for their news than English-speakers, who can chose from the newscasts of the three national networks, as well as CNN, CNN Headline

News, Fox News and other cable news channels. Thus, English-speakers may receive conflicting salience cues for the various media in our survey area.

Finally, Spanish-speakers may use the Spanish cable news programs to acculturate themselves to the U.S. As Kim (1979) notes, individuals identified in some fashion as minorities tend to become acquainted with and adopt "the norms and values of a salient reference group." In this case, Hispanics may use the Spanish cable newscasts as a tool to learn the relative importance of issues of the general U.S. population. Thus, strong agenda-setting effects may be found among viewers of these newscasts.

Agenda-setting

Since the seminal study by McCombs and Shaw (1972), the vast majority of agenda-setting studies have found support for the notion that members of the public learn the relative importance of issues from the amount of coverage these issues receive in the mass media. Recent studies have made several refinements to the original agenda-setting hypothesis.

Early studies used aggregated data, employing the issue, rather than the individual respondent, as the unit of analysis (for example, McCombs and Shaw, 1972; Funkhouser, 1973). While these studies were able to examine several issue variables -- for instance, the obtrusiveness of issues (Zucker, 1978) -- investigations of factors within individuals that could play a role in the agenda-setting process were difficult.

A consistent problem with many previous agenda-setting studies has been how to examine individuals as the unit of measurement. Indeed, individuals should be the focus of more research in agenda-setting. It is the individual who consumes and processes issue information contained in the news media. And it is the individual who ultimately displays the agenda-

setting effect. While agenda-setting may be a societal effect, the process of agenda-setting takes place within individuals.

Hill (1985) provided a crucial first step in research in this area. Hill uncovered only one demographic variable that appeared to influence the media agenda-setting effect. He found that if respondents had some college education, they were more susceptible to agenda-setting effects than individuals with lower levels of education. According to Hill's study, then, education played a role in media agenda-setting.

It should be noted, however, that Hill's methodology had a significant shortcoming. Hill used a five-point Likert-type scale to examine individuals' issue agendas. The responses to questions dealing with the perceived importance of issues were used to rank the issues. Thus, there were several "ties" among the issue ranks for each respondent. Since computations of Spearman rank-order correlations are hampered by tied categories, the results could have been less rigorous as they may have been with a different methodology.

Recently, Wanta (1997) employed an "agenda-setting susceptibility" score to examine individual variables. This measure, essentially an index of issue concern responses weighted by media coverage, is used in the present study.

Utilizing this agenda-setting effects index, Wanta (1997) employed a path analysis model of agenda-setting effects. According to his results, individuals first form opinions regarding the perceived credibility of the mass media. Based on these perceptions, individuals form a level of reliance on the mass media for information. Individuals then expose themselves to media content based on this level of reliance. Finally, exposure to the media

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leads to agenda-setting effects. Thus, the results showed agenda-setting effects were strongest for active processors of media messages.

Miller and Wanta (1996) also used this agenda-setting susceptibility measure to examine agenda-setting differences between different racial groups -- one of the first studies to investigate race as a variable in media effects research. Their survey found whites and non-whites were extremely similar in the two sites of their study. The lone exception was that minorities in a city with a high minority population (Tampa, Florida) demonstrated concern with more issues than either whites in the same city or minorities and whites in a city with a low minority population (Eugene, Oregon). They speculate that this difference may have been due to the availability of minority-based newspapers in the Tampa area.

Researchers have found several psychological factors may affect the magnitude of agenda-setting effects. Two such variables – media credibility and media reliance -- seem especially pertinent to an examination of Hispanics and their uses of the news media.

Meyer (1989) developed a media credibility index consisting of two factors. From his factor analysis, Meyer found two useful scales: one dealing with the believability of the news media, the other with community affiliation. Believability is based on the notion that news media need to offer accurate and unbiased information. Community affiliation is based on newspaper editors' concerns that media need to maintain harmony and a leadership status in a community. Both factors are used in the present study. Indeed, if individuals view the news media in a positive way on these two factors, they likely will display strong agenda-setting effects. Agenda-setting influences, in other words, should be stronger if the receiver of a media

message views the sender of the message in a highly positive light. Wanta and Hu (1994) found some support for this relationship.

Reliance on the media for information likewise should influence the agenda-setting power of the news media. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach note that individuals develop dependencies on the mass media because people tend to be goal oriented and often require resources controlled by the media to achieve their goals. If individuals have a goal of gaining information on the important issues of the day, they will become highly dependent on the media, since the media control access to a variety of information. High reliance on the media, then, should lead to powerful media influences. Thus, if individuals become highly reliant on the news media for information, they will display strong agenda-setting effects. Again, Wanta and Hu (1994) found support for this relationship.

Hypotheses

Two hypotheses will be tested here examining the relationship between exposure to news media and agenda-setting effects:

H1: The more individuals are exposed to Spanish cable news broadcasts, the more they will perceive issues covered on the newscasts to be highly important.

H2: The more individuals are exposed to U.S. news broadcasts, the more they will perceive issues covered on the newscasts to be highly important.

These two hypotheses are based on previous research showing that the more individuals are exposed to mass media news coverage, the more they will believe the issues covered by the media are important — the basic logic behind the agenda-setting hypothesis. Furthermore, if minorities were

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influenced by the minority press in Tampa, as Miller and Wanta (1996) argue, perhaps a similar case will be found in the present study. In other words, Spanish-speakers may learn the relative importance of issues from their exposure to Spanish cable news.

And if exposure is a key variable influencing the magnitude of agenda-setting effects (Wanta, 1997), high levels of exposure to Spanish cable news should lead to strong agenda-setting effects for Spanish-speakers. Similarly, high levels of exposure to U.S. newscasts should lead to strong agenda-setting effects for English-speakers.

In addition to testing for the above hypotheses, we will also examine the potential role of two other factors: the perceived credibility of the news media and the level of media reliance within individuals. Both have been found to play important roles in the agenda-setting process (Wanta and Hu, 1994). Thus, two additional hypotheses will be tested:

H3: The more credible that individuals view the news media to be, the stronger the agenda-setting effects they will display.

H4: The higher the level of reliance that individuals feel toward the news media, the stronger the agenda-setting effects they will display.

If individuals view the news media in a positive way and form a reliance on the media for information, they likely will expose themselves often to media messages and thus become highly susceptible to agenda-setting influences.

Method

A telephone survey was conducted spring of 1997 in the border city of McAllen, Texas. McAllen's population is approximately 110,000 of which 91 percent is Hispanic. The median household income is $30,544 and the

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median age is 26.7 (McAllen, 1997). The response rate for working numbers was approximately 72 percent. The telephone numbers were selected by random digit dialing and yielded 297 completed questionnaires.

Each questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete and included mostly closed-ended questions. Respondents were asked what they thought was the number one problem facing the country and were asked to determine their level of concern on 15 issues (extremely concerned, very concerned, somewhat concerned, a little concerned or not concerned at all). This series of questions dealing with issue concerns formed the basis for the present study. The survey also included sections on media habits, media credibility, perceptions of advertising and demographics.

To determine the relative strength of agenda-setting effects displayed by respondents, a methodology was utilized that was nearly identical to that used previously by Miller and Wanta (1996) and Wanta (1997).

First, the national newscasts in Spanish and English which aired in the McAllen area for two weeks prior to conducting the survey were videotaped and coded for issue rankings. According to Eaton (1989) and Winter and Eyal (1981), the optimum time to test for agenda setting effects is the two weeks immediately preceding the test of public opinion. Thus, for the two weeks before the survey period, the news reports of Univision, ABC and CBS were content analyzed for issue coverage. Since the Univision news programs are one hour long, and since NBC does not air in the McAllen market, the method provided a relatively equal amount of content for the Spanish and English news programs that would be available to McAllen residents.

Two agenda-setting effects scores were then computed, one for the Spanish network news broadcasts and one for the English network news broadcasts, both based on responses to the level of concern respondents

reported for the 15 issues included in our study. First, responses to three of these issue concern questions were weighted based on the number of stories the issues received on either the Spanish or English news programs. For example, 28% of the stories on Univision dealt with International Problems, 19% dealt with Drugs, and 13% dealt with Immigration. These were the three issues that topped the Spanish news agenda. Responses to these issues were weighted by .28, .19, and .13, then summed.

Next, responses to three issues that received no media coverage were used to guard against potential problems of individuals responding that they were concerned with all issues. Indeed, if respondents were highly concerned with all issues, even those that received little media attention, this would not show media influence but a psychological factor inherent in the individual. Thus, responses for the issues Gangs, Teen Pregnancy and Job Security were weighted by the average of the three highest coverage issues, then subtracted from the total for the highly covered issues. This final score, then, gave an indication of the magnitude of the Spanish network news' agenda-setting influence that an individual displayed.

Similarly, for the English news agenda, responses to International Problems were weighted by .22, Crime by .21 and Economy by .11. These were the top three issues on the U.S. network news agenda. These scores were then summed, and the score for the non-covered issues used in the Spanish news agenda-setting effects score was subtracted from the total. This final score formed the English news agenda-setting effects score.

The two agenda-setting scores were relatively similar across the respondents sampled here. The English news agenda-setting effects scores were slighly larger than the Spanish effects scores (mean = .803, standard

deviation = .617 for the English news; mean = .512, standard deviation = .557 for the Spanish news).

These two agenda-setting effects scores were then used as dependent variables in a series of regression analyses. Used as independent variables were exposure to Spanish cable news or exposure to U.S. network news; the two media credibility measures involving believability and community affiliation; and media reliance.

Two exposure questions asked respondents how many days in a typical week they watched the Spanish cable news and the U.S. network news. The believability measure asked respondents if they strongly agreed, agreed, were neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the following statements: News organizations like newspapers and television news try to manipulate public opinion, news organizations often fail to get all of the facts straight, news organizations don't deal fairly with all sides of a political or social issue, news organizations do a poor job of separating facts from opinions. The community affiliation measure asked respondents if they strongly agreed to strongly disagreed with the following: News organizations are concerned with the community's well-being, news organizations watch out for your interests, and news organizations are concerned mainly about the public welfare. These two credibility measures are a subset of the indexes developed by Meyer (1989). Finally, reliance was measure by the respondents' level of agreement with the following: I rely on TV news and special reports for information about politics and important issues.

Results

In the survey, 58 percent of the respondents reported they were Hispanic, 13 percent reported they were partially Hispanic and 29 percent

reported they were not Hispanic. The mean income of respondents was between $30,000 and $50,000, and the mean age of respondents was 41, understandably higher than the average age of the McAllen general population, given the fact that we interviewed only individuals who were older than 18 years of age.

As would be expected, Hispanic individuals were more likely to display agenda-setting effects from Spanish cable news (mean = .5495) than non-Hispanics (mean = .4308). Similarly, non-Hispanics displayed stronger agenda-setting effects from the English-language network news (mean = .8031) than Hispanics (mean = .7935)

Table 1 shows Pearson correlations for the variables in our study. As the table details, exposure to Spanish cable news was positively associated with the Spanish agenda-setting effects score (r=.1259, p < .05). However, exposure to the English-language network news was not related to the English agenda-setting effects score (r=.0518, p > .05). In other words, exposure to the news was associated with agenda-setting effects only for the Spanish cable news. The more individuals watched the Spanish cable news, the stronger the agenda-setting effects they displayed.

The results of the regression analyses are listed in Table 2 and 3. According to Table 2, only exposure to Spanish cable news was associated with the agenda-setting effects score. The two credibility measures -- believability and community affiliation -- narrowly fell short of statistical significance. Media reliance also was not associated with media effects for the Spanish cable news.

According to Table 3, none of the independent variables was associated with the agenda-setting effects score for the U.S. English-language newscasts.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine whether exposure to the Spanish cable news had an agenda-setting influence on a highly Hispanic population. The results of our survey conducted in the Texas border town of McAllen support the agenda-setting hypothesis for the Spanish cable newscasts. The level of agenda-setting effects shown by respondents in McAllen was associated with their level of exposure to the Spanish-language newscasts, supporting our first hypothesis.

On the other hand, however, we did not find support for an agenda-setting influence of the U.S. national network newscasts. Individuals' exposure levels to English-language network news were not associated with the magnitude of effects they displayed, as our second hypothesis predicted. The lack of an agenda-setting effect here could be explained by a number of factors.

First, the lack of agenda-setting influence could be due to the fact that English-speakers have more news options than Spanish-speakers. Beyond ABC and CBS, the two media included in our content analysis, McAllen residents had several other news sources available to them: CNN, CNN Network news and Fox News, as well as several English-language newspapers. Thus, ABC and CBS, the sources for the media agenda used here, had competition from several other English-language media for individuals' attention. The issues covered by these two networks were in fact only a small portion of the overall issue agenda that English-speakers in McAllen potentially could be exposed to through the available English-language media in the area.

Univision, on the other hand, has a near monopoly for Spanish-speakers in McAllen. There were no other cable channels or local television

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stations providing news in Spanish in the area. In addition, relatively few other Spanish-language sources were available, all from across the border in Mexico.

