A STUDY OF "GATE KEEPING" PRACTICES AND CREDIBILITY SOURCES OF EDUCATION REPORTERS IN SELECTED MICHIGAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Arthur H. Rice, Jr.

1964

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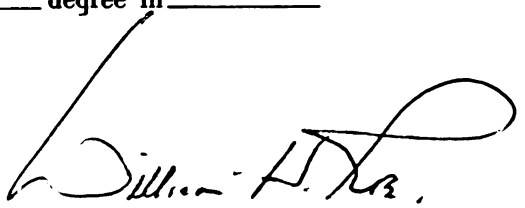

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF "GATE KEEPING" PRACTICES AND CREDIBILITY SOURCES OF EDUCATION REPORTERS IN SELECTED MICHIGAN DAILY NEWSPAPERS

by Arthur H. Rice, Jr.

This study is an exploratory study with three major purposes: (1) to examine demographic characteristics of education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000; (2) to assess frequency of contact and credibility rankings for 27 sources of education information as judged by these education reporters; and (3) to investigate "gate keeping" practices of these education reporters.

The press constitutes a--if not "the"--major channel of communication through which the community learns about and interprets the policies, programs, and activities of its schools. Despite the importance of this relationship, there is a paucity of research about basic patterns of school-press interactions. It was assumed that if the framers of education "messages" could have some index of

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how well or how poorly the press is likely to receive and use messages emanating from various sources of education information, then the implications of attributing the "correct" sources to different education messages are obvious.

Methodology. Because of the degree of specialization now practiced by the larger newspapers, the sample for this study was limited to the 17 Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000. No specific hypotheses were tested. Methodology utilized to analyze the data varied to fit the three purposes cited above: (1) survey research methods (including compilations of aggregate percentages) were used to analyze the demographic data; (2) factor analysis and Q-technique were used to analyze the frequency of contact and source credibility data; and (3) survey methods were used to analyze the interview "gate keeping" data.

Factor analysis and Q-methodology were considered especially appropriate for the source credibility analysis. Respondents were asked to evaluate 27 education information sources (e.g., local public school superintendent, National Education Association) according to a four-point scale for

"frequency of contact" (frequently, occasionally, very seldom, and never) and according to an 11-point scale for "source credibility" (from "most accurate" to "least accurate"). In the source credibility Q-sort, the factor analytic model constructed three hypothetical types of persons based on the way the subjects rated the 27 Q-items. After the three arrays of weighted item scores were computed, they were converted to z-scores to compare how the three "types" of education reporters related to each other in credibility rankings.

Major Findings. (1) Frequency of contact. A significant finding of this study is the strong preference of education reporters for contacting local sources of education information. Respondents identified the local superintendent of schools (public), the president of the local school board, public school principals (elementary and secondary), and the local administrator (public) in charge of school public relations as the five most frequently contacted sources of education information. Moreover, state-level sources of education information are contacted more frequently than national-level sources.

(2) Source credibility. One of the most important findings of this study is that the local public school

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superintendent, who received the highest z-score on the "frequency of contact" array, also has the highest average "source credibility" z-score across all three "types" of education reporters. Classroom teachers (public) were trusted by all three types of education reporters, but public school principals (elementary and secondary) were ranked high in source credibility by Types I and II but very low by Type III. Source credibility rankings for the local Parent-Teachers Association were low for all three types, with Type I giving it the lowest credibility ranking of all 27 sources (z-score, -4.09). Another important finding is how membership or non-membership in the reporters' union (American Newspaper Guild) is reflected in the source credibility rankings of teachers' unions (AFL-CIO) as compared to rankings of "professional" teachers' organizations (NEA-MEA-local affiliate). Union reporters are more positively oriented to the teachers' unions than are non-union reporters.

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By

Arthur H. Rice, Jr.

A THESIS

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College of Education

1964

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Each person named above has aided me in numerous ways to help reach this goal and to give me deeper and broader understandings of education and communication.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Some 30 years ago when the American Association of School Administrators convened in Atlantic City for its annual convention, the superintendents' organization felt fortunate if coverage of its activities rated one paragraph buried on an inside page of the local newspaper. Today AASA conventions are covered by 30 to 40 reporters from the major newspapers, magazines, and wire service. "Education" is recognized as a topic worthy of special attention, and many of the larger daily newspapers have assigned the "education beat" to a specific journalist (commonly designated as "education editor," "education writer," or "education reporter"). No study to date has investigated the "gate keeping" functions of these journalists covering the education beat. In part, this was an objective of this study.

As Kurt Lewin points out,[1] it is apparent that even the actual physical events (the criterion events) are

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[1]David Manning White, "The 'Gate Keeper': A Case Study in the Selection of News," Journalism Quarterly, XXVII (1950), 383-390.

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reported by two reporters in two different perceptual frameworks and that the two men bring to the "story" different sets of experiences, attitudes, and expectations. The two communicators, the source and the education editor, are "gate keepers" in the channel of news; that is, they make the decisions controlling the flow of news to the community. In theory, supposedly, a communicator decides that relevant information has values consonant with the needs of mass-media audiences. Theory, however, is subject to qualification. Thus the clues to the fate of a "given" story (providing the "given" story exists) on any topical subject can be found in the ways the roles are carried out.

Two major concerns of this study were as follows: (1) to ascertain what sources of education information are used most frequently by education reporters of large daily newspapers; and (2) to ascertain the "source credibility" of these same sources of education information.

The influence of sources which the audience considers highly credible or less credible, trustworthy or untrustworthy, and the like has been extensively investigated by the Yale Communications Research Program.[2] The weight of

---

[2]Joseph T. Klapper, The Effects of Mass Communication (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1963), p. 100.

evidence from the Yale studies is quite consistent. Communications attributed to high credibility sources are more often considered "fair" than are the same communications when attributed to low credibility sources, and their conclusions are more often considered "justified." Thus the education reporter's image of sources affects his interpretation of the communication and its persuasive effectiveness. Sources regarded as credible, trustworthy, or high in prestige apparently abet persuasion; while sources inspiring more negative images apparently hinder persuasion.

Purposes of This Study

Recognizing the paucity of research concerning the "gate keeping" functions of education reporters and noting the importance of "source credibility" in the persuasive effects of communication, this study set out to do an exploratory analysis of these two major areas. No specific hypotheses were tested. Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of journalists filling the education reporter's position? Data were gathered to disclose the reporters' educational background, previous work experience, membership in groups, income, religion, political affiliation, union affiliation, and so on.

2. What are the actual practices of these education reporters in their relationships with the schools? Specifically, answers to such questions as the following were sought:

a. What are the basic patterns of educational coverage? How much time are education reporters able to devote to covering education news? Are specific persons given specific educational areas, levels, or topics to cover? Are "stringers" used? Which major educational conventions are reporters able to attend and how often?

b. Are these reporters allowed to attend executive sessions of school boards? If so, under what conditions? What topics do these reporters consider legitimate subjects to be discussed in executive sessions?

c. Do reporters assist in the writing of editorials on education?

d. What is their reaction to press conferences held by school officials?

e. What topics on the "education beat" are the most difficult to cover? Why?

3. Of 27 education information sources, which ones are contacted most frequently by education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers above 20,000 circulation? These sources included major education information sources on local (i.e., local superintendents of schools), state (i.e., State Department of Public Instruction), and national levels (i.e., National Education Association). Categories also included educational organizations of governmental (i.e., U.S. Office of Education), professional (i.e., American

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4. What are the rankings of source credibility for these 27 education information sources as judged by education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers above 20,000 circulation?

Contribution of This Study

The press is a--if not "the"--major medium of public relations for most school systems. It usually constitutes the most important single channel of communications through which the community learns about and interprets the policies, programs, and activities of its schools. Despite the importance of this relationship, there is relatively little reliable information about basic patterns of school-press interactions. This study set out to reveal the news-gathering practices of education reporters and to obtain credibility rankings for various possible sources of education information. If the framers of educational "messages" could have some index of how well or how poorly the press is likely to receive and use messages from various sources of education information, then the implications for attributing the "correct" sources to educational messages is dramatically obvious and critically important.

Basic Assumptions

1. A communicator who knows which relevant sources his receiver trusts can more strongly affect his receiver than can one who does not.

2. Although every person is unique, there are relatively few basic patterns of thinking and feeling. These basic patterns will reasonably describe most of the people the communicator wants to communicate with.

3. Knowledge of receivers' beliefs will affect communicators, modifying their own views of the matters in the communication process.

4. No two studies are alike in their problems of analysis and interpretation. Hence this study incorporates non-quantitative methods of analyzing data gathered from open-end responses, as well as descriptive survey research data and a Q-sort statistical analysis of "source credibility."

Delimitations

The delimiting factors which were established to confine the scope of this study are as follows:

1. Because of the degree of specialization now practiced by the larger daily newspapers, the sample for this study was limited to the 17 Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000.

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2. Of these 17 newspapers, 13 had specific persons designated to serve as "education editor" or "education reporter." These 13 "education reporters" were interviewed; respondents for the four newspapers without "education reporters" specifically designated were the persons most directly responsible for covering education news for their respective newspapers.

3. As there is no basis to judge how representative of any larger press population the Michigan newspapers involved in this study are, the findings of this study cannot be generalized beyond the Michigan population.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the terms given below will convey consistently the meaning as set forth in the definitions.

Channel. Noting that no one word in communication theory has been as used and abused as the word "channel," Berlo defines it as "a medium, a carrier of messages."[3] Thus messages can exist only in some channel, one of six elements in the communication process.

Communication model. A diagrammatical outline identifying the major elements of the communication process.

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[3] David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960), p. 31.

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Communication process. According to Berlo, six elements are essential to human communication: the communication source, the encoder, the message, the channel, the decoder, and the communication receiver. Says Berlo: "Whether we talk about communication in terms of one person, two persons, or an institutional network, the functions labeled as source, encoder, decoder, and receiver have to be performed. Messages are always involved and must exist in some channel. How they go together in what order, and with what kinds of interrelationships depend on the situation, the nature of the specific process under study, and the dynamic developed."[4]

Decoder. "Just as a source needs an encoder to translate his purpose in a code, the receiver needs a decoder to retranslate, to decode the message and put it in a form that the receiver can use. In one- or two-person communication situations, the decoder can be thought of as the senses."[5]

Education beat. In newspaper terminology, this refers to sources of education news which are contacted by reporters on a periodic, routine basis.

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[4] Ibid., p. 38.

[5] Ibid., pp. 31-32.

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[6] Ibid., p.

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Education Reporter. All respondents interviewed in this study will be referred to as education reporters. This classification, therefore, encompasses all other titles, including education editor, education staff writer, education writer, and general assignment reporter.

Encoder. The communication encoder, according to Berlo, "is responsible for taking the ideas of the source and putting them in a code, expressing the source's purpose in the form of a message. In person-to-person communication the encoder would be the set of motor skills of the source."[6]

Feedback. The return message to the sender which indicates how his message is getting across. The feedback message may be direct communication from the receiver, the source's observation of the receiver's behavior following receipt of the communication, or it may be an indirect type of report from data-collecting instruments or persons other than the receiver.

"Gate Keeper." Kurt Lewin pointed out that the traveling of a news item through certain communication channels is dependent on the fact that certain areas function as "gates."[7] Gate sections are governed either by impartial

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[6] Ibid., p. 30.

[7] White, op. cit., pp. 383-385.

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[8] Shirley A. M

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[9] Ibid., p. 52

[10] Ibid.

rules or by "gate keepers," and in the latter case an individual or group is "in power" for making the decision between "in" and "out." Both sources and newspaper reporters are in gate-keeping positions.

Hypothetico-deductive methodology. Scientific method wherein hypotheses are deduced from a theory for the express purpose of accepting or rejecting their validity on the basis of empirical findings.[8]

Ipsative. Particular personality elements or traits possessed in idiosyncratic fashion; the individual is compared as to the interrelationship of elements within his own personality system.[9]

Ipsative Scales. Scales on which people have distinguished among items and not necessarily scales which distinguish among people on any normative basis of individual differences.[10]

Message. "In human communication," according to Berlo, "a message is behavior available in physical form--

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[8] Shirley A. Marsh, Q-Technique: An Advance in Idiodynamics (East Lansing: Communications Research Center, College of Communication Arts, Michigan State University, December, 1963), p. 51.

[9] Ibid., p. 52.

[10] Ibid.

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the translation of ideas, purposes, and intentions into a code, a systematic set of symbols."[11]

Q-Technique. According to Stephenson,[12] Q-technique supports a wholly different standpoint of "type" psychology than R-technique. While R-technique restricts its definition of "type" to mean "a class of persons having a common characteristic or characteristics," Q-technique deals with the definition of type as "a person, serving as a characteristic specimen of a class." In R, populations are groups of persons, while in Q there are groups of items. For R each variate has reference to an attribute or characteristic of all such persons, while in Q each variate has reference to an operation of a single person upon all the observational items in one interactional setting. Variates in R do not interact while in Q they do.

Receiver. The receiver is the "target of communication."[13] For communication to occur, there must be a person or persons at the opposite end of the channel from the source--a receiver. For analytic purposes, sources and

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[11] Berlo, op. cit., p. 31.

[12] William Stephenson, The Study of Behavior: Q-Technique and Its Methodology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 47-61.

[13] Berlo, op. cit., p. 31.

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[14] Ibid., p.

[15] Ibid., p.

[16] Wilbur Sch

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receivers can be discussed separately, but they are not independent functions, independent kinds of behavior.

Respondent. The education reporter or newspaper journalist responsible for covering education news interviewed in this study for "gate keeping" practices and rankings of source credibility of education information sources.

Source. Berlo states that all human communication has some source, "some person or group of persons with a purpose, a reason for engaging in communication."[14] In the communication process, Berlo says, "a communication source, after determining the way in which he desires to affect his receiver, encodes a message intended to produce the desired response."[15]

Source credibility. The effect of the source on the acceptance of a message by the receiver. Schramm[16] states "a message is more likely to be accepted if the source is perceived as trustworthy or expert."

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[14] Ibid., p. 30.

[15] Ibid., p. 41.

[16] Wilbur Schramm, The Process and Effects of Mass Communication (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p. 212.

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Stringer. In newspaper terminology, this refers to a part-time newspaper employee who is responsible for covering news of a given topic or within a given geographic area. Stringers generally live in the outlying area which they cover.

Superintendent. The person who is directly responsible to the board of education for the professional administration of the school system.

z-score. The most fundamental form of standard score is the z-score. A z-score tells how many standard deviations a given point is above or below the mean. The mean of the distribution of z-scores is 0, and its standard deviation is 1.00.[17]

Methodological Overview

The scope of this study encompasses three major areas: (1) basic demographic data concerning education reporters; (2) an examination of the "gate keeping" functions of education reporters; and (3) an analysis of the "frequency of contact" for 27 education information sources and a Q-analysis of the "source credibility" ratings of these same 27 education information sources.

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[17]Virginia L. Senders, Measurement and Statistics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 222.

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N.Y., 1963), p. 34.

The first two parts of this study sought to discover specific news-gathering practices of education reporters, as well as to reveal essential demographic data. Research methodology consisted of descriptive survey research techniques. Both a written questionnaire and oral interviews (of about two hours duration) were utilized (see Appendices A and B). The ordinary methods of describing survey data are quite straightforward. In a sense, the first two parts of this study result in a "statistical description"--i.e., describing the features of the survey aggregate. Statistical "inferences" are not tested in any of the three parts of this study.

