

A SURVEY OF WOMEN'S NEWS EDITORS  
AS GATEKEEPERS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.  
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THESIS



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## ABSTRACT

### A STUDY OF WOMEN'S NEWS EDITORS AS GATEKEEPERS

By Elizabeth H. Harrison

This study surveyed demographic and professional characteristics of the women's editors of 26 of the 28 daily papers with over 10,000 circulation in a midwestern state. It also examined their practices as "gatekeepers" standing between the flood of copy coming into their newspapers and the trickle of news printed.

A pilot study, five focused interviews and a mail questionnaire were the means by which the research was conducted.

The position of women's editor appeared to differ from that of telegraph editor, studied in previous "gatekeeper" research in at least three major respects: the women's editor often had administrative duties, sought out story ideas rather than merely selecting copy from the wire service offerings, and dealt personally with the general public and sometimes with advertisers.

A majority of the respondents to the mail survey had held their jobs for three years or less. Better than three-fourths of the editors had had some college education,





but fewer than a third were college graduates. Half had had neither journalism training in college nor previous experience on other newspapers.

On the largest newspaper surveyed the women's editor had 23 full-time assistants; on eight of the smaller papers the editors had no full-time assistants.

In most cases, salaries appeared related to the newspapers' circulation and ranged from under \$100 a week to over \$200 a week. General areas of responsibility were similar from paper to paper, with the majority of editors agreeing they performed 11 of a list of 14 functions.

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by

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A THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis concerns women's editors--a type of journalist often scorned by women reporters on the "city side," laughed at by male colleagues, and ignored by journalism schools.

For purposes of the study, a "women's editor" was defined as a newspaper staff member given this title or a similar one, such as "women's news editor."

Titles of this sort originally referred to the person on the newspaper responsible for food, furnishings, or other news presumably of interest solely to women (15). Such domestically-oriented news is the only responsibility of the women's editors of some papers today.

However, society and club news have also traditionally been thought to be of particular interest to women, and the title may refer on other newspapers to staff members responsible for one or both these kinds of news, and perhaps for domestically-oriented news as well.

Or, a "women's editor" could be an editor charged simply with the responsibility of producing a section of the paper of particular interest to women and given an option as to subject matter.

One aspect of this study was to examine various functions of editors with titles of this sort.

### Rationale for Choosing the Topic

Women's news editors were studied for three major reasons.

1. They have seldom, if ever, been systematically studied. Yet, feature pages of the sort they edit are believed to secure steady newspaper readership (8).

Women readers are important to newspapers if only because they are important to advertisers. Carl Lindstrom goes so far as to suggest that recipes would not appear in newspapers if food ads did not (10).

Women's pages can attract high interest, as evidenced by a Milwaukee Journal 1963 study showing 86 per cent women's readership of the Sunday women's section (4).

2. Women's news editors are responsible for a section of the paper intended to interest a segment of the population whose traditional roles are being shaken.

As Betty Friedan points out in her polemic The Feminine Mystique, the skills women once contributed to the family economy have become obsolescent (5). A woman need no longer bake the family bread, weave its blankets, or bend over a scrub board.

The number of women who have turned to outside employment has increased. One out of three woman now hold paying jobs outside the home, and it is estimated that nine out of ten will be so employed at some time during their lives (14).

But if the household economy claims less of women's skills, the emotional demands at home may be greater. The family life with which women are so deeply involved is undergoing profound stresses. Juvenile delinquency at all levels of society is a matter of national concern. Though the divorce rate has fallen slightly in recent years, it is more than double what it was a half-century ago (17).

The public service function assigned newspapers dictates that city editors must go on using news of city hall and that wire editors must acquaint us with foreign wars, despite these radical changes in American home life. However, no such traditional charge dictates that women's editors must go on serving up recipes, "personals" and notices of PTA meetings. They may have an opportunity to develop fresh and significant concepts of news and public service.

3. By one estimate, 42.3 per cent of the bachelor's degrees in journal granted in 1963 were awarded to women (2). And the position of women's news editor is perhaps the one editorial executive position on a newspaper where her sex is normally an asset to a woman in competing for the job.

Yet, young women journalists generally display an antipathy toward a women's editor's work.

The antipathy was eloquently expressed 72 years ago by Mrs. S. Isadore Miner, a woman journalist of the time, who wrote:

No woman with an untrammelled ambition is satisfied to remain on the staff as a household editor when broader fields are open. She knows that she cannot hope to dive continually into the depths of pot hooks and pans, or knit three, purl two and slip one, and come up with hands reeking with crochet, and mayonnaise dressing, and at the same time write her name on the tablets of fame . . . It is harrowing to the mental powers to work for just one-half of the human family (16).

The antipathy may be grounded more in tradition than based on present conditions, and it seems in any case that investigations of the present possibilities of women's news editing would be useful.

#### Purposes of the Study

The study had two general purposes.

First, it was designed as a descriptive survey of the basic characteristics of a sample of women's news editors.

Second, it was intended as an exploratory study from which hypotheses could be generated about women's news editors, their functions, the conceptions and perceptions on which they operate, and their feelings about their job.

#### Theoretical Background

The gatekeeper theory of the late social-psychologist Kurt Lewin provides the theoretical background for this research.

In an article published in 1947, Lewin defined a gatekeeper as a person in a position to halt or further the flow of a given social process (9).



The gate to be kept could be identified because. . . "the constellation of the forces before and after the gate region is decisively different in such a way that the passing or not passing of the unit through the whole channel depends to a high degree on what happens in the gate region."

The region might be controlled by impartial rules--or by a gatekeeping individual or group. If control rests in an individual or group, said Lewin, "understanding the function of the gate becomes equivalent . . . to understanding the factors which determine the decisions of the gate keepers . . . ."

And these decisions, he said, "depend partly on their ideology, that is their system of values and beliefs which determine what they consider to be 'good' or 'bad,' and partly on the way they perceive the particular situation."

He emphasized that it was important not only to understand the forces in the channel leading up to the gate, but the "effect which the situation in the various sections of the channel has on the gatekeeper."

Lewin stated that his gatekeeper theory might be applied to "the travelling of a news item through certain communication channels in a group," as well as to other social phenomena.

The theory has been used as a basis for studying both newspaper reporters and newspaper editors. Standing as they do between the flow of copy coming into a newspaper office

and the trickle of "news" that appears on the stands the next day, the latter are conspicuous gatekeepers.

This study, relying as it does on information received from the "gatekeepers" about conditions at the "gate," leans heavily on Lewin's theory that it is the perceptions of the gatekeeper of the conditions at the gate, rather than the conditions themselves, that determine decisions.

It also attempts tentative probes at the "system of values and beliefs" with which this particular set of gatekeepers operates.

#### Organization of the Presentation

This report of the present research proceeds with a review of the related studies (Chapter II). In Chapter III, the plan of the study is presented. The sample, the methods used, and the data sought are described. In Chapters IV and V, the results of the first two parts of the research are presented. In Chapter VI, the results of the last portion of the study is set forth. The final chapter is comprised of conclusions drawn from the results and a summary of the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature discussed in this chapter is arranged in two sections. One section covers material relating to editors in general; the other deals with women's news editors in particular.

#### Research on Editors--General

Three studies of editors are reviewed here. Two, those by David M. White and Walter Gieber, were inspired by the gatekeeper theory of Kurt Lewin. A third, by Malcolm S. MacLean and Ann Li-an Kao, studies the predictive power of two picture editors under varying circumstances.

White (18)--David M. White studied the wire editor of a paper of 30,000 circulation in a "highly industrialized mid-west city of 100,000." A man in his middle 40's, White's "Mr. Gates" had had 25 years' experience as a journalist, both as a reporter and copy editor.

White asked Mr. Gates to save all rejected copy for a week and to write on it the reasons for his rejection. These reasons turned out to be, in White's opinion, highly arbitrary. For instance, Mr. Gates remarked on one piece

of copy, "He's too Red." Over a dozen stories were tersely marked "Propaganda" and one simply "Don't care for suicides."

White divided the rejected copy into two general categories: in one category were the stories in which Mr. Gates considered the subject matter unworthy of reportage; in the second were stories Mr. Gates rejected because of space limitations, availability of better stories on the same subject matter, etc. Rejections in the second category out-numbered those in the first by about two to one.

This rejected copy comprised nine out of ten stories Mr. Gates received; only one-tenth ultimately appeared in the newspaper.

White asserted:

It is only when we study the reasons given by Mr. Gates for rejecting almost nine-tenths of the wire copy (in his search for the one-tenth for which he has space) that we begin to understand how highly subjective, how reliant upon value judgments based on the "gatekeeper's" own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations the communication of news really is.

Mr. Gates probably would not have agreed with White's judgment. Replying to four questions asking him about the bases on which he chose copy, Mr. Gates seemed to reject the idea that he allowed his personal feelings to enter into his choices.

Answering White's question, "Do you feel that you have any prejudices which may affect your choice of news stories?" Gates answered in part . . .

I have few prejudices, built-in or otherwise, and there is little I can do about them. I dislike Truman's economics, daylight saving time and warm beer, but I go ahead using stories on them and other matters if I feel there is nothing more important to give space to . . .

White concluded:

It is a well known fact in individual psychology that people tend to perceive as true only those happenings which fit into their own beliefs concerning what is likely to happen. It begins to appear (if Mr. Gates is a fair representative of his class) that in his position as "gatekeeper" the newspaper editor sees to it (even though he may never be consciously aware of it) that the community shall hear as a fact only those events which the newsman, as the representative of his culture, believes to be true.

Gieber (6).--The next major gatekeeper study was conducted by Walter Gieber, whose subjects were 16 wire editors of Wisconsin dailies with circulation ranging from 4,000 to 31,000.

The editors ranged in age from 22 to 65 years; five were 30 years of age and under. Thirteen had graduated from college; one had attended college one year; two had not completed high school.

Gieber interviewed the editors and observed them at work. He set up a five-point series of criteria for judging the ideal wire editor's work--(1)"an appreciation of his community and the communality of interests held by and among his readers" (2) efficiency in handling the copy flow (3) sharp copy-reading skills (4)"an alert understanding what is in the news" and an ability to select news stories quickly and (5) an ability "to apply tools of the 'intellect' to make his stories 'meaningful.'"

Gieber also described the editorial decision-making process for a wire editor. It incorporates, he said,

the individual wire editor's perception of his community and readers, the traditions of his newspaper and the news policies of his superiors, and his own biases. Very much a part of the process are the daily problems of publication--what and how much news is being provided by the press associations, white space availability, composing room demands, copyreading and headline writing, and that most demanding taskmaster, time.

Few of the editors Gieber surveyed approached his ideal wire editor. Some were dissatisfied with their salaries and communities; few, Gieber seems to feel, were sufficiently attuned to their readers. Some were sloppy workers, and others had allowed once sharp skills to deteriorate.

Gieber found that the demand for and the employment of rigorous copyreading and intelligent editing appeared to be at low ebb. He also observed, "Editing of copy--the effort to maximize the meaning of news--seemed to be all but absent."

Perhaps most significantly for the readers, Gieber found that these editors, "working in a day-to-day frame of reference, rarely judged an item in the context of current events."