Moreover, reported levels of exposure to other Spanish media, beyond exposure to Univision, were extremely low. While Hispanic respondents showed a mean score of 2.57 on the question dealing with the number of days in a typical week they watched Spanish cable news, the mean score dropped to .93 -- or less than once a week on average -- for days in a typical week in which they read a Spanish newspaper. This is in sharp contrast to the media usage patterns for Non-Hispanics in McAllen. Non-Hispanics reported watching English-language network newscasts an average of 4.68 times a week, but also reported reading English-language newspapers 5.54 times a week and watching English-language local news programs 5.32 times a week. In other words, Non-Hispanics were more likely to read English-language newspapers and watch local news programs than they were to watch the national network news. These other media could have given McAllen residents messages about the relative importance of issues that conflicted with the national network issue agenda. Clearly, English-speakers in McAllen were using a wide variety of news media while Spanish-speakers, because of limited news options, demonstrated a much more narrow pattern of news usage, focusing almost entirely on Spanish cable news.

Second, the results here may have been due to differences in the information processing of individuals. Spanish-speakers may have been more attentive when watching the Spanish cable newscasts than English-speakers were when watching the national network news. With the news broadcast in a more accessible language, Spanish-speakers may have been more active in their processing of information and thus may have been more

influenced by its content. They may have watched the Spanish newscasts with a strong intention of learning about important issues, while English-speakers may not have been as purposive in their viewing of national network newscasts.

The Spanish cable newscasts, meanwhile, also may have been providing its Spanish-speaking viewers with coverage of issues the cable network felt its viewers were concerned with -- a reverse agenda-setting process. In other words, the Spanish network may have covered issues it thought its viewers wanted to see. The data here provide some support for this notion. The third highest issue on the Spanish cable news agenda was immigration, likely an important issue for Spanish-speakers in the U.S. This issue received minimal coverage on the U.S. English-speaking networks. Immigration clearly was a more important issue for the audiences of the Spanish cable news, and thus received a great deal more coverage here than on the national network news.

One other difference should be noted dealing with issue coverage of the Spanish and English language newscasts. The national networks provided a significantly higher number of stories dealing with crime than did the Spanish cable news. Crime, however, was an important issue on the Spanish news agenda as well -- ranking fifth.

Finally, the differences found here may be due to intra-media agenda-setting. It is possible that the Spanish cable network had its agenda set by U.S. networks. If this were the case, the two-week time-lag utilized in our methodology may have been sensitive enough for the Spanish newscasts but not sensitive enough for the national networks. If issue coverage begins with the U.S. networks and filters its way to the Spanish cable news, perhaps a longer time-lag would have produced a different issue agenda for the U.S.

networks, and thus different agenda-setting effects results. Future research, then, might examine the relationship between coverage of U.S. and Spanish newscasts.

The lack of influence dealing with the credibility and reliance measures used here is puzzling. Possibly, these variables do not directly impact the magnitude of agenda-setting effects, but instead have an indirect influence. Indeed, Wanta and Hu (1994) found that credibility is associated with reliance, reliance is associated with exposure, and exposure is associated with agenda-setting effects. Thus, these variables interact with each other before eventually having an indirect influence on agenda-setting effects. A similar process could be occurring here.

The data here again offer some support for this explanation. Statistically significant correlations were found for the community affiliation index and several other variables, including our reliance measure (r=.3724, p<.001), exposure to network news (r=.1246, p=.035) and exposure to Spanish cable news (r=.1271, p=.032). Thus, these variables may be part of a broad agenda-setting process.

Another plausible explanation is that our questions dealing with reliance and credibility were not medium specific. Our reliance question, for example, asked respondents about their reliance on "TV news and special reports" in general. Perhaps if the question asked specifically about reliance on Spanish cable news, we may have found a stronger link between reliance, agenda-setting effects and/or Spanish cable news exposure. The same could be the case with the believability and community affiliation measures, both of which dealt with "news organizations" in general.

Overall, the findings here suggest that the respondents in our study did indeed learn the relative importance of issues from the coverage these issues

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received on the Spanish cable news. The agenda-setting function of the Spanish-language news media, then, was at work in the present study.

Perhaps, as was mentioned earlier, Spanish-speakers were attempting to become more enculturated into U.S. by learning about the issues of importance as covered on Spanish cable news. Or perhaps, Spanish-speakers were merely attempting to be entertained by a medium that catered to their needs through its use of the Spanish language. Thus, the agenda-setting effects found here may have been an inadvertent by-product of Spanish-speakers' need for gratifications that could be met only by the Spanish-language network. Regardless, the motivation behind the uses of the Spanish cable news appears to be another area that deserves future attention.

The present study demonstrates the potential fruitfulness of future studies of Hispanics and their media usage patterns. As the Hispanic population continues to grow, investigations of this crucial segment of our society will grow in importance as well.

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Table 1. Correlations comparing media exposure and agenda-setting effects scores.

	Spanish news Agenda-Setting Effect	U.S. Network Agenda-Setting Effect
Spanish News Exposure	.1259 p=.033	.0462 p=.436
U.S. Network News Exposure	.0324 p=.585	.0518 p=.383
Media Believability	.0866 p=.144	.0403 p=.497
Perceived Community Affiliation	.0786 p=.188	.0184 p=.757
TV News Reliance	-.0285 p=.632	.0455 p=.444

Table 2. Regression results for media variables and agenda-setting effects score for Spanish cable news.

Variable	Beta	Standard. Beta	T-Value	Sign.
News Exposure	.135	.140	2.360	.02
Media Believability	.029	.100	1.681	.09
Perceived Community Affiliation	.041	.114	1.782	.08
TV Reliance	-.006	-006	-0.101	.92

Multiple R: .188; R-Square: .035; Adjusted R-Square: .022.

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Table 3. Regression results for media variables and agenda-setting effects score for U.S. network news.

Variable	Beta	Standard. Beta	T-Value	Sign.
News Exposure	.007	.043	0.720	.47
Media Believability	.004	.040	0.676	.50
Perceived Community Affiliation	.005	.040	0.613	.54
TV Reliance	.018	.055	0.854	.39

Multiple R: .084; R-Square: .007; Adjusted R-Square: .007.

Do Social Norms and Media Coverage Influence Illicit Drug Trial Among College Students? Implications for Media Practitioners and Drug Educators

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Do social norms and media coverage influence illicit drug trial among college students? Implications for media practitioners and drug educators

Introduction

Illicit drug use by college students is hardly a recent phenomenon. According to an annual survey by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), 31.4% of full-time college students had tried an illicit drug in the past year (1994). The most prevalent of these drugs was marijuana, followed by hallucinogens, LSD, and stimulants, respectively. In addition, 16% of these students had used an illicit drug in the previous 30 days (1994).

The preliminary 1996 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse showed that while rates of drug use are declining among teens (albeit slightly), consumption among 18- to 25-year olds rose from 13.3% in 1994 to 15.6% in 1996. The biggest jump was in heroin use, with the number of past-year users tripling since 1993. In addition, past-month cocaine use among this age group also has increased, from 1.3 percent to 2.0 percent (Table 1).

Table 1: Drug Use in U.S. Population, 18-25

	Lifetime	Past year	Past month
	1995/1996	1995/1996	1995/1996
Any Illicit Drug	45.8/48.0	25.5/26.8	14.2/15.6
Marijuana/hashish	41.4/44.0*	21.8/23.8	12.0/13.2
Cocaine	9.8/10.2	4.3/4.7	1.3/2.0*
Crack	2.9/3.0	1.1/1.3	0.3/0.6
Inhalants	11.2/10.8	3.2/3.0	0.7/1.0
Hallucinogens	14.1/16.3*	5.3/6.9**	2.3/2.3
PCP	3.0/2.3	0.4/0.5	0.0/0.1
LSD	12.0/13.9*	3.8/4.6	1.2/0.9
Heroin	0.7/1.3	0.3/0.9*	0.1/0.4
Stimulants	3.9/4.3	2.0/2.0	1.0/0.6
Sedatives	1.5/1.3	0.5/0.7	0.2/0.3
Tranquilizers	5.0/5.0	2.8/2.6	.07/.09
Analgesics	8.1/8.9	4.2/4.9	1.1/2.0*
Illicit—not marijuana	23.5/26.6	12.5/12.7	5.7/6.3
Alcohol	84.4/83.8	76.5/75.3	61.3/60.0
"Binge" alcohol use	------	--------	29.9/32.0
Heavy alcohol use	------	--------	12.0/12.9
Cigarettes	67.7/68.5	42.5/44.7	35.3/28.3*
Smokeless tobacco	24.7/23.4	8.8/9.7	5.4/6.1

Taken from The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 1996 preliminary data
*significant at .05 level; **significant at .01 level

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The data show that, for whatever reason, drug consumption is taking place on our campuses. There are a variety of factors which may contribute to illicit drug use among college students. This paper examines attitudes and behaviors that surround drug consumption in this population, as well as the roles that social norms and the mass media might play in students' drug use. Social norms and agenda-setting theory both are applied in an attempt to explain the use of drugs in the college student population.

Social norms

Social norms refer to a person's perception of what constitutes normal behavior in a given situation (Sherif, 1936; Berkowitz, 1972; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Best stated by Cialdini, social norms posit that "if everyone is doing it, is must be a sensible thing to do" (1988). The influence of social norms on subsequent behavior has been examined in terms of subjective norms, social influences, and perceptions of normal behaviors. Subjective norms refer to a person's perception of how significant others think that they should behave, which often, is one of the predictors of behavior. (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Social influences, identification with reference groups, and perceived norms have been shown to play a significant role in the determination of one's behavioral intentions, particularly in the case of drug use (Terry & Hogg, 1996; Bearden et.al., 1994; Rose et.al., 1992).

Social learning theory also plays a role in the perception of social norms. Social learning theory asserts that behavior is learned through the observation of others, such as role models and peer groups, and thus, can influence subsequent behaviors (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1986). Social learning has significant implications for drug use, particularly when it is perceived that drug consumption constitutes normal and accepted

behavior (Akers et al., 1979; Akers, 1985). "The more individuals define drug behavior as good or at least as justified or excusable rather than holding to general beliefs or specific attitudes counter to a drug, the more likely that they are to use that drug" (Akers, 1992, p. 12).

There are other dimensions to social norms and influences beyond than subjective norms. In an attempt to further refine normative conduct, Cialdini et.al. (1990) differentiate between descriptive and injunctive norms. Descriptive norms refer to those actions which typically are performed: "It is what most people do, and it motivates by providing evidence as to what will likely be effective and adaptive action" (p. 1015). Injunctive norms, on the other hand, refer to those things that *ought* to be performed, i.e., "rules or beliefs as to what constitutes morally approved and disapproved conduct" (p. 1015).

Cialdini et.al. (1990) studied how descriptive and injunctive norms affected behavior, using littering as the relevant behavior. Subjects in their experiment tended to litter according to their interpretation of how others around them behaved, i.e., according to what they felt to be the descriptive norm in that situation. Similarly, the researchers found that as the descriptive norms changed, so did subsequent behavior. In addition, they determined that injunctive norms also had an effect on behavior, in that when presented with a message promoting an injunctive norm (an anti-littering message), subjects were less likely to litter. In a follow-up study, Reno et.al. (1993) found that while both descriptive and injunctive norms are of value in understanding behavior, "an injunctive norm focus proved decidedly more robust in its impact across situations that a descriptive norm focus" (p. 109)

Applying such normative theories to drug consumption may prove useful in understanding this behavior, particularly among college students. Although the consumption of most drugs is illegal, often the use of these substances is considered to be the norm. Many times, actual norms differ from those that are perceived to be true. Studies have shown that perceived norms surrounding substance use and abuse are accurate predictors of consumption (Beck & Treiman, 1996; Wood et.al.,1992; Baer et.al., 1991; Downs, 1987). However, these perceived norms often are not indicative of what really occurs among one's peers in a given population (Baer et.al., 1991). Even so, many college students have a tendency to rely on these perceptions to justify their behaviors (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1986).

Many young people, particularly college students, have a need for affiliation with their peers and spend a lot of time with friends. This often is manifested by conformity to social and group norms, as well as through pressure by members of the peer group (Brown et al., 1986). It has been documented that friends exert a strong influence over each other, and that this influence often is translated to shared drug and alcohol consumption (Rose et al., 1992).

The mass media and agenda setting

The power of the press was expressed well by Bernard Cohen: "The press is significantly more than a purveyor of information and opinion. It may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (1963, p. 13). This accurately defines what is meant by agenda setting. Agenda setting theory states asserts that:

The audience learns what issues are important from the priorities of the news media and incorporates a similar set of weights in their own personal agendas. Agenda setting is a relational concept specifying a positive connection between the emphases of the news media and the perceived importance of these topics to the news audience (Protess & McCombs, p. 2).

In essence, agenda setting theory argues that the media decides which issues to cover, and thus leads the public to believe that these issues are important. The media exert a powerful influence over their audiences, and by deciding what issues will receive coverage, have the ability to shape the public's attitudes about these issues.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) first tested the agenda-setting hypothesis in the presidential campaign of 1968, and they determined that the media had a significant effect on what the public perceived as the important issues of the campaign. Since then, numerous studies have continued to confirm this hypothesis (Shaw & McCombs, 1977; Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder, 1982; Iyengar & Kinder, 1978; Wanta, 1988). Agenda setting by the mass media has appeared to affect the public's perception of the nation's drug problem. In 1986, when crack cocaine was being presented by the media as a major drug menace to society (Akers, 1992), *New York Times* writer Peter Kerr wrote: "In recent weeks, as the intense attention to drugs has faded, some have asked if the reaction to drugs was appropriate, and how it is that the press and Congress sometimes suddenly discover and then dismiss a major national problem" (p.1). Once the initial hype had begun to fade, others began to question the nature of drug coverage.