Highly structured research methodology with representative samples of respondents is most fruitful when variables are well identified. At present so little is known in regard to the practices of education reporters in making news-gathering decisions that a highly structured design for this part of the study seemed inappropriate. "In problem orientation," says MacLean, "researchers frequently 'feel out' the problem quite unsystematically before proceeding to more carefully planned stages."[18] MacLean assesses

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[18]Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., "Research Planning," Introduction to Mass Communications Research, ed. by Ralph O. Nafziger and David M. White, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Journalism Monographs, No. 6, 1963), p. 34.

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[19] Ibid., p. 35.

[20] Ibid., pp. 3

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> The amount of planning a particular research project requires depends on the level of research appropriate at each stage. At one stage a researcher may be probing, using projective techniques or focused interviews to get relatively few people to express themselves as fully as possible on some subject. Such interviews may provide not only clues on what things may be important for his future study but may also provide rich materials useful in themselves. "Motivation research" functions largely at this level. At another stage the researcher may be using statements gleaned from the first study to get a systematic picture of the variety of ways in which people orient themselves to aspects of the world around them. Typical of work at this stage is the use of "Q-methodology" to develop a typology of persons as to their news reading interests.[19]

MacLean further asserts that the various stages of research serve complementary purposes:

> In mass communication research, and indeed all research, two somewhat different approaches are relevant to the planning problem. Some researchers are seeking, rather directly, solutions to practical everyday communication problems. ... On the other hand, there are many researchers who focus on one or two particular variables and explore how they relate to other variables which might help to explain them. ... These two approaches are not independent; they feed into each other. For example, the idea of "local" versus "cosmopolitan" influentials, now widely recognized as a significant variable in communication research, was originally developed out of a practical field study by Robert K. Merton for Time magazine.[20]

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[19] Ibid., p. 35.

[20] Ibid., pp. 33-34.

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It is assumed that no two surveys are alike in their problems of analysis and interpretation. Analysis of survey material does not necessarily have to be statistical. Even in surveys concerned chiefly with characteristics of an aggregate, non-quantitative methods of analysis and evaluation may be preferred.[21] Thus, analysis of the more open-ended, unstructured questions in this study may prove to be most fruitful in providing clues to significant patterns of school-press relationships.

"Source Credibility." In the third part of our study we sought to determine the frequency of contact and source credibility of 27 education information sources as judged by education reporters of Michigan daily newspapers above 20,000 circulation. Using factor analysis and Q-methodology, our focus was on hypothesis development rather than hypothesis testing.

Factor analysis was a particularly appropriate scientific investigation tool for our purposes because it can be used profitably with relatively little regard to prior formulation of a hypothesis. Thus, as Cattell[22] points out, the factor analyst may start with two or three dozen

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[21] C. A. Moser, Survey Methods in Social Investigation (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958), p. 263.

[22] Raymond I. Cattell, Factor Analysis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 21.

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variables and without hypothesis formation arrive at whatever organization or structure is present and what factors or types are at work. Factor analysis is a useful tool in the behavioral sciences where control is sometimes impossible, where a predictive hypothesis can be as misleading as helpful, where the crucial variables are unknown or not clear, and where the direction of causation is unknown.

Q-methodology also was particularly appropriate for our purposes. Stephenson[23] says we should be making discoveries rather than testing our reasoning. He believes that empirical curiosity rather than hypothetico-deductive logic should be the mainspring of behavioral science, as it is of Q-methodology. Thus, the Q-technique was selected for our research design to isolate useful and meaningful typologies of education reporters. It was our plan to derive hypotheses for future studies from analyzing our Q-sorts.

Organization of the Presentation

The foregoing presentation outlined the problem and its component parts and indicated the method used to attack the problem. Altogether there are seven chapters in this study.

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[23] Stephenson, op. cit., pp. 150-152.

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Chapter II presents a review of the literature which deals with specific aspects of the study. Chapter III presents the actual conduct of the study. The next three chapters (Chapters IV, V, and VI) present an analysis and interpretation of the data as follows: (1) Chapter IV covers the analysis of the Q-sort data on frequency of contact and source credibility; (2) Chapter V covers the analysis of the demographic data; and (3) Chapter VI covers the analysis of the open-ended interview data. Chapter VII presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations.

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REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are four pertinent areas of literature related to this study: (1) the area of basic behavioral science research, (2) the area of communication, with emphasis on "source credibility" and "gate keeper" studies, (3) the area of school-community communications, and (4) the area of Q-technique as research methodology.

Behavioral Approach to Human Communication

To put it simply, the process of human communication is complex. To attempt to understand the effects and interactions of this dynamic process requires the combined efforts of many behavioral disciplines--sociology, anthropology, experimental and social psychology, linguistics, psycholinguistics, political science--together with research in applied communication fields, including mass communications. Basic communication questions will be most fruitfully investigated through an interdisciplinary approach.

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misperceptions or improve attitudes. Research in the behavioral sciences on this subject suggests several conclusions:

1. A high level of information in a community is not sufficiently caused by adequate dissemination of information.[1]

2. The prevailing cognitive structure of an individual is one determinant of the information he will acquire.[2]

3. Basic motivational processes (including interests and attitudes) are intimately bound up with the information an individual will acquire and remember.[3]

4. The motivational processes underlying the acquisition of information are importantly generated and reinforced through the individual's interaction with his primary groups.[4]

Basic concerns of this thesis are the forces which impinge upon the decision-making processes of a selected group of newspaper reporters. It should be emphasized that "news" is a product of the mediation by communicators who, in turn, are influenced by psychological and social forces.

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[1]W. W. Charters, Jr., "In a Public Relations Program Facts Are Never Enough," The Nation's Schools, LIII (Feb., 1954), 56-58.

[2]Dorwin Cartwright, "Some Principles of Mass Persuasion," Human Relations, II (1949), 253-267.

[3]Carl I. Hovland, "Effects of the Mass Media of Communication," Handbook of Social Psychology, II (Addison-Wesley, 1954), 1062-1103.

[4]Theodore M. Newcomb, Social Psychology (Dryden, 1950), pp. 256-283, 328-334.

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Effective mass communication today is much more difficult and time-consuming than is appreciated by most educators and public relations people. A chief difficulty is that too many persons are trying to live by a World War I concept of communication which is now badly outdated. This simple concept calls for (1) a message, (2) transmission through media, and (3) the receiver is supposed to be affected by the message and take action. Trouble is that there are too many blocks and adverse factors which can impair the workability of this straight-line theory (often referred to as the "hypodermic needle theory").[5]

Evidence clearly seems to reject this "hypodermic needle model" of mass communications. The impact of mass media must be evaluated in relation to the total complex of social relationships within which the audience member functions before, during, and after exposure to the medium. As many studies demonstrate, the individual is a member of a network of primary and secondary groupings--his family, friendship groups, occupational circles, etc.--which influence his opinions and attitudes. "Inevitably," as Wright asserts, "they affect the way in which he is exposed to mass communi-

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[5] Charles R. Wright, Mass Communication (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 110.

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cation, how he interprets or reacts to any specific communication, and the extent to which he will or can modify his behavior in compliance with the message."[6]

Moreover, psychological research reveals how individuals vary in perception and retention. "Properly speaking," say Krech and Crutchfield, "there is no real physical event, merely a continuous flow of physical happenings. That we do tend to perceive such a sequence of physical happenings as a unified event, an episode with a beginning and an end, depends on the fact that certain physical happenings serve as distinguishing landmarks."[7] Thus the assumption that all men will perceive "reality" in the same way can be interpreted as "naive realism." Part of the difficulty stems from the fact of individual differences among perceivers. One man's mess may be another man's order.

Snygg and Combs say that each person's perceptual field is responsible for his every behavior.[8] People do

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[6] Ibid.

[7] David Krech and Richard S. Crutchfield, Elements of Psychology (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), pp. 34-35.

[8] Donald Snygg and Arthur Combs, Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 21.

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[9] Milton Roke

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not behave according to the facts as others see them, but the way they see them. What governs behavior from the point of view of the individual are his unique perceptions of himself and the world in which he lives, the meanings things have for him.

Rokeach[9] suggests that we organize the world of ideas, people, and authority basically along lines of belief congruence. To handle a number of complex theoretical issues, Rokeach conceives of three layers organized along a central-peripheral dimension: (1) A central region represents a person's "primitive" beliefs. These refer to all the beliefs a person acquires about the nature of the physical world he lives in, the nature of the self, and of the "generalized other." (2) An intermediate region represents the beliefs a person has in and about the nature of authority, and the people who line up with authority, on whom he depends to help him form a picture of the world he lives in. (3) A peripheral region represents the beliefs derived from authority, such beliefs filling in the details of his world map. Rokeach points out that some individuals are more rigid and dogmatic than others in defending belief

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[9] Milton Rokeach, The Open and Closed Mind (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960).

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systems, including beliefs in authorities.

In recent communication research there has been a transition from concentration upon the message (as in propaganda study), or concentration upon effects (as in public opinion or advertising research), to an attempt to study the process of communication. Here it becomes necessary to study and apply psychological learning theories, sociological theories of action, theories of personality, theories of perception, information theory and cybernetics, and social psychology theories. For example, some of the basic behavioral theories which have stimulated significant communication research include Rokeach's psychological theory of belief systems; the "balance theories" of Newcomb,[10] Heider,[11] Osgood,[12] and Festinger;[13] the TOTE

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[10]Theodore M. Newcomb, "An Approach to the Study of the Communicative Act," Psychological Review, LX (1953), 361-366.

[11]Fritz Heider, The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations (New York: Wiley, 1958).

[12]Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, The Measurement of Meaning (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1957).

[13]Leon Festinger, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

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theory of Miller, Pribram, and Galanter;[14] small group research of Homans and others;[15] the "Whorfian hypothesis" of Benjamin Lee Whorf;[16] and considerably more research in sociology, psychology, social psychology, anthropology, and linguistics.

Of special significance for the purposes of this study is an understanding of three related sociological concepts--role, significant others, and reference groups. A brief discussion of these concepts follows.

Role Analysis. The concept of "role" represents the social scientist's acknowledgment of certain uniformities observable in human behavior which are specific to situations. The concept of role originated in several disciplines of the social sciences to serve somewhat different theoretical purposes, and the usage of the term is by no means consistent at the present time. Moreover, as role analysis has been put to empirical use in recent years, such

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[14]George A. Miller, Karl H. Pribram, and Eugene Galanter, Plans and the Structure of Behavior (New York: Holt, 1960).

[15]George Homans, The Human Group (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Inc., 1950).

[16]Benjamin Lee Whorf, Language, Thought, and Reality, ed. by John B. Carroll, (Cambridge: Technology Press of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1956).

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a remarkable proliferation of related concepts has occurred that it is impossible to use the terms definitively. The reigning confusion can be illustrated by the fact that what one author (Cameron)[17] means by "role" is what a second author (Newcomb)[18] means by "role behavior," and not equivalent to what Newcomb means by "role."

Generally speaking, however, the concept of role stresses the influence of contemporaneous forces arising in the person's immediate social environment to impress his behavior. It designates, in particular, the force constituted by expectations[19, 20] on a person which are held by significant others in his milieu. The person lives in an environment in which other people around him expect him to be (and not be) a certain kind of person or expect him to behave

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[17]N. A. Cameron, The Psychology of Behavior Disorders: A Biosocial Interpretation (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1947), p. 90.

[18]Newcomb, op. cit., pp. 328-334.

[19]Jacob W. Getzels and Egon G. Guba, "The Structure of Roles and Role Conflict in the Teaching Situation," Journal of Educational Sociology, XXIX (1955), 30-40; and

[20]N. Gross, W. S. Mason, and A. W. McEachern, Explorations in Role Analysis: Studies of the School Superintendency Role (New York: Wiley, 1958).

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(and not behave) in certain ways, and these expectations vary systematically from one situation to another in which he and other people are enmeshed. In the sociologically-oriented role theories, the expectations are regarded as culturally patterned and as attached to the statuses, or positions, a person occupies rather than immutably to the person himself. In any event, the force of expectations is transmitted to the person during interaction between himself and the significant other. The force is effective, however, only as the person perceives, or cognizes, the expectations.

In the tradition of Newcomb and others, Getzels conceives of the social system (used conceptually, not descriptively) as involving two classes of phenomena "which are at once conceptually independent and phenomenally interactive."[21] First, there are the institutions "with certain roles and expectations that will fulfill the goals of the system." Second, there are the individuals "with certain personalities and need-dispositions inhabiting the system, whose observed interactions comprise 'social behavior.'"

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[21]Jacob W. Getzels, "Administration as a Social Process," The Planning of Change: Readings in the Applied Behavioral Sciences, ed. by Warren G. Bennis, Kenneth D. Benne, and Robert Chin (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 377.

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Getzels asserts that this social behavior may be understood as a function of these major elements: institution, role, and expectation (nomothetic or normative dimension of activity); and individual, personality, and need-disposition (idiographic or personal dimension in a social system).

Recognizing the dynamics of interaction between externally defined expectations and internally determined needs, Getzels says that "a given act is conceived as deriving simultaneously from both the nomothetic and idiographic dimensions." In other words, Getzels believes "social behavior results as the individual attempts to cope with an environment composed of patterns of expectations for his behavior in ways consistent with his own independent pattern of needs." Generally speaking, then, the concept of "role" stresses the influence of contemporaneous forces arising in the person's immediate social environment.

"Significant Others." Also apropos here is George Herbert Mead's description of "significant others." In essence, the requirements of the confronting situation upon the individual in his role are communicated to him through the expectations of people--persons and groups--whom

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he perceives to be significant in his environment.[22] And his perceptions, both of which are significantly to be taken into account in his judgments and of what their expectations with respect to his conduct are, are subject to all the distortions, conscious and unconscious, to which human perception generally is subject.

Reference Groups. "Reference group theory," according to Hyman, "aims to systematize the determinants and consequences of those processes of evaluation and self-appraisal in which the individual takes the values or standards of other individuals and groups as a comparative frame of reference."[23] Hyman emphasizes the three polar terms in the phrases: self-appraisal rather than evaluation, standards versus values, and individuals rather than groups. The concept of reference group today seems almost always to be used in connection with group influences in the formation of attitudes. The equally important element of the theory, the fact that self-appraisal is dependent on the reference group which one employs as a point of social comparison, has been seriously neglected.

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[22]George Herbert Mead, The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead, ed. by Anselm Strauss (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Phoenix Books, 1962).

[23]Herbert H. Hyman, "Reflections on Reference Groups," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXIV (Fall, 1960), 383-396.

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The measurement of which group is a reference group is only one element. An individual can identify with a group, but in order to orient his attitudes he must have some perception of the group's norms. His opinion may deviate from the objective position of the group, not because he opposes the group, but simply because he conforms to a false norm that he has taken for the true norm of the group. The awareness that there is a norm at all, and what its content is, are two important aspects of reference group measurement.

Review of Communication Research

There appears to be no major area in the study of communication that does not have implications for school-press relations. A completely exhaustive review of the communication literature is neither possible nor practical. For the purposes of this thesis our review will be limited to basic pertinent research, with special emphasis on the "source credibility" and "gate keeper" studies.

Models of communication process. Although the dynamic quality of the communication process is impossible to depict with isomorphic fidelity through the use of "communication models," the dozen or so models that have been presented do help to interpret visually the communication

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[26] Berlo, op

process. Since two recent publications[24, 25] contain very adequate reviews and appraisals of these communication models, our review of the literature will cite only two for purposes of illustration: Berlo's SMCR model and Westley-MacLean's paradigm which is applicable to the mass media situation.