Gieber concluded:

The telegraph editor described in this study is caught in a strait jacket of mechanical details. To him, the most significant force in processing the news is getting copy into the newspaper. He is connected with the immediate details of his work rather than the social arena in which news is made and given meaning. In this situation the wire editor can do little more than the most meager copyreading and editing. Craftsmanship takes time, and the wire editors said they were rushed.



MacLean-Kao (11),--Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr. and Ann Li--an Kao wanted to see if an editor's ability to predict the interests of his readers might be improved. They worked with two picture editors. One editor was asked first to sort a deck of sixty non-captioned pictures in terms of the like or dislike he thought an "average" reader would feel for them. The correlation with an "average" reader's sorting was 0.7--no better than chance.

Next the editor was given a description of this "average" reader--a housewife named Mrs. Snelling with a boy in kindergarten, a girl in sixth grade, and so on. After Mrs. Snelling was described to him, the editor's correlation went up to .24. Finally, he was shown another deck of pictures and told how Mrs. Snelling had sorted these and what remarks she had made about them. When he sorted the original deck again for Mrs. Snelling his correlation rose to .75--"a darn good prediction in any business," say MacLean and Kao.

The same procedure was followed with a second editor, who was asked to rate intensity of feeling. His correlations were .18 on the first try, .62 on the second and .67 on the third.

The researchers concluded they were "coming much closer to research techniques which will not only give the editor much more directly a feel for the values of his readers but will also help him and us to develop sounder theories about editing processes."

Research on Women's Editors in Particular

There is no heading for women's pages, women's editors, women's news--nor, indeed, any heading beginning with "women's" in the index to Journalism Quarterly.

A search of the index to each individual issue turned up a few articles on women in journalism but none on women's pages or women's editors.

A survey of titles of master's theses in journalism uncovered 31 appearing to relate to women's pages or women in journalism. In half a dozen cases where the title indicated women's editors might be included in the discussions, theses were obtained. Women's editors were dealt with only peripherally in all but one consulted, a study of an Oklahoma City society editor who had been elected to her state's hall of fame (3).

However, one master's thesis did deal directly with women's news editors.\*

McGee (12).--A study of the predictive powers of women's news editors was conducted by Joan Rasmussen McGee for a master's thesis granted by the University of Wisconsin in 1964.

McGee asked a group of editors and a group of Wisconsin urban homemakers to sort the same selection of 25 topic summaries. She asked the homemakers to indicate their degree

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\*The following review is taken from a summary: the university library involved does not release master's theses.

of interest in each topic and the editors to indicate the degree of interest they thought the homemakers would have.

The editors either underestimated or overestimated the women's interest in roughly half the 25 topics. There was no particular pattern to their misjudgments. Says a summary: "The study seemed to indicate that the editors picked topics in a random manner rather than on how they express their readers' interests."

### Summary

Studies on editors and editing are few. Those available tend principally to point up possible editorial fallibility. In a gatekeeper type study, David M. White found a wire editor selecting news on a "highly subjective" basis that was "reliant upon value judgments." Walter Gieber complained that the 16 wire editors he studied had little sense of the "broad arena in which news is made," and, pressed for time, exercised little judgment or craftsmanship. In the course of developing a means of enhancing an editor's predictive powers, MacLean and Kao found that selecting photographs for average readers without any specifications on the readers, two picture editors chose with no more than random success; however, their predictions were better when they were given factual information and best when they were acquainted with a sampling of the audience's own choices. Surveying women's news editors, McGee found that they overestimated or underestimated their readers' interests in roughly half a set of story topics.

Unlike the MacLean-Kao and McGee studies, no actual tests of women's editors' ability to predict reader interest was made in the present research. Rather, the study followed the patterns of the White and Gieber gatekeeping studies in attempting to explore the apparatus with which these editors made decisions and the circumstances under which their decisions are made.

## CHAPTER III

### CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

This chapter is divided into four subsections. The first deals with the sample used in the study. The second relates to the methods used in each of the three stages of the study and to the portion of the sample used for each stage. In the third section can be found a summary of the subject matter covered in the study, and in the fourth section a summary of the chapter.

#### The Sample

The sample was the women's editors of the 28 daily newspapers of over 10,000 circulation published in a mid-west industrial state. Twenty-six of these papers listed women's editors in the 1965 Editor & Publisher Yearbook.

The papers ranged in size of circulation from 10,000 to 707,000. Size of circulation and the size of the city in which each newspaper is published are listed in descending order of circulation in (Table 3-1).

#### Method of Conducting Study

The study was conducted in three stages. The first was a pilot study--an unstructured interview and observation session with the women's editor of a metropolitan daily.

TABLE 3-1

## THE STATE'S NEWSPAPERS: CIRCULATION SIZE AND CITY SIZE

Number Assigned	Circulation	Population of City of Publication
1	700,000	1,700,000
2	520,000	1,700,000
3	130,000	212,000
4	105,000	213,000
5	74,000	120,000
6	70,000	86,000
7	57,000	94,000
8	56,000	101,000
9	54,000	86,000
10	47,000	76,000
11	46,000	23,000
12	40,000	56,000
13	39,000	45,000
14	39,000	52,000
15	35,000	36,000
16	33,000	71,000
17	26,400	31,000
18	22,000	25,000
19	19,000	21,000
20	16,000	21,000
21	14,000	26,000
22	14,000	18,000
23	14,000	19,000
24	13,000	30,000
25	11,000	22,000
26	10,000	3,000
27	10,000	14,000
28	10,000	16,000



The second was a series of focused interview with five women's editors. The third stage was surveying the remaining 22 editors by means of a mail questionnaire.

Pilot Study.--The subject of the pilot study was the women's editor of Paper No. 2 in Table 3-1, a metropolitan daily with a circulation of 520,000. The paper is not locally owned; it is the only newspaper in the state held by a powerful and prosperous national chain. The only morning newspaper in the state, it competes for circulation against Paper No. 1, a home-owned afternoon daily. Though it suffers a 40 per cent disadvantage in general circulation, Paper No. 2 is distributed widely throughout the state. (It was read by all but four of the women's editors surveyed).

The women's editor of Paper No. 2 was chosen as the subject for the pilot study because it was believed that the chain-owned metropolitan newspaper by which she is employed could provide her with optimum resources for editing a good women's page. Also, as a considerable underdog in the circulation struggle, Paper No. 2 appears to be more aggressive and less conservative than its opposition, Paper No. 1. In the words of a current No. 2's business advertising, it seems to try harder.

Given the resources of a chain and metropolitan newspaper, combined with a situation that puts a premium on sharp editing, it seemed that the women's editor of Paper No. 2 might be regarded as a kind of model against which other women's news editors might be measured.

The pilot interview followed as closely as possible the criteria set up for this type of interview by a textbook on social science research:

. . .the researcher interviews in the field in a very nondirective fashion. The questions are structured very little and controlled only by dealing with these general areas which he has reason to think are important. During this kind of flexible interviewing, he tries to follow up every promising lead which may appear, as to meaning of phrases, embarrassing areas of inquiry, differences of response to what seems to be the same question, new areas of subject matter, etc. (7).

In addition to being interviewed, the editor was observed for a day and queried about her activities.

Focused Interviews.--In the second stage, focused interviews were conducted with the women's editors of five of the newspapers.

These editors were selected for several reasons: the newspapers they represented have circulations of varying sizes; the communities in which the papers are published are of varying sizes and circumstances; and the communities were easily accessible for on-the-scene interviews.

A brief description of the particular situation of each newspaper selected follows, with papers named in descending order of circulation size and numbered as in Table 3-1. How this selection of newspapers and that of the pilot newspaper relate to the total sample is seen in Table 3-2.

TABLE 3-2

## DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Circulation	Number of Papers in Circulation Class	Interviews Conducted
Over 10,000, under 25,000	11	2
Over 25,000, under 50,000	8	1
Over 50,000, under 100,000	5	1
Over 100,000, under 500,000	2	1
Over 500,000	<u>2</u>	<u>(pilot study) 1</u>
Total	28	6

Paper No. 3: One of a chain of medium-sized papers, it has the largest circulation of any out-state newspaper. The city population is 212,000. The paper's circulation is 130,000.

Paper No. 6: Independently owned, it publishes in a city in the shadow of the state's metropolis and competes aggressively for circulation in the metropolis suburbs. The size of the home city is 86,000; the papers circulation is 70,000.

Paper No. 14: Owned by the same chain that publishes Paper No. 3, its circulation is 39,000 in a self-contained industrial city of 52,000.

Paper No. 19: Just purchased by a foreign chain, this daily publishes in a city of 21,000 and has a circulation of 19,000.

Paper No. 24: Independently owned, it circulates to 13,00; size of the city of publication is 30,000.

Letters requesting interviews were sent to the women's editors of each of these five papers (see Appendix A).

A form of the "focused interview" developed by Robert Merton and associates was used (13). Seven general questions were asked. The questions were open-ended. One was typed at the left top side of each of seven interview sheets. On the right side of the page were typed words that acted as cues to issues that the interviewer wished to raise if the editor interviewed did not mention them in speaking to the question. The interview guide used comprises Appendix B.

Questionnaires.--Responses from the six previous interviews were used to construct the mail questionnaire that was sent to the remaining 22 editors in the sample. Here only five out of 34 questions were of a completely open-ended nature; the others were multiple-choice or asked for factual information that could be quickly recorded. This questionnaire is Appendix C.

The mail questionnaire was accompanied by a hand-typed letter in which the study was sanctioned by the state's women's press club (see Appendix D).

Those editors who had not responded within a week were telephoned and their cooperation personally requested. In several cases it was found that the questionnaires had gone astray because incorrect names had been listed in the Editor & Publisher's Yearbook.

Twenty of the 22 editors queried by mail (91 per cent) eventually returned their questionnaires--an unusually high return rate for a mail questionnaire. One of the two who did not return the questionnaire was the editor of Paper No. 9, who indicated in the telephone conversation that she thought the questionnaire was "high schoolish" and that it irritated her. The other non-respondent was the editor of Paper No. 4, who said when phoned that she would return the questionnaire as soon as she could get to it, but never did.

#### Information Sought

Information sought was of three general types. One type was personal information. It included the editor's name, age, marital status, maternal status, number of years in the community, educational background, previous experience, number of years on the newspaper, salary, use of the media, organizational memberships, and so on.

Another type related to the job performed by the editor and to the editor's perception of the job. Gieber's description of the telegraph editor's functions, stated in Chapter II, served as a preliminary check list. Other information

sought of this type included the editor's title or titles, the amount of space generally allotted to the section, and the number of assistants assigned the editor.

A third type of information sought related to the editor's grounds for editing women's news. Included were questions intended to draw out the subject's perception of the community and of the women's section's typical reader and the conception held by the editor of women's interests in general.

The research was intended as a survey of a sample of women's news editors and as a means of gathering material with which hypotheses could be formulated. No hypotheses were tested.

### Summary

The subjects of the study were the 28 women's news editors of newspapers of over 10,000 circulation in an industrial midwest state. A pilot interview was conducted with the women's news editor of one of the state's two metropolitan dailies. Adaptations of focused interviews were conducted with the editors of five other newspapers, published in cities of 21,000, 30,000, 52,000, 86,000 and 212,000. Mail questionnaires were sent to the remaining 22 editors in the sample.

Information sought was of three general types-- personal information about the editor; information about

the job being performed and the editor's perceptions of the job and information about the grounds on which the editor makes decisions.