Edwin Diamond and his News Study Group at NYU (1987) reported that television "had begun to reflect on its drug coverage over the summer, questioning whether it had been exaggerated, and media treatment of cocaine became a story itself" (p. 6). They reported that although the media's coverage of drug abuse increased during

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this period, there was no evidence that the levels of drug abuse actually changed (Shoemaker et.al., 1989). What change did occur was positive. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that by the time the media hype began concerning cocaine in 1986, the problem already was on the decline (Johnston, 1989).

Often it is the "elite media," such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* who set the agenda for other media on this issue. (Massing, 1984). In other words, if these papers are running the story, then it must be news. Reese and Danielian (1989) confirmed this. In 1985 and 1986, they found that news stories about cocaine increased as the elite papers increased the number of stories they ran about this issue. In fact, they discovered that *The New York Times* actually set the agenda for network news.

Essentially, the more media coverage drugs receive, the more important the public perceives the problem to be (Shaw & McCombs, 1989). This coverage often is due to agenda setting, rather than to actual news events spurring them (Danielian & Reese, 1989). The next logical question is whether this increased media coverage has any influence on drug consumption. While the effects of anti-drug campaigns have been studied (Forman & Lachter, 1989), very little research has been done to determine whether media coverage of drugs, particularly "new" drugs, has any influence on trial among college students, who are an experimental population by nature.

In general, both social norms and agenda setting may influence people's attitudes and/or decision-making about whether to use or try drugs. Because the rates of illicit drug use are highest among college students (NHSDA, 1996), this study seeks to examine these factors with respect to this population. Specifically, it attempts to answer the following research questions: Are students who *believe* drug use to be the norm (i.e., they think

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everyone around them uses drugs) more likely to use illicit drugs? If a student's friends or peers *do* use drugs, does that student also use drugs? Do perceptions of social norms surrounding drug use influence drug trial? Does media coverage of a drug influence a student's intentions to try that drug? Do social norms and the media work together to influence drug use?

This study strives to answer these questions using a survey to measure students' drug trial, their conceptions of social norms surrounding drug use, and their attitudes about media coverage on drugs. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses were generated:

H1: Students who report that their friends use drugs are more likely to have tried at least one illicit drug than those who do not believe that their friends use drugs.

H2: Students who agree that drug trial is normal in college will be more likely to have tried an illicit drug than those who do not see drug trial as the norm.

H3: Those students who have ever used an illicit drug are more likely to try new drugs that are covered by the media than those who have not used an illicit drug.

H4: There is a positive relationship between students' attitudes toward media coverage of drugs and the use of illicit drugs.

H5: There is a positive relationship between perception of social norms and illicit drug use.

Methodology

A six-page questionnaire was developed in an attempt to measure social norm and agenda setting variables and substance use. Items in the questionnaire addressed the following topics: (1) illicit drug consumption (2) students' perceptions of friends' drug use; (3) perceptions about the media's coverage of drug use and (4) the media's influence on drug consumption. Each attitudinal item consisted of a statement followed by a five-point Likert response scale that ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

Behavioral items required the respondent to indicate whether or not he/she had performed the given behavior. The questionnaire also asked demographic questions of each respondent, including gender, age, year in school, race, and religious affiliation.

In addition, the questionnaire addressed students' consumption of specific drugs. Respondents were asked when or if they had last used alcohol or tobacco as well as the following illicit drugs: marijuana, cocaine, crack, heroin, GHB, Ecstacy, ice or other amphetamine derivatives, LSD, PCP or other hallucinogens, and barbiturates or other depressants. They were asked to indicate whether they had ever used the drug, and if so, whether their most recent consumption occurred longer than a year, within the past year, within the month, within the past week, or within the past two days. The independent variable measured whether the respondent had ever tried an *illicit* drug. Therefore, if the respondents indicated that they had ever used one or more of the illicit drugs, they were included in the trial group. Those who had never tried any of the illicit drugs were part of the non-trial group.

Respondents in this study were recruited from three introductory communications courses at a large southeastern university. The questionnaire was administered by the researcher during class time. Between 180 and 230 students were enrolled in each of the three classes. Students were given extra credit points in the class for their participation; therefore, all of the students in each class participated. Because many of the questions required students to admit to activities that are against the law, confidentiality was stressed in order to ensure honest answers. Data was analyzed using SPSS for Windows.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Gender. A total of 461 people participated in the survey. Males comprised 54.7% of the responses (n=252), and females made up 45.3% (n=209).

Race. Just over 78% (n=360) were Caucasian, 5.9% (n=27) were African-American, 3.7% (n=17) were Asian, 9.8% were Hispanic/Latino, and the remaining 2.6% (n=12) were of another race.

Religion. The majority of the sample was Christian (37.3%; n=172). Catholics comprised 31.9% (n=147), while 17.4% (n=80) were Jewish, and 13 were either Muslin, Islamic, Buddhist, or other.

Age. Most of the respondents (94.3%; n=435) were between the ages of 18 and 25. Twenty-five were older than 25 (5.4%), and only one respondent was under 18.

Year in school. About 50% (n=228) of the respondents were juniors. Seniors made up 26.2% of the sample (n=121), sophomores, 21% (n=97), and freshmen, 2.8% (n=13). Only two people in the sample were graduate students.

Greek affiliation. A little more than 30% (n=140) of respondents reported being a member of a fraternity or sorority. The remaining 321 (69.6%) respondents were not Greek-affiliated.

Drug consumption. Table 2 summarizes drug usage among members of the sample. Usage was defined by whether respondents had ever used the drug, or whether their most recent use of the drug was in the past year, month, week, or two days.

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Table 2: Drug Consumption

DRUG	Never used	Past year	Past month	Past week	Past 2 days
ALCOHOL	10 (2.2%)	27 (5.9%)	84 (18.2%)	158 (34.3%)	182 (39.5%)
BARBITURATES	382 (82.9%)	46 (10%)	16 (3.5%)	10 (2.2%)	7 (1.5%)
COCAINE	397 (86.1%)	36 (7.8%)	16 (3.5%)	10 (2.2%)	2 (0.4%)
CRACK	456 (98.9%)	4 (0.9%)	0	0	1 (0.2%)
ECSTACY	349 (75.7)	61 (13.2%)	38 (8.2%)	7 (1.5%)	6 (1.3%)
GHB	412 (89.4%)	38 (8.0%)	5 (1.1%)	5 (1.1%)	2 (0.4%)
HEROIN	447 (97.0%)	10 (2.2%)	2 (0.4%)	1 (0.2%)	1 (0.2%)
ICE	451 (97.8%)	6 (1.3%)	4 (0.9%)	0	0
LSD	350 (75.9%)	81 (17.6%)	24 (5.2%)	4 (0.9%)	2 (0.4%)
MARIJUANA	181 (39.3%)	91 (19.7%)	57 (12.4%)	37 (8.0%)	95 (20.6%)
PCP	387 (83.9%)	42 (9.1%)	24 (5.2%)	5 (1.1%)	3 (0.7%)
TOBACCO	140 (30.4%)	95 (20.6%)	55 (11.9%)	40 (8.7%)	131 (28.4%)

As the table shows, alcohol was the most readily consumed substance, followed by tobacco and marijuana. Almost 98% of respondents had used it at least once in their lives, with 40% of respondents (n=182) having most recently used it in the past two days. A little under 70% have tried tobacco at least once, and almost 30% of those had used a tobacco product in the past two days. Over 60% had ever tried marijuana, and 20 percent of respondents had used marijuana in the past two days (n=95). Ecstasy and GHB, two popular drugs of the 1990s, also were used by a number of respondents. Almost 25% (n=112) had tried Ecstasy, and 11% (n=49) had tried GHB. In addition, 14% (n=64) had tried cocaine, 17% had tried barbiturates (n=79), and about 25% (n= 111) had tried LSD. Although the majority of students had never tried any these drugs, certainly there still appears to be a reasonably significant number of users.

Social norms and drug use in college

Twelve survey items questioned students about the social norms and activity surrounding drug use in a college atmosphere. Interaction with friends, as well as belief's about drug use were included as social norm variables, as they may be factors associated with perceptions of norms. Table 3 summarizes these results.

Table 3: Social norms and drug use in college

Statement	Agree	Don't know	Disagree
If I use drugs, my friends usually are using them, too	186 (33.8%)	24 (5.2%)	251 (54.5%)
It's pretty normal to try drugs when you're in college.	292 (63.4%)	54 (11.7%)	115 (24.9%)
There's pressure to try drugs when you're in college.	159 (34.5%)	63 (13.7%)	239 (51.9%)
Using drugs in college isn't the same thing as using them when you're out in the real world.	126 (27.3%)	68 (14.8%)	267 (57.9%)
College is an experimental time. If you're going to try drugs, this is the time to do it.	213 (46.2%)	55 (11.9%)	193 (41.9%)
I think that using drugs is bad.	255 (55.3%)	78 (16.9%)	128 (27.8%)
There's a difference between people who use drugs all the time and people who only use them once in a while.	315 (68.4%)	51 (11.1%)	95 (20.6%)
Some of my good friends use drugs.	340 (73.7%)	18 (3.9%)	103 (22.4%)
Taking drugs in college is not a big deal.	142 (30.8%)	79 (17.1%)	240 (52.1%)
If I do use drugs, it's only when I'm partying with my friends.	182 (39.5%)	36 (7.8%)	243 (52.7%)
If everyone around me is using drugs, it's hard not to use them also.	87 (18.9%)	44 (9.5%)	330 (71.6%)
I often have a tendency to follow what my friends do, even though/ I may not always agree with what they're doing.	31 (6.8%)	26 (5.6%)	404 (87.6%)

*Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.

**The survey actually was based on a five-point Likert scale. Strongly agree and agree were collapsed into one category, as were disagree and strongly disagree.

A majority of the students in this survey (n=292; 63.4%) agreed that drug use is a normal college behavior, yet about 56% (n=255) believe that drug use is wrong. Almost 75% of respondents reported that some of their good friends use drugs, while only seven percent (n=31) say they follow their friends' negative behaviors. About 34% (n=186) use drugs with their friends.

Students in this study believe that drug consumption in college is different from drug consumption outside of the college atmosphere. Thirty-one percent do not feel that drug use in college is a big deal. Almost 35% (n=159) think that there is pressure to try drugs when you're in college and 19% (n=87) say it's difficult to abstain from drug use if your friends are using drugs. About 46% (n=213) agreed that if one is going to try drugs, college is the place to do it. A little over 27% (n=126) said that using drugs in college is not the same thing as using them in the real world. While the majority of students do not see drug use as a normal behavior, a many of those students who are users have deemed drug use as acceptable in college.

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Hypothesis one stated that students who thought their good friends use drugs are more likely to have ever tried an illicit drug than those who thought their good friends do not use drugs. This is confirmed by the data (table 4). Of the 461 total respondents, 284 (61.6%) had ever tried an illicit drug (including marijuana). Of that 284, 255 (89.8%) agreed that they thought some of their good friends also use drugs. Those students who had never tried an illicit drug (n=177) were less likely to think that their friends use drugs (n=85, 48%). Essentially, those students who have tried drugs are much more likely to think their friends use drugs. A chi-square test confirms a significant relationship between these variables (gamma = .64; r=.46; X^2=104.8, df=4, 2-tailed p<.0001).

Table 4: Drug trial vs. friends' drug usage

EVERUSE	Good friends use			
	agree	don't know	disagree	TOTAL
yes	255	5	24	284
no	85	13	79	177
TOTAL	340	18	103	461

Hypothesis two posited that those students who agree that trying drugs in college is normal would be more likely to have tried an illicit drug than those who do not see drug use as the norm. The data support this hypothesis. Of the 284 students who had ever tried an illicit drug, 235 (82.7%) agree that trying drugs is normal in college. Only 18 respondents (6.3%) who had tried illicit drugs did not see this behavior as normal. A chi-square test revealed that there is a significant relationship between a student's perceived norm about drug trial and whether that student has ever tried an illicit drug (gamma =.814; r=.561; X^2=147.05, df=2, 2-tailed p<.0001). In other words, if a college student thinks that it is normal to try drugs in college, then that student will be more likely to engage in this behavior.

In an attempt to test the hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between perception of social norms and drug use, the mean for the social norm items was calculated and an index was formed for this variable. Chi-square tests and Pearson correlations then were run with these indices on the drug trial variable. The tests showed a significant, positive relationship between whether a student ever tried an illicit drug and the social norm index, confirming hypothesis five (gamma = .988; r=.795; X^2=93.6, df=1, 2-tailed p<.0001; r=.795).

An ANOVA then was run with drug trial as the dependent variable. The effect of the social norm index on drug trial was significant (F=251.03, df=1, p<.0001). In other words, one's perception of the norms surrounding drug use may predict whether one will try an illicit drug.

Media attitudes about illicit drugs

The survey contained nine items to media coverage of illicit drugs. Table 5 summarizes the frequencies with which respondents agreed with the given statements.