Berlo's SMCR model[26] is a taxonomic approach to the study of the communication process. In this model Berlo developed a description of the physical and psychological properties for the main elements of communication as he saw them: Source, Message, Channel, and Receiver. Berlo, however, stressed the dynamic qualities of the communication process as follows:

> The SMCR model of the communication process emphasizes the importance of a thorough understanding of human behavior as a prerequisite to communication analysis. If communication is

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[24] Research, Principles, and Practices in Visual Communication, edited by John Ball and Francis C. Byrnes, (Washington, D.C.: Department of Audio-Visual Instruction, National Education Association, 1960).

[25] Sylvia Ciernick, "Development and Use of a Conceptual Schema for Analyzing the School Public Relations Process" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1962), pp. 56-61.

[26] Berlo, op. cit., pp. 23-70.

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[27] Ibid., p.

[28] Bruce H. W
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> intended to affect behavior, we need to understand the variables and processes underlying behavior and behavior change. Although we separate the source from the receiver in our communication model, anything we learn about one applies to the other--the source and receiver are corresponding systems. Both are human organisms who exist in similar states. An analysis of behavior from a communication point of view applies equally to communication sources and receivers.[27]

Westley and MacLean[28] take note of the fact that many communications are mediated. Some agency reports information from one to another of two parties, say, from the schools to the community or from the community to the schools. The agency may help communication flow by furnishing a vehicle otherwise lacking, or it may hinder communication by censoring or distorting information. The important mediating agencies in the school-community relationship are the school board, local mass media, local parent groups, citizen committees, and opposition groups. Individuals may also be seen in this role. Community leaders, teachers, principals, and informed citizens of many types fill this position. Of these, the school board

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[27] Ibid., p. 73.

[28] Bruce H. Westley and Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., "A Conceptual Model for Communication Research," Audio-Visual Communications Review, III (1955), 66-71.

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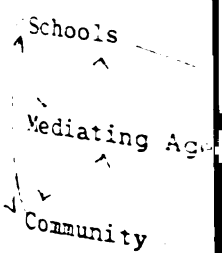

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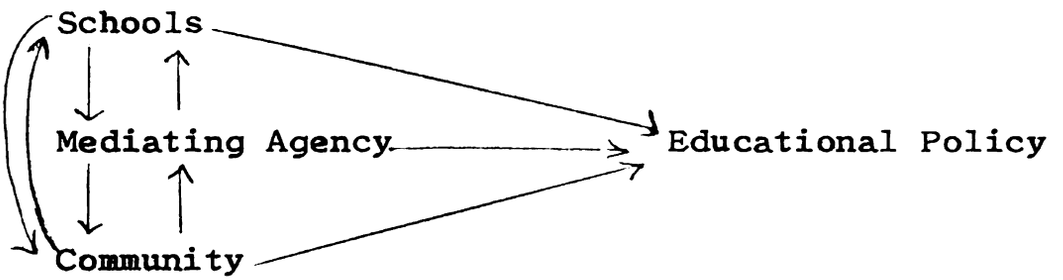

Mass Communication Research. Mass communication researchers--in co-operation with the allied disciplines of sociology, psychology, and social-psychology--have produced useful data to analyze characteristics and interactions of the basic communication elements: source, message, channel, and receiver. "Source credibility" studies have revealed how the audience's image of sources affects its interpretation of the communication and its persuasive effectiveness. Research on the audience's image of the media has revealed significant data on the differential

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persuasive power of the several media, the power of face-to-face contact supplemented by multi-media usage, and the unique advantages attributed to the several media. Content characteristics of the "message" have been analyzed in studies dealing with one-sidedness versus two-sidedness; explicitness versus implicitness; extreme "threat" appeals; repetition, variation, and cumulative exposure; "canalization" and providing release from tension; and order, emphasis, organization, and the like. Implications of all these studies should be analyzed by school public relations persons. Klapper's book[29] comprehensively reviews the research in these areas, however, and our review will not discuss these findings in detail--with the exception of "source credibility" studies.

In summarizing mass communications research dealing with the audience's image of the media, however, Klapper makes these important generalizations:

> The mass media of communications appear to be in themselves differentially effective as channels for persuasive communication, over and above the fact that they normally draw on somewhat different audiences. In laboratory experiments, wherein all conditions other than the media are kept constant, formal personal appeal is typically found more

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[29] Klapper, op. cit.

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> effective than radio, which is, in turn, found more effective than print. Television and films may be hypothesized to fall between personal appeal and radio... In real life situations, informal personal appeal has been consistently found to be more effective than any mass medium, but it is, nevertheless, not essential to successful persuasion. The relative efficacy of the mass media varies so widely from one topical area to another as to defy generalization. Multi-media usage supplemented by face-to-face contact is believed to be peculiarly effective... Certain characteristics of each medium are believed to provide that medium with unique capabilities as a persuasive instrument. These include such characteristics as the unique ability of print to permit the audience member to govern his rate of exposure, and the ability of the broadcast media to provide the audience member with some sense of personal participation. None of these characteristics has been explicitly shown to contribute to persuasion.[30]

A highly significant publication appearing in 1955 brought a wide range of social-science research to bear on the flow of communication within the community.[31] The writers, Elihu Katz and Paul Lazarsfeld, develop the hypothesis that communications reach the individual citizen in two steps, by flowing from radio and print to "opinion leaders" in various segments of the community and by spreading from the opinion leaders to the less active

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[30] Ibid., pp. 129-132.

[31] Elihu Katz and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Personal Influence (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955).

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"Source Credibility." The audience's image of sources affects the audience's interpretation of the communication and its persuasive effectiveness.[32] Sources regarded as credible, trustworthy, or high in prestige apparently abet persuasion; while sources inspiring more negative images apparently hinder persuasion. The differential effect tends, however, to disappear with the passage of time.

The influence of sources which the audience considers highly credible or less credible, trustworthy or untrustworthy, and the like has been extensively investigated by the Yale Communication Research Program. The weight of evidence from the Yale studies is quite consistent. In 1951, for example, Hovland and Weiss presented college students with a series of four articles dealing with the

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[32]Klapper, op. cit., pp. 99-104.

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sale of anti-histamine drugs, the possibility of building atomic-powered submarines, the causes of a steel shortage, and the future of the motion picture industry.[33] Each of the articles was attributed for one half of the group to a source previously established as having "high credibility," and for the other half to a source established as having "low credibility."

Communications attributed to high credibility sources were more often considered "fair" than were the same communications when attributed to low credibility sources, and their conclusions were more often considered "justified." The major differential, however, occurred in regard to opinion change. Net change in the direction intended by the communication was found, directly after exposure, to be three and one-half times as great among those who read the communications attributed to the high credibility sources as it was among those who read the same communications attributed to low credibility sources. This differential does not, however, appear to be permanent. Opinion tests administered a month later showed no significant

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[33]Carl I. Hovland and W. Weiss, "The Influence of Source Credibility on Communication Effectiveness," Public Opinion Quarterly, XI (Fall, 1951), 635-650.

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Highly specialized sources appear to be more persuasive for their own specialized audiences than are more general sources for the same audiences. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, for example, found that in Erie County in 1940, the Farm Journal was mentioned as a concrete influence upon changes in vote intention as frequently as Collier's, despite their great difference in circulation, and the Townsend publication as frequently as Life or the Saturday Evening Post.[34] The effectiveness of such specialized publications is probably increased by the fact that exposure to them is likely to be highly selective and in accord with group norms and interests.

"Gate Keepers." Kurt Lewin applied the term "gate keeper" to a phenonmenon which is of considerable interest to students of mass communication.[35] Lewin pointed out that the traveling of a news item through certain communica-

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[34] Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Helen Gaudet, The People's Choice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), p. 136.

[35] White, op. cit., pp. 383-390.

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tion channels was dependent on the fact that certain areas within the channels functioned as "gates." Gate sections are governed either by impartial rules or by "gate keepers," and in the latter case an individual or group is "in power" for making the decision between "in" and "out."

To understand the functioning of the "gate," Lewin said, was equivalent to understanding the factors which determine the decisions of the "gate keepers." Thus it is apparent that even the actual physical events (the criterion events) are reported by two reporters in two different perceptual frameworks and that the two men bring to the "story" different sets of experience, attitudes, and expectations. All of the "gate keeper" studies to date indicate clearly that reasons given for rejection of stories fall into the category of highly subjective value judgments. Following are some "gate keeping" findings from studies by White, Carter, Gieber, and Breed. Although not "gate keeping" studies, books by Cater and Matthews are also reviewed in this section because of their similarity to the "gate keeping" concerns.

1. White. In what is probably the first of the "gate keeper" studies of mass communicators, White revealed that highly subjective value judgments are reasons for

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.,

[38] Roy E.

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rejection of stories by wire editors.[36] White hypothesizes and cites evidence to show that many times decisions are made by "gate keepers" other than the wire editor, or by "gate keepers" in competing media. He implies that a wire editor cannot refuse to play a story "up" when his counterpart in the local radio station is playing it to the hilt. Thus, concludes White, "in his position as 'gate keeper' 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."[37]

2. Carter. Carter also presents two different studies, probing the relationships between the newspaper "gate keeper" and news sources. He drew his data from studies of the press and medical profession (in North Carolina)[38] and the press and public school superintendents

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[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid., p. 390.

[38] Roy E. Carter, Jr., "Newspaper 'Gate Keepers' and the Sources of News," Public Opinion Quarterly, XXII (1958), 133-144.

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(in California).[39] Research variables included self/other images, occupational stereotypes, "threat versus status-conferral value," significant others, frequency of interaction, goal differences, newsgathering practices, language barriers, and perception of media channels. As his principal measure of self/other images in the press-medical study, Carter used a set of seven-step rating scales representing the "evaluative," "potency," and "activity" factors in the "semantic differential" procedure developed by Charles E. Osgood. The medical project included interview work in four county medical society areas, statewide mail questionnaires, and content analysis of newspapers and professional journals. The sample N included 213 North Carolina physicians; 86 county medical society presidents, secretaries, and public relations chairmen; and 54 newspaper editors.

Carter concluded that the "significant others" for the doctors are (1) his colleagues and (2) a general public thought of in terms of a "patient" role. For the newsman, the "significant others" seem to be (1) the people in the newsroom and (2) a general public made up of readers to whom

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[39]Roy E. Carter, Jr., "The Press and Public School Superintendents in California," Journalism Quarterly, XXXI (1954), 175-185.

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the journalist ascribes certain values and interests. Doctors, Carter learned, have two real intra-professional problems as news sources: (1) they may be accused of seeking publicity if they are quoted in print; and (2) they may be questioned on "scientific" grounds if what is attributed to them goes into print in language which is non-technical and shorn of its "if's," "and's," and other qualifiers. For the doctor, then, publicity seems to offer little status-conferral value in the community, yet is threatening insofar as his relationships with his colleagues are concerned. The California schoolman, on the other hand, had much to gain from publicity and little to lose.

Good basic foundations for future research are the working hypotheses developed by Carter in the medical and school studies and projected for a study of the relationships between local government officials and the press. These hypotheses propose:

(1) City officials' favorability toward the press is a positive function of the degree to which publicity (or the possibility thereof) is perceived as having <u>status</u> <u>conferral</u> value rather than <u>threat</u> value.

(2) Friction between reporter and news source increases with difference in age of the actors. When other relevant variables are held constant, the greatest friction will occur when the official is much older than the reporter.

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(3) In general, favorability of each group toward the other is a positive function of age when education is held constant. (The "self-made" newsman and the office-holder who moved into his position through the party organization with little formal education may tend to be somewhat more hostile and/or cynical than their formally-trained counterparts.)

(4) Frequency of contact with press representatives is positively associated with favorability toward the press. However, the relationship between perceived goal agreement and the following typology of news sources may be curvilinear: infrequent sources, frequent sources, "seekers" of publicity.

(5) The favorability of newsmen's perceptions of city-official news sources is positively related to their views concerning the respectability or "professional" nature of municipal administration as a field of endeavor. Similarly, there is a positive relationship between favorable perception of newspaper treatment of local government and the degree to which local officials regard news work as "professional" in nature.

(6) Officials' favorability toward the press, and attitudes of press people toward officials, are functions of perceived status differences, both within and between groups.

(7) Harmony between newsman and city official is related to differences in definition of news and to the degree of overlap in the audiences the two have in mind when giving out or reporting news.

3. Gieber. Two significant "gate keeper" studies have been conducted by Gieber. In his study of 16 telegraph editors, Gieber concludes that the telegraph editor is

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caught in a strait jacket of mechanical details.[40] To him, the most significant force in processing the news is getting copy into the newspaper. He is concerned with the immediate details of his work rather than the social arena in which news is made and given meaning. Thus, says Gieber, the wire editor perceives his readers as members of special interest groups, stereotyped classifications for the sorting of news items.

In Gieber's second interview study--the handling of news of civil liberties and rights--he examines the social-psychological forces which control the flow of news from source to reporter and into the press.[41] As in his study of the 16 telegraph editors, Gieber's second study utilized the interview technique and researched a relatively small sample (five newspapers, 25 sources of civil rights news, and 22 reporters nominated by the sources). In his interviews Gieber used 26 "local" news events on civil rights situations (adopted from actual news stories) as "tests" for

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[40]Walter Gieber, "Across the Desk: A Study of 16 Telegraph Editors," Journalism Quarterly, XXXIII (1956), 423-432.

[41]Walter Gieber, "Two Communicators of the News: A Study of the Roles of Sources and Reporters," Social Forces, October, 1960, pp. 76-83.

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Gieber found that the "fate" of a given story is determined by the demands of the reference group of which the communicator is a member, not by the needs of the community or mass audience. Gieber maintains that "craft orientation" appears in the reporters' approach to a news-productive situation. From the event, a reporter selects what he believes is the most pertinent, the most interesting or humorous, or the most easily identified symbols. Reporters, says Gieber, perceive the symbols as extra-personal. News craftsmanship, a product of journalistic tradition, places emphasis on denotative symbols and denotative writing; the reporter is "pointing to" some thing or person in the environment. The best opportunity for the inclusion of relevant symbols occurs when the pertinent event reflects tensions or controversy. Both sources and reporters, says Gieber, see themselves in the role of communicators to a mass audience. The rationale of both is the needs of their auditors. Explains Gieber: "Although the normal flow of information is from sources to reporters, the two communicator groups have what amounts to polar perceptions and behavior."[42]

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[42] Ibid., p. 82.

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44 Ibid., p.

45 Ibid.

4. Breed. Breed has conducted two studies on the patterns of influence and pressure in the newsroom. Noting monopoly control of the U.S. press, Breed's hypothesis holds that the "arterial" and other "journalistic" processes would develop even with more competing papers and with less oligarchic press ownership and control.[43] His criticism focuses upon editors and the processes of editing, independent of the structure of ownership. He bases his argument on the fact that "the newsman's source of rewards is located not among the readers, who are manifestly his clients, but among his colleagues and superiors. Instead of adhering to societal and professional ideals, he re-defines his values to the more pragmatic level of the newsroom group."[44]

Two of Breed's studies are of interest. One interview study reveals that while some journalists are undoubtedly independent and use their own news judgment, many "follow the opinion leader."[45] A set of institutional conditions causes them to follow the arterial pattern. In effect,

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[43] Warren Breed, "Newspaper 'Opinion Leaders' and Processes of Standardization," Journalism Quarterly, XXXII (Summer 1955), 277-284.

[44] Ibid., p. 284.

[45] Ibid.

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editors of large papers and "general news editors" of wire services hold more responsible posts than even they perhaps realize, as absentee guides of the news display policies of hundreds of smaller newspapers.

Breed's second interview study is a "functional analysis" of social control in the newsroom.[46] His frame of reference is Merton's paradigm. Six factors are cited which Breed says promote policy uniformity. The most significant of these variables, obligation and esteem for superiors, was deemed not only the most important, but the most fluctuating variable from paper to paper. Its existence and its importance for conformity led to the sub-hypothesis that reference group behavior was playing a part in the pattern.