The findings are analyzed in the next three chapters.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF THE PILOT STUDY-- MRS. "A." AS A GATEKEEPER

In this chapter the results of the pilot study are reported. The material has been organized into six sections: a short statement about the newspaper and the city where it is published, general observations, material on the editor herself, material on the editor's functions and her perceptions of her functions, a section on her conception of women's interests and her perceptions of her average reader, a brief statement of the qualifications she believes a women's editor should have, and, finally, a summary.

General observations are included in this and the following chapter because, while of a subjective nature, they inevitably contributed to the formulation of hypotheses.

#### The City

The solid, stolid brick bungalows of skilled workers line the outlying streets of the 2-million population metropolis where Mrs. A.'s paper is published. The inner city presents the familiar contrasts of many large cities today: ugly Negro slums next to sleek urban renewal projects and the imposing edifices of the city's cultural institutions.



Mrs. A.'s paper, as stated in the previous chapter, is one of two daily papers published here and fights a 40 per cent circulation disadvantage. It is a chain paper; its competitor is home-owned.

#### General Observations

Mrs. A. appeared calm, confident and competent. She was not only willing to be interviewed on a Monday, one of her busiest days of the week, but suggested the day herself. Her voice was soft and seldom rose in tone or volume. If she wanted to speak to staff members across the room, she went to their desks or they came to hers. She weathered needing two reporters at the same hour and having only one available without audible expressions of anxiety. She consulted a mirror only at lunchtime, but emerged at the end of the day with her simple but modish coiffure intact and her lipstick fresh. Despite the staff shortage--which necessitated her pitching in to do a rewrite job--she managed to take a long lunch hour with the interviewer. Her office was littered in classic newspaper style, but she seemed to know where to find what she needed without scrambling.

#### Personal Data

The daughter of a small-town publisher, Mrs. A. began working on her father's paper when she was in high school and went to work for him full-time when she graduated from college.

Next she moved to a nearby city as women's editor of the daily paper there.

Subsequently she became women's editor of another important paper in the chain of her present employers and assistant city editor--and sometimes acting city editor--of a Washington, D. C., daily. She has lived in Latin America and retains an interest in Latin American affairs. In all, she has had 30 years' newspaper experience.

Now in her early 50's, Mrs. A. was one of two editors in the sample to earn over \$200 a week; the male women's editor on the competing daily also fell in this income category.

#### Job Functions and Perceptions of Them

Mrs. A. is responsible for a women's section that generally occupies 14 columns of the paper daily and 45 columns on Sunday. Monday through Friday and Sundays her material heads a section of the paper.

Space, she said, was her worry: "That's our great problem. We don't have enough space--we never have enough."

Management, she said, allows her carte blanche in deciding what women's news will be. She is permitted to buy free lance or syndicated material and the rights to serialize best sellers. Though women's pages are generally among the first to be bedded down in the composing room, she has the unusual privilege of remaking her pages for spot news she considers important.

Obviously there are basic differences in the sort of news that Mrs. A. and her fellow women's news editors handle and that handled by the telegraph editors observed in past gatekeeper studies. The subject matter itself is different; the news comes in from different sources.

But the fundamental elements of the decision-making process by which Gieber defined his editors' jobs are all present in Mrs. A.'s job, though some are present in different forms and she handles some differently.

(Gieber, it will be remembered, said the decision-making process incorporated ". . . the wire editor's perception of his community and readers, the traditions of his newspaper and the news policies of his superiors, and his own biases." Also incorporated were the daily problems of publication--what and how much news is being provided by the press associations, white space availability, composing room demands, copyreading and headline writing, and that most demanding taskmaster, time).

Mrs. A.'s job differs from that of a telegraph editor in three major respects.

1. One of the key elements that both alters these factors for Mrs. A. and adds another dimension to her job is that of her administrative responsibility. She directs a staff of eleven full-time and one part-time workers, including a fashion artist, one full-time and one part-time copy editor, three general assignment reporters, two fashion writers, two home-furnishings writers, a food writer in the news-

paper's test kitchen, a society columnist, and her own secretary, who doubles as a writer of engagement and wedding announcements.

Likening her job to that of a city editor, Mrs. A. said a large part of it was keeping her department running happily. Women, she said, tended to be sensitive and needed a sensitive supervisor if their best performance was to be assured.

As an administrator, she delegates responsibility for some of the preliminary decision-making. Her copy editors do the page layouts, write headlines, ready copy; she simply looks over what they do.

2. Where Gieber's and White's gatekeepers simply passed on or rejected the wire copy that came to thier gates, an added element in Mrs. A.'s job is her conscious "creation" of news, Mrs. A. seeks out copy.

"Whether they come from another part of the paper or whether they come from women's reporters, I want to encourage all the ideas that I can," she said. "It is up to me to select the ideas with which we can get the most readership and which we can produce with a reasonable expenditure of time and personnel."

She reads extensively both in and outside of her office to get such ideas. At her desk, she looks over the mass circulation women's magazines in addition to the Wall Street Journal, Women's Wear Daily, the competing newspaper, and, of course, her own paper.

At home she regularly peruses Time, the New Republic, National Observer, Life and a magazine about Latin America. She reads other magazines on a random basis.

3. Where telegraph editors make their decisions in the privacy of the newsroom, Mrs. A. confronts both advertisers and readers.

Newspaper policy specifies that no store names be mentioned when her section runs a feature on new fashions or home furnishings. But readers can write or call in to find out where the merchandise may be obtained, and merchants sometimes complain to Mrs. A. or to the managing editor if their goods are not included in this editorial matter. Mrs. A. investigates such complaints and if she feels they are justified asks the fashions or furnishing writers to find something from the advertiser's wares worthy of being featured.

She summed up her policy this way: "After all, we exist on our advertising revenues. I don't think we should give our space away."

There is no club writer on Mrs. A.'s staff; she personally handles requests from club women for publicity in the newspaper. This way, she explained, the women feel they have had an answer to their request from the top authority.

"Our first obligation is to present news, of course," said Mrs. A., "But we do all we can to support good community efforts. We do need a certain number of fillers, and I feel this is where we can assist worthy causes."

Mrs. A. and her staff must also cope with a flood of bridal and engagement announcements and wedding pictures. Here newspaper policy dictates her decision-making. All that are submitted must be used--but Mrs. A. can decide how much space each is to get.

#### Ground for Selecting Copy

"Women are interested in so many things," said Mrs. A., "but it is mainly things that touch their families, their homes, their communities--where people 'live'--what you live with all day long, all night long."

A study her newspaper made several years ago, she said, has given her some information about her readership--for instance, that about 65 per cent of her potential audience has husbands who are blue collar workers earning \$7,500-\$8,000 a year. She considers her median reader a woman with a high school education and children at home and tries to address the bulk of her copy to this reader.

But she contended that the more material she runs that is "vital" enough to attract the interest of the woman "who wouldn't naturally read the paper," the more college-educated readership she captures as well.

Generally speaking, she said her reader was "more intelligent than she was a few years ago because she has had better schooling . . . and TV has broadened her outlook."

Asked to respond in writing to the series of four questions that White submitted to Mr. Gates, Mrs. A. wrote, in response to the query "Do you feel that you have any prejudices which may affect your choice of news stories?":

Do I believe prejudices affect my choice of news stories? Well, I have few prejudices that I am aware of. Those I recognize I try to understand and give careful consideration to any story falling in such an area. For instance, I do not have a very good sense of humor. So a light story, purely entertainment, does not appeal to me very much. I remind myself that there are many readers who are looking for just such reading. I weigh this fact in judging such a piece.

An answer to the effect that the copy or story suggestion was not sufficiently interesting was the reason most often offered by Mrs. A. when she rejected material under the interviewer's observation.

#### Qualifications for the Job

Mrs. A. said she believed the necessary qualifications for a women's editor were maturity, broad interests, a good education, drive, personality, and the ability to make fast judgments.

#### Summary

Now in her early 50's, the subject of the pilot interview has had 30 years of newspaper experience, at least part of it on metropolitan dailies other than the one for which she now edits.

Her job differs from those of the telegraph editors of the Gieber and White studies in three major respects: she

administers a department; she originates "news;" she deals with both advertisers and readers directly.

Her preception of her "average" reader is buttressed by demographic data provided by her newspapers' research. She appears to have given some consideration to basic differences in men's and women's reading preferences.



## CHAPTER V

### THE FOCUSED INTERVIEWS

Reports on the five focused interviews are grouped together in this chapter in descending order of city size.

The results are reported individually in much the same manner as that of the previous chapter. Sections on the city where the newspaper is located and general observations about each editor are followed by sections on the editor herself, the functions included in her job and her perceptions of the job, her grounds for judging copy and her feelings about the job of women's editor. The last named section differs somewhat from that of the report on the pilot study in that editors were sounded out on their own aspirations and feelings rather than on their opinions of job qualifications.

The individual reports are followed by a section relating areas where the subjects interviewed seemed in substantial agreement.

Interview with Mrs."B." City Size: 212,000. Paper's Circulation: 130,000

Mrs. B.'s city is but a ninth the size of Mrs. A.'s metropolis. Still, it is one of the largest cities in the state and is nationally known as a manufacturing center.

A prominent ethnic group dominates some aspects of its life and gives the town a distinct personality.

Though the newspaper is part of a large chain, it is a city institution. Mrs. B. commented that the citizens seemed to feel it was a kind of public utility.

General Observations.--In contrast with Mrs. A.'s crisp approach, Mrs. B.'s "style" as women's news editor seemed rather like that of a shrewd, charming and candid politician.

"In this town, if you know people, it helps," she said. On being told that the new women's news editor of a nearby paper was not a native of the city, she expressed disbelief: how could anyone do a good job who didn't know people?

Though she proclaimed, as did several other women's editors, that society is dead, she ticked off the "good" clubs in her city with a predision that indicated that if society was dead, it had not been forgotten.

Personal Data.--A native of the city, Mrs. B. began her newspaper career more than 25 years ago as a society reporter. She became society editor six months after being hired.

Rearing a family meant a career hiatus, but she went back to work on the women's page of the competing paper when her youngest child was in grade school. When the city's two papers merged, she was named women's editor.

Mrs. B. is 59. She had two years of college and worked for a girls' club in the West before returning to her native city and society reporting. She earns roughly \$175 a week.

Job Functions and Perceptions of Them.--Like Mrs. A., Mrs. B. seemed highly interested in the administrative aspects of her job. She expressed pride that she had trained all of her five assistants to take over any production aspect of getting out the women's page and to handle people who come into the office with requests for publicity or news space. She discussed in some detail how she was trying to put the special talents of each member of her staff to use.

Mrs. B. added another element to the list of women's editors' functions. She monitors the advertising material to see that inappropriate ads--for men's shaving cream, for instance--do not appear on her page. And she also tries to get ads with large patches of black taken off and put elsewhere.

Like other women's editors interviewed, with the exception of Mrs. A., she consciously cultivated good relations with the composing room, and she acknowledged the importance of diplomacy in dealing with advertisers and clubwomen.

The paper's management, she said, let her alone to do what she like, but she seemed to have a clear idea of what "they" would approve of.