Table 5: Media and illicit drug consumption

Statement	Agree**	Don't know	Disagree
I hear a lot of bad things about drugs in the media.	407 (88.2%)	26 (5.6%)	28 (6.1%)*
Drugs aren't as big a deal as the media makes them out to be.	125 (27.2%)	91 (19.7%)	245 (53.1%)
I have tried drugs out of curiosity because I heard about them in the media.	79 (17.2%)	29 (6.3%)	353 (76.5%)
The more the media talks about a drug, the more dangerous that drug is.	74 (16.1%)	100 (21.7%)	287 (62.3%)
The media decides which drugs are a problem in our society.	179 (38.8%)	79 (17.1%)	203 (44%)
Reporters have a tendency to exaggerate when they write about how serious drug use is	171 (37.1%)	132 (28.6%)	158 (34.3%)
The more the media talks about a drug, the more people will want to try it and see what the fascination is.	182 (39.5%)	126 (27.3%)	153 (33.2%)
I have tried drugs such as GHB, Ecstasy, and cocaine because I was hearing so much about them in the media, I wanted to see what the big deal was.	14 (3%)	29 (6.3%)	418 (90.7%)
If I read about a new drug that was making its way into [the local] party scene, I would want to try it and see what it was like.	22 (4.8%)	57 (12.4%)	382 (82.9%)

*Because of rounding, percentages may not add up to 100.
**The survey actually was based on a five-point Likert scale. Strongly agree and agree were collapsed into one category, as were disagree and strongly disagree.

The results show that a number of students believe that the media exerts an influence on society's perceptions of drug use. About 27% (n=125) of the respondents

agreed that the media makes coverage of drug use more pertinent than necessary, and more than 37% (n=171) feel that reporter may exaggerate the seriousness of drug consumption. Almost 40% (n=182) believe that media coverage of a drug increases students' curiosity, and may lead to trial. However, only three percent (n=14) agreed that coverage had actually *led* to drug trial, and only five percent (n=22) said that they *would* try a new drug that they had read about.

The third hypothesis stated that students illicit drug trial may be related to media coverage, and this relationship would be more prevalent for those who had tried drugs. This is suggested by the data, (table 6) but the relationship is not significant (gamma = .204; $r=.08$; $X^2=3.568$, df=2, 2-tailed $p<.168$). Only 14 total respondents agreed that they would try a drug based on media coverage. Of those, 12 had ever tried an illicit drug. In addition, only 22 said that they may have tried a new drug because of media coverage, and of those, all of them had tried an illicit drug. The data suggest that a student who has already tried drugs is much more likely to be influenced by media coverage than non-drug users. However, the media is not a *reason* for drug use. About 74% of respondents who had ever tried a drug also reported that they would *not* try a drug based on media coverage. The chi-square test on these variables revealed a significant relationship (gamma = .849; $r=.29$; $X^2=41.96$, df=2, 2-tailed $p<.0001$).

Table 6: Drug trial vs. media trial crosstabulation

	Try b/c of media			
EVERUSE	agree	don't know	disagree	**TOTAL**
yes	12	18	254	284
no	2	11	164	177
TOTAL	14	29	418	461

The mean of the media attitude items was calculated to form an index for this variable. Chi-square tests and correlations showed a significant, positive relationship between drug use and the media attitude index (gamma = .96; r=.59; X^2=43.4, df=1, 2-tailed p<.0001; r=.592). This confirms hypothesis four. The use of illicit drugs by college students is positively related to media coverage of drugs, such as GHB and Ecstasy, as well as to social norms, and friends' behaviors.

In addition, an ANOVA was run on the media coverage index with drug trial as the dependent variable. The results show the model to be significant (F=65.73, df=1, p<.0001). Thus, media coverage may predict whether a person will try an illicit drug.

Combining social norms and media attitudes to explain drug trial

The prior tests reveal that both perceptions of social norms and attitudes about the media's coverage of drugs influence drug trial among members of this population. However, it is not probable that only one of these factors leads to the consumption of illicit drugs by college students. Rather, it may be that the two factors work together to explain drug use. A simple factorial ANOVA (table 7) revealed that when both social norms and media attitudes were put into the model, the effects were significant. (F=50.25, df=5, p<.0001). This suggests that drug trial by college students may be explained not only by perception of what is socially normal in college, but also by students' interpretation of media coverage about drugs.

ANOVA[a,b,c]

			Unique Method				
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
EVERUSE	Main Effects	(Combined)	8.775	2	4.387	135.281	.000
		MEDATT	.610	1	.610	18.794	.000
		SOCNORMS	1.425	1	1.425	43.937	.000
	Model		8.775	2	4.387	135.281	.000
	Residual		1.200	37	3.2E-02		
	Total		9.975	39	.256		

a. EVERUSE by MEDATT, SOCNORMS

b. All effects entered simultaneously

c. Due to empty cells or a singular matrix, higher order interactions have been suppressed.

Discussion

The results of the survey indicate that college students have, indeed, tried illicit drugs, and that many of them continue to so do on a regular basis. Forty percent of the sample had last used an illicit drug (including marijuana) in the past month, 17 percent had last used in the past week, and 26 percent had last used in the past two days. The most commonly used illicit drugs were marijuana, Ecstasy, and LSD.

Students use drugs for a number of reasons, including mood enhancement, social purposes, and experimentation (Clifford et al., 1991). Certainly, these reasons for drug consumption is not restricted to the sample in this study. Numerous studies have shown that drug consumption occurs on many college campuses (Pendergast, 1994; Werch et al., 1993; Campbell & Svenson, 1992; Pope et al., 1990; Carlson & Davis, 1988; Patterson et al., 1988; Bachman et al., 1984). Overall, the number of college students using drugs appears to have dropped (NHSDA, 1996; Haberman, 1994). However, there are enough students still using drugs to warrant concern.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether drug trial among college students was influenced by students' perceptions of social norms as well as whether

students perceived media coverage to be an influence on drug use. The data show that both factors predict whether or not a student has tried an illegal drug. However, social norms appear to have a greater influence on college students' drug trial than do attitudes about media coverage.

Indeed, recreational drug use in college consistently has been correlated with social settings and connection with one's peers (Akers et al., 1979; Johnston, 1973; Kandel, 1973, 1978). Longitudinal studies have shown that association with drug users is predictive of subsequent trial (Jessor & Jessor, 1978; Kandel, Kessler, & Margulies, 1978). In addition, social context has been shown not only to influence drug trial, but also continued use of drugs as well (Bachman, O'Malley, & Johnston, 1984). Because social setting and peer association both are factors associated with the construction of social norms, the positive correlation between social norms and drug trial found in this study could have significant implications for organizations and media practitioners whose aim is the creation and dissemination of effective drug prevention messages. These messages can be geared toward changing social norms about drug use, particularly when trial is perceived to be normal.

The results of this study also showed that media coverage of illicit drugs may influence drug trial. There was a positive correlation between a drug trial and a student's interpretation of the media's role in drug coverage. From an agenda setting perspective, this is an important finding. The literature shows that media coverage of drug use often lags behind actual consumption rates and often tends to exaggerate the extent of the problem. (Reese & Danielian, 1989; Danielian & Reese, 1989; Edwin et al., 1987). Students who consistently see coverage of drug use may begin to perceive this to be the

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norm when, actually, this is not so. If social norms are positive predictors of drug trial and the media have the power to create these norms about drug use, then newspaper editors and television producers may want to be more careful in their coverage.

The media also have been successful in disseminating information about "new" drugs to the public. In fact, it appears as if the media creates a "scary drug of the year" (Akers, 1992). In the 1960s, PCP dominated the headlines. In the 70s, it was LSD and in the 80s, it was cocaine and crack. The 1990s has seen an increased coverage of designer drugs, such as Ecstasy, as well as other drugs such as GHB (Gamma Hydroxy Butyrate). Ecstasy is an oral amphetamine derivative used as a psychoactive agent (Cuomo et al., 1994). GHB is a central nervous system depressant whose primary users include nightclub and partygoers. It also has been used as a "date rape drug" (Gamma hydroxy butyrate, 1997).

GHB and Ecstasy are two drugs of the 90s that have received quite a bit of media coverage and college students in this study may have responded to this. During the administration of this survey, the researcher instructed the respondents to ask if they had not heard of any of the drugs on the questionnaire. A number of students asked about the nature of ice and barbiturates. Not one of the 461 total respondents asked about GHB or Ecstasy. Further analysis of the data showed that of the 112 students who had tried Ecstasy, 31 (27.7%) agreed that they have tried a drug because the media made them curious about it. Among those who had tried GHB, 31% agreed that media coverage had made them curious enough to try a drug. Again, this has significant implications for newspaper editors who choose to cover new drugs continually in their papers.

The introduction and coverage of new drugs also has appeared to influence the use of more traditional drugs. One study found that as consumption of drugs such as Ecstasy increased, the use of cocaine and other amphetamines decreased significantly (Cuomo et al., 1994). This may be due to similar changes in drug coverage. This also coincides with the trial rates found in the current study. Almost 25% of the sample had ever tried Ecstasy, compared with only 14% who had tried cocaine. Of those who had tried Ecstasy, 13% had used it in the past year and eight percent had used it in the past month. In fact, Ecstasy was the most widely used illicit drug among members of the sample, indicating that media coverage of this drug may have some influence over trial.

A majority of respondents in this study agree that the media have a tendency to overplay the consumption of illicit drugs and that the more the media talks about a drug, the more prevalent they perceive use of that drug to be. Media coverage leads the public to become alarmed, which, in turn, leads to a drug scare, as was the case with ice in the early 1990s. A study by Lauderback and Waldorf (1993) showed that ice gained national notoriety in the media in 1989, which led many people to believe that this drug was going to become a public threat. This threat never panned out, and the scare became nothing more than a passing phase. This is indicated by the results of the present survey, as only 2.2% of respondents had ever tried ice.

This study suggests that both perceived social norms and interpretation of drug coverage may influence drug trial independently among college students. However, it may be more useful to examine drug use as a function of both of these factors combined. In other words, it can be assumed that increased media coverage of illicit drugs leads the public to believe that usage is widespread. This may lead to the belief that drug

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consumption is the norm in specific populations. For example, if the media continues to cover new drugs such as GHB and Ecstasy disproportionately and this, in turn, may lead college students to believe that trying these drugs is normal, and usage rates may increase as a result.

This assumption could prove to be helpful, particularly for newspaper editors and television producers who decide which stories receive coverage. As the agenda setting research shows, the media often decide what important issues face our country, and can generate awareness and knowledge of those issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In the case of drugs, newspaper editors and TV producers should be aware that curiosity and drug trial among experimenters like college students may be a negative, unintended consequence of putting drugs on the media's agenda.

The findings in this study also have implications for drug educators, who often use the media for the dissemination of health messages (Wallack, 1990). Because the media is such an important influence in society, it certainly should be considered an outlet for further drug education. If we understand how college students perceive social norms surrounding drug use, then effective messages can be developed to address them. In addition, the results of this study indicate that perhaps drug education programs should include a media literacy component to educate people about how and why the media reports issues such as drug consumption.

Future research

Social norms and attitudes about media coverage on drugs seem to be an important predictors of drug trial among college students. Future research should take a closer look at drug users. Focus groups and interviews with current drug users could

provide useful information about *why* college students use illicit drugs, as well as why certain factors influence their drug consumption. Experimental studies also should be performed to test whether extensive media coverage of drugs causes curiosity and trial. Although this study shows that social norms and media attitudes about drug coverage appear to relate to drug trial, more rigorous methods could be employed to determine whether causal relationships may exist.

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Perceptions of Traditional American Journalists

Toward the Internet as a News Source: A Critical Approach

by

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Abstract

Perceptions of Traditional American Journalists

Toward the Internet as a News Source: A Critical Approach

This study examines, from a critical perspective, the perception of

traditional American journalists toward the Internet as a news source.

Specifically, it argues that because traditional American journalists

are socialized both ideologically and professionally into the dominant

ideology, many are refusing to share their elite positions as disseminators of

news with Internet "journalists." Analyzed data from the Lexis-Nexis

database and American journalism review magazines indicates that

traditional American journalists are generating a concerted effort to repair the

elite news "paradigm" against incursion from the Internet.

Perceptions of Traditional American Journalists
Toward the Internet as a News Source: A Critical Approach

Introduction

Critical mass communication scholars have long argued the
hegemonic nature of American media institutions (Gitlin, 1980; Hall et al.,
1980; Williams, 1977). Journalistic production often appears to be dependent
on the U.S. business system. Broadcast networks, newspapers, and magazines
are run like other U.S. corporations, "by boards of directors composed mostly
of persons drawn from the moneyed strata of society" (Parenti, 1986, p. 35).
Some scholars argue that freedom of the press belongs to the people who own
the institutions, and because mass media's first obligation is to make money
for their owners, control of media dissemination is protected by those in
power (Carmody, 1977).