5. Cater and Matthews. Two excellent books examining the interrelated roles of public officials and reporters are Cater's The Fourth Branch of Government[47] and Matthews' U.S. Senators and Their World.[48] Both authors

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[46]Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis," Social Forces, XXXIII (1955), 326-335.

[47]Douglass Cater, The Fourth Branch of Government (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1959).

[48]Donald R. Matthews, U.S. Senators and Their World (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1960).

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[49] Ibid., p

cite examples of how reporters influence the behavior of senators and how senators possess considerable leverage over the reporters as well. Matthews reports that the relatively few full-time Capitol Hill reporters have many potential news sources, but in actual practice most of these reporters develop a limited number of news sources and lean on them heavily. Matthews explained the reasons for this as follows:

> In part, this is the result of the time pressure under which most Washington correspondents work. "You just can't go around and talk with all of them, so you tend to fall back on the ones that you know are most helpful to you." For the wire-service reporters, especially, this is important... Correspondents also desire off-the-record background information and interpretation. "If what you want is background information not for quotation, it takes a fairly lengthy and close relationship before they will be completely open with you." Even when such a confidential relationship is well established, the reporter must know his informant well enough to read between the lines... Still another factor encouraging the reporter's reliance upon a relatively few news sources in the Senate is the chamber's internal patterns of influence. "I don't talk about this for obvious diplomatic reasons," one reporter for a nationally known paper said, "but there's not too much use in talking to more than five or six senators. After you've talked to them, you know what is going on." ... Finally, as still another reporter said, "Some senators have a good news sense--they are good reporters. If we call them off the floor, they can summarize developments briefly in newsworthy form."[49]

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[49] Ibid., pp. 200-201.

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50 Ibid., p

According to the "Fourth Estate myth," reporters are neutral observers entirely divorced from the situation on which they report. No matter how laudible this myth may be, both Cater and Matthews affirm that one need not spend much time on Capitol Hill to observe that it departs drastically from Congressional realities. Matthews says that senator-reporter "back-scratching" has a decided influence on Capitol Hill news:

> Few groups are more dependent upon each other than senators and Washington reporters. They need each other so badly that the use by either side of sanctions stronger than non-cooperation is not rational policy... Both senators and reporters have it in their power to build each other up. A senator, by giving a reporter preferential treatment, can enhance newsmen's prestige among the press corps, his standing with his employers and readers, and his earning power. A reporter, by giving the senator a good break, can contribute substantially to the success of the senator's career. This kind of "back scratching" is far more profitable to both sides than conflict. ... Generally speaking, it is <u>how</u> a story is written, and not whether it is written, that is influenced by reporter-senator "back-scratching."[50]

Review of School-Community Communications Research

The review of the literature in this section will focus on three areas: (1) major communications studies pertaining to school-community relations; (2) the schoolman's

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[50] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 214.

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image of communications media; and (3) content analysis of school news in Michigan newspapers.

Major Communications Studies. As Ciernick[51] points out, the literature indicates an increasing awareness on the part of professional educators that the communication process between the general public and the school now goes beyond the narrow, one-way intent and purpose of the school publicity programs which characterized the decades of 1920 and 1930.

The National Opinion Research Institute, University of Chicago, is attempting to find out what effect participation has in determining attitudes toward education.[52] Under a Carnegie Corporation grant, a two-year study is being made with the major focus of attention upon adult and continuing education activities. Attitudes will be explored through interviews with a representative sampling of the U.S. population.

A number of major communication studies conducted by Stanford University's Institute for Communication Research

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[51]Ciernick, op. cit., pp. 20-30.

[52]"Does It Make A Difference?", Trends, National School Public Relations Association, February 1, 1962, p. 2.

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have contributed greatly toward a communication focus on public relations. One of Stanford's biggest school public relations projects was started in April, 1962.[53] An effort is being made to measure the effectiveness of school-community relations principles which generally have been regarded as sound. More than 170 school public relations hypotheses will be tested. The test range covers 180 school districts, a sample drawn by the U.S. Bureau of Census. Conducted for the U.S. Office of Education over a five-year period, the project will be completed in 1967.

Previous Stanford communication studies have probed significant areas. Results of one study (4,000 interviews with registered voters) turned up dangerously serious situations.[54] Not only were the voters woefully uninformed about schools, but "about half the people interviewed reported no interest in school affairs, no current participation in school affairs, and no desire to participate in school affairs."[55] Recognizing that participation sometimes is

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[53]"Stanford's PR Test Range," Trends, National School Public Relations Association, April 1, 1962, p. 1.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid.

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physically and psychologically difficult, the Stanford report adds, many voters do not believe it is even possible. One-half said voting was the only citizen voice in school affairs; almost as many said educational policy was too complicated to understand; and a fourth said school officials did not care about what citizens think.

Another co-operative research study, financed by the U.S. Office of Education and conducted by Stanford University's School of Education and Institute for Communication Research, revealed that less than two voters out of five have shown sufficient interest in school bond and tax elections to cast their ballot in the 12 years preceding 1960.[56] The average turnout for a school financial election during this period was only 36.3 per cent of the eligible voters in each district. Findings were based upon questionnaires submitted to superintendents of all U.S. school districts with annual enrollments of at least 150. These districts accounted for 97 per cent of all public school pupils.

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[56] Richard F. Carter and William G. Savard, Influence of Voter Turnout on School Bond and Tax Elections, Cooperative Research Monograph No. 5, (Washington: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, U.S. Government Printing Office, OE-22012, 1961).

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This study revealed that the turnout was greater in elections where issues were defeated in both bond and tax elections regardless of the size of the school district. Generally speaking, the turnout was largest in small districts. It was greater in medium-sized districts than in large districts. There is no reason to think, the report indicates, that public interest has increased to any extent in recent years. Lack of interest, the report concludes, is largely due to the feeling of a great many voters that school problems are so complicated that they cannot hope to decide whether the issue should be accepted or defeated.

Several recent research studies illustrate the close relationship between communications and public relations. These include Pfau's study of the parts that oral and written communication have played in school public relations programs in Michigan,[57] Pernert's study of certain aspects of communication programs in small school districts in Michigan,[58]

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[57] Ed Pfau, "A Study of Selected Aspects of Oral and Written Communication as These Are a Part of School Public Relations Programs" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1955).

[58] Earl Maurice Pernert, "A Study of Certain Aspects of Communication Programs in Selected Class C Public Schools in Michigan" (Unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1960).

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Van Winkle's study of various channels of communication from the school to the parent,[59] and Merrill's study of the informal channels of communication within the school-community.[60]

Media Image. School public relations persons often regard the student as the prime agent in the transmission of information about the school to his parents, and research studies occasionally lend some credence to this contention. Van Winkle found that parents and superintendents in 42 mid-western school districts were in over-all agreement in their rankings of most-used sources of information--children first, letters and duplicated bulletins second, and news-papers third.[61] However, substantial discrepancies between the rankings of parents and superintendents appeared in some districts when the data were broken down by individual school systems.

Channels of communication in a community, however, cannot be specified in general, for they vary as the topic

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[59]Harold Van Winkle, "The Crux of Parent School Relations: Communications," School Executive, LXXVI (December, 1956), 45-47.

[60]Edward C. Merrill, Jr., "How the Word Gets Around," American School Board Journal, CXXX (February, 1955), 29-31.

[61]Van Winkle, op. cit., p. 46.

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[65] Roy E. C
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of communication varies.[62] Dennis's study showed that when the topic was school-district reorganization, citizens secured most of their information from fellow citizens, not from students.[63] The Van Winkle study and data offered by Purdy[64] suggest that citizens' views of proper channels of school communication differ from one community to another, a finding which, if substantiated, holds implications for the nature of public relations programs in the schools.

Carter's study shows how school superintendents view the relative utility and adequacy of the various mass media for school purposes.[65] Carter asked a representative sample of California school superintendents to evaluate seven information channels in terms of their importance as ways of keeping the community informed about their school

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[62] Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank N. Stanton (eds.), Communication Research, 1948-49, (Harpers, 1949), pp. 180-219.

[63] David M. Dennis, "Public School Programs in Local School District Reorganization" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1954).

[64] Ralph D. Purdy, "Community Foundations for Educational Leadership," American School Board Journal, October, 1955, pp. 50-52.

[65] Roy E. Carter, Jr., "The Press and Public School Superintendents in California," Journalism Quarterly, XXXI (1954), 175-185.

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systems. They ranked them in the following order: personal contacts (i.e., teacher/parent), daily newspaper, children's reports, public meetings (i.e., PTA), school system publications, student publications, and radio. A question about public confidence in these channels disclosed that although the schoolmen perceived the newspaper as an essential information channel, they tended to doubt that the public believed newspaper reports as fully as information carried home by children or obtained through face-to-face contact with school people.

One of the most extensive sociological studies of school superintendents was carried out by Gross.[66] In this study 38 per cent of the superintendents named elected or appointed community officials in local government as those who do most to block the public schools in their communities. Next in order of frequency were businessmen (36 per cent), taxpayer groups (34 per cent), older residents of the community (28 per cent), individuals with grudges (19 per cent), and religious groups (15 per cent). Less than one out of ten of the school administrators (7 per cent),

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[66]Neal Gross, Who Runs Our Schools? (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1958), pp. 30-31.

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67 Ibid., p

68 Ibid., p

however, viewed newspapermen as major opponents of their school systems. Findings reported in this book emerged from interviews with nearly half of the superintendents and their school board members in Massachusetts during 1952-53. These 105 superintendents and 508 school board members represented a carefully drawn random sample of all superintendents and school board members in Massachusetts in 1952.

In this study four of the seven superintendents who listed newspapermen were from communities in the 10,000 to 50,000 population category, and none at all were from communities in the 5,000 to 10,000 category. In the smallest-sized communities, those with under 5,000 population, two mentioned newspapermen, and only one of the ten large-community superintendents viewed them as major opponents of the schools.

Nine per cent of the superintendents mentioned newspaper editors as those who do the most to promote public education in their communities.[67] Thirty-six per cent of the superintendents and 19 per cent of the school board members said they were exposed to pressures from "the press."[68]

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[67] Ibid., p. 43.

[68] Ibid., p. 50.

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In matters of school athletics, the press stands out, perhaps because representatives of the press consider school sports the most newsworthy item in the school program. However, although 16 per cent of the superintendents said they received pressures from the press for more emphasis on athletics in the schools, many more mentioned school board members (28 per cent) and parents (25 per cent).[69]

These findings tend to corroborate those of another study[70] concerned with the school-press relationships in New England. In that study it was found that the great majority of superintendents expressed satisfaction with their relationships with the press.

Content Analysis. Content analysis is a limited tool in the study of the press. It is based on the "what" in Lasswell's model: "Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect."[71] If the what is missing or occluded, then one must ask the communicators (the who) why?

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[69] Ibid., p. 56.

[70] Neal Gross, The Schools and the Press: A Study of the Relationships Between Newspapermen and School Administrators in New England (Cambridge, Massachusetts: New England School Development Council, 1956).

[71] Bruce L. Smith, Harold D. Lasswell, and Ralph D. Casey, Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 121.

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Content analysis, however, does reveal significant trends in mass media content pertaining to Michigan schools. The Michigan Communication Project[72] investigated three areas of study: a newspaper content analysis of school news, a community survey study, and a collection of effective procedures. In the content analysis part of this study, conducted in 1954, it was revealed that 48 per cent of all school news was devoted to athletics, 18 per cent to social activities, while less than 1 per cent was devoted to curriculum and one-tenth of 1 per cent to teaching methods.

Monahan's study of school news in Michigan newspapers provides more recent data for analysis.[73] Monahan analyzed the school content in 23 randomly selected Michigan newspapers during a three-month period in the fall of 1959. This sample included 15 weekly newspapers with a circulation range of from 870 to 10,325; and eight daily newspapers whose circulations ranged from 3,477 to 59,345. He found that weekly newspapers print a greater percentage of school news

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[72]William H. Roe, Leo A. Haak, Earl A. McIntyre, "Michigan Communications Study," Michigan Education Journal (November, 1954), pp. 118-119.

[73]William G. Monahan, "An Analysis of the School Content in Michigan Newspapers; Comparisons with a Similar Study and Implications for School-Press Relations" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, East Lansing, 1960).

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than dailies. The 15 weekly newspapers' total of school news accounted for 4.6 per cent of the total space, whereas in daily newspapers, school news accounted for only 1.9 per cent of the total space. In this study, athletics and athletic illustrations accounted for the most space--53.2 per cent of the school content among daily newspapers and 36.7 per cent among weeklies. General illustrations, curriculum, finance, and miscellaneous school items accounted for another 35.9 per cent of the school content in weekly newspapers and for 25.4 per cent in daily papers. Together with athletics and athletic illustrations, these categories accounted for 72.3 per cent and 64.6 per cent of all school content in daily and weekly newspapers respectively.

Q-Technique as Research Methodology

The purpose of this section is to explain Q-technique as an idiodynamic approach to the study of human behavior. The technique will be defined and some current uses will be cited.

William Stephenson has been the main proponent of the methodological Q approach, dating its inception to 1935. His book, The Study of Behavior: Q-Technique and Its Methodology,[74] is the single, most important reference for

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[74] Stephenson, op. cit.

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the Q-technique. Arguing against the sole use of normative approaches to the study of behavior, Stephenson's approach is the use of ipsative variables, e.g., character traits. He suggests that there are "dynamic interactions" inside the individual which constitute his own "unique" character. These underlie or form the basis of his behavior. Through analysis of such traits and interactions, one gains understanding, hence prediction of human behavior.[75]

Two major approaches to psychological analysis are generally recognized. In one approach study traits are analyzed--how much of a particular characteristic do how many people have. Type psychology, the second approach, stresses the parsimonious description of persons in terms of major patterns of belief. Stephenson's Q-technique is used appropriately in research designs for the second approach.

Stephenson defines Q-methodology as "essentially a new set of principles, collected to suit the scientific situation in psychology today."[76] He calls it a "postulatory-dependency" methodology rather than a "hypothetico-deductive"

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[75] Shirley A. Marsh, Q-Technique: An Advance in Idiodynamics (Michigan State University: Communications Research Center, College of Communication Arts), December, 1963, p. 31.

[76] Stephenson, op. cit., p. 1.

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[77] Ibid.,

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[79] Ibid.,

one, although it has much which resembles the latter. Thus, as Stephenson puts it:

> We shall study man's attitudes, his thinking behavior, his personality, his social interaction, his self, his psychoanalytic mechanisms, and all else objective to others or subjective to himself; and we can do this all scientifically, without using any formal scales or measuring instruments of the kind with which psychology is familiar. This is achieved by Q-technique.[77]

In 1935 Stephenson made this claim for Q: "The technique is a complete inversion of all previous factor techniques. It is a very simple notion indeed, but it brings a new tool to the aid of psychology, general, social, or individual."[78] Marsh warns that Q-methodology and Q-technique should not be regarded as synonomous, although they are conceptually related. As she explains it:

> Logical hypotheses derived from a theory by Q-methodology are tested by Q-technique. Q-methodology is methodology for the single case but not necessarily confined to a single case. Q-technique is only one of the many operational procedures that may subserve the wider methodology.[79]

Although a more complete summarization of the statistical procedures involved in Q-technique is included

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[77] Ibid., p. 5.

[78] Marsh, op. cit., p. 4.

[79] Ibid., p. 8.