She and her editors share a concern about the influence of the fundamentalist church of the city's prominent ethnic group. Mrs. B. said that for years in reporting social gatherings she "practically had had people sipping canapes." After an editorial conference, she obtained permission to use the word "cocktail"--but only if absolutely certain that the beverage being sipped really contained alcohol.

Like Mrs. A., Mrs. B. was concerned with originating ideas for material. She expressed it in terms of "keeping the page going" in an interesting way. Other newspapers--she particularly likes the Milwaukee Journal--are one source of ideas for her. She also keeps in touch with the newspaper business by reading Editor & Publisher and was planning to attend a University of Missouri conference for women's editors.

Ground for Selecting Copy.--"What a stuffy question!" Mrs. B. responded when asked about the purpose of women's pages. Ideally, she said, a page would give its readers something "meaty" to chew on, but she said that with so many syndicated columns that had to run--Ann Landers, for instance--her page just couldn't afford the space.

She also rejected the idea of an "average" reader. Maybe one woman was interested in food, she said; another in sewing. She tried to have something for everybody on her pages; she did not think everything she ran would interest everybody.

Mrs. B.'s idea was to keep a little ahead of the crowd. She rejected the idea of catering to the average pocketbook. "I don't use pictures of old clothes you can buy for \$20," she said; she thought people liked to look at pretty things even if they couldn't afford them.

Like a number of other editors, Mrs. B. expressed concern about the number of bridal and engagement stories that had to be printed in accordance with newspaper policy.

She was only half joking when she said, "I'm biased in favor of girls who wear simple wedding dresses."

Feelings About Job.--Mrs. B. said that she liked her job but seemed to have reservations about it.

Interview with Mrs. "C." City Size: 86,000. Paper's Circulation 79,000

Mrs. C. edits in an industrial city of 86,000 in the shadow of the metropolis where Mrs. A. presides. The city thrives independently of the metropolis but is circled by its wealthy suburbs. It competes for circulation in these suburbs.

General Observations.--A tiny, bustling woman, Mrs. C. emphasized her womanliness in her role as women's editor. Of course she used her femininity in dealing with the men in the composing room, she said, laughing. Her conversation was warmed by domestic similes. One instance: in talking about the need for balance in her page's subject matter, she observed: "As in planning a meal, you want variety."

Personal Data.--Now 54, Mrs. C. has worked on the newspaper for 13 years, starting part-time as food editor, then becoming home editor, and four years ago starting work full-time as women's editor. A college graduate who majored in English, she is the mother of two children, one married, one still at home.

She'd never stayed home, she said. Before joining the newspaper's staff she had taught school and worked as a bookkeeper for a department store.

She earns roughly \$185 a week.

Job Functions and Perception of Them.--Mrs. C. had nothing new to add to the roster of duties a women's news editor performs. Unlike Mrs. A. and Mrs. B., she does not delegate copyreading responsibility to any of her three assistants, but said she read every piece of copy herself. However, she reported that all could take over production duties.

She seemed to have no special concern about seeking feature material for her page, and said most of her ideas came from having someone say, "How about doing a feature on so-and-so?"

"I get most of my ideas when I'm ironing at night," she said. "You can't sit down and think quietly in an editorial office."

Mrs. C. seems to steer a middle course on club news. The hardest part of her job, she said, was having to say

"no." She spoke of spending half an hour on the phone with a friend who could not understand why her club wasn't given the space she thought it deserved. However, she said, "In the summer when the organizations close down, we really have to scrounge."

Bridal stories give her problems, too. "We take care of everybody who comes in," she observed, "but we're going to have to do something. Last year we had 50 weddings one weekend in January; this year we had 150."

One thing she could not and would not do, she said, was "turn over the paper to the brides."

Grounds for Selecting Copy.--Mrs. C. is conscious of her paper's competition with the metropolitan dailies for circulation in the wealthy suburbs. She runs a society column from one of the suburbs and does features on homes in the area and their decorating schemes.

However, her primary interest seems to be in the lower middle class women of the industrial city where the paper is published.

"I think in this area a newspaper may be the only reading matter for a lot of women," she said, "I feel we have an obligation to bring them a variety of news--not only local but national and international about what women are doing all over the world."

Women's "first interests" Mrs. C. believes, are their homes and local news. But she said, ". . . you can't separate the career woman from the homemaker today, so many do both."

She thinks women are interested in clothes, famous personages, food. "I'm afraid that most of them are not interested in politics and government--some are, but I don't think that's too general."

Feelings about Job.--"I love my job," she said with no apparent reservations.

Interview with Mrs. "D." City Size: 52,000. Paper's Circulation: 38,000.

Even 25 years ago, a guide to the state found 40 industrial plants flourishing in Mrs. D.'s city. The guidebook writer found poverty 25 years ago; today it is aggravated by a race problem.

Mrs. D.'s paper is owned by the same chain that owns Mrs. B.'s but the two operate independently.

General Observations.--Like Mrs. A., Mrs. D. appeared calm and professional. Her voice was quiet; her clothing neat and conservative; her desk (like the newsroom in which she works) was immaculate.

Professionally oriented, she is an active member of the state's women's press club, has attended the University of Missouri conference for women's editors and for several years has served as a critic and moderator for women's page panels at the editorial conferences of a prominent Eastern university.



Personal Data.--Now in her middle 40's, Mrs. D. is a native of the city where the paper is published. Her experience before coming to work for the newspaper included service with the WAVES.

After serving in the paper's classified department, she became assistant women's editor, then women's editor.

Job Functions and Perceptions of Them.--"What do editors with lots of assistants do with them?" asked Mrs. D. She herself has two full-time and one part-time assistant with whom to get out from six to 13 columns weekdays and 25 to 35 columns on Sundays.

She added no new tasks to the list of functions and seemed to have no particular consciousness of herself as an administrator or creative thinker.

She described the production of her page as a "cooperative" effort. "Sometimes reporters have ideas for stories," she said. "If they don't I have to come up with suggestions for features."

Grounds for Selecting Copy.--"What should a women's page do? Mrs. D. gave answers of a rather general nature first.

Well, it should inform women of what's happening in the world. It should be a service for women. It should be informative as to what's new in homemaking and in food, particularly. . .contain information on how to care for children. And all of these things should have a balance. One shouldn't be out of proportion to another. A combination of these things would make up a balanced page, in my estimation. We're a small paper and we can't touch on all these things every day, but over a week or two we can touch on all of them in our pages.

She went on:

It's interesting to know how people live in other countries. Locally, people like to know how other people are decorating their homes, what kind of sewing they're doing, what their clubs are doing. It's a way of keeping track of people.

Naturally, we use more local news because that's closer to us. I feel that the strongest interest is still on the local level--but it's important to have something from other places, too.

Mrs. D. candidly admitted that she judges stories on whether they interest her or not. She had used the results of research presented at a seminar of hers and an allied chain of papers, however, as the rationale for dropping a good deal of the club news that the newspaper had been carrying. "This is just one minor interest of women," she said.

Feelings about Job.--"I like it very much," she said of her job. "It's interesting, challenging."

As to women's page reporting, she said:

The modern women's page has just as much potential for a writer as any other section of the paper. One of our two reporters is working now at a feature at our new four-year college. She just finished a story on part-time work available to women in our area. We have a current story on teachers as contract bargainers--they have to bargain, just as in a union. We're doing stories that are essential stories. It's not just fluff.

Interview with Mrs. "E." City Size: 30,000. Paper's Circulation: 13,000.

A river runs through the center of the city where Mrs. E.'s paper is published. In the early days of the state, this was a saw mill town. Today, the town is dominated by a corporation of national importance. In 1941, 17 per cent of

the city's residents were university graduates employed by this corporation in scientific capacities alone. The small-town midwest atmosphere of the older parts of town contrasts with new executive-type housing developments on the outskirts.

General Observations.--Mrs. E. did not want to be interviewed. She was too busy, she said--it would take too much time. Couldn't the interview be done over the phone? A decisive "no" brought capitulation.

Mrs. E., it seems, might have just as much difficulty turning down copy from publicity-seeking clubs. "I don't turn anything down because it is trivial," she said, "because it is important to somebody, perhaps."

Personal Data.--Born and raised on a farm, Mrs. E. still lives on one, though both she and her husband are employed in the city. In her early fifties, she has worked 17 years full-time on the newspaper and is earning \$115 a week.

She started writing fiction when she was 7 years old. In her teens, she worked for this paper as a country correspondent.

Her first full-time job on the paper was as a reporter in the women's department--she joined the staff when her youngest son was in grade school.

Job Functions and Perceptions of Them.--Mrs. E. emphasized the public relations nature of her work. "Because we contact and talk with people personally, we are the way

they form their opinion of the paper," she said. " . . . Their whole impression of the paper depends on our attitude. We let girls go for just that reason--that they don't have the proper attitude toward the public."

Mrs. E. generally has 18 columns to fill. She does the layouts and headlines herself and selects photographs, in addition to directing her staff of two. Both these assistants are assigned to "take society calls and handle women's page news."

Ground for Selecting Copy.--Mrs. E. expressed pleasure that she could give bridal pictures a good deal of space. She also, she said, took pride in the equality of treatment accorded all comers.

This is one of my sore points, I know that some other papers say they'll give everyone the same treatment, but if the father's important, they'll get better treatment. I feel Mr. Jones' daughter's wedding's as important as anybody else's. Weddings aren't jumped to the front page here.

A balanced women's page, she said, would combine local news with general releases. But she conceded that this seldom happened on her page. "A great deal of the problem is space," she said. We have to use local stuff and to give local features first. It has an awful lot to do with space."

She would like, she said, to have interesting local news, "not just the gab club business." But later, she acknowledged that when her two assistants did do features she tried to have them used in other parts of the paper which "need them more."

She perceived her city as one made up of organizations and her average reader as "a person who is club-minded and who is culture--minded."

"I'd say there is a lot of interest in the page," she observed. She said she'd concluded this because of "the amount of people who want their activities reported and by the complaints you get when there's a mistake. An awful lot of people must read it!"

Feelings About Job.--Being women's editor as a career goal? "Perhaps it is not too rewarding as a goal for a young woman. A lot of it is boring--maybe it wouldn't have to be. The routine--club reports, club reports all the time. You know. In general, I like it." But, she said, there was so much repetition. "But I think that happens in any job. There's a certain amount of that in any job."

Interview with Mrs. "F." City Size: 21,000. Paper's Circulation 19,000.

Mrs. F.'s paper publishes in a county seat that houses two colleges. The industries are varied and no one is dominant. Settled early in the state's history, the city call itself, "city of trees" after its fine shade trees.

The newspaper was recently purchased by a large foreign-owned chain.

General Observations.--Now in her late 70's, Mrs. F. understandably seemed more interested in a forthcoming trip to Europe and in her reporting experiences during prohibition days than in women's page editing.

Personal Data.--Mrs. F. has been with the newspaper for 44 years. She started a few months out of high school, married and moved away from town, and went back to work on the paper eight or nine years later as a young widow with two small sons.

First, she said, she went down to the railroad stations and got "society news" about those traveling to the metropolis for the day.

But she graduated to general news and during prohibition covered the county jail. "It was the most fun I ever had in my life," she said. Post-prohibition, she was assigned to city hall.

Then came the depression, the newspaper let people go, she was sent back to women's news, "and I've been stuck here ever since."