Equally important in the hegemonic process is the notion that the
mass media have become core systems for the dissemination of elite ideology
(Altschull, 1995; Gitlin, 1980;). This elite ideology "represents a society-level
phenomenon and is a belief in the value of the capitalist economic system,
private ownership, pursuit of profit by self-interested entrepreneurs, and free
markets" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, p. 184). Even non-critical mass
communication scholars tend to view the journalist as a broker between
advocates in society with messages to send, and the public (Westley and
MacLean, 1957). The proclivity of journalists to engage in "agenda-setting"
(Long, 1958; McCombs and Shaw, 1993); and "priming" and "framing"
(Iyengar and Simon, 1993) have become accepted theories even by those not
given to Marxist leanings.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how traditional or mainstream journalists perceive the Internet, given their elite positioning in the capitalist economic system. Previous studies have indicated that many mainstream journalists view much Internet content as suspicious at best, and worthless at worst (Ketterer, 1998, Ruggiero and Winch, 1996). As professionals, traditional journalists may be reflecting more than "technophobia," if they perceive the Internet as deviant. They may be constrained by the framework of their own ideological and professional socialization from accepting the Internet as a viable disseminator of news. This study seeks to explore this question by conducting an analysis of rhetoric about the Internet available in major American newspapers. First, however, theories of socialization of traditional journalists in the mass communication literature will be reviewed. Second, the theoretical perspective used in this study, "paradigm repair" will be introduced. Third, a brief discussion of the Internet as a "new medium" will be presented. Fourth, the methodology and data collection used in this study is reviewed. Finally, the findings and conclusions of the study are discussed.

Literature Review

As disseminators of elite ideology, journalists themselves are socialized in several crucial ways. First, as a rule, journalists are exposed to similar communities, schools, colleges, graduate schools, popular culture and media that help socialize other Americans into the dominant belief system (Parenti, 1986). A majority view themselves as politically liberal (Lichter, Rothman & Lichter, 1986). Since mainstream journalists rarely cross taboo boundaries and are rarely reined in by their bosses, most have no idea they are on an "ideological leash" (p. 35). Second, under the rubrics of "balanced" and "objective," mainstream journalists are even allowed a relative degree of

independence if they meet at least two criteria in the course of their work: the ability to produce copy that is ideologically acceptable and the ability to produce copy that is competently crafted (Parenti, 1986). These two criteria are discussed in depth below.

Ideologically acceptable copy

Breed (1955) argued that journalists are thoroughly socialized into the dominant belief system in the newsroom. A journalist learns newsroom policy by internalizing "the rights and obligation of his (her) status and its norms and values. He (She) learns to anticipate what is expected of him (her) so as to win rewards and avoid punishments" (p. 328). In his Social Control in the Newsroom, Breed cites six factors that play a role in newsroom conformity: (1) institutional authority and sanctions, (2) feelings of obligation and esteem for superiors, (3) mobility aspirations, (4) absence of conflicting group allegiance, (5) the pleasant nature of the activity, and (6) news as a value in itself. Thus, whether journalists acknowledge it or not, individual attitudes are influenced by a set of norms shared with other individuals. Those individuals constitute a reference group (Newcomb, 1950). In the newsroom, the reference group, which contains elite executives and experienced journalists, is unable to change policy significantly because first, "it is the group charged with carrying out the policy, and second, because the policy maker, the publisher, if often insulated on the delicate issue of policy" (Breed, 1955, p. 332).

While policy rigidity can be undermined by journalists under certain conditions, the socio-cultural nature of the newsroom contributes a ripe environment for conformity. A journalist's source of rewards is not from readers and viewers, who are clients, but from colleagues and superiors. "Instead of adhering to societal and professional ideals, he (she) re-defines his

(her) values to the more pragmatic level of the newsroom group" (p. 335).

Conformity is not automatic because of ethical journalistic norms, but

compensation include elite status and acceptance in a group engaged in

interesting, diverse, and often important work. So, rather than serving as

mirrors of reality, as the press is often presented, journalists often end up

acting what Graber (1989) quoting Stanley Bigman calls "rivals of conformity"

(p. 87-88).

Competently crafted copy

Competently crafted copy is contexualized in media frames that are

"persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of

selection, emphasis, and exclusion" (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Newsgathering

routines, especially the development of beats and the reliance on official or

elite sources--while designed to reduce workload--also serve to constrain

journalists in the hegemonic process (Borquez, 1993; Fishman, 1980; Sigal,

1993; Tuchman, 1978). First, the beat is a "system of regularized contacts with

sources on a particular topic. The sources comprising a beat do not emerge by

accident and tend to be legitimate newsmakers, most often government

officials" (Borquez, 1993, p. 36-37). Secondly, as producers of meaning

journalists do not use all potential sources for news information. Generally

journalists choose sources who are considered authoritative (Sahr, 1993).

Source authority, according to Sahr, is generally comprised of at least three

types: 1) holders or candidates for formal government positions; 2) interest

group or company representatives; or 3) "experts" in a topic being given news

coverage. By using primarily elite sources, journalists are provided a

safeguard for their own professional reputations.

Stempel (1985) concluded from his study of six newspapers and three

network newscasts that there is a general notion as to what makes a suitable

news package. Reliance on elite and "acceptable" images, reinforced by deadline pressures and economy of presentation, create a hegemonic frame journalists make news judgments through: 1) enduring values; 2) climates of opinion; 3) policy frameworks; and 4) stereotypes (Sahr, 1993). "Given these orientations, almost never do American journalists undercut, challenge, or question dominant values, or, it appears, even recognize them as anything other than universal" (p. 156-157). Gitlin (1980) also describes American journalists and their hegemonic status:

> Journalists are socialized from childhood, and then trained, recruited, assigned, edited, rewarded, and promoted on the job; they decisively shape the ways in which news is defined, events are considered newsworthy, and objectivity is secured. The fact that news is managed routinely, automatically, as reporters import definitions of newsworthiness from editors and institutional beats, and accept the analytical frameworks of officials even while taking up adversary positions. When reporters make decisions about what to cover and how, rarely do they deliberate about ideological assumptions or political consequences. Simply by doing their jobs, journalists tend to serve the political and economic elite definitions of reality. (p. 11-12)

Ultimately, and unfortunately, the consequences of journalists "doing their jobs" has serious repercussions for the American public and the democratic process. For example, from their examination of the press's coverage of the Watergate break-in, Lang and Lang (1983) contend that the language used by the media can affect the perception of importance of an issue. Initial media references to the Watergate break-in as a "caper" tended to downplay its importance. Months later, when its significance began to be ascertained, it began to be described as a "scandal." More recently, during the first several weeks leading up to the Gulf War, the public had little opportunity to debate the pros and cons of the military option, due in part, to the news media's "chronic dependence upon officialdom to provide the main

focus of their work and the sources of their criticism (Cook, 1994, p.127). In support of this chronic dependence on elite sources, Soley (1994) conducted a content analysis of 1978 and 1990 newspaper stories. He found a significant increase in journalist's use of "experts" during the 15-year period. Nearly twice as many experts were quoted in 1990 as in 1978.

Paradigm Repair

McQuail (1994) asserts that mass media "do not define reality on their own but give preferential access to the definitions of those in authority" (p. 99). Thus, through hegemony, journalists tend to define unconventional opposition to the status quo as insurgent and deviant. One process by which traditional journalists attempt to identify and normalize violations of central tenets of the elite news product, Reese (1989) has called "paradigm repair." Modeled after Kuhn's notion of paradigm as "an accepted model or pattern" (1962, p. 23), Reese's model maintains that like all paradigms, the news model faces the problem of "anomalous or troublesome cases that fall partly within the defining logic of the paradigm, yet fail to conform to other defining characteristics of the paradigm" (Bennett et al., 1985, p. 55). Thus, nontraditional news stories such as those emanating from the Internet may threaten the elite news paradigm by "calling into question its limitations and biases, and therefore must be repaired" Reese, 1989, p. 1). This study will use the concept of paradigm repair as the theoretical perspective through which to analyze traditional journalists perceptions of the Internet.

New Media as Deviant

One possible reason for the Internet's perception as deviant by off-line journalists, may be its dissimilarities with traditional American mass media institutions. Four primary features of new media contrast substantially with traditional media: decentralization; high capacity; interactivity; and flexibility

(McQuail, 1994). More definitively, in new media such as the Internet, supply and choice are no longer predominantly controlled by elite sources; restrictions of cost, distance and capacity are ameliorated; the receiver can select, answer back, exchange and be linked to other receivers directly; and flexibility of form, content, and use appear to be intrinsic. Not surprisingly then, the Internet may indeed represent a challenge to the production, distribution and basic forms of traditional media institutions--at least in the eyes of traditional journalists. Supporting this, conclusions from a recent study indicated that many mainstream journalists view the Internet as suspicious and unreliable (Ruggiero and Winch, 1996). More culpably, Godwin (1997) argued that many traditional journalists support freedom of the press in theory, but not in practice. Most traditional journalists, Godwin believes, are "not ready for a world in which everyone gets to be Clark Kent or Lois Lane" (p. 101).

Method

The traditional media establish what is normal and what is deviant based on how they portray people and ideas (Dreier, 1982). Efforts to engage in paradigm repair is often framed in arguments that attack deviant journalists, news stories and the medium of the Internet itself. Those attacks most often correspond to ideologically unacceptable and incompetently crafted criteria (Parenti, 1986). However, it may be more difficult for traditional journalists to attack the ideological deviance of the Internet than its lack of "professionalism." First, the Internet has been linked by some scholars to "democracy" and "free speech" (Browning, 1996; Berman, J., 1997; Behar, J. E., 1997) and most traditional American journalists would hesitate to challenge it accordingly. Also, as previously indicated, Sahr (1993) noted that American

journalists rarely challenge, or question dominant values, or even recognize them as anything other than universal.

However, traditional journalists are well-versed in the "competency of their craft," and readily defend it from aberrant professional behavior. Thus, this study contends that it is from this evidentiary arena most reportage of Internet deviancy arises. In order to determine if this is the case, this study borrows from Altschull's (1984) model of journalism as applied to market nations to establish a traditional mass media paradigm of competently crafted news. Collected data was analyzed and discussed through two criteria: credibility and accountability. While Bennett et al. (1985) and Reese's work (1989) used a case study approach, this study will analyze the language used by traditional journalists in numerous mass media publications to describe, as deviant, the Internet and Internet journalists and news content.

Data Collection

The Lexis-Nexis information retrieval service was used to collect full-text, unedited major newspaper stories that specifically discussed the question of credibility, accountability, authenticity and authority of Internet news information. Search modes included [General News Topics]: Major Newspapers. The stories analyzed in this study appeared on October 16, 1993 and ended on March 27, 1998. Search terms were selected for their ability to retrieve articles relevant to the topic. Based on the terms [Internet] and [news and sources and hoax OR scam], the search revealed 158 news stories. All of these were analyzed and appropriate selections were adopted as representative data. In addition, A library catalog search of articles appearing in U.S. journalism review magazines over the last three years was also conducted for indications of past and current support for the perception of the Internet as deviant.

Discussion

In this section relevant examples of the thematic arguments used by traditional journalists to portray the Internet as deviant are presented. They are discussed within two categories: 1) credibility, which includes accuracy and authority; and 2) accountability, which includes being socially responsible and professional. In each of these categories traditional journalists have formulated arguments in order to distance the methodology, content, and apparent function of the deviant version from commonly accepted journalism standards and to suggest that this kind of behavior is deviant.

Credibility

Analysis of the data revealed that one of the primary arguments against the Internet was its inaccuracy and failure to seek the truth. Numerous traditional news stories targeted the Internet as a source of bogus news.

Credibility in the news business depends on the truth, facts and trusted sources. The advent of the Internet as a mass communications medium creates a whole new set of problems because gatekeepers often don't censor what gets put into print. On the Net, it's often difficult to tell truth from fiction (Lorek, 1997).

Other stories identified the Internet's propensity to disseminate hoaxes and urban legends. Hoaxes identified range from Pierre Salinger's allegation that a U.S. Navy missile downed TWA Flight 800 (Ketterer, 1998; Ruggiero and Winch, 1996), to novelist Kurt Vonnegut's alleged MIT commencement speech in which he advised the Class of '97 to "wear sunscreen, sing, floss and do one thing everyday that scares you" (http://www.chicago.tribune.com/news/current/schmich0601.htm). Urban legends include "Microsoft bought the Vatican, The Good Times virus is preparing to destroy millions of hard

drives, Snapple gives money to the Ku Klux Klan. E-mail will soon require stamps" (Stevens, 1996).

The faux-pas of rogue journalist Pierre Salinger and others are seen as an extremely persuasive argument against the reliability of the Internet to provide accurate news. In particular, dissemination of these hoaxes is portrayed by traditional journalists as grossly and harmfully inaccurate news reports publicized by irresponsible people. For example:

Drudge's and Salinger's blunders were not the playful hoaxes that appear on the Net with frequency. Nor were they the obviously absurd yarns spun by the Net's unhealthily large population of conspiracy theorists and nuts.. But the stories could never have reared their heads to a level of national consciousness without the Internet. Drudge, with his anonymously e-mailed tips, would have no stories to run on his site and no site to run them on. Salinger would have had to have hung out at a bar with conspiracy theorists to pick up his precious misinformation (McAllester, 1997).

Traditional journalists tend to use elite or authoritative sources, and failure by Internet journalists to comply with this norm was cited as one of the weaknesses in the Internet three years ago :

Conventional news media - newspapers, TV, radio - come equipped with editors whose job it is to cast a skeptical eye on stories. By contrast, the Internet is a dazzling exhibition of free speech without the usual editors, fact-checkers or media ethics codes to give it credibility. You get what you get. By design, the Internet has no editor with guts to say: "We can't print that because we can't prove it." Or, with the brains to ask: "Who are the sources? Can they be trusted? (A media virus, 1995)

While more recently, acceptance of the Internet has been growing among traditional journalists, similar arguments are still appearing in mainstream mass media publications:

We make our judgments of the accuracy of television shows and newspapers by monitoring their performance and comparing what they say with what we already know. The complication on the Internet is that there are potentially millions of sources instead of the relatively few we're used to, and to some extent people will have to learn to do the kind of fact-checking professional journalists do (Grossman, 1997).