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in Chapter III ("Conduct of the Study"), a brief description is appropriate here. Q relies heavily on factor analysis, analysis of variance, and small-sample theory. Q-sorts may be correlated, then factor analyzed, and used basically in two ways: (1) as an "independency analysis"--searching for hypotheses to be tested on a fresh sample; and (2) as "dependency analysis"--where factors are rotated according to a preconceived hypothesis. Stephenson states that there is nothing "statistically novel" about Q-technique, claiming that Q "satisfies every rule and procedure of scientific method."[80] He insists that Q-technique is not merely the correlation of persons. In Q, intra-individual "significances" alone are postulatory, replacing the role of individual differences completely.

Certain precautions in Q analysis are important. Guilford[81] stresses that scores should be ipsative measures, distributed about the mean of an individual for <u>each</u> individual, not about the mean of the population for each test. This indicates that the means for all individuals must be

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[80] Stephenson, <u>op. cit.</u>, p. 25.

[81] J. P. Guilford, <u>Psychometric Methods</u> (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1954).

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equated. Q-sort is one procedure for equating the means. Block[82] notes that the Q-sorting procedure is essentially a rank-order technique where many ties are permitted.

Uses of Q. In the past eleven years there has been an increasing interest and application of Q-technique in many fields: clinical psychology, self psychology, type psychology, social psychology, and communication research.[83] Advantages of the Q-methodology for communication research were cited by Talbott:

> Q-methodology has a marked advantage of bringing both system and depth into communication studies. Some communication researchers have been dismayed by its use with relatively small numbers of people, in some cases with only one person.[84]

Two major universities, Michigan State University's Communications Research Center and the University of Missouri's School of Journalism, have conducted major communication studies using the Q-technique. Typical examples are as follows: studies of patterns of newspaper reader

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[82] J. Block, The Q-Sort Method in Personality Assessment and Psychiatric Research (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1961).

[83] An excellent summary of this research is presented in the Marsh study cited previously.

[84] A.D. Talbott, "The Q Block Method of Indexing Q Typologies," Report to the 1963 AEJ Convention, Michigan State University, 1963, p. 3.

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interest and attitudes; typologies of television viewers concerning program interests; patterns of role identification in advertising photographs; patterns of orientation and beliefs toward civil defense and implications for public information programs; and images of public libraries as they relate to public relations problems. A study by MacLean and Kao used the Q-technique to determine types of reader values for news magazine pictures.[85]

Summary of Significant Research Literature

This chapter summarized significant research in four areas: (1) basic behavioral science research, with emphasis on psychological, sociological, and social-psychological findings; (2) communication research, with emphasis on "source credibility" and "gate keeper" studies; (3) school-community communications research; and (4) Q-technique as research methodology.

A summary of significant research literature reveals the following:

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[85] Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., and A. L. Kao, "Picture Selection: An Editorial Game," Journalism Quarterly, 39:2, Spring, 1963.

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1. Evidence rejects the "hypodermic needle model" of mass communications. Mass communications must be viewed as functioning within the larger sociological perspective of the culture, social organization, and human groups. Thus the social groups to which each person belongs or refers will influence his chances of being exposed to any message or media campaign, his perception and interpretation of the content, and its impact upon him. The social context sets limits also to the range of behavior any message can produce. Freedom to communicate does not automatically reduce misperceptions or improve attitudes.

2. "News" is what the reporter perceives it to be. Thus it is apparent that even the actual physical events (the criterion events) are reported by two reporters in two different perceptual frameworks and that the two men bring to the "story" different sets of experiences, attitudes, and expectations.

3. Influences of role, reference groups, and significant others--three important sociological concepts--should be examined carefully by the researcher to determine how they affect a reporter's "gate keeping" decisions.

4. "Gate keeper" studies have demonstrated the social-psychological forces which control the flow of news

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from source to reporter and into the press. Most significantly, these studies have revealed that the "fate" of a given story is determined by the demands of the reference group of which the communicator is a member, not by the needs of the community or mass audience. The newsman's source of rewards, as Breed points out, is located not among the readers, who are manifestly his clients, but among his colleagues and superiors. Thus, instead of adhering to societal and professional ideals, he re-defines his values to the more pragamtic level of the newsroom group. Moreover, editors and reporters are inclined to follow the "opinion leader" in making editorial decisions. It has been demonstrated that "craft orientation" shapes the reporter's approach to a news-gathering situation--resulting in "frozen news patterns."

5. Experimental studies have shown that audience perceptions of the source of a communication affect acceptance of information and opinion. Sources regarded as credible apparently abet persuasion; while sources inspiring more negative images apparently hinder persuasion. The research area of "source credibility" merits close attention from school administrators.

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6. Face-to-face discourse has frequently been shown to be a more effective instrument of persuasion than the mass media. The combined use of several media plus face-to-face contact, formal or informal, is believed to be a peculiarly effective technique of persuasion. The mass media appear to be themselves differentially effective as channels for persuasive communication, over and above the fact that they normally draw on somewhat different audiences. Certain characteristics of each medium (e.g., the ability of television to permit "personal participation") are believed to provide that medium with unique capabilities as a persuasive instrument. None of these characteristics has been explicitly shown to contribute to persuasion. In laboratory experiments, where all conditions other than the media are kept constant, formal personal appeal is typically found more effective than radio, which is in turn found more effective than print. Television and films may be hypothesized to fall between personal appeal and radio.

7. School public relations has barely gotten off the ground in adapting present knowledge in the behavioral sciences and communication to school purposes. Although only in the infant stage at present, the Stanford University

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public relations studies and other research projects are helping school public relations to move away from mere "rule-of-thumb" understandings to more scientific analyses. Rigorous research in the field of school public relations is sorely needed, including an analytical model of the public relations process.

8. Q-technique, an idiodynamic approach to the study of human behavior, is an appropriate methodology used to describe persons in terms of major patterns of belief ("type psychology"). During the past decade or so Q-technique has been used increasingly in research designs in many fields: clinical psychology, self psychology, type psychology, social psychology, and communication research.

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CHAPTER III

CONDUCT OF THE STUDY

As stated previously, the scope of this study encompasses three major areas: (1) basic demographic data; (2) an examination of the "gate keeping" functions of education reporters; and (3) an analysis of the "frequency of contact" of 27 education information sources by education reporters and a Q-analysis of the "source credibility" ratings of those same 27 education information sources, with education reporters doing the Q-sorting.

Selection of the Sample of Respondents

Because of the degree of specialization now practiced by the larger daily newspapers, the sample for this study was limited to the 17 Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000 (Table 1). Thus the sample for this study is not a random sample or representative sample.

The selection of this sample was made because observation indicated that there is a greater tendency for

larger newspapers to assign specific reporters to cover a specific topic (e.g., education). Data in Table 1 indicate that 13 of these 17 newspapers have specific persons assigned to cover education. The circulation cutoff was set at 20,000 for two reasons: (1) to limit the size of the sample to make in-depth interviews possible; and (2) to concentrate attention on newspapers where a high degree of specialization is now evident.

The sample was confined to Michigan newspapers to permit the author to conduct face-to-face interviews with all respondents in the sample, rather than having to rely solely on written questionnaires.

Table 1 identifies the sample for this study: the 17 Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000.

Collection of the Data and Safeguards Employed

Both a written questionnaire (see Appendix A) and personal interviews were employed in the data collecting. To insure uniformity of interview procedures, an interview schedule (see Appendix B) was used. Interview procedures suggested by Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook[1] were followed.

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[1]Marie Jahoda, Morton Deutsch, and Stuart W. Cook, Research Methods in Social Relations (New York: The Dryden Press, 1958), pp. 152-182.

Table 1. Dail
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Name of Newspaper	
Detroit News	
Detroit Free Press	
Grand Rapids Press	
Flint Journal	
Lansing State Journa	
Pontiac Press	
Saginaw News	
Royal Oak Tribune	
Kalamazoo Gazette	
Muskegon Chronicle	
Battle Creek Enquire	
Jackson Citizen-Patr	
Bay City Times	
Port Huron Times-Her	
Ann Arbor News	
Benton Harbor News-P	
Monroe Evening News	

Source: Editor and

Table 1. Daily Newspapers in Michigan with Circulations Above 20,000

Name of Newspaper	Circulation	Education Editor on Staff
Detroit News	701,935	Yes
Detroit Free Press	512,259	Yes
Grand Rapids Press	125,915	Yes
Flint Journal	101,023	Yes
Lansing State Journal	70,182	Yes
Pontiac Press	63,035	Yes
Saginaw News	53,521	Yes
Royal Oak Tribune	53,216	Yes
Kalamazoo Gazette	52,313	Yes
Muskegon Chronicle	46,391	No
Battle Creek Enquirer & News	37,937	No
Jackson Citizen-Patriot	37,400	Yes
Bay City Times	36,975	Yes
Port Huron Times-Herald	32,773	Yes
Ann Arbor News	30,900	Yes
Benton Harbor News-Palladium	25,417	No
Monroe Evening News	20,605	No

Source: Editor and Publisher Yearbook, 1964

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Fifteen subjects responded to both the written questionnaire and the oral interview. One respondent (Battle Creek) refused to submit to the interview, but did respond to the written questionnaire. Another respondent (Monroe) refused to answer the written questions,but did consent to the oral interview (only under the condition that five staff members be present, including the publisher--which was how this interview was actually conducted).

Selection of questionnaire and interview questions. Questions for the demographic and interview parts of this study were selected following consultations with knowledgeable persons in various academic disciplines and official positions. Specifically, members of the author's doctoral committee and faculty members in the sociology, communication, school administration, and educational research departments were consulted. Also assisting in the formulation of questions were officials of the Michigan Press Association and the Michigan Education Association (especially officers of the Michigan School Public Relations Association). The author's past experiences as a journalist and as an MEA executive provided helpful insights into "communication" problems as viewed from the two different perspectives--from the school administrator's point of view and from the reporter's point of view.

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Testing of procedures. An exploratory study of the questionnaire and interview schedule was conducted with the education reporter for one Michigan newspaper (with a circulation just under 20,000). Results from this trial interview are not included in the data reported in this study. Only minor changes in the questionnaire and interview procedures resulted from this trial interview. Because of the limited time available for the oral interviews, it was decided to divide the written questionnaire into two parts. Part I (mostly demographic data) was to be mailed to the respondent and completed by him prior to the oral interview, and Part II (which includes the "source credibility" observations) was to be administered at the very beginning of the oral interview.

Conduct of the study. Data for this study were collected over a two-month period (May 18, 1964, to July 15, 1964). Letters requesting participation in this study (see Appendix C) were sent to the 13 persons listed as "education editors" for their respective newspapers in Editor and Publisher Yearbook, 1964 (limited to Michigan daily newspapers above 20,000 circulation). Letters (see Appendix D) were also sent to the publishers of the four other Michigan newspapers in the population, asking them to

identify an appropriate person on their staffs for the purposes of this study. Upon receipt of names from these four publishers, letters similar to those sent the 13 "education editors" were mailed, requesting their participation in this study. With the aid of telephone calls and follow-up letters, 100 per cent participation was achieved. However, as noted above, one respondent answered only the written questionnaire, and another newspaper consented only to a "group oral interview" of five staff members.

After a time and place had been established for the interview with each respondent, Part I of the questionnaire was mailed, requesting that it be filled out prior to the interview. Part II of the questionnaire was given to each respondent to be filled out at the beginning of each oral interview. In two instances the respondent was unable to fill out Part I of the questionnaire prior to the interview, and in these two cases both Parts I and II were completed during the time of the interview. In one instance (Battle Creek) both Parts I and II were mailed to the respondent, filled out by the respondent, and returned by mail. One newspaper (Monroe) did not respond to either Part I or Part II.

With two exceptions, all the interviews were conducted in the newspaper offices of the respondents involved.

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One interview was conducted in the author's office at Michigan State University, and one interview was conducted in the home of a respondent. Every possible effort was made to provide as much privacy and as few interruptions as possible; considerable success was achieved in this regard, as in only one newspaper office--in addition to the "group interview" in Monroe--was complete privacy not possible.

Respondents were informed that the information they supplied would be held in confidence and that no individual would be identified in any way.

During the oral interviews, each of the open-end questions was read from a typed 3 x 5 card, and each card was then given to each respondent for further contemplation. Every effort was made to assure respondents that there were no "correct" answers and to allow sufficient time to explore each pertinent issue. With one exception (Monroe), all respondents consented to having the interview tape recorded. Each tape-recorded interview was completely transcribed by the author to insure as much accuracy as possible in the process of transferring the recorded interviews to type-written copy.

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Procedures Used to Analyze Demographic Data

Rationale. Webster defines "demography" as "the statistical study of populations, as to births, marriages, mortality, health, etc."[2] For purposes of this study our definition of "demography" extends Webster's "etc." to include the following items for our population (and sample) of education reporters: sex, amount and type of education, income, previous work experiences (other than journalism), journalistic work experiences, amount and "adequacy" of time devoted to covering education, identification of other newspaper assignments in addition to covering education, membership in groups (civic, professional, religious, political, cultural, etc.), and readership and convention-attendance habits.

Purposes for seeking this demographic data were as follows: (1) to determine the relationship of certain demographic data (sex, education, size of newspaper, and union and religious affiliations) to the typal structures in the "source credibility" Q-sorts; and (2) to reveal and compare significant patterns of response for individuals

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[2] Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Mass.: G. and C. Merriam Co., Publishers, 1956), p. 220.

filling these important "gate keeping" positions. For example, the amount and type of education and the length of service which education reporters have spent covering education are unknown data at this time--data which, if known, would have important implications for those responsible for school information programs. In addition, identification of group memberships, readership habits, and convention-attendance habits would help indicate the nature of "significant others" and "reference groups" for education reporters.

Analytic Procedure. Methods used to describe survey data are quite straightforward.[3] Thus this part of our study results in a "statistical description"--i.e., describing the features of the survey aggregate. Recognizing that the use of refined methods of analysis on crude data can result in a misleading appearance of precision, this part of our study incorporates less rigorous statistical techniques. The methodology employed in this section of our study is a compilation of responses by aggregate percentages.

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[3]C. A. Moser, Survey Methods in Social Investigation (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1958), pp. 237-266.

Procedures Used to Analyze "Open-End" Data

Rationale. Controversy rages among survey researchers over the degree to which questions should be structured--in terms of the amount of freedom given the interviewer in framing questions and the freedom enjoyed by the respondent in answering questions.[4] It was recognized that there are advantages and disadvantages in using unstructured questions of the "open end" or "free response" type. Backstrom and Hursh cite disadvantages of "open end" questions as follows:

> ...(1) open-end questions are unwieldy; (2) open-end questions may give researchers the false impression that they are successfully exploring complex respondent motivations; and (3) a major weakness of the open-end question is that the analyst must impress on the data some classification that appears meaningful to him. The respondents, had they been given the choice, might have classified themselves differently...[5]

As Backstrom and Hursh point out, however, "the form of the question used depends on the kind of information desired."[6] Four advantages of open-end questions were

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[4]Roy E. Carter, Jr., "Field Methods in Communication Research," Introduction to Mass Communication Research, ed. by Ralph O. Nafziger and David M. White, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), pp. 93-96.

[5]Charles H. Backstrom and Gerald D. Hursh, Survey Research (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1963), p. 73.

[6]Ibid., p. 72.