Job Functions and Her Perceptions of Them.--Mrs. F. still covers stories herself. "It's confined more to clubs now--county federatins, state federations--I've been doing it for so long."

She and her one assistant "who was trained in journalism" also write up death notices and hospital notices, and Mrs. F. helps proof the paper's front page. She works only part-time on women's news--five or six hours a day--and is also engaged in indexing and compiling a years-ago column from back issues.

Management makes certain demands on the women's section. The new editor insists on a two-page cut every day, and Mrs. F.'s assistant is conducting a cooking contest.

Mrs. F. expressed unhappiness at some changes. Since the paper had been taken over by the chain, she said, pages had had to be remade to accommodate last minute ads: "We think we're going to have seven or eight columns and then it changes."

News now appeared in other sections of the paper: "I was talking at a club meeting the other night--they just don't know where to look for their news now. I have to look through the paper to find it, too. That is not the fault of the women's page editor."

Grounds for Selecting Copy.--Like Mrs. E., Mrs. F. perceived her city as a cauldron filled with clubs, though, she said, "It's a little difficult for me to say what it's like, I've been here so long."

As to the clubs: "I think there are 70 clubs, and that doesn't begin to cover our small social clubs and clubs within lodges."

Feelings About Job.--She could not really evaluate the job of women's editor as compared with other jobs for women, said Mrs. F. After all, she said, she had not really chosen to do this with her life, "I just fell into it."

#### Common Tendencies

All the elements that Gieber saw contributing to the editorial decision-making process were present in all the editors' jobs.

Except for Mrs. F., none of the five seemed conscious of any vital managerial interest in how their pages were conducted. Mrs. F. did not see this as interest but pressure.

None of the editors had any research done by their own newspaper that would give them feedback on reader interest in their pages and none had any research that could give them information on their readers.

None were avid television viewers. None except Mrs. D. read magazines specifically to get ideas for their pages. None belonged to more than three organizations as active members, and none saw their local club memberships as adjuncts to their job and means of learning about women in the community: memberships represented personal interests.

### Summary

The five editors with whom focused interviews were conducted presented a considerable range of demographic characteristics; in age, from the early 40's to well over 65; in education from high school through college training. In marital status, only the single state was not represented.

None of these editors had access to research on their readership.

They carried out most of the same technical functions but differed in the "style" with which they conducted their jobs. Mrs. B. enjoyed and emphasized the management of people. Mrs. C. was conscientious and anxious to be of service to the lower middle class housewives in her community.



Mrs. D., oriented to a broader journalistic world than that of her own paper, was interested in presenting a women's page that was "not just fluff." Mrs. E. was concerned about the public relations aspects of her job and hesitated to offend anyone. Mrs. F. faced with reluctance the problem of adjusting to the demands of a new ownership.

## CHAPTER VI

### FINDINGS FROM MAIL SURVEY

Chapter VI has been divided into sections that coincide with the three areas in which data were sought. The first section includes personal data about the 20 editors who responded to the mail questionnaire; the second, data about their job functions and perceptions of them; the third, information on factors associated with editorial judgment.

#### Personal Data

This section has sub-sections on sex, age, marital status, education, experience, present salary, and media use and memberships.

Sex.--Nineteen out of the 20 editors were women. The one man in the sample worked for the largest paper and was in the highest salary category.

Age.--In Table 6-1 is shown the distribution of editors in each of six age groups. No relationship emerged between the age of the editors and the circulation of the papers by which they were employed. For instance, a fourth of the editors reporting were under 30 and were employed by papers with

circulations of 10,000, 14,000, 27,000, 35,000 and 57,000 respectively.

Some data about these younger editors: None had graduated from college, but four out of five had had some college experience. Two of the four mentioned journalism among their fields of specialization in college. Three were married and one had two children, the youngest 3.

TABLE 6-1

## AGES OF EDITORS RESPONDING TO QUESTIONNAIRE

Age Groups	Number of Respondents in Group
Under 30	5
30-39	2
40-49	5
50-59	5
60-69	3
over 69	0

Marital Status and Children--Eight of the editors sampled were married; five, single; three, divorced or separated from their husbands; four, widowed. A majority, therefore, were living without husbands.

Education--Table 6-2 shows the schooling obtained by editors in the sample.

Some relationship might exist between education and size of newspaper: all three editors whose education ended

at high school worked on papers with circulations below 30,000--or in the half of the newspapers sampled with the lowest circulations.

TABLE 6-2

## EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ACHIEVED BY RESPONDENTS

Last Year of Schooling	No. of Editors Stopping at This Level
4th year high school	3
1st year college	2
2nd year college	6
3rd year college	3
4th year college	6

Experience.--Almost half the sample--nine editors--designated no work experience prior to joining their newspapers' staff.

A little over a fourth--six--had other newspaper experience in their background and one had had writing experience in free-lance advertising and on a trade magazine.

The remaining four editors had had one or more non-writing jobs before joining the paper. In three cases these jobs had included secretarial work. One editor had managed both a grocery store and a tavern; another, a hat shop.

Four of the six editors with previous newspaper experience worked for the half the papers in the sample with over 30,000 circulation. Five of them were women. All the editors

save these five experienced women had been in the community longer than they had worked on the paper. None of these five women editors had a husband living in the home. Four of the five had started on the paper as women's editor; one as a women's page writer.

Three women without experience had started on their papers' staffs as women's editors--all of them on papers in the half the sample with the lowest circulations.

Two other editors started as assistant women's editor; four as women's or society writers. Three started as proof-readers; two in other editorial capacities. One--the women's editor who is now also editor of her daily--started as secretary to the publisher. One editor failed to specify her first job on the paper.

The average number of years spent with current employers was 9.6. The average number of years as women's editor was 6.7. One woman had held her job for 34 years, another for four months. Over half the sample--11 editors--had been in their jobs three years or less.

No pattern emerges as to the length of time the editor had held the job and the size of the paper.

Wages.--Table 6-3 shows wages received in relation to the size of the newspaper. As will be noted, in only three cases did the women's editors of smaller papers receive salaries as large or larger than those of papers larger than their own. Otherwise the stepladder effect was unbroken.

TABLE 6-3  
RELATION OF NEWSPAPER CIRCULATIONS TO EDITORS' SALARIES

Circulation	Under \$100	\$100-\$125	\$126-\$150	\$151-\$175	\$176-\$200	Over \$200
707,000						x
74,000					x	
57,000				x		
56,000				x		
47,000			x			
46,000			x			
40,000		x				
39,000		x				
35,000		x				
33,000		x				
26,000			x			
22,000		x				
16,000	x					
14,000	x					
14,000	x					
14,000	x					
11,000		x				
10,000				x		
10,000	x					
10,000	x					

No plausible explanation could be found in the data why one of these three editors was above the usual salary scale. In a second case, the women's editor was also the editor of the paper. In a third case, a major change in newspaper policy had resulted in the hiring of this experienced staff member to manage the women's page.

Media Consumption.--The average editor read three or four newspapers a day in addition to her own. Eight read the New York Times; nine, the Wall Street Journal.

Editors read as few as two and as many as 11 magazines; the average number read was seven. The Ladies' Home Journal and Good Housekeeping, each with 14 readers, were the most popular magazines. McCall's had 13 readers and Life, 12.

Half the editors failed to answer a question on the best book they read last year.

On a question relating to TV shows viewed the day before, four did not answer. Six editors specified they had viewed none. Four shows was the highest number viewed.

Three editors failed to answer the question on radio programs heard the day before; four specified they had not listened. The remaining 13 had listened to music, news, weather reports; two specifically mentioned a popular disc jockey.

Organizational Memberships.--One fourth of the editors--or five--were members of the state press club; two, of Theta Sigma Phi, women's honorary journalism society.

Only four held memberships outside these professionally-oriented organizations; none of these belonged to more than three organizations, and none who belonged to "outside" organizations were members of professional organizations.

#### Job Functions and The Editors' Perceptions of Them

This section has been divided into subsections on: the titles accorded the editors sampled in the questionnaire; assistance assigned the editors; amount of space allotted women's pages; duties performed; problems perceived; changes made in women's pages and their origins; perceptions of treatment accorded advertisers; qualifications seen as important to a women's editor; and editors' feelings about the desirability of the job of a women's editor.

Titles.--All 20 editors held the title "women's editor" or something akin to it.\* This was the sole title of five of the editors; the rest had other titles in addition. Women's editors on smaller papers tended to have fewer titles than editors on larger papers, perhaps because their papers cover a more limited range of subject matter.

Six of the ten editors in the upper half of the circulation sample held four titles in addition to that of women's editor: society editor, food editor, fashion editor, and home furnishings editor. A seventh held all these titles but food editor. Only one editor in the lower circulation half of the sample held as many as five titles.

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\*On paper No. 1, the editor was called "director of the women's department;" on paper No. 5 she was known as "family living editor."



Some editors mentioned holding titles that indicated responsibilities outside the women's page. These titles included editor of the newspaper, garden editor, cultural events editor, Saturday PTA page editor, radio-TV editor, and flight-of-time editor.

Numbers of assistants ranged from 23 plus-one-columnist-working-at-home (for the editor of the largest paper of the 20) down to no full-time assistants at all for the editors of the smallest eight papers in the sample (though one of the eight had a part-time assistant and two were in charge of columnists working at home).

Space.--Editors reported the amount of space for which they were responsible in four kinds of measures--columns, pages, full-pages, and inches. Thus, no precise comparisons of space allotted were possible. However, on the basis of rough estimates it appears that in this sample there is no reason to believe that the larger the paper's circulation the more space given to women's news. For instance, the editor of the paper with highest circulation (with 23 assistants) was responsible for 9 1/2 columns of space daily and a varying amount on Sunday. Several editors of smaller papers, with no assistants at all, were responsible, they reported, for a page of space daily, or presumably almost the same amount of daily copy, though they did not put out Sunday pages.

Duties.--The editors were unanimous in reporting that their duties included dealing with the public and general responsibility for the women's section. Substantial numbers agreed that their functions included headline writing, make-up, selecting copy from wire and syndicate offerings, and "thinking about their sections," selecting and processing photographs, originating ideas for features and series, and administering their departments.

Table 6-4 shows what editors reported their functions to be and the importance accorded various functions.

As will be noted, most editors (16) considered a general responsibility for their page their primary responsibility. Editors in the higher circulation half of the sample performed an average of 11 functions; editors in the lower half an average of 8.6 functions.

Problems.--Asked to check their problems from a list of 15 possibilities suggested by personal interviews or Gieber's gatekeeper study, 13 editors checked "a deluge of bridal, engagement or anniversary stories." Staff shortages plagued 12. No problem received more than four votes as the No. 1 trouble spot. In the high-circulation half of the sample, editors checked an average of 4.2 problems; in the lower half, an average of 3 problems.

Table 6-5 shows problems that were noted and those that were ranked as of particular magnitude.