Lack of authority is also linked with the dangers of relying electronic documents:

For one thing, the potential for journalists to be duped by fake electronic documents is a growing danger. With paper documents, investigative reporters often try to judge the authenticity by the appearance, by letterhead imprints, time stamps or other distinctive markings. Because computers can create almost any visual look or type style, electronic documents are much easier to forge. And because of the immense complexities of electronic networks, sources of information can be disguised (Wilmsen, 1997).

By-and-large however, the most frequent argument made by traditional journalists against the Internet was its free-for-all nature, an anathema to the use of newsgathering routines, especially the development of beats and the reliance on official or elite sources:

The cyberspace world is still in its Wild West stage, where the rules of the road are unwritten. A lot of information on the Internet falls somewhere between tabloid journalism and old-fashioned chain letters, thus meriting a high degree of skepticism. As in the world of commerce, if something sounds too good, or too clever, to be true, it probably isn't true. On the Internet, the only rule that makes sense is caveat lector: let the reader beware (Seeing and believing, 1997).

Analysis of the data concerning credibility suggests that traditional journalists tend to characterize the Internet in several negative ways: as a source of bogus news, as a perpetuator of hoaxes and urban legends, and as a purveyor of unreliable electronic documents. Also, traditional journalists

tend to rely on elite or authoritative sources and the beat system of newsgathering. Thus, they tend to view the Internet as an unreliable, free-for-all source of information, and this, perhaps more than the other reasons, is why the Internet is perceived as outside the norm of traditional newsgathering routines and in need of paradigm repair.

Accountability

The data revealed that many traditional journalists, particularly print journalists, characterize the Internet as a less-than-responsible medium, and liken it to the worst in broadcast journalism. For example:

The Internet, which future historians might argue came into its own with this sex scandal, much in the same way that the Persian Gulf War established CNN and the idea of 24-hour news coverage. The news exploded throughout the electronic intricacies of the Internet, and the informed, misinformed, opinionated, outraged and just plain confused leaped to express themselves on the scandal (Steinberg, 1998).

Some journalists contend that the Internet blatantly lacks accountability to the professional standards of traditional journalism:

Using the Internet, any spinner of yarns can make up a story and spread it around the world without any of the usually extensive fact-checking that reporters and editors use. No serious person believes that the federal government started the AIDS epidemic or blew up the Oklahoma City federal building, but reports blaming the government for those and other disasters have appeared on the Internet. A law professor told the Chicago Tribune's Coates that the Internet carries false rumors to satisfy any taste, from "paint-ball right-wingers to the paranoid left-wingers." Many of them spew anti-government venom (World Information Web, 1996).

Other journalists contend that the ethical conduct of traditional journalism is being violated by Internet reportage:

Journalism ethics specialists said that regardless of whether obtaining electronic documents is against the law, the practice violates codes of the profession (Wilmsen, 1997).

Finally, the Internet's growing ability to disseminate inaccurate information to a broader audience is also a matter of great concern to traditional journalists:

The publication on the Internet last week of a photograph purporting to show Diana, Princess of Wales, as she lay dying in the back of a crashed Mercedes -- and its publication on the front page of a French newspaper -- has set off a new controversy over the ease with which inaccurate information can be disseminated over the global computer network (Harmon, 1997).

Analysis of the data concerning accountability suggests that traditional journalists tend to hold perceptions of the Internet as a less-than-responsible medium, and liken it to the worst in broadcast journalism and talk radio. Furthermore, they contend that professional standards of traditional journalism, such as ethical conduct, are being abandoned by irresponsible Internet reportage. Finally, a theme emerged that suggested that some traditional journalists are concerned about the Internet's growing influence on a larger and larger public, many who are unprepared for the barrage of inaccurate information disseminated to their computers. Each of these perceptions appear to be robust incentives for traditional journalists to perform paradigm repair against the Internet.

Conclusions

A recent Pew Research Center survey reveals that the credibility of journalists has fallen sharply in the last 10 years (Nelson, 1997). Thus, as professionals, traditional journalists may have much more at stake than merely "technophobia," when attacking the Internet. From the data analyzed

in this study it became apparent that issues of credibility and accountability were repetitive claims of deviancy argued by traditional journalists. That credibility and accountability are twin pillars in the dominant American journalism paradigm has been well supported by previous studies (Tuchman, 1978; Gitlin, 1980; Stempel, 1985). Thus, this study concludes that concerted effort by traditional journalists to repair the dominant news paradigm against incursion by the Internet does indeed exist.

This study also indicated that some journalism educators may share similar prejudices against the Internet. A library catalog search of articles appearing in U.S. journalism review magazines over the last three years revealed some past and current support for the perception of the Internet as deviant. In the May, 1997 *Columbia Journalism Review* , media critic Tom Rosenstiel was quoted as saying, "The risk exists that the wild culture of the Web will erode standards of accuracy" (Hanson, 1997,). In a more recent *American Journalism Review* article, Staci D. Kramer was quoted as saying," There is a feeling that the difference between people who were trained as journalists and people using the Internet to act as journalists is that the first group adheres to a common set of ethical guidelines, and the second doesn't feel that it has to" (Lynch, 1998, p. 42). While it is not the conclusion of this study that the majority of journalism educators are anti-Internet, the existence of rhetoric in review magazines widely disseminated among the profession, indicates that that attitude is shared by some.

Unquestionably, the image of the Internet has not been helped to have renowned journalists such as Walter Cronkite speak ill of it. In November 1996, as the premier speaker at the first Herb/Caen/San Francisco Chronicle Lecture , "the most trusted man in America," preached sentiments shared by many mainstream journalists. The Internet can be a valuable source of

information, but can also be a "frightful danger to all of us," Cronkite said (Lee, 1996).

Ultimately however, the conclusions of this study would be inaccurate if they failed to acknowledge that a growing number of traditional journalists and journalism educators are relinquishing outright dismissal of the Internet as deviant and beginning to embrace its potential for news production. One example of the praise it is receiving appeared in the July 1997 *Columbia Journalism Review* :

Since networked new media can be interactive, on-demand, customizable; since it can incorporate new combinations of text, images, moving images, and sound; since can build new communities based on shared interests and concerns; and since it has the almost unlimited space to offer levels of reportorial depth, texture, and context that are impossible in any other medium--new media can transform journalism (Pavlik, 1997, p.30).

But even here a note of caution must be offered. In an even more recent Internet study, a mass communication scholar asserted:

These complexities shroud the reputation of the Internet at a crucial juncture in its development as a communications medium. Legal and ethical issues associated with interactive media threaten to be a perpetual challenge for present and future on-line entrepreneurs (Smethers, 1998, p. 16).

Thus, the implications of this study are not overly optimistic that traditional American journalism, and those scholars who examine it, will affably share with the Internet, its elite position as disseminator of news. Socialization into the dominant ideology is buttressed by a profession that utilizes newsgathering routines such as "beats" and the reliance on official or elite sources, and is constrained by deadline pressures and economy of

presentation. This study concludes that such a paradigm such may serve as much as a constriction on the production of news as facilitation.

One implication of this study concerns the democratic potential of the Internet, as some scholars have postulated. Critically, Beniger (1986) has argued that the driving logic of technological communication has been toward more powerful social control, rather than toward more democratic institutions. But it would be a mistake to assume that the American corporate-financial class--while powerful--is omnipotent (McQuail, 1994). Optimistically, McQuail contends that practically all mass media have radical possibility, in the sense of being potentially subversive of systems of social control. Unfortunately, McQuail also argues: "While technology in general seems to increase the promise of freedom of communication, the continued strength of institutional controls, including those of the market, over actual flow and reception should not be underestimated" (p. 25). Thus, in the U.S.'s market-driven economy, the future of the Internet as an acknowledged disseminator of news, at least for critical scholars, remains unanswered.

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Auto Elite and Agenda-Setting:

How the Auto Elite Set the Auto Trade Policy Agenda?

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Auto Elite and Agenda-Setting:

How the Auto Elite Set the Auto Trade Policy Agenda

Abstract

The automobile industry leaders were illustrated through a descriptive content analysis as the agenda-setters for U.S. newspapers on their news coverage of the auto trade conflict between America and Japan. The study reveals that Lee Iacocca, alongside other auto elite, set the agenda for the *New York Times* and the *Detroit News*, both of which rely heavily upon these auto elite, and through them, U.S. presidents, Congressmen and U.S. Trade Representatives as the primary news sources.

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze and to compare the news coverage of the automobile trade disputes between the United States and Japan in two American newspapers. More specifically, the study is to analyze what is the role of the newspapers regarding the issue, and how is the agenda-setting mechanism formed and working? While the agenda-setting theory has been broadly analyzed by scholars studying numerous domestic and foreign policies, it has scarcely been applied to study the international trade issues or commercial policies, despite the escalating prominence of world trade.[1]

The trade imbalance between the United States and Japan has existed for decades, and the resulting conflicts between the two economic powers have been intensified with the continuous surge in the trade deficit. The Japanese automobile trade surplus with the U.S. was estimated at some $31 billion, or nearly three-quarters of its total trade surplus with America in 1990.[2] In 1994, whereas the number moved up only a bit to $37 billion, the percentage declined considerably to about 55 percent of the total $66 billion trade surplus.[3]

The tension over automobile trade reached its peak in June 1995. The U.S. government announced its intention to impose 100 percent "punitive tariffs" valued at $5.9 billion on the Japanese auto industry in retaliation for Japan's alleged unfair trade practice. Japan, on the other hand, accused its rival of abandoning the free trade principle pledged to in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The issue later was, once again, resolved in a

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[1] One of the very few studies touching on this perspective was conducted by professor Wayne Wanta of the University of Oregon. Wayne Wanta and Y.W. Hu, "The Agenda-Setting Effects of International News Coverage-An Examination of Differing News Frames," *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 3 (fall 1993): 250-264. In their study, Wanta and Hu found that international trade coverage, particularly when the United States is not involved, have a much weaker agenda-setting impact on public concerns. They also concluded the weak agenda-setting effect in the international trade issues is due mostly to their abstractness.

[2] Leslie Helm and Donald Woutat, "Angry Reaction to Japan's Auto Quota Renewal," *The Los Angeles Times,* 12 January 1991, sec. D, p. 2.

[3] Andrew Pollack, "Detroit's Japan-Friendly Cars Go to Tokyo," *The New York Times*, 25 October 1995, sec. D, p. 1.

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"peaceful" way, with the Japanese forced to make another commitment to restrain "voluntarily" its auto exports to the United States.

The concept of "fair trade" is reported and used frequently by the news media, regarding international trade, particularly in the issue under investigation. It is confusing and misleading because there exists in economics no such idea as "fair trade," as opposed to the more common free trade. How was the fair trade concept formatted and framed? And by whom? In other words, who sets the agenda of the fair trade concept and policy?

Significance and Purpose of the study

This study aims to offer an alternative explanation and answer to the old question: Who sets the media's agenda? Previous research has found that there exist a number of sources for media agenda-setting effect, but led to no conclusive answers. The news media are considered highly susceptible to external forces, including multinational corporations such as automobile firms. This research can therefore also provide insights in future studies of the kinship between trade policy and the press, particularly when international trade activities and the accompanying conflicts have become increasingly notable.

Preliminary research of public and private documents disclosed that the fair trade notion was employed by auto industry leaders, notably Lee Iacocca, and then adopted by the government and the news media. In her analysis of the rhetoric of Iacocca's speeches, Judith Hoover writes:

> No single issue characterizes the public communication and the public image of Lee Iacocca more than the trade imbalance with Japan. Since his initial efforts [in late 1970s and early 1980s] to generate support for the Chrysler guarantee loan, he has consistently identified *fair trade* as an overriding goal. Indeed, he has managed to frame much of the public discourse about *fair trade* through his early and persistent attention to the topic.[4]

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[4] Judith Hoover, "The Japanese Trade Imbalance: Lee Iacocca and Corporate Advocacy," in "*I gotta tell You,*" ed. Mattew W. Seeger (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 167.

Clearly, there are manifest connections among the auto industry, trade conflict at issue, fair trade concept and the agenda-setting theory. Through the agenda-setting mechanism, the auto elite may be able to format the fair trade perception in the mind of the government, the news media and the public. This phenomena can be better illustrated by Jeffrey M. Berry:

> It seems entirely appropriate to most Americans that government should try to shore up a troubled industry lest it fall victim to foreign competition. Although it is more controversial, there are convincing rationalizations that justify the government's stepping in to save individual companies of particular importance to the economy, such as *Chrysler*..., even though those firms were failing because of their own bad management practices.[5]

Adding to that keen observation, scholars Jonathan D. Aronson and Peter F. Cowhey further pinpoint the burgeoning importance of the international auto trade issue. They state, "the political economy of the automobile industry reflects its size. The automobile sector is always politically sensitive because it affects the economic well-being of grass-root constituents and the voting public knows it."[6] The news media play an important role in shaping public opinion through the mechanism of agenda-setting, and can potentially influence the trade policy.

Who Sets the Media's Agenda?