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[7] Ibid., p. 73

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summarized by Backstrom and Hursh as follows:

> The free-response question is especially useful (1) where the researcher has limited knowledge as to the kind of answers a particular question is likely to provoke; (2) where he anticipates a great range of responses; (3) where he is interested in what the respondent will volunteer on a subject before specific prompting, or (4) where he wants to go a little deeper into respondents' motivations.[7]

Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook also point out advantages of open-end approach:

> The advantages of open-end interviews and questionnaires are obvious. The subject's responses give a more detailed picture of his attitudes, a picture which is less subject to misinterpretation than the responses to poll questions. The open-end question, by not suggesting responses, allows the subject to respond in terms of his own frame of reference. The freedom to respond, in a sense, forces the subject to respond in terms of the factors which are salient to him. Thus, the open-end question provides an indicator of the factors which are prominent in the thinking of the individual about a given issue. In the interviewing situation, open-end questions have a further advantage. If the respondent's interpretation of a question is different from that intended by the investigator, this fact is likely to become apparent, and the interviewer has an opportunity to clarify the meaning of a question. This is not true, of course, in a questionnaire.[8]

Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook further assert:

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[7] Ibid., p. 73.

[8] Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, op. cit., pp. 173-174.

> In most open-end interviews, the questions and their order are pre-determined, but the interviewer is given freedom to use at his discretion such non-directive probes as "Won't you tell me more?" "What makes you think that...?" "Why?" "In what way...?" The task of the interviewer is to encourage the respondent to talk freely and fully in response to the questions included in the interview schedule and to make a verbatim record of his replies.[9]

Analytic Procedure. Variables in behavior patterns of education reporters are not well identified. Thus it would be unwise to force this research at this point into a rigid design. Recognizing the limited knowledge now available as to the kind of answers particular questions would be likely to provoke from education reporters, it was decided to use questions of the open-end type. Questions were designed to probe the "gate keeping" functions of education reporters, especially in regard to their selection of sources of education information.

Analysis of survey material does not necessarily have to be statistical.[10] Non-quantitative methods of analysis and evaluation may be preferred even in surveys concerned chiefly with characteristics of an aggregate, which is the concern of this part of our study. As Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook explain: "The sharpness with which

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[9] Ibid., p. 173.

[10] Moser, op. cit., pp. 250-275.

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[11] Ibid., p

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categories can be defined varies according to the nature of the raw data, the type of problem under investigation, and the situation to which the data refer."[11]

Therefore, in the open-end interview part of our study the verbatim answers (as transcribed from the taped interviews) were segregated into separate question categories, analyzed for major response trends, and presented in summarizations according to consensus and minority viewpoints.

Procedures Used to Analyze Frequency of Contact and Source Credibility Ratings

This part of our study sought to determine the frequency of contact and source credibility of 27 education information sources as judged by education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers above 20,000 circulation.

Rationale. The use of Q-technique for typological purposes can be very fruitful at the exploratory stages of research. The versatility of the Q-technique for typological purposes is stressed by Stephenson[12] and Marsh.[13] Some of

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[11] Ibid., p. 296.

[12] Stephenson, op. cit.

[13] Marsh, op. cit.

the earliest applications of Q-technique were for personality typing. As Marsh explains it:

> Stephenson remarked that the psychological textbooks may deny the existence of personality types, claiming "uniqueness" for every individual, but that types are an "everyday occurrence in Q." The fact that Q has been widely used for this specific purpose substantiates his claim. A quick scanning of the Q literature finds frequent titles with terms such as "psychiatric types," "Ideal types," "Q typologies," "types and traits..." Or, if you take a closer look at the research done, much of it is using Q to identify typologies with both structured and unstructured designs.[14]

In communication research, Q has been used as "enrichment" to combine with the precision of survey sampling. For example, Talbott[15] used Stephenson's questionnaire technique to assign people to typologies followed by construction of "Q blocks" which were then used in survey research. In a fallout shelter study, four basic typologies were identified originally with an unstructured Q-sort containing 57 items. Sixteen statements were then used in the "Q blocks" for the final survey research. These blocks yielded a highly reliable assignment of persons to types. According to Talbott, there was 91 per cent agreement between

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[14] Ibid., pp. 14-15.

[15] Albert D. Talbott, op. cit.

assignment to type by Q block and factor analysis when mixed types were considered.

Analytic Procedure. Using the more rigorous methods of factor analysis and Q-methodology, our focus here was on hypothesis development, rather than hypothesis testing. Factor analysis is a particularly appropriate scientific investigation tool for our purposes because it can be used profitably with relatively little regard to prior formulation of a hypothesis.[16]

The Q-technique was selected to isolate useful typologies of education reporters. MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott[17] have summarized the six major steps in Q-analysis as follows:

> 1. Respondents are asked to sort a deck of cards which have items printed on them into a specific number of ranked piles according to a modified normal distribution. The sorting is done on the basis of some criterion, e.g., belief-disbelief, agree-disagree, etc.
>
> 2. A matrix of intercorrelations is formed by correlating every person's sort of items with every other person's sort of items.

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[16] Cattell, op. cit.

[17] Malcolm S. MacLean, Jr., Thomas Danbury, and Albert D. Talbott, Civil Defense Belief Patterns (East Lansing: Department of Communication, Michigan State University, March, 1964), 4.

3. This matrix of intercorrelations is submitted to factor analysis so that persons are variables and items are observations. A principal axis solution is obtained. This is submitted to a varimax rotation which produces orthogonal factors. On this basis, a factor represents a grouping of persons around a common pattern of sorting the items. Hence, a factor represents a type of person.

4. Each pattern of sorting the items associated with each factor or type of person is estimated. This is done by weighting each item response of each of the persons most highly associated with a given factor by the degree to which they are loaded on that factor. The higher a person's loading on the factor, the greater is the weight. These weighted responses are summed across each item separately. This produces an item array of weighted responses for each factor in the rotated factor analysis solution selected. The arrays of weighted responses are then converted to z-scores.

5. The arrays of item z-scores are ordered from most accepted to most rejected for each factor. This provides a hierarchy of item acceptance for each factor or type of persons.

6. The arrays of items z-scores for each factor are compared by subtraction for each pair of factors. This produces arrays of difference scores for each pair of factors. This provides the basis for differentiating one factor or type of persons from another.

Essentially, the six steps as outlined by MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott were followed for purposes of this study. In comparison with these suggested six steps our Q-analysis took this direction:

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the 16 subjects (representing all newspapers except Monroe) for this part of the study (last four pages of Part II) were asked to make two separate evaluations: (1) to evaluate "frequency of contact" with 27 education information sources according to a four-point scale (frequently, occasionally, very seldom, and never); and (2) to evaluate these same 27 education information sources for "credibility" according to an eleven-point scale (from "most accurate" to "least accurate").

A "free sorting," rather than a "forced sorting" of Q-items according to a symmetrical distribution, was permitted. In a free sort, the subject is allowed to sort items along a continuum according to any distribution he chooses. A forced sort requires that a predetermined number of items be placed in each cell of the sort. Stephenson believes that the forced sort is an integral part of Q-technique; however, others (notably Gaito,[18] Cronbach and

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[18] J. Gaito, "Forced and Free Q-Sorts," Psychological Reports, X (1962), 251-254.

Gleser,[19] and Hess and Hink[20] present evidence to argue for a free sort.

Hess and Hink[21] constructed a Q-sort to explore Erik H. Erikson's concept of identity formation in adolescence. The Q-sort was administered in groups of four to juniors in a metropolitan high school by both free- and forced-choice methods. As a result of correlations (rho) between areas, dimensions, and area-dimensions, there appeared to be no definitive answer as to which sort was most reliable. The Pearson product moment correlation between free- and forced-choice in the sample showed correlations in the areas, dimensions, and area-dimensions ranging from .77 to .60. These correlations show that the free and forced sorts do not give strikingly different results.

Appendix E is the data matrix for the "frequency of contact" Q-scores; Appendix F is the data matrix for the

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[19]Lee J. Cronbach and Goldine C. Gleser, "Book Review: William Stephenson, The Study of Behavior," Psychometrika, XIX (1954), 327-331.

[20]Robert D. Hess and Douglas L. Hink, "A Comparison of Forced Vs. Free Q-Sort Procedures," Journal of Educational Research, LIII, No. 3 (November, 1959), 83-90.

[21]Ibid.

"source credibility" Q-scores. It should be noted that all 16 subjects evaluated all 27 "frequency of contact" Q-items as requested. However, only two subjects (Nos. 4 and 6) evaluated all 27 "source credibility" Q-items. Because subjects said they "never" contacted certain sources (especially state and national sources), they refused to give "credibility" Q-scores for these sources. Thus, to be able to conduct a "credibility" Q-analysis, it was necessary to fill in the blank spaces in the Q-scores with the arithmetic mean for each subject (determined by adding each subject's Q-score points for all Q-items actually evaluated and dividing by the number of Q-items actually evaluated). It should be noted that the underlined Q-scores in Appendix F (i.e., 9.4, 10.1, etc.) are not actual scores given by the subjects, but are each subject's mean score for Q-items actually evaluated.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that the source credibility rankings for the Q-items in this study are therefore somewhat hypothetical. Some 22.9 per cent (99 out of 432) of all Q-scores used in this "credibility" Q-analysis are arithmetic mean scores and not actual credibility evaluations of the subjects. Only five Q-items (board members other than the president, professors of education,

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secondary school principals, elementary school principals, and classroom teachers) were given Q-scores by all 16 subjects. Four sources (AASA, NASB, MASB, and PTA-national) have 10 arithmetic mean scores filled in; two sources (MASA and MFT) have nine mean scores; two sources (AFT and PTA-state) have eight mean scores; one source (local teachers' union) has five mean scores; one source (USOE) has four mean scores; four sources each have two mean scores; and eight sources each have one mean score.

Step 2. Two matrices of intercorrelations were formed: (1) One matrix of intercorrelations was formed by correlating every person's Q-sort of the "frequency of contact" items with every other person's sort of the items. This was accomplished by correlating the distribution of Q-scores in each column in Appendix E with every other column. Pearson product moment coefficients were used. (2) A second matrix of intercorrelations was formed by correlating every person's sort of the "credibility" items with every other person's sort of the items. This was accomplished by correlating the distribution of Q-scores in each column in Appendix F with every other column. Pearson product moment coefficients were used.

Step 3. Next these matrices of intercorrelations were submitted to factor analysis so that the subjects were

variables and the items were observations. First, the principal axis solution was obtained for both the "frequency of contact" Q-scores and the "credibility" Q-scores. Because of the high loading on factor I (eigenvalue of 10.9933) in the "frequency of contact" factor loading matrix, it was decided to convert this single factor array into z-scores.

The "source credibility" principal axis solution was submitted to Varimax rotation. This procedure first rotates the two largest principal axis factors to the simple structure criterion, then it takes the three largest principal axis factors and rotates them to the simple structure criterion, and so on for as many as desired. Data in Table 2 reveal the three-factor rotated solution for the 16 "source credibility" Q-sorts. In effect, the factor analytic model constructs hypothetical types of persons based on the way the subjects rated the 27 Q-items. The coefficients or loadings in the rotated factor solution can be viewed as each subject's correlation with each of these hypothetical types. To group people, they are assigned to the group that they are most like, i.e., the factor on which they have the highest loading. In the three-factor solution (Table 2) there are three groupings: (1) subjects 6, 9, 12, and 13 (Type I); (2) subjects 3, 4, 7, and 8

Table 2. Factor
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Subject	Typ
1.	-.0
2.	-.2
3.	-.0
4.	.1
5.	.5
6.	.5
7.	.0
8.	-.0
9.	.9
10.	.1
11.	.0
12.	.1
13.	.1
14.	.
15.	.0
16.	..
Per Cent Total Variance	1

Table 2. Factor Analysis of 16 Q-Sorts. Three-Factor Solution. Principle Axis with Varimax Rotation.

Subject	Type I	Type II	Type III	h^2
1.	-.0391	-.5315	.3809	.4291
2.	-.2074	.0832	-.7247	.5751
3.	-.0337	.7872	-.2830	.7010
4.	.1128	.6796	.1652	.5019
5.	.5830	.3876	-.0589	.4936
6.	.5821	.0011	.2207	.3875
7.	.0698	.6752	-.0906	.4690
8.	-.0147	.7878	.1920	.6577
9.	.6527	.2130	-.0774	.4774
10.	.3201	.3057	-.3973	.3538
11.	.6086	-.2369	.3175	.5273
12.	.7651	.0400	-.2596	.6543
13.	.7798	-.1220	-.3416	.7396
14.	.1354	.0616	-.5306	.3037
15.	.0522	-.1683	-.6939	.5126
16.	.4427	.4000	.0286	.3568
Per Cent Total Variance	19.07	18.76	13.05	50.88

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(Type II); and (3) subjects 2, 14, and 15 (Type III). Subjects 1, 5, 10, 11, and 16 are referred to as a mixed type--somewhat like all three types.

Step 4. In the next step each pattern of sorting the items associated with each factor or type of person is estimated. According to MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott:

> Associated with each of the hypothetical types constructed by the factor analytic model is a pattern of sorting the items. Estimation of these patterns, in effect, is estimation of the "hypothetical sorts" of the hypothetical types constructed. To do this, we take a weighted average of the sorts of the people most highly associated with a given type or factor. The more a person's sort is like the hypothetical type, the more weight it receives in the average. The specific weight given is as follows:
>
> r = loading
>
> $$\text{weight} = \frac{r}{1 - r^2}$$
>
> This weighted average is called an item factor array. The persons used to estimate an array should be not only highly associated with the type but they should not be associated very much with any of the other types. That is, for the persons selected the square of the loading on that factor should approach the communality (h^2).[22]

Factor arrays for the three-factor rotated solution were computed. The subjects whose loadings are underlined in Table 2 are the ones whose sorts were used to compute

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[22] MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott, op. cit., p. 23.

the arrays of weighted item scores. The subjects selected and their weights (derived from the formula) are shown in Table 3.

After the three arrays of weighted item scores were computed, they were converted to z-scores. In an array, a z-score is equal to the weighted score minus the mean and divided by the standard deviation. The array of z-scores for each factor or type is called the factor array.

Steps 5 and 6. The next step (Step 5) is to describe the hypothetical types of persons that the factor analytic model has constructed on the basis of the actual sorts of the subjects interviewed. This task involves a description of the factor arrays for each type or the "hypothetical sort" of each type. The final step (Step 6) is to relate the various types to each other. Steps 5 and 6 will be described in Chapter IV ("Analysis and Interpretation of Q-Sort Data").

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Factor	Sub Num
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II	
III	
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Table 3. Subjects to be Used and Their Weights in Estimating the Factor Arrays for Factors I, II, and III of the Three-Factor Rotated Factor Analysis Solution.

Factor	Subject Number	Factor Loading	Weight
I	6	.58	0.874
	9	.65	1.126
	12	.76	1.800
	13	.78	1.992
II	3	.79	2.102
	4	.68	1.265
	7	.67	1.216
	8	.79	2.102
III	2	.72	1.495
	14	.53	0.737
	15	.69	1.317

Summary

1. This study encompasses three major areas: (1) basic demographic data; (2) an analysis of "gate keeping" functions of education reporters; and (3) an analysis of "frequency of contact" by education reporters of 27 education information sources and a Q-analysis of the "source credibility" of these same 27 education information sources, with education reporters doing the Q-sorting.

2. Because of the degree of specialization now practiced by the larger daily newspapers, the sample for this study was limited to the 17 Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000.

3. Both a written questionnaire and personal interviews were employed in the data collecting. Consultations with knowledgeable persons in various disciplines were undertaken to select appropriate questions for the questionnaire and interviews.

4. One pre-testing of the questionnaire and interview procedures was conducted with an education reporter for a newspaper with a circulation just under 20,000. Only minor changes in the questions and procedures resulted from this trial interview. Data from this trial interview are not included in the findings for this study.