TABLE 6-4

NUMBER OF EDITORS PERFORMING GIVEN FUNCTIONS IN THEIR JOBS AND ASSIGNING THEM RANK OF IMPORTANCE

Number of Editors Performing Function and Rank of Importance Assigned, if Designated	Function														
	Taking general responsibility for section	Dealing with public	Headline writing	Make-up	Thinking about section	Selecting copy from wires & syndicates	Originating ideas for features and series	Selecting, process- ing photos	Administering department	Copyreading	Seeing page through composing room	Assigning reporters	Seeing inappropriate ads do not appear on page	Dealing with advertisers	
Performing and ranking of first importance	16	1					1		1						
Performing and ranking of second importance	1	2		4		2	7	1							
Performing and ranking of third importance		4	2		2		2	1	3		2				
Performing but giving no ranking	3	13	17	14	15	15	6	14	12	14	11	10	5	2	
Total Performing Function	20	20	19	18	17	17	16	16	16	14	13	10	5	2	

TABLE 6-5

NUMBER OF EDITORS CONSIDERING GIVEN FACTORS PROBLEMS AND ASSIGNING THEM RANK OF IMPORTANCE

Number of Editors Con- sidering Factor Problem and Giving Rank or Simply Considering it a Problem	Factor									
	A deluge of nuptial or anniversary material	Lack of space	Lack of time	Late ads	Staff shortages	Too many club stories	No time to think	Space-consuming columns	Early deadlines in composing room	Unsympathetic superiors
Considering factor problem of first importance	3	4	2	2	2					1
Considering factor problem of second importance	5	1	1		1	1	1	2	1	
Considering factor problem of third importance			3		2	1	1	2	2	1
Considering factor problem but assign- ing no rank	5	3	2	5		3	3	1	2	1
Total considering factor problem	13	8	8	7	5	5	5	5	5	3
										2
										2
										0

A deluge of nuptial  
or anniversary  
material  
Lack of space  
Lack of time  
Late ads  
Staff shortages  
Too many club  
stories  
No time to think  
Space-consuming  
columns  
Early deadlines in  
composing room  
Unsympathetic  
superiors  
Newspaper policies  
Photographers un-  
available when  
needed  
Uncooperative com-  
posting room

Changes and Their Authors. ~~Management or higher-~~ ranking editors were the initiators of major changes in the women's page in half of the 16 cases where the women's page editors indicated that such changes had been made.

Three editors said they themselves had initiated the "most recent change of a major nature;" two said the change arose from "necessity" or public demand; one change was attributed to an editorial seminar; in two cases of change no initiator was specified.

Of the eight changes initiated by management, five seemed to be related to editorial aspects of the page (broader scope, a change in Sunday page one format, etc.); three to relate more directly to administration (addition of a reporter, loss of two reporters, combining functions when two papers merged).

The three changes attributed by editors to themselves related respectively to doing more features, raising head sizes and improving the quality of writing.

"Necessity" dictated reduced coverage of small clubs. Public demand, it was said where this reason was cited for change, indicated increased use of special features and food stories.

To the editorial seminar cited as a change agent was attributed a means of cutting down on the space necessary for engagement and wedding material.

Relations with Advertisers.--Editors were asked to check the response most closely corresponding to their experience from a series of four answers intended as a scale from independence to increasing accommodation in advertiser-newspaper relationships.

Four editors checked the most independent response, "my paper forbids me to use any store names at all on my page." Nine took the next, "My paper expects me to treat advertisers fairly, but we never coordinate editorial copy with an advertising campaign." Ten checked, "My paper expects me to treat advertisers fairly and we sometimes try to coordinate copy with an advertising campaign." No one checked, "I'm at the beck and call of the advertising department."

(Multiple answers were given by several editors, indicated that the scale was less than perfect).

Nine of the 10 editors who reported occasional coordination of ad campaigns with copy represented newspapers in the lower half on the circulation scale; thus only one paper in the top half occasionally accommodated advertisers in this way. All nine responses of "never coordinate" were in the top half of the sample circulation-wise. The "never use store names" responses were equally divided between the upper and lower circulation groups.

Necessary Qualifications.--"Tact" and "knowledge of the community" each were considered important qualifications for women's editors by 18 out of 20 editors; "understanding

women" and "ability to make decisions fast" by 15 each, and "experience as a women's page reporter" by 14. The responses are charted in Table 6-6.

Only "experience as a general reporter" and "previous editing experience seemed to bear possible relationship to circulation size. Six of the eight mentions of the former and six of the nine of the latter came from editors in the higher circulation half of the sample.

A minority (eight) of the editors said journalism education should be a necessary qualification for a women's editor on their papers. Five of these eight votes came from among the seven editors who had had some journalism education themselves.

Attitudes toward Job.--Offered a set of responses intended to measure job satisfaction and asked which best represented their feelings 13 editors checked: "I enjoy the job, and I think it's a good one for any woman interested in journalism to aspire to." (The word "woman" was underlined on the questionnaire, as were those words underlined in the next paragraph).

Only four thought their jobs good ones for anyone interested in journalism to aspire to; six specified that there were better jobs for men interested in journalism and six that there were better jobs for women interested in journalism to aspire to. One editor reported that she was satisfied with her job but did it purely in the line of duty.

TABLE 6-6

## QUALIFICATIONS SEEN AS IMPORTANT TO WOMEN'S EDITOR

Number of Editors Checking Qualification as Important to Women's Editor and Numbers Checking and Assigning Rank	Qualification								
	Knowledge of community and readers	Tact	Understanding women	Ability to make decisions fast	Experience as women's page writer	Being a woman	Other editing experi- ence	Education in journalism	Experience as general reporter
Number ranking of first importance	3	3	2	1	5	1			
Number ranking of second importance	4	5	3	1	1	1			3
Number ranking of third importance	1	3	1	2	3		3	2	1
Number checking but not ranking	10	7	9	11	5	10	6	6	3
Total considering qualification important	18	18	15	15	14	12	9	8	7



No editor answered in a sixth category of choice, "I don't like the job and would prefer another journalistic assignment." Two editors--one of them the male women's editor--did not answer at all. The other non-respondent refused to check any of the proffered possibilities saying that they were too confining; editing she observed, was not what every reporter was qualified to do. Checking more than one response was permitted, and many editors did. The responses had been intended as a scale of descending satisfaction but did not prove out as a scale.

Job satisfaction or lack of it did not seem dramatically related to size of paper or number of problems cited.

#### Ground for Selection of Copy

Topics that provide sub-headings for this section are: the editors' ratings of a group of purposes women's pages might fill; their opinions on what women are interested in, their descriptions of their communities and their "typical readers;" their ratings of a group of proffered reasons for choosing stories for their sections, and their statements about conscious bias.

Purposes of Women's Pages.--No unanimity was reached on any of seven suggestions proffered as to what a women's page should "do" But 19 out of 20 editors agreed that a page should "offer news about interesting things women are doing, both in the community and outside it and 18 agreed

that women's pages should provide news of value to women in their roles as wives, mothers and homemakers." The responses are charted in Table 6-7.

No pattern emerged linking circulation size, the editor's experience, education, or numbers of assistants with responses to this question.

Women's Interest.--What are women interested in in general? Answers to this open-ended question seemed to fall in several categories. Nine editors cited what might be called family-oriented material, including food and fashion stories. Five responses included mention of topics that might be classed as other women or other people. "Three included references to what might be called "self-improvement." "Clubs" was part of one response; four editors responded in terms of more than one of these categories.

"Their own names in print," "both world and local news" and "women's role in the progressing world" were each the sole entry of one editor.

Four editors did not answer.

Descriptions of Communities.--Descriptions of their communities tended to be short and, again, could be categorized. One type answer referred to the size or type of city where the paper was published--small town, suburb, etc.-- (five editors). A second type described attitudes or activities of the citizens--conservative, community-minded, etc. (five editors). A third type emphasized the homogeneity of the city (three editors).

TABLE 6-7

## WHAT EDITORS THINK A WOMEN'S PAGE SHOULD "DO"

Number of Editors Checking Purpose and Number Checking and Assigning Rank of Importance	Purpose									
	Offer news about in- teresting activities of women in and out- side community	Provide news of value to women in roles as wives, mothers, home- makers	Serve not only women but family as whole	Recognize changing roles of women by offering information of value to them in roles as community volunteers or employees	Serve women by seeing their club news gets in paper	Tackle family-related problems of day, such as changing sexual mores	Alert women to situa- tions where they might form power blocks			
Number ranking first in importance	4	9	2	2	1					
Number ranking second in importance	3	4	2	5	2	1	1			
Number ranking third in importance	5	2	3	2	3	2				
Number checking but not giving rank	7	3	9	5	6	5	3			
Total Checking	19	18	16	14	12	8	4			

Seven editors described their cities in two or more terms; in four of these cases there was some reference to the city's economic structure as being industrial, middle class, etc.

Three editors, in addition to one or more of these kinds of descriptions, mentioned social change. Two did not answer.

Descriptions of "Typical Reader."--Again, descriptions tended to be short. Seven editors described their "typical reader" with attitudinal or action-oriented adjectives like "interested" or "active." Two placed her demographically as a homemaker, mother, etc. Two put her on some unspecified scale as "average" or "above average." Three said there was no typical reader. Three answered in terms of two of these categories, and two did not answer.

When Selecting Stories.--Asked which, if any, of four proffered reasons they found present in their thinking when selecting copy for their pages, the editors replied as in Table 6-8. One editor rejected the choices and said he considered "the story and its merits."

Biases.--Biases mentioned were of several sorts. Four editors responded in terms of social or organizational news. Their biases were, respectively, against "people passing bucks for charity," "club news that isn't (Jolly Dozen Club, Euchrettes, etc.)," and "preferential treatment of top drawer social activities" and for "groups with lots of local women, not just a few out of a whole club." (Presumably the last related to photographic subjects).

TABLE 6-8

## FACTORS EDITORS SAY INFLUENCE SELECTION OF COPY

Number of Editors Who Say Factor Influences Selection and Number Who Say It Influences Selection and Rank It of First Importance	Factor			
	Knowledge of community and readers	Editor's interest in story and its merits	Comments received on this sort of story in past	Interest of readers as shown by readership surveys
Number ranking factor first in importance	11	2	1	2
Number saying factor considered	6	10	9	7
Total consider- ing factor when judging copy	17	12	10	9

Three editors confessed biases in favor in stories about interesting women. Two were biased in favor of cultural material, and one for in-depth features.

One editor said, I object to the general trend to make homemakers feel they shouldn't be happy at home--the feminine mystique idea in general."

Ten editors did not respond to this open-ended question.

### Summary

Editors were scattered in every age group from under 30 to 60-69. Nineteen were women. Only a fourth of the women were single but another fourth were either widowed or separated or divorced.

Half had had neither previous experience on a newspaper before coming to their present paper nor journalism training in college. Fewer than a third (six) were college graduates. Over half (11) had been women's editors of their papers three years or less. All but five had lived in their communities longer than they had worked on the paper. The most frequently checked response to a series of statements designed to measure attitudes toward the job was "I enjoy the job, and I think it's a good one for any woman interested in journalism to aspire to." Only one editor said, "The job is satisfactory, but I do it purely in the line of duty."

Eighteen editors in the sample held the title "women's editor;" one was called Director of the Women's Department"

and another "Family Living Editor." Asked to indicate which they performed from a list of 14 job functions assembled from the previous interviews, a majority of the editors checked these 11: general responsibility for the women's page; make-up; copyreading; headline writing; dealing with the public; selecting and processing photos; seeing copy through the composing room; selecting appropriate copy from wire and syndicate offerings; originating ideas for features and stories; administering the department; thinking about the women's section.