The intriguing nature of the international trade issues underscores this important question: Who sets the media's agenda? According to Jian-Hua Zhu, it is the interest group. In his five-component "public agenda" study, Zhu ranks first the interest group's

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[5] Jeffrey M. Berry, "The Power of Business," in *The Interest Group Society,* 2d ed. (Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown series in political science, 1989), 211.

[6] Peter F. Cowhey and Jonathan D. Aronson, *Managing The World Economy: The Consequences of Corporate Alliances* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1993), 92-93.

agenda, followed by the media agenda, audience members' agenda, policymakers' agenda, and policy agenda.[7] He writes:

> Those components play different roles in the formation of public agenda. Interest groups initially identify, define and raise social issues. Therefore, their agenda is the source of the public agenda. The media select, redefine and amplify some of the interest group issues, with both ordinary citizens and policymakers as the target. In this sense, the media are instrumental.[8]

Moreover, many other researchers have also found that the press is often serving as supporters and advocates of the government and its foreign policy. For instance, Tsan-Kuo Chang demonstrates that the government has an upper hand in shaping and directing the public agenda and opinion concerning foreign policies.[9] In his content-analysis study of the press' role in Sino-America foreign policy, Chang concludes that the press is inclined to be pro-government and basically follows the government's position for its direction of news coverage, and thereby influences public opinion.[10] Chang's and Zhu's arguments are echoed by Shoemaker and Reese's concept of "hierarchy of influence"[11] in which societal ideology predominates special groups, the news media, the influence of news definitions and the individual as sources of influence.

Furthermore, press supports of foreign policy are even more prominent when its government is in national emergencies or in stalemates with foreign states.[12] Such a "rally

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[7] Jian-Hua Zhu, "Issue Competition and Attention Distraction: A Zero-Sum Theory of Agenda-Setting," *Journalism Quarterly* 69 (winter 1992): 825-836.

[8] Zhu, "Issue Competition and Attention Distraction," 826.

[9] Tsan-Kuo Chang, *The Press and China Policy: The Illusion of Sino-American Relations 1950-1984* (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1993).

[10] Chang, *The Press and China Policy.*

[11] P.J. Shoemaker and S.D. Reese, "The Influence of Ideology," *Mediating the Messages: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content* (N.Y.: Longman, 1991), 221-251.

[12] John Zaller and Dennis Chiu, "Government's little helper: U.S. press coverage of foreign policy crises, 1945-1991," *Political Communication* 13 (Oct.-Dec., 1996): 385-405.

around the flag" effect has been evidenced by some studies that concluded that the press was more likely to be either supportive or uncritical of the government's foreign actions during the crises.[13]

In their study of press coverage of the U.S. invasion of Panama, Gutierrez-Villalobos and associates concluded that *Time* and *Newsweek* as mainstream news organizations deferred to "authority in the area of foreign affair news."[14] Likewise, in their investigation of so-called CNN-effect on U.S.-Somalia foreign policy, Livingston and Eachus stated that "because news agendas typically reflect the agendas of officials, the media serve as instruments of those officials who are most adept at using news to further their policy goals."[15] More critical than the news- media-as-instruments model is Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model in which they integrate concepts of instrumental influence and political economy to scrutinize the cozy tie between the media and news sources. The news organizations, they claim, are servants to the influential who have the ultimate power in shaping the foreign policy.[16]

Source-dependence Concept

The relationship of the news media and sources has also been examined by other researchers such as Leon V. Sigal, Shoemaker and Reese, and Judy VanSlyke Turk. In his seminal study, Sigal found more than two decades ago that the news media over-relied on governmental officials through routine channels, which include official proceedings, press

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[13] James McCartney, "Rallying around the flag," *American Journalism* Review 16 (sept. 1994): 40-46.

[14] Sonia Gutierrez-Villalobos, James K. Hertog, and Ramona R. Rush, "Press Support for the U.S. Administration During the Panama Invasion: Analyses of Strategic and Tactical Critique in the Domestic Press," *Journalism Quarterly* 71 (autumn 1994): 625.

[15] Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus, "Humanitarian Crises and U.S. Foreign Policy: Somalia and the CNN Effect Reconsidered," *Political Communication* 12 (Oct.-Dec., 1995): 427.

[16] Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

releases, press conferences and speeches.[17] In his content analysis of *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, Sigal concluded that U.S. (federal) government officials, particularly at the executive branch, predominate as the prime sources of information for the news media.[18] He also observed that U.S. Congressmen had gained an increasing role as news sources over the past decades. Sigal stated "Legislators in pivotal positions in Congress have become more adept at disseminating information to the press."[19]

In their study of influence on the media content, Shoemaker and Reese explicitly pinpoint and depict the relationship between the news sources and the media. They argue, above all, that "sources have a tremendous effect on mass media content, because journalists can't include in their news reports what they don't know."[20] Concurring with Sigal's observations, Shoemaker and Reese say that news media rely heavily on government officials for information due to their availability, authority and credibility. In addition, they find that powerful and resourceful interest groups tend to directly influence or control media's content by ways of routine conduits such as press releases and public relations campaigns.[21]

Furthermore, at the local level, Weaver and Elliott, in their study of the source-media kinship, find that local newspapers tend to serve as a "transmitter" rather than a "filter," or agenda-setter, as they fundamentally follow and reflect "the priorities of the city council on major items."[22] And such a role by the press is more prominent on economic

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[17] Leon V. Sigal, "Channels and Sources of News," in *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1973), 119-130.

[18] Sigal, "Channels and Sources of News," 119-130.

[19] Sigal., "Channels and Sources of News," 127.

[20] Shoemaker and Reese, "Influence on Content from Outside of Media Organizations," 178.

[21] Shoemaker and Reese, "Influence on Content from Outside of Media Organizations," 175-220.

[22] David Weaver and Swanzy Nimley Elliott, "Who Sets the Agenda for the Media? A Study of Local Agenda-Building," *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (spring 1985): 91.

topics that are considered by journalists to be policy matters and require political decisions.[23] Likewise, Turk, who investigates the impact of public information officials [PIOs] as news sources upon the local papers' news content, points out that: "...the [local government officials as] sources of the raw material of information upon which journalists rely may ultimately have as much to do with the media's agenda..."[24] The newspapers, VanSlyke Turk argues, rely heavily upon the PIOs, who offer newsworthy information and set the media's agenda.

One notable point revealed in both Weaver's and VanSlyke Turk's research is that local newspapers are highly susceptible to the agenda of local sources on economic issues. This notion is very important because the local economy often is tied to the international trade activities of the local enterprises. More relevant to this study is Erwin Atwood's research on how the U.S. and the Japanese newspapers portray each other in their news coverage. Atwood argues that foreign correspondents were inclined to reflect the opinions of the foreign nation participating in an international trade issue.[25]

News Content Sampling

The researcher analyzed news content of 325 news items from the *New York Times* and the *Detroit News*. The rationales for the newspapers selection included: (1) the Times has been considered a general and influential national elite newspaper dedicated to the coverage of both politics and economics; (2) the News, located in the center of competition and controversy of the international automobile trade, serves as the representative local daily newspaper with a considerably large circulation.

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[23] Weaver and Elliott, "Who Sets the Agenda for the Media," 87-94.

[24] Judy VanSlyke Turk, "Public Relations' Influence on the News," *Newspaper Research Journal* 7 (summer 1986): 15.

[25] L. Erwin Atwood, "News of U.S. and Japan in each other's papers," *Gazette* 39 (1987): 73-89.

Because the automobile trade conflict was both a domestic/local and an international issue, the population of the descriptive content analysis was defined as encompassing stories on the front pages, international pages, editorial pages and business pages. Selected and sampled stories were from the period of automobile trade negotiations between the countries each year, if any. More specifically, the study covered a 14-day time span within which trade talks were held. For instance, the news content for the period of January 3, 1992 through was collected and analyzed for the trade negotiations held on January 9 and 19, 1992. *The New York Times* and the *Detroit News* had 169 and 156 news/editorial items, respectively.

This study included only the news covered in both newspapers for each trade talk. In addition, this investigation encompassed news content directly aimed at or closely related to bilateral automobile trade negotiation between the United States and Japan. For instance, the news content for the Framework (for a New Economic Partnership) talks was included in the sample, whereas content for the Structural Impediment Initiatives (SII) was not, because auto trade talks were not listed as the major part of its agenda.

This study divided the 15-years time span (1981-1995) into two periods, with each period including four years. Period one included years 1981, 1983, 1985 and 1986; period two 1992-1995. The main rationale for this design is that a natural time block, from 1987 through 1991 during which no trade negotiations were held or reported in both newspapers, helped divide the time span into two periods and allowed the longitudinal method.

The Big Three as the Agenda-Setters

The researcher employed qualitative, descriptive content analysis, based on the source dependence theory and path analysis to test this hypothesis. According to Judith Hoover, former Chrysler Corp. President Lee Iacocca framed and then further set the fair-

trade policy agenda for the nation as a whole. It was thus essential to trace and capture how the fair trade concept was originated and transmitted among the key players involved in this issue, just as it was helpful to identify and disclose how the newspapers selected and cited their news sources.

A comprehensive scrutiny of public documents reconfirming Hoover's observations unveiled that Iacocca, with two other auto industry leaders, set the agenda since the early stage for the U.S. Congress, the presidents and the news media. Iacocca set the fair-trade policy agenda for the Reagan regime. The exact wording of "fair trade" was uttered by Iacocca in his congressional hearing statement on April 22, 1982. "The nation must face up to the fact that the Japanese auto makers have an *unfair* tax and *trade* advantage which is denying hundreds of thousands of Americans a fair shot at a job... That's not *fair trade*..."[26] [emphases added].

Fair Trade as the Trade Policy

The term of "fair trade" was recorded for the first time in the presidential documents on the November 7, 1983 before President Reagan's trip to Japan. Reagan said, "I think, for one thing, we have some differences with regard to trade... The great growth and prosperity of Japan in trade and industry is due to the idea of democracy and free trade. And so free trade must also be *fair trade*... And there is a dangerous imbalance now in that trade."[27]

In subsequent public speeches, Reagan had adopted and promoted the themes of fair trade advocated by the American Big Three and related interest groups. For instance, the president in his interview with the *Far Eastern Economic Review* said, "Our trade

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[26] Congress, House, Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affair, *Oversight Hearing on the Chrysler Corporation Loan Guarantee Act and the Status of the U.S. Automobile Industry: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Economic Stabilization*, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., 22 April 1982, 7-13.

[27] President, Remarks in an Interview with Nobutaka Shikanai of Fuji Television in the White House, *The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 19 (14 November 1983): 1539.

policy toward Japan this year is the same one we have been pursuing all through my administration. It is a simple and, we believe, *fair policy*. We would like our companies to have the same access to Japan's market that Japanese companies have to ours."[28] Reagan often mentioned themes such as job creations, trade barriers, trade deficits, breathing room and market access, among others.[29]

Moreover, even before adopting the *fair trade* concept, Reagan had willy-nilly adapted himself to gradually become sympathetic to the sobering auto industry. He said, for instance, "We want to enhance the ability of U.S. producers and workers to compete on a fair and equitable basis in the world marketplace... The United States will-carry the banner of free trade and open market."[30] More importantly, the influences of auto elite on the Reagan administration was greatly evinced in his remarks on this issue in his 1982 State of the Union Address. On the very top of his agendas, Reagan stated, "Seldom have the stakes been higher for America. What we do and say here will make all the difference to automakers in Detroit... who are in the unemployment lines."[31]

President Reagan, who had long been misperceived by many as for free trade, indeed was a moderate fair-trade promoter, considering his support to the then deteriorating industry. The shift in his position from "free trade" to "free trade and open market" to "free and fair trade" were highly documented. As a result, fair trade became in 1985 the label for

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[28] President, Foreign Issues: Responses to Questions submitted by the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, *The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Document* 20 (14 May 1984): 684.

[29] In many other remarks recorded in the presidential documents, Presidents expressed those fair trade themes. For instance, Remarks in a question-and-answer session during a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Teleconference, May 10, 1983; Proclamation 5160 at the World Trade Week, 1984, March 15, 1984; Remarks at the Ford Claycomo Assembly Plant in Kansas City, Missouri, April 11, 1984; Remarks at the Awards Presentation Ceremony, May 23, 1984.

[30] President, International Trade: Remarks and a question-a-answer session during a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Teleconference, *The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* 19 (16 May 1983): 690-695.

[31] President, The State of the Union, *The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Document* 18 (7 February 1982): 76.

U.S. trade policy, which is indexed in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents.[32]

Although President Bush adopted a similar moderate approach to the automobile trade issue, Clinton is much more aggressive in his stand, which eventually resulted in the 1995 chaotic auto trade negotiation. Clinton's true belief in the fair trade concept can be dated at least as early as 1987 while he was governor of Arkansas. Clinton was "shot early"[33] when he was attending a National Governors Association Conference in Michigan where Lee Iacocca presented a speech on the automobile trade issue and policy; since then, Clinton may have been substantially influenced. In that presentation, Iacocca, criticizing the free-trade idea and Reagan's talks-more-than-actions trade policy, repeated his old themes and attacked the Japanese for their unfair trade practices, which led to the mega-scale bilateral trade deficit and unemployment. Iacocca said:

> While we're debating, we've losing the economic war [to the Japanese]. If you really believe in free and fair trade, we should be retaliating right about now... We can't let the American market be the dumping ground for the world's excess capacity, either. And that's what we're doing. We need a trade policy with teeth, that says to our friends, "Hey, trade has to be *two-way*, fellas."[34]

Apparently, as the governor of one of the poorest states in the U.S., Clinton was more susceptible to Iacocca's speech concerning unemployment and trade deficit.