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5. Data were collected over a two-month period (May 18, 1964, to July 15, 1964). Letters were sent to 13 "education editors" as listed in Editor and Publisher, 1964 and to appropriate journalists for four other newspapers as identified by their publishers. In one sense, 100 per cent participation was achieved. However, one respondent answered only the written questionnaire, and another newspaper consented only to a "group oral interview" of five staff members.

6. Demographic data were collected both to show relationships in the "source credibility" Q-sorts and to reveal significant demographic patterns of response for a selected population of education reporters. Methodology employed to analyze the demographic data is a compilation of responses by aggregate percentages.

7. In the non-quantitative analysis of the open-end interview responses, the verbatim answers as transcribed from the taped interviews were segregated into separate question categories, analyzed for major response trends, and presented in written summarizations according to consensus and minority viewpoints.

8. For the "frequency of contact" and "source credibility" analyses of the 27 sources of education information, more rigorous investigation tools were employed.

Sixteen respondents were asked to evaluate the 27 education information sources according to a four-point scale for "frequency of contact" and according to an eleven-point scale for "source credibility" (from "most accurate" to "least accurate"). Factor analysis and Q-methodology were considered especially appropriate for the "source credibility" analysis. Q-technique permitted useful typologies of education reporters to be isolated. Essentially, the six major steps in Q-analysis as presented by MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott were followed in our "source credibility" analysis. Relying on evidence showing that free and forced Q-sorts do not give strikingly different results, this study permitted a "free sorting," rather than a "forced sorting" of Q-items according to a symmetrical distribution.

9. Because subjects said they "never" contact certain sources (especially "state" and "national" sources), they refused to give "credibility" Q-scores for these sources. Thus, some 22.9 per cent of all Q-scores used in this "credibility" Q-analysis are arithmetic mean scores and not <u>actual</u> credibility evaluations by the respondents.

10. Because of the high loading on factor I (eigenvalue of 10.9933) in the "frequency of contact" factor loading matrix, it was decided to convert this single factor array into z-scores.

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11. In the "source credibility" Q-sort, however, the factor analytic model constructed three hypothetical types of persons based on the way the subjects rated the 27 Q-items.

12. After three arrays of weighted item scores were computed, they were converted to *z*-scores.

13. The final two steps (as suggested by MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott) in our Q-analysis will be presented in the next chapter. These two steps encompass: (1) a description of the three hypothetical types of persons that the factor analytic model has constructed on the basis of the actual Q-sorts of the subjects interviewed; and (2) comparisons of how the three types relate to each other.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF Q-SORT DATA

The previous chapter described how this study was conducted and its three major parts: (1) basic demographic data; (2) open-end interview questions examining news-gathering practices and attitudes of education reporters; and (3) an analysis of "frequency of contact" with 27 education information sources and a Q-analysis of the source credibility of these 27 sources by 16 education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers above 20,000 circulation. Chapter V will analyze the demographic data, and Chapter VI will analyze the open-end interview questions.

This chapter (Chapter IV) will analyze the "frequency of contact" findings and the Q-analysis of "source credibility." Because Chapter III presented the first four steps of the six steps suggested by MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott[1] in analyzing the "source credibility" Q-data, it was decided that the final two steps (Steps 5 and 6) of

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[1] MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott, op. cit.

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interpretation and analysis should be presented in this chapter, rather than having the demographic and interview data chapters interrupt. The purpose of this chapter arrangement was to provide an easier transition in explaining the Q-sort analysis.

Frequency of Contact

Data in Table 4 indicate the strong preference of education reporters for contacting local sources of education information. The first nine sources (ranked by z-scores in order of most frequent contact) are all local sources of education information. It is interesting to note that state-level sources (State Department of Public Instruction, Michigan Education Association, state-level PTA, and Michigan Association of School Administrators) are more frequently contacted than national-level sources (U.S. Office of Education, National Education Association, national-level PTA, and American Association of School Administrators).

Data in Table 4 reveal also some interesting comparisons of frequency of contact between various educational organizations (governmental, professional, and citizen) on local, state, and national levels. It is significant to note that in five of six comparisons the organizational unit

Table 4. Sixt
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z-score	Source
1.33	3.
1.26	5.
1.22	25.
1.22	26.
1.22	4.
1.01	27.
0.91	6.
0.89	12.
0.76	7.
0.69	23.
0.52	20.
0.52	24.
0.47	8.
0.33	9.
0.18	
-0.40	1.
	10.
-0.47	
-0.77	15.
-0.83	19.
	22.
-0.99	
-1.08	2.
-1.14	13.
-1.24	11.
	21.
-1.29	
-1.31	14.
-1.48	17.
-1.54	16.
	18.

Table 4. Sixteen Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation: Array of Education Information Sources in Order from Most Frequently Contacted to Least Frequently Contacted.

z-score	Source	
1.33	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)
1.26	5.	President of the local school board
1.22	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
1.22	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
1.22	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
1.01	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.91	6.	School board members other than president
0.89	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
0.76	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
0.69	23.	Professors of education
0.52	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local)
0.52	24.	College professors other than professors of education
0.47	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.33	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
0.18	1.	State Department of Public Instruction
-0.40	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
-0.47	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
-0.77	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state level)
-0.83	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
-0.99	2.	U.S. Office of Education
-1.08	13.	American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
-1.14	11.	National Education Association
-1.24	21.	American Association of School Administrators
-1.29	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
-1.31	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
-1.48	16.	National School Board Association
-1.54	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national level)

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on the lowest hierarchial level (assuming a national-state-local hierarchy) is most frequently contacted. Thus, the State Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is contacted more frequently than the U.S. Office of Education (USOE), the Michigan Association of School Administrators (MASA) is contacted more frequently than the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), and the Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB) is contacted more often than the National School Board Association (NSBA). Likewise, the local professional teachers' association (local NEA-MEA affiliate) is contacted more than the Michigan Education Association (state level), which in turn, is contacted more than the National Education Association (NEA). Also, local PTA officers are contacted more often than the Michigan Congress of Parents and Teachers (state-level PTA), which, in turn, is contacted more than the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. The one exception to this pattern is provided by the teachers' union where the local AFL-CIO affiliate is contacted most often, but the American Federation of Teachers is contacted more frequently than the Michigan Federation of Teachers.

The percentage tabulations in Table 5 indicate how the composite totals of all sources (local, state, national, and higher education) compare on frequency of contact. Once

Table 5. Comparison of Frequency of Contact with All Local, State, National, and Higher Education News Sources by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation (N = 16)

Table 5. Comparison of Frequency of Contact with All Local, State, National, and Higher Education News Sources by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation (N = 16)

All Possible Sources	Frequency of Contact									
	Frequently		Occasionally		Very Seldom		Never		Total	
Local Sources	138	(66.35)	50	(24.04)	11	(5.29)	9	(4.32)	208	(100)
Higher Education	15	(46.88)	13	(40.63)	3	(9.38)	1	(3.13)	32	(100)
State Sources	9	(9.38)	28	(29.17)	23	(23.96)	36	(37.5)	96	(100)
National Sources	5	(5.21)	5	(5.21)	34	(35.42)	52	(54.17)	96	(100)
TOTAL	167	(38.66)	96	(22.22)	71	(16.44)	98	(22.69)	432	(100)

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Q-Analysis of Source Credibility Data

As indicated in Chapter III, the last two steps (Steps 5 and 6) in analyzing Q-data involve a description of the factor arrays for each type or the "hypothetical sort" of each type. To provide a means of describing each hypothetical type of person that the factor analytic model has constructed, the Q-sort items for each array were ordered in terms of "source credibility" acceptance. When ordered in terms of *z*-scores, the factor array becomes a hierarchy of item acceptance or belief pattern for each of the three types. Items at the extremes are particularly valuable in this description.

As Chapter III points out, Type I includes four subjects (subjects 6, 9, 12, and 13); Type II includes four subjects (subjects 3, 4, 7, and 8); and Type III includes three subjects (subjects 2, 14, and 15). Five subjects (subjects 1, 5, 10, 11, and 16) are of a mixed type--somewhat like all three types.

The "source credibility" acceptance patterns for the three types are presented in the next three tables (Type I in Table 6, Type II in Table 7, and Type III in

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Table 8). Type I represents reporters for medium-sized and smaller newspapers in this sample; Type II represents reporters for large and medium-sized newspapers in this sample; and Type III represents reporters for very large and very small newspapers in this sample.

All three types highly trust the local public school superintendent. Elementary school principals and secondary school principals are highly trusted by Types I and II, but are highly distrusted by Type III. Classroom teachers (public) are trusted by all three types.

For a look at how the three types rank the 27 education information sources and for a description of each of the three types, we proceed now to Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Source Type I accepts the local, professional, public school administrator as the most trustworthy. In essence, Type I is saying "the professional school administrators know what this business of education is all about, and I trust them."

Source Type I regards the professional education associations as less accurate than the local school officials. Especially suspect in Type I's opinion are the Parent-Teachers Associations, with the local PTA organization considered the most inaccurate of all education sources.

Table 6. Educa
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z-score	Source
1.52	3.
1.03	4.
0.91	25.
0.91	26.
0.78	8.
0.75	5.
0.64	9.
0.40	6.
0.30	13.
0.23	7.
0.21	11.
0.19	1.
0.19	2.
0.17	27.
0.13	14.
0.13	15.
0.11	23.
0.04	10.
-0.08	24.
-0.34	12.
-0.47	18.
-0.54	16.
-0.64	21.
-0.64	22.
-0.80	17.
-1.03	19.
-4.09	20.

Table 6. Education Information Source Type I: Array of Education Information Sources in order from Most Accurate to Least Accurate.

z-score	Sources	
1.52	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)
1.03	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
0.91	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
0.91	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
0.78	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.75	5.	President of the local school board
0.64	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
0.40	6.	School board members other than president
0.30	13.	American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
0.23	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
0.21	11.	National Education Association
0.19	1.	State Department of Public Instruction
0.19	2.	U.S. Office of Education
0.17	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.13	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers
0.13	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
0.11	23.	Professors of education
0.04	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
-0.08	24.	College professors other than professors of education
-0.34	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
-0.47	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national level)
-0.54	16.	National School Board Association
-0.64	21.	American Association of School Administrators
-0.64	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
-0.80	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
-1.03	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state level)
-4.09	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local level)

Table 7. Educat
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z-score	Source
1.11	25.
1.11	26.
0.85	6.
0.85	27.
0.73	2.
0.73	16.
0.73	17.
0.69	3.
0.69	4.
0.47	10.
0.47	11.
0.43	5.
0.43	8.
0.30	9.
0.30	21.
0.30	22.
0.22	7.
0.18	20.
0.04	18.
0.04	19.
-0.34	12.
-1.13	14.
-1.47	23.
-1.47	24.
-1.59	1.
-2.03	13.
-2.65	15.

Table 7. Education Information Source Type II: Array of Education Information Sources in order from Most Accurate to Least Accurate.

z-score	Sources	
1.11	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
1.11	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
0.85	6.	School board members other than president
0.85	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.73	2.	U.S. Office of Education
0.73	16.	National School Board Association
0.73	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
0.69	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)
0.69	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
0.47	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
0.47	11.	National Education Association
0.43	5.	President of the local school board
0.43	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.30	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
0.30	21.	American Association of School Administrators
0.30	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
0.22	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
0.18	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local level)
0.04	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national)
0.04	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state)
-0.34	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
-1.13	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
-1.47	23.	Professors of education
-1.47	24.	College professors other than professors of education
-1.59	1.	State Department of Public Instruction
-2.03	13.	American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
-2.65	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)

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z-score	Sourc
2.76	5.
1.31	9.
1.28	12.
0.88	3.
0.88	8.
0.86	27.
0.72	2.
0.63	6.
0.31	1.
0.31	10.
0.23	15.
-0.05	16.
-0.05	17.
-0.05	18.
-0.05	19.
-0.05	21.
-0.05	22.
-0.11	24.
-0.40	4.
-0.81	23.
-0.83	20.
-0.97	11.
-0.99	13.
-0.99	14.
-1.03	7.
-1.88	25.
-1.88	26.

Table 8. Education Information Source Type III: Array of Education Information Sources in order from Most Accurate to Least Accurate.

z-score	Sources	
2.76	5.	President of the local school board
1.31	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
1.28	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
0.88	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)
0.88	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.86	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.72	2.	U.S. Office of Education
0.63	6.	School board members other than president
0.31	1.	State Department of Public Instruction
0.31	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
0.23	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
-0.05	16.	National School Board Association
-0.05	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
-0.05	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national)
-0.05	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state)
-0.05	21.	American Association of School Administrators
-0.05	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
-0.11	24.	College professors other than professors of education
-0.40	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
-0.81	23.	Professors of education
-0.83	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local)
-0.97	11.	National Education Association
-0.99	13.	American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
-0.99	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
-1.03	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
-1.88	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
-1.88	26.	Elementary school principals (public)

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Type I is younger than Types II and III (all Type I's are less than 39), is more likely to be a woman (half of Type I's are women), and has less formal education than Types II and III (half of Type I's are only high school graduates). Type I is more likely to belong to a newspaper union than Types II and III. Type I is more likely to be Protestant than Type II, but with about equal probability to Type III.

Source Type II also trusts local public school officials most, but significantly public school principals on the elementary and secondary levels rank higher than the chief public school administrators (the local superintendent of schools and the local administrator in charge of school public relations).

Source Type II rejects teachers' unions at all three levels (local, state, and national), the State Department of Public Instruction, college professors (both education professors and non-education professors), and the local chapter of the Michigan Education Association. Thus, local teachers' organizations (both the AFL-CIO affiliate and the NEA-MEA affiliate) have low credibility in Type II's evaluation.

All Type II's are men and all are college graduates. Type II is evenly represented in all age categories. Type II

is more likely to be a non-union newspaperman and Roman Catholic than Types I and III. In fact, no Type II belongs to the American Newspaper Guild.

Source Type III's orientation is considerably different than Types I and II. Whereas Types I and II placed confidence in the local, professional, public school administrators, Type III trusts the president of the local school board (a non-professional) and non-public school officials more. Also, Type III trusts the local affiliate of the NEA-MEA, whereas Types I and II ranked this source considerably lower.

Type III rejects elementary and secondary school principals, whereas Types I and II put confidence in these sources. Type III also ranks school officials of county or intermediate districts lower than Types I and II.

Similar to Type II, all Type III's are college graduates. However, Type III includes both men and women (twice as many men as women), and Type III's are likely to be young (less than 39) or old (more than 60). Like Type I, Type III is likely to be Protestant. Type III could be either a union or non-union newspaperman (with greater probability for non-union affiliation).

Comparison of One Type with Another

In describing the persons isolated, the next step was to compare the various types to each other. The arrays of item z-scores (factor arrays) for each type were compared by subtraction for each pair of types. This provided the basis for differentiating one type from another. Thus, Table 9 compares items which differentiate Type I from Type II; Table 10 compares items which differentiate Type I from Type III, and Table 11 compares items which differentiate Type II from Type III.

Type I is much more positively oriented than Type II to the local teachers' union, American Federation of Teachers, State Department of Public Instruction, college professors (both education and non-education), and Michigan Federation of Teachers. It is obvious that Type I has a much stronger union orientation than Type II.

Type II is much more positively oriented than Type I to the Parent-Teachers Association (local), Michigan Association of School Boards, National School Board Association, and the Parent-Teachers Association (state). Compared to Type I, Type II has a much stronger trust in educational organizations--especially those composed of lay citizen members.

Table 9. Education Information Source Types I and II: Education Information Sources Which Differentiate Type I from Type II.