The number of staff members under the editors' direction ranged from 23 on the largest paper down to none at all on eight of the 10 papers in the smaller circulation half of the sample. However, the amount of space allotted the women's section did not appear directly related to the newspaper's circulation.

The job problem most often cited (by 13 editors) was "a deluge of bridal, engagement or anniversary stories."

Most (nine) editors of papers in the larger circulation portion of the samples said their newspapers never coordinated copy with advertising campaigns, while most (nine) editors of papers in the smaller circulation group said this practice was followed occasionally.

A majority of the editors (11) said that their most important tool for selecting copy was their knowledge of their community and readers. Eighteen out of 20 considered knowledge of the community and readers a necessary qualifica-

tion for a women's editor. Yet answers to questions concerning the nature of the community and typical readers tended to be in terms of a single word or phrase or perhaps two phrases.

The editors were almost unanimous in agreeing that women's pages should "offer news about interesting things women are doing, both in the community and outside it" (19 editors) and "provide news of value to women in their roles as wives, mothers and homemakers" (18 editors). A minority (eight) believed women's pages should "tackle family-related problems of the day, such as changing sexual mores" and only four said they should "alert women to situations where they might form power blocs."



## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The contents of this chapter are a summary of the study, a statement of the findings reached, a discussion of the findings, and a section on the implications for future research.

#### Summary of the Study

This study surveyed demographic characteristics of 26 women's editors of the 28 newspapers of over 10,000 circulation in a midwestern industrial state. It also examined their practices as "gatekeepers" standing between the flood of copy coming into their newspapers and the relative trickle of news that is printed.

The research was conducted by three different methods. First, a pilot study was made of the women's editor of a metropolitan daily; she was the subject both of a day-long observation session and an unstructured interview.

Second, modified focused interviews were conducted with the women's editors of five outstate papers ranging in circulation from 110,000 downwards to 13,000.

Third, a questionnaire was mailed to the remaining 22 women's editors of papers over 10,000; 20 responded.

### The Findings

Summaires of the findings are arranged according to the method by which they were obtained.

The Pilot Study.--The editors interviewed and observed for the pilot study appeared to have basically similar elements involved in their decision-making as did the telegraph editors of Gieber's gatekeeper study. In addition, three major new elements appeared: this editor administered a department; she dealt directly with the public and with advertisers; and she "created" news by seeking out material for stories, rather than merely selecting copy from wire or syndicate offerings.

The Focused Interviews.--Though their duties were essentially the same as those of the editor in the pilot study, the five editors interviewed were found to place emphasis on differing aspects of the job. One was concerned with generating feature ideas; another considered the public relations aspects of her position as of primary importance, and so forth. None of these five editors had access to research about her own readers.

Mail Questionnaire.--Fewer than a third of the respondents had graduated from college; half had had neither journalism training in college nor previous experience on other newspapers. A majority had held the post of women's editor for three years or less.

On the largest newspaper surveyed, the women's editor had 23 full-time assistants; on eight of the smaller papers the editors had no full-time assistant. In most cases, salaries appeared to depend on the newspaper's circulation and ranged from under \$100 a week to over \$200 a week. General areas of responsibility were similar from paper to paper, with the majority of editors agreeing they performed 11 of a list of 14 functions.

#### Discussion of the Findings

"I just fell into it," one of the editors said in talking about her job. This statement might characterize the way many editors in the sample arrived at their present position. Of the 26 editors in the total sample, only six, less than a fourth, were women who had come to the community at the same time they joined the newspaper's staff.

Thus, a maximum of less than a quarter of the editors had deliberately changed residence to take a job.

In a full half of the cases studied, the women's editor had had neither previous experience on another paper nor journalistic training.

Of course, it should be acknowledged that falling into a job does not preclude enthusiasm for it, and the women with whom personal interviews were conducted and a majority of the questionnaire respondents seemed to like their jobs.

But it also might be noted that where three-fourths of the telegraph editors Gieber interviewed had graduated from

college, fewer than a third of the women's editors in the total sample were college graduates.

Fewer than half the questionnaire respondents seemed to feel that journalism education was necessary to job performance.

These findings may help to explain the low esteem in which women's pages are held.

Publishers generally do not seem to demand that the persons editing these pages have a high standard of professional or of educational competency. Also, while there are clearly defined standards of excellence in some other aspects of newspaper work, no model has been set either by journalism schools or by publishers or editors associations as to just what a women's page should be or a women's editor should do. Courses on women's page writing or editing certainly do not abound.

On the other hand, there is some evidence that women's editors themselves are eager for an exchange of ideas and some kind of instruction, though they might not call it "journalism education." A quarter of the respondents to the questionnaire were members of the newly formed women's press club in the state. Of the three editors personally interviewed who were questioned about their interest in a seminar for women's editors conducted annually by the University of Missouri, one had already attended, one was about to leave for this year's seminar, and a third had twice requested to be sent, only to be turned down by her superiors.

Many of the women responding to the mail questionnaire seemed eager to write about their jobs, and some answered questions at far greater length than the circumstances seemed to require and with what appeared to be a kind of gratitude at the interest in their jobs the survey expressed.

One of the younger editors appended a note explaining more fully what she did and talking about her personal feelings.

Our set-up here is everyone does everything (to a certain extent) but those items which deal with women--recipes, fashions, food, furniture, etc., go on 'my' woman's page and if anything is wrong it is my fault and they know whom to complain to. However, that does not happen too often (must be more luck than brains!)

\_\_\_\_\_ has a population of nearly 25,000. We were settled by the Dutch who claimed they were looking for religious freedom, but being Catholic I wonder sometimes. 'My' typical reader, as far as the woman's page is concerned would rather see Dutch recipes and more recipes rather than those crazy fashions.

We have featured local women and their recipes and local women doing things with their organizations, but I (maybe it's a private subconscious war) prefer to use wire copy and other features to point out what's happening in the 'feminine' fields in other places.

I don't have a great deal of time to lay out a woman's page each week as I assist on society writing, do two news broadcasts, write features, and now and then write accidents and other general news items. I also review plays now and then and have had occasion to cover public meetings.

Hoping this does not reach you too late, I am,  
(signature).

An older editor added a covering note criticizing the questionnaire and defending unspecified editorial practices:

This questionnaire comes from a "small city" daily, which really means "small town." Here I assume readership in all the "slick" magazines, so I don't think readers are being deprived on my page. Fashions (pictures, too), however, I use with discernment as fillers and consider it an attractive way to fill when "short."

After replying in pencil to the closed-end question on the general purposes of women's pages, one small-town editor unstapled the questionnaire and put it in her typewriter to give page-long expression to her opinions:

You will note I did not check [presenting] club news [as a function for the women's page], though we do have a club circuit in which all meetings are announced in advance. No followup unless of wide interest.

In my opinion, people haven't changed much, despite new trends to upgrade women's pages. Women still like to read about themselves and the people they know and about their community leaders. I personally do not think too much "how to do it" articles have the same appeal. An example of personal interest is one of my ex-assistants who thought local names were overplayed, yet when her name appeared in a small "ancient history" column, telling when she came to town, she wanted an extra copy and clipped the story out. She has since joined another organization and has appeared in three pictures.

Whenever we run lists of patrons for community charities, supporting ball, etc., the list of patrons' responses jumps by the dozen immediately after the publication of such a list.

So, what do they like? Their own names in print, I say. Makes dull reading possibly, but that's human nature.

Other comments, though not as lengthy, were also indicative of interest in the job. After checking off appropriate responses to a closed-end question about her duties, an editor on a remote small-town daily added; "Have a standing head all set up for a weekly or frequent column of my own--won't feel worth my salt until I get going on it."

To the questionnaire's list, one respondent added her own "necessary qualification for a women's editor:" "Compassion--realizing the importance of each story to each person involved in the story. Accuracy. Enthusiasm."

Another who is also editor of her paper, suggested: "Being able to write is no handicap, neither is breaking in a new hat."

As to the job, itself, as contrasted to the women in it, the crucial objective factor appeared to be the size of the newspaper's circulation. The salary the editor could earn appeared to depend largely on this. So did at least one element of the job's duties--administration. An editor directing a staff of 23 persons or even two persons has executive responsibilities which those with no staff do not encounter, and the presence of a staff was closely linked to the paper's circulation.

Women, who traditionally hold conciliatory roles in the family (19) and who are socialized from childhood with a view to their primary roles as wives and mothers (1) may find it

difficult to assume management positions where harsh decisions must sometimes be made and where aggressiveness is rewarded.

If women do tend to lack aggressiveness, can it be considered a random circumstance that the editors reported half the suggestions for major changes in their pages coming from management and only three as a result of their own conscious decisions?

Questions of this nature lead into the relations of this study to previous gatekeeper studies. Lewin, it will be remembered, said that the gatekeeper's decisions will depend on the psychological make-up of the gatekeeper.

On a less basic level than that of the relationship of the editor's sex to her job, it seemed that the job functions themselves observed in the study depended somewhat on the personality structure of the editor. One editor, concerned with aesthetics, made it her function to get heavy black ads off her page. Another made her job a base for professional activities that took her from desk and duties, with her superiors' blessings, and gave her welcome contacts outside her own city.

As to the decision-making process, women's editors seemed as personality-bound as White's "Mr. Gates." One editor disliked pictures of "old \$20 clothes" and approached fashion with an eye to its fantasy-creating potential. Another, though her readership included residents of a wealthy



suburban area, said she did not feature clothes that could not be afforded by workingmen's wives.

An editor divorced and presumably supporting herself to some extent cited with pride the "meaty" stories her reporters had done on teachers' bargaining problems and part-time employment for women, while a wife-mother-editor said she would like to run stories with some "meat" but didn't have the space.

While a majority (11) of the editors responding to the questionnaire ranked "knowledge of community and readers" the most important of four factors offered as possible reasons for selecting a given piece of copy for their pages, and while six others said they considered this factor when selecting copy, none of the editors offered more than a superficial description of their readers or their communities. These findings raise questions on how well the editors really do understand their readers and how good a job they are doing of predicting reader interest. Previous studies of editors do not offer reassurance on this point.

#### Implications for Future Research

The previously cited poverty of studies makes this a rich field for further research. A few areas suggested by this study follow in the form of questions.

1. How do women's editors compare with women who are general news reporters in education, age, salaries, job satisfaction and the like?

2. If it is generally true that women's editors tend to enjoy their jobs, what is it that they enjoy about them? In the study at hand, job satisfaction did not seem to be related to any factor with which it might obviously be linked, such as salary.

3. What makes for differences in quality in women's pages? For instance, is a page put together by an editor with 23 assistants 23 times better by some ~~still-to-be-con-~~structed measure of editorial excellence than one put together by one editor with no assistance?

4. This and previous studies suggest the tenuousness of the bases on which editors select copy. A study of women's news editors using techniques similar to those used in the MacLean-Kao study of picture editors cited earlier should prove useful.

Finally, it should be noted that because it is usually women who hold these jobs, further studies of women's editors could make a contribution not only to the literature of journalism but to that on women as workers.

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## APPENDIX A

Dear Mrs. X.:

I am writing to request your assistance in a research project on women's editors. The research is being conducted for a master's thesis at Michigan State University. I'm the researcher-- a former writer for the women's pages of The New York Times and Detroit News.

Your cooperation would entail only an interview at your convenience: you and your newspaper would not be identified by name in the finished report.