The Big Three, UAW and Jobs

The conception of fair trade was initiated in early 1980 by the then UAW's president, Douglas Fraser. In his testimony at a congressional hearing on March 18, 1980,

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[32] Since 1985, the term "Fair Trade" has been indexed in *The Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents*.

[33] Lee Iacocca said that "For of all, there's a good chance that someone in this room may be a future president of the United States, and I wanted a shot at him early." Lee Iacocca, "Remarks at the National Governors Association Conference," in *"I gotta tell you,"* ed. Mattew W. Seeger (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1994), 228.

[34] Lee, *"I gotta tell you,"* 228-236.

Fraser exhorted Japan to adopt export restraints "voluntarily in the spirit of *fair trade* and as a responsible member of the world trade community."[35] Nonetheless, Fraser's usage and urging of the fair-trade notion was derived from Lee Iacocca's incessant public discussions of this concept and the trade issue. As early as 1979, when Iacocca sought financial grants from the public and private sectors to salvage the dying company, he persistently singled out and attacked Japan for its unfair advantages in the global automobile competition. In his statement submitted at a House hearing, Iacocca dedicated nearly 40 percent of his time to criticizing the Japanese "runaway and unfair impact of imports," one of the eight major factors that plagued the U.S. automobile industry, particularly Chrysler. For instance, on March 11, 1980, Iacocca said:

> "The [Japanese] government put up a big wall around its own market while it encouraged automotive exports. It did not allow foreigners to build plants in Japan, at least the Europeans let us invest in Europe. In the final analysis, the development of Japan's auto industry is a classic example of government protection, government assistance, and government encouragement conspicuously given to make companies internationally competitive... I'm still a free trader, I think. But it's hard to argue against some kind of action when you're locked out of the other guy's market and he's having a field day in yours. Maybe we should require that they build some portion of their cars here. That helps keep the competition at least *fair*..."[36]

Additionally, Iacocca blamed most of the economic misery resulting from foreign competition upon the increasingly severe hardships of unemployment in the automobile industry and the economy as a whole. He proclaimed that hundreds of thousands of jobs would have been lost had Chrysler failed. He said, "It is fair to assume a permanent loss of jobs in the U.S. as automotive job opportunities are transferred largely to foreign

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[35] Congress, House, Committee on Ways and Means, *World Auto Trade: Current Trends and Structural Problems: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Trade*, 96th Cong., 2nd sess., 18 March, 1980, 65-70.

[36] Congress, the Joint Economic Committee, *Trade and Investment Policy: Imports and the Future of the American Automobile Industry: Hearing before the Joint Economic Committee*, 96th Cong., 2nd sess, 19 March, 1980, 142.

countries,"[37] notably Japan. Iacocca was successful back in 1980 in imposing the fair-trade concept and agenda upon the United Automobile Workers composed of more than 1.5 million members, and on other related automotive groups by his continuous stressing of the Japanese import threats to their own economic welfare or job security.

Also, Iacocca used the annual shareholders meetings and annual reports as the conduits to spread the fair trade/fairness ideas to the public. In the 1979 Chrysler annual report, the newly minted chairman stated that "imports increased their share of the total U.S. market, quarter by quarter; at the expense of the domestic producers"[38] and jobs. A similar story was repeated by Iacocca, just months later in the 1980 annual shareholder meeting.[39]

In the 1982 annual report, Iacocca again mentioned the Japanese threat. He said, "there can never be long-lasting security for the jobs of American workers unless decisive action is taken to correct or offset the unfair trade advantages enjoyed by the Japanese in several of our key industries including automobile."[40] Likewise, The chairmen of Ford and General Motors frequently addressed the Japanese problem in their annual reports where such themes as unemployment, cost advantage, market share, local content and exchange rate (Japanese yen) were mentioned, though with a modest tone. But as the trade conflict is mounting , these auto executives employed stronger and more clear-cut language condemning the Japanese government and auto industry.

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[37] Congress, House, Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs, *The Chrysler Corporation Financial Situation: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Economic*, 96th Cong., 1st sess., 15 September, 1979, 191.

[38] Statement by Lee A. Iacocca, "To Our Shareholders," in Chrysler 1979 Annual Report.

[39] Iacocca said that stopping the flood of the Japanese imports into the U.S. was the immediate and foremost aim. "Today, more than 260,000 American automotive workers are on the streets, while imports by [the Japanese] keep coming at us - shiploads every day." Lee A. Iacocca, "Remarks at the Annual Shareholders Meeting," in *"I gotta tell you,"* ed. Mattew W. Seeger, 82 (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1994). This speech was given in Rockford, Ill., on 13 May, 1980.

[40] Iacocca, "To Our Shareholders," 1982 *Annual Report* of Chrysler, Feb. 24, 1983, p. 3.

The Big Three and the U.S. Congress

While Lee Iacocca, among all automobile elite, shaped the fair-trade concept in the mind of the government, the public and other automotive organizations, he also set the agenda for congressmen. In addition to their direct efforts through testimony at congressional hearings in both houses, auto elite urged and led the public and auto workers, employed and unemployed alike, to seek assistance and relief from their constituents. For instance, in his letter dated Oct. 30, 1979, to Chrysler's shareholders, Iacocca wrote: "We have received strong support from Congressional leaders, individual shareholders, dealers, suppliers, and many organizations including the United Auto Workers... We urged shareholders to write or personally contact their Senators and Representatives and ask them to support Chrysler's request for assistance..."[41]

Notably in almost all hearings, there were congressmen from Michigan, notably the Levin brothers and Donald Riegle, either serving as the chairmen or simply presenting their views. The agenda-setting for fair trade with representatives was illustrated by their reactions to prominently display Iacocca's testimony. Rep. Carl Levin said, "Members of the Congress have become sensitive to the plight of the industry as a result of the Chrysler legislation [the Chrysler Corporation Loan Guarantee Act]... All the problems facing the industry have been made more critical by the flow of imports [by the Japanese] into this country... It is clear that we ought to take action now to facilitate a process which will produce that restraint"[42] on Japan. Beyond that, UAW chairmen and other automotive interest groups often personally testified at or submitted their opinions to congressional hearings.

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[41] Iacocca, in his "Letter to Chrysler shareholders," on Oct. 30 1979.

[42] Congress, House, Committee on Ways and Means, *Auto Situation, Autumn 1980: Hearing before the Subcommittee*, 96th Cong. 2nd sess., 18 November, 1980, 16-17.

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The Big Three and the News Media

It is possible to investigate who sets the news media's agenda, using the source dependency, by examining how the newspapers cited or quoted their selected news sources. Among them were the auto elite and related interest groups, congressmen, and the presidents and their officials. The selective findings from *The New York Times* and the *Detroit News* were listed for the critical years of 1981, 1983, 1992 and 1995, during which the trade conflicts and negotiations were most notable for each period.[43] The descriptive content analyses unveiled some interesting varying citation patterns by *The New York Times* and the *Detroit News*. First of all, the *Times* seemed more likely to quote government officials, particularly in the second period, whereas the *News* persistently quoted more auto elite and automotive interest groups than government officials in the same period. The *Times* usually provided more quotes from officials, while the *News* tended to quote automakers and congressmen from Michigan.

On May 2, 1981, both papers quoted virtually the same sources. *The New York Times*[44] quoted fair trade sources 11 times, whereas the *Detroit News*[45] quoted fair trades sources 15 times. Also, in this particular article, U.S. congressmen from Michigan were quoted more by the *News* than by the *Times*. Moreover, the *News* used stronger expressions that showed more intense emotions in the news coverage. Lee Iacocca, former UAW chairman Douglas Fraser and Congressmen such as Carl Levin, among others, voiced their anger at or disappointment of the insignificant automobile trade agreement

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[43] The first ever bilateral trade negotiation for the voluntary export restraints was held in 1981 and settled by the United States. In 1983, public opinion poll on the trade issue and conflict was for the first time conducted by the news media (*The Los Angeles Times*). 1992 represented the increased clout of auto elite, who accompanied President Bush to Japan on the highly regarded auto trade mission. 1995 showcased the prominence of this trade issue as the accompanying disputes reached its peak.

[44] Clyde H. Farnsworth, "Tokyo's Car Curbs Hailed in U.S.: Congress Move Now Unlikely," *The New York Times*, 2 May 1981, sec. A, p. 1.

[45] John E. Peterson, "Car import lid defuses debate," the *Detroit News*, 2 May 1981, sec. A, p. 1.

reached by the Reagan government and his counterpart. In addition, they expressed their concerns about the Japanese commitment and faith in fulfilling the agreement.

They also complained that while the trade pact might help the U.S. Big Three protect some American domestic auto and auto parts market, it was far from solving such fundamental problems as huge unemployment in the auto industry. For instance, Sen. Carl Levin said, "the agreement just isn't good enough. It may be enough to blunt the political pressure for strong and strict quotas, but it doesn't do enough to offer real relief to the auto industry and its workers."

On Nov. 2, 1983, in their coverage of the auto trade negotiation on the VER renewal, both newspapers again relied on and quoted heavily the auto elite, particularly Lee Iacocca and other related interest groups. They slashed that the renewed VER would create many negative effects on the industry, auto workers and the whole economy, as a result of the unfair trade practices by the Japanese automakers. Owen Bieber, then UAW president, even argued that the new VER agreement would eventually eradicate the production line of small car by the Big Three. Lee Iacocca, for instance, said, "**MAKE NO MISTAKE**, this 'transitional agreement' is a serious blow to the U.S. auto producers, suppliers, dealers, their employees and laid-off workers who are being hurt by the unfair advantages enjoyed by the Japanese auto industry - and whose problems were not corrected by these negotiations" [emphasis in original].

This issue turned more intense and controversial as it moved into the second period. News sources with a higher power index, or themes such as trade war, were more often cited or quoted by both newspapers. For example, the "trade war' theme was cited only four and one times by the *Times* and the *News*, respectively, in the first period; the frequency of its citation by the two newspapers increased to 12 and 16 times in the second period. Likewise, themes such as trade deficit, market share, market openness and import target, among others, has been cited by the two papers more frequently.

Nevertheless, the *Detroit News* continued to rely more on the auto elite as the primary news sources, as the trade issue seemed to shift from an international/national issue to a local one. On the other hand, *The New York Times* still used government official as the primary sources. In period two, *The New York Times* quoted Clinton or his trade officials a combined 103 (80/23) times, compared to 38 (33/5) times by the *Detroit News*. During the same period, the *News* quoted the executives of the auto industry (GM/Ford/Chrysler) 100 times (15/47/38), compared to 36 (4/15/17) times by the *Times*. When related interest groups and Congressmen are considered, the disparity in the citation frequency between the two newspapers becomes much greater. The *Detroit News* quoted them a combined 44 times, compared to *The News York Times'* six, in the second period. The citation patterns by the two newspapers further helped illustrate and support the first hypothesis that the auto elite set the media's agenda.

For instance, most notably, on Jan. 12, 1992, the *Detroit News*[46] published an excerpt of Lee Iacocca's speech made on Jan. 10 at the Detroit Economic Club concerning automakers' trade mission to Japan. This excerpt, which accounted for 73 paragraphs, reiterated those themes and arguments spelled out by Iacocca over the past 10 years. More importantly, those themes used by the auto elite have also been adopted by government officials as news sources that further passed them on to the news media covering the story. Bush and Clinton and their trade representatives all mentioned and stressed such themes as unemployment, trade deficit, trade barriers/Keiretsu, market openness, market share, import target as well as trade retaliation.

Bush, for example, said in the 1992 trade negotiation that the agreement will improve the "the leveling of the playing field" to promote the U.S. exports, which would "translates into jobs of the American worker." Also, Mickey Kantor, the US Trade Representative under Clinton, claimed that the 1995 trade pact, which helped prove

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[46] "Iacocca: 'We're getting stiffed," the *Detroit News*, 12 Jan. 1992, sec. B, p. 1.

Clinton's will to ensure a "two-way street [for trade]" would dismantle the *Keiretsu* system, which has kept outsiders from accessing to the Japanese market.

Conclusion

As analyzed above, the auto elite set the fair-trade agenda for the two newspapers. Clearly, the auto elite framed the fair trade concept and related sub-concepts, used them in testimony before Congress, influenced the presidents and trade representatives to adopt the terms, which then were picked up by the news media. More specifically, the newspapers relied on the auto elite as a powerful interest group, who set the media's agenda en route of hearings, news releases, speeches and interviews, advertising campaigns and even public relations issued or conducted from Detroit or their Washington offices. The offices updates constantly their chairman at the headquarters on any concerned issue development at the governments and help disseminate news information prepared by the headquarters to the journalists in Washington.

The New York Times and the *Detroit News* also depend considerably on government sources serving in the U.S. or overseas, notably the presidents, U.S. trade representatives, U.S. ambassadors to Japan, for information of the trade negotiations through similar routines used by the auto elite. Therefore, the hypothesis for this study is supported. The automobile elite set the fair trade agenda for the news media analyzed through their routine news practices by ways of news sources selections and reliance.

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