I'll try to reach you by phone later this week to explain my purposes more fully and to request an appointment.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Harrison

## APPENDIX B



The first question I'd like to ask you is about women's pages. What, in general, do you think their purposes should be?

### Editorial Philosophy

conception of women's  
interests in general

conception of what  
makes up a balanced  
page.

perception of relation  
to advertisers

position we give them  
what they want  
vs. editorial leader-  
ship

Then to go to your own page.

How do you decide what's to be included?

Editorial Decision-Making

conception of community

conception of "average" reader

conception of readers' interests

conception of what will be tolerated as "good taste"

how these conceptions are arrived at

interests of superiors in women's news

research sources available

Next, would you tell me about  
your operations as women's  
editor?

Getting out Paper  
full-time job?  
white space allowance?  
composing room policies  
where copy comes from  
whether duties include  
    originating story  
    ideas  
    gatekeeping incoming  
    copy  
    copy editing  
    make-up  
    copyreading and head-  
    line writing  
    hiring staff  
    assigning reporters  
    dealing with advertisers  
    public relations in  
    community  
    frequency and nature of  
    conferences with  
    superiors

How would you evaluate your  
page? And what do you think  
it is in your operations that  
contributes to its strengths or  
weaknesses

Assessment of Operations

feedback or lack of it  
newspaper traditions  
newspaper policies  
own biases  
lack of material or  
too much  
white space availabil-  
ity  
composing room demands  
pressures of time  
inadequate staff  
budget  
advertisers pressures

Now for a few personal questions.

Would you tell me what organizations you belong to and how you feel about their personal or professional value?

Organizational  
Activities

What about your use of the media?

What magazines or newspapers do  
you read and how do you feel about  
them? What television or radio  
shows do you see regularly and what  
do you think about them?

Media consumption

Newspapers read reg.  
or sometimes

Magazines read reg.  
or scanned

books (names)

TV programs

radio programs

movies (frequency)?  
(habit)? Liked or  
not?

Finally, would you please tell me  
about your personal experience,  
starting with when you came to this  
job and going back in time from that.  
Let's see, you title is . . .

Personal Background

years in job

length of time in  
community

professional experi-  
ence

education

place of birth

marital status

maternal status, ages  
of children

aspirations

feelings about present  
job

hobbies

age

salary

## APPENDIX C



## GENERAL

1. At present, I have the following title or titles:  
(Please check all that are appropriate).

\_\_\_\_\_ women's editor  
\_\_\_\_\_ society editor  
\_\_\_\_\_ food editor  
\_\_\_\_\_ fashion editor  
\_\_\_\_\_ home furnishings editor

Others?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. On my staff are \_\_\_\_\_ full-time assistants, \_\_\_\_\_ part-time assistants and \_\_\_\_\_ summer assistants, plus \_\_\_\_\_ columnists working at home.
3. My space allotment is \_\_\_\_\_ weekdays. On Sundays (answer if appropriate) it's \_\_\_\_\_.

## EDITORIAL PROCESS

4. In my opinion, a page for women readers should: (Please check ALL responses that seem appropriate, then go back and write 1, 2 or 3 in front of the THREE that seem most important).

\_\_\_\_\_ serve women of the community by seeing that as much of their club news as possible gets in the papers.

\_\_\_\_\_ provide news of value to women in their roles as wives, mothers and homemakers.

\_\_\_\_\_ offer news about interesting things women are doing, both in the community and outside it.

- \_\_\_\_\_ serve not only women but the family as a whole.
- \_\_\_\_\_ alert women to situations where they might form power blocs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ recognize the changing roles of women by offering information of value to them in their roles as community volunteers or as actual or potential holders of paying jobs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ tackle family-related problems of the day, such as changing sexual mores.

Others?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. In general, I think women are interested in: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. I'd describe our community as: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. I'd describe our "typical reader" as: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. I usually have a number of reasons for choosing a given story for my section, and they include: (Please check ALL appropriate responses, then go back and put a 1 in front of the ONE that seems most important).

- \_\_\_\_\_ comments received on this sort of story in the past.
- \_\_\_\_\_ the story and its merits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ interest of readers in this type of story, as shown by readership surveys.
- \_\_\_\_\_ my knowledge of the community and my readers.

9. My biases, if any, are (for or against) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. The statement below which most closely describes my section's relationship with advertisers is: (Please check one).

\_\_\_\_\_ My paper forbids me to use any store names at all on my page.

\_\_\_\_\_ My paper expects me to treat advertisers fairly but we never coordinate editorial copy with an advertising campaign.

\_\_\_\_\_ My paper expects me to treat advertisers fairly, and we sometimes try to coordinate copy with an advertising campaign.

\_\_\_\_\_ I'm at the back and call of the advertising department.

11. My duties as an editor include all of the following, and I've ranked the three I consider most important: (Please check ALL appropriate responses, then go back and write 1, 2 or 3 in front of the THREE that seem most important).

\_\_\_\_\_ general responsibility for the section and what appears on it.

\_\_\_\_\_ make-up.

\_\_\_\_\_ copyreading.

\_\_\_\_\_ headline writing.

\_\_\_\_\_ dealing with the public.

\_\_\_\_\_ dealing with advertisers.

\_\_\_\_\_ selecting and processing photographs.

\_\_\_\_\_ seeing my page through the composing room.

\_\_\_\_\_ weeding out appropriate material from wire and syndicate copy.

\_\_\_\_\_ seeing that inappropriate ads do not appear on my pages.

\_\_\_\_\_ originating ideas for features and series.

\_\_\_\_\_ administering my department.

\_\_\_\_\_ assigning reporters.

\_\_\_\_\_ thinking about the section in general.

Others?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. The most recent change of a major nature in my section  
was \_\_\_\_\_

13. It was suggested by \_\_\_\_\_

14. My problems include all those I've checked, and I think  
the three most troublesome are: (Please check ALL  
appropriate responses, then go back and write 1, 2 or 3  
in front of the THREE that seem most troublesome).

\_\_\_\_\_ general lack of space.

\_\_\_\_\_ too much space occupied by columns that  
have to run.

\_\_\_\_\_ a deluge of bridal, engagement or anniver-  
sary stories.

\_\_\_\_\_ an uncooperative composing room.

\_\_\_\_\_ composing room deadlines that are set  
too early.

\_\_\_\_\_ staff shortages.

\_\_\_\_\_ composing room deadlines set too early.

\_\_\_\_\_ staff shortages.

\_\_\_\_\_ lack of time to do a good job.

\_\_\_\_\_ photographers unavailable when needed.

\_\_\_\_\_ newspaper policies

\_\_\_\_\_ unsympathetic superiors.

\_\_\_\_\_ too many club stories that have to run.

\_\_\_\_\_ no time to think.

\_\_\_\_\_ late ads disrupting my pages.

Others?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### PERSONAL DATA

15. Marital status. (Please check correct category).

\_\_\_\_\_ married

\_\_\_\_\_ divorced

\_\_\_\_\_ single

\_\_\_\_\_ widowed

16. Number of children. \_\_\_\_\_
17. Ages of children. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
18. Number of years in community. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Number of years with this newspaper. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Number of years as women's editor with this newspaper. \_\_\_\_\_
21. First job with this newspaper and number of years held.
- \_\_\_\_\_
22. Other jobs with this newspaper and number of years held.  
(Please list in consecutive order). \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
23. Previous jobs, place held, and number of years held.  
(Please list in consecutive order). \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
24. Age. (Please check correct category).
- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| _____ under 30 | _____ 50-59   |
| _____ 30-39    | _____ 60-69   |
| _____ 40-49    | _____ over 69 |
25. Education (Circle last year of education completed)
- |             |             |       |
|-------------|-------------|-------|
| high school | college     | other |
| 9 10 11 12  | 13 14 15 16 | _____ |
- special field of emphasis in college? \_\_\_\_\_
26. Present salary. (Please check correct category). (Again, no names or newspapers will be identified in reporting this material).
- |                          |
|--------------------------|
| _____ under \$100 a week |
| _____ \$100-\$125 a week |
| _____ \$126-\$150 a week |
| _____ \$151-\$175 a week |
| _____ \$176-\$200 a week |
| _____ over \$200 a week  |

27. I'd say the following statement or statements comes closest to expressing my feelings about my job: (Please check ALL appropriate responses).

\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the job, and I think it's a good one for anyone interested in journalism to aspire to.

\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the job, and I think it's a good one for any woman interested in journalism to aspire to.

\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the job, but I think there are better ones for men interested in journalism to aspire to.

\_\_\_\_\_ I enjoy the job, but I think there are better ones for women interested in journalism to aspire to.

\_\_\_\_\_ The job is satisfactory, but I do it purely in the line of duty.

\_\_\_\_\_ I don't like the job and would prefer another journalistic assignment.

28. I'd say a women's editor on my newspaper should have at least these qualifications: (Please check ALL appropriate responses, then go back and write 1, 2 or 3 in front of the THREE that seem most important).

\_\_\_\_\_ tact in dealing with the public and advertisers.

\_\_\_\_\_ experience as a women's page writer.

\_\_\_\_\_ knowledge of the community and readers.

\_\_\_\_\_ education in journalism.

\_\_\_\_\_ being a woman.

\_\_\_\_\_ ability to make decisions fast.

\_\_\_\_\_ experience as a general reporter.

\_\_\_\_\_ other editing experience.

\_\_\_\_\_ understanding women.

Others?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

29. I read or scan these newspapers: (Please check appropriate items and also put an O in front of those in which you look for ideas for your section).

☐ my own  
☐ Detroit Free Press  
☐ Detroit News  
☐ New York Times  
☐ Wall St. Journal

Others?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

30. I read or scan these magazines: (Please check appropriate items and also put an O in front of those in which you look for ideas for your section).

<input type="checkbox"/> Time	<input type="checkbox"/> Ladies Home Journal
<input type="checkbox"/> Life	<input type="checkbox"/> McCalls
<input type="checkbox"/> Newsweek	<input type="checkbox"/> Good Housekeeping
<input type="checkbox"/> Look	<input type="checkbox"/> Vogue

☐ Mademoiselle  
☐ Harper's  
☐ National Geographic  
☐ Editor & Publisher

Others?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

31. The best book I read last year was \_\_\_\_\_

32. The television programs I watched yesterday were \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

33. The radio programs I listened to yesterday were \_\_\_\_\_

34. I'm a member of: (Check appropriate responses).

\_\_\_\_\_ Theta Sigma Phi

\_\_\_\_\_ Michigan Women's Press Club

Others? (Please put an O in front of  
those you joined for professional  
reasons).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX D

Dear Mrs. X:

The Women's Press Club joins me in requesting your cooperation in what is probably the first comprehensive survey of the state's women's news editors.

The survey is being made among dailies with over 10,000 circulation. The research will be the subject of a master's thesis at Michigan State University and of a report at a forthcoming meeting of the Press Club. Some of the more interesting findings will be summarized and sent to you in a brief report.

No editors or newspapers will be identified by name at any time.

The Press Club believes the results of this state-wide survey may be helpful in upgrading women's news for readers and in promoting a better understanding of the problems of women's editors.

The questionnaire takes only about 10 minutes to complete. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for its return, hopefully within the next three days.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth H. Harrison  
Master's Candidate  
Michigan State University



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