Source

Table 9. Education Information Source Types I and II: Education Information Sources Which Differentiate Type I from Type II.

z-scores			Source
Type I	Type II	I - II	More than Type II, Type I accepts:
0.13	-2.65	2.78	15. Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
0.30	-2.03	2.33	13. American Federation of Teachers
0.19	-1.59	1.78	1. State Department of Public Instruction
0.11	-1.47	1.59	23. Professors of education
-0.08	-1.47	1.39	24. College professors other than professors of education
0.13	-1.13	1.26	14. Michigan Federation of Teachers
1.52	0.69	0.83	3. Local superintendent of schools (public)
0.78	0.43	0.35	8. Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
1.03	0.69	0.34	4. Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
0.64	0.30	0.34	9. Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
0.75	0.43	0.32	5. President of the local school board
0.23	0.22	0.01	7. School officials of county or intermediate districts
			More than Type II, Type I rejects:
-4.09	0.18	-4.27	20. Parent-Teachers Association (local)
-0.80	0.73	-1.53	17. Michigan Association of School Boards
-0.54	0.73	-1.27	16. National School Board Association
-1.03	0.04	-1.07	19. Parent-Teachers Association (state)
-0.64	0.30	-0.94	22. Michigan Association of School Administrators
-0.64	0.30	-0.94	21. American Association of School Administrators

Table 9. Continued.

z-scores			Source
Type I	Type II	I - II	More Than Type II, Type I rejects:
0.17	0.85	-0.68	27. Classroom teachers (public)
0.10	0.73	-0.54	28. Male [illegible]

Table 9. Continued.

z-scores			Source	
Type I	Type II	I - II		More Than Type II, Type I rejects:
0.17	0.85	-0.68	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.19	0.73	-0.54	2.	U.S. Office of Education
-0.47	0.04	-0.51	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national)
0.40	0.85	-0.45	6.	School board members other than president
0.04	0.47	-0.43	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
0.21	0.47	-0.26	11.	National Education Association
0.91	1.11	-0.20	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
0.91	1.11	-0.20	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
-0.34	-0.34	-0.01	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)

Table 10. Education Information Source Types I and III: Education Information Sources Which Differentiate Type I from Type III

z-scores			Source
Type I	Type III	I - III	More than Type III, Type I accepts:

Table 10. Education Information Source Types I and III: Education Information Sources Which Differentiate Type I from Type III

z-scores			Source	
Type I	Type III	I - III		More than Type III, Type I accepts:
0.91	-1.88	2.80	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
0.91	-1.88	2.80	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
1.03	-0.40	1.43	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
0.30	-0.99	1.28	13.	American Federation of Teachers
0.23	-1.03	1.26	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
0.21	-0.97	1.18	11.	National Education Association
0.13	-0.99	1.12	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers
0.11	-0.81	0.92	23.	Professors of education
1.52	0.88	0.64	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)
-0.08	-0.11	0.03	24.	College professors not professors of education
				More than Type III, Type I rejects:
-4.09	-0.83	-3.26	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local)
0.75	2.76	-2.01	5.	President of the local school board
-0.34	1.28	-1.63	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
-1.03	-0.05	-0.99	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state)
-0.80	-0.05	-0.76	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
0.17	0.86	-0.69	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.64	1.31	-0.66	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic

Table 10. Continued.

z-scores			Source
Type I	Type III	I - III	More than Type III, Type I rejects:
-0.64	-0.05	-0.59	21. American Association of School Administrators
-0.64	-0.05	-0.59	22. Michigan Association of School Administrators
0.19	0.72	-0.53	2. U.S. Office of Education

Table 10. Continued.

z-scores			Source	
Type I	Type III	I - III	More than Type III, Type I rejects:	
-0.64	-0.05	-0.59	21.	American Association of School Administrators
-0.64	-0.05	-0.59	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
0.19	0.72	-0.53	2.	U.S. Office of Education
-0.54	-0.05	-0.50	16.	National School Board Association
-0.47	-0.05	-0.42	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national)
0.04	0.31	-0.27	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
0.40	0.63	-0.23	6.	School board members other than president
0.19	0.31	-0.12	1.	State Department of Public Instruction
0.13	0.23	-0.10	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
0.78	0.88	-0.10	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)

Table 11. Education Information Source Types II and III: Education Information Sources Which Differentiate Type II from Type III

z-scores			Source
Type II	*Type III*	*II - III*	More than Type III, Type II accepts:

Table 11. Education Information Source Types II and III: Education Information Sources Which Differentiate Type II from Type III

z-scores Type II	z-scores Type III	II - III	Source	
			More than Type III, Type II accepts:	
1.11	-1.88	3.00	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
1.11	-1.88	3.00	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
0.47	-0.97	1.44	11.	National Education Association
0.22	-1.03	1.25	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
0.69	-0.40	1.09	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
0.18	-0.83	1.01	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local)
0.73	-0.05	0.77	16.	National School Board Association
0.73	-0.05	0.77	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
0.30	-0.05	0.35	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
0.30	-0.05	0.35	21.	American Association of School Administrators
0.85	0.63	0.22	6.	School board members other than president
0.47	0.31	0.16	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
0.04	-0.05	0.09	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national)
0.04	-0.05	0.09	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state)
0.73	0.72	0.01	2.	U.S. Office of Education
			More than Type III, Type II rejects:	
-2.65	0.23	-2.88	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
0.43	2.76	-2.34	5.	President of the local school board

Table 11. Continued.

z-scores			Source	
Type II	Type III	II - III	More than Type III, Type II rejects:	
-1.59	0.31	-1.90	1.	State Department of Public Instruction
-0.34	1.28	-1.62	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
-1.47	-0.11	-1.36	24.	College professors other than professors of education
-2.03	-0.99	-1.04	13.	American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
0.30	1.31	-1.00	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
-1.47	-0.81	-0.67	23.	Professors of education
0.43	0.88	-0.45	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.69	0.88	-0.19	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)
-1.13	-0.99	-0.14	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
0.85	0.86	-0.01	27.	Classroom teachers (public)

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Compared to Type III, Type I has much greater confidence in public secondary school principals, public elementary school principals, the local public school administrator in charge of public relations, American Federation of Teachers, school officials of county or intermediate units, National Education Association, and Michigan Federation of Teachers. Thus, Type I trusts local public school administrators at all hierarchical levels more than Type III.

Compared to Type I, Type III puts more trust in the Parent-Teachers Association (local), president of the school board, and Michigan Education Association (local chapter). All of these three sources are local sources, but they are not professional administrative sources.

Sources which are trusted much more by Type II than by Type III include public school principals (elementary and secondary), National Education Association, school officials of county or intermediate districts, local public school administrator in charge of public relations, and the Parent-Teachers Association (local). Compared to Type III, most of Type II's higher acceptance sources are local professional administrators.

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Sources which are trusted much more by Type III than by Type II include the local teachers' union, president of the local school board, State Department of Public Instruction, MEA (local chapter), non-education college professors, AFT, and administrators of private schools other than Catholic. Type III's higher acceptance includes both local teachers' organizations (union local and MEA local chapter), but not one local professional administrative source (public) of education information.

Comparison of One Type with the Two Other Types

The next step was to identify the items which differentiate one type from all other types. This was determined by separating items which were higher (or lower) in the array for one type than they were in the arrays for all other types. Thus, Table 12 ranks the items which differentiate Type I from Types II and III; Table 13 ranks the items which differentiate Type II from Types I and III, and Table 14 ranks the items which differentiate Type III from Types I and II.

Compared to both Types II and III, Type I finds seven sources more accurate. However, for only two of these seven sources--the American Federation of Teachers and the Michigan Federation of Teachers--is the z-score difference

Table 12. Education Information Source Type I: Information Sources Which Differentiate Type I from Types II and III

z-scores			Sources
Type I	*Type II*	*Type III*	*More than Types II and III, Type I considers accurate:*

Table 12. Education Information Source Type I: Information Sources Which Differentiate Type I from Types II and III

z-scores			Sources	
Type I	Type II	Type III		More than Types II and III, Type I considers accurate:
1.52	0.69	0.88	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)
1.03	0.69	-0.40	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)
0.30	-2.03	-0.99	13.	American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
0.23	0.22	-1.03	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
0.13	-1.13	-0.99	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)
0.11	-1.47	-0.81	23.	Professors of education
-0.08	-1.47	-0.11	24.	College professors other than professors of education
				Less than Types II and III, Type I considers accurate:
-4.09	0.18	-0.83	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local)
-1.03	0.04	-0.05	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state)
-0.80	0.73	-0.05	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
-0.64	0.30	-0.05	21.	American Association of School Administrators
-0.64	0.30	-0.05	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
-0.54	0.73	-0.05	16.	National School Board Association
-0.47	0.04	-0.05	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national)

Table 12. Continued.

z-scores			Sources
Type I	Type II	Type III	Less than Types II and III, Type I considers accurate:

Table 12. Continued.

z-scores			Sources	
Type I	Type II	Type III	Less than Types II and III, Type I considers accurate:	
-0.34	-0.34	1.28	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
0.04	0.47	0.31	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
0.17	0.85	0.86	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.19	0.73	0.72	2.	U.S. Office of Education
0.40	0.85	0.63	6.	School board members other than president

Table 13. Education Information Source Type II: Information Sources Which Differentiate Type II from Types I and III

z-scores	Sources
	More than Types I and III Type II considers accurate:

Table 13. Education Information Source Type II: Information Sources Which Differentiate Type II from Types I and III

z-scores			Sources	
Type II	Type I	Type III		
More than Types I and III, Type II considers accurate:				
1.11	0.91	-1.88	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
1.11	0.91	-1.88	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
0.85	0.40	0.63	6.	School board members other than president
0.73	0.19	0.72	2.	U.S. Office of Education
0.73	-0.54	-0.05	16.	National School Board Association
0.73	-0.80	-0.05	17.	Michigan Association of School Boards
0.47	0.04	0.31	10.	Michigan Education Association (state level)
0.47	0.21	-0.97	11.	National Education Association
0.30	-0.64	-0.05	21.	American Association of School Administrators
0.30	-0.64	-0.05	22.	Michigan Association of School Administrators
0.18	-4.09	-0.83	20.	Parent-Teachers Association (local)
0.04	-0.47	-0.05	18.	Parent-Teachers Association (national)
0.04	-1.03	-0.05	19.	Parent-Teachers Association (state)
Less than Types I and III, Type II considers accurate:				
-2.65	0.13	0.23	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
-2.03	0.30	-0.99	13.	American Federation of Teachers
-1.59	0.19	0.31	1.	State Department of Public Instruction

Table 13. Continued.

z-scores			Sources
Type II	*Type I*	*Type III*	*Less than Types I and III, Type II considers accurate:*
[illegible]	[illegible]	0.81	23 Professors of education

Table 13. Continued.

z-scores			Sources	
Type II	Type I	Type III	Less than Types I and III, Type II considers accurate:	
-1.47	0.11	-0.81	23.	Professors of education
-1.47	-0.08	-0.11	24.	College professors other than professors of education
-1.13	0.13	-0.99	14.	Michigan Federation of Teachers
0.30	0.64	1.31	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
0.43	0.75	2.76	5.	President of the local school board
0.43	0.78	0.88	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.69	1.52	0.88	3.	Local superintendent of schools (public)

Table 14. Education Information Source Type III: Information Sources Which Differentiate Type III from Types I and II

z-scores	Sources

Table 14. Education Information Source Type III: Information Sources Which Differentiate Type III from Types I and II

z-scores			Sources	
Type III	Type I	Type II		More than Types I and II, Type III considers accurate:
2.76	0.75	0.43	5.	President of the local school board
1.31	0.64	0.30	9.	Administrators of private schools other than Catholic
1.28	-0.34	-0.34	12.	Michigan Education Association (local chapter)
0.88	0.78	0.43	8.	Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.86	0.17	0.85	27.	Classroom teachers (public)
0.31	0.19	-1.59	1.	State Department of Public Instruction
0.23	0.13	-2.65	15.	Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)
				Less than Types I and II, Type III considers accurate:
-1.88	0.91	1.11	25.	Secondary school principals (public)
-1.88	0.91	1.11	26.	Elementary school principals (public)
-1.03	0.23	0.22	7.	School officials of county or intermediate districts
-0.97	0.21	0.47	11.	National Education Association
-0.40	1.03	0.69	4.	Local administrator in charge of school PR (public)

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more than 1.00 between Type I and both Types II and III. Therefore, more than Types II and III, Type I would look more kindly at educational messages emanating from national and state union sources.

Compared to both Types II and III, Type I finds two sources particularly inaccurate: the Parent-Teachers Association (local) and the Parent-Teachers Association (state). It would be unwise to attempt to persuade Type I with an educational message emanating from a PTA source.

Compared to both Types I and III, Type II finds 13 sources more accurate. However, the differences between all three types are not more than 1.00 *z*-score except in one instance. The *z*-score difference for the Parent-Teachers Association (local) is 4.27 between Type II and Type I and 1.01 between Type II and Type III.

Compared to both Types I and III, Type II finds four sources particularly inaccurate (more than 1.00 *z*-score). They are the local teachers' union, American Federation of Teachers, State Department of Public Instruction, and non-education professors. The probability is high that an education "message" emanating from a teachers' union (local or national) or from the State Department of Public Instruction would have very low persuasive effectiveness on Type II.

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Compared to Types I and II, Type III finds seven sources more accurate. However, for only two sources (president of the local school board and MEA-local chapter) does the difference between all three types exceed 1.00 *z*-score. The best source to attempt to persuade Type III is the president of the local school board.

Compared to Types I and II, Type III finds five sources particularly inaccurate (more than 1.00 *z*-score). They are public school principals (both elementary and secondary), school officials of county or intermediate districts, National Education Association, and the local public school administrator in charge of public relations. It would be unwise to attempt to persuade Type III with an education "message" emanating from any one of these five sources.

Consensus Sources

The final step was to determine what sources or areas of agreement seem to cut across all of the types. If the *z*-scores for all types are nearly equal, this would define agreement. A consensus source is one in which the difference between the largest *z*-score given that item by one of the types and the smallest *z*-score is less than 1.00. Consensus sources are listed in Table 15.

Table 15.

Average z-score	Sourc
1.03	3.
0.70	8.
0.63	6.
0.62	27.
0.55	2.
0.27	10.
-0.13	21.
-0.13	22.
-0.16	18.

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Table 15. Education Sources of Information: Consensus Items

Average z-score	Source
1.03	3. Local superintendent of schools (public)
0.70	8. Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)
0.63	6. School board members other than president
0.62	27. Classroom teachers (public)
0.55	2. U.S. Office of Education
0.27	10. Michigan Education Association (state level)
-0.13	21. American Association of School Administrators
-0.13	22. Michigan Association of School Administrators
-0.16	18. Parent-Teachers Association (national)

It is significant to note that the local public school superintendent, who received the highest z-score on the "frequency of contact" array, also has the highest average "source credibility" z-score across all the types. In other words, there appears to be considerable agreement among all the subjects in this study that the local public school superintendent should be contacted often and that his information is accurate.

Although the superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese) did not rank near the top in the "frequency of contact" array (z-score of 0.47), he did receive high agreement across all types in his "credibility" scores (z-score, 0.70). In other words, reporters don't

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contact the superintendent of Catholic schools as often as they do the public school superintendent, but when they do contact the local archdiocese they find that the information is accurate.

Summary and Conclusions

Frequency of Contact. A significant finding of this study is the strong preference of education reporters for contacting local sources of education information. Respondents identified the local superintendent of schools (public), the president of the local school board, public school principals (elementary and secondary), and the local administrator (public) in charge of school public relations as the five most frequently contacted sources of education information. Moreover, it is significant to note that state-level sources of education information are contacted more frequently than national-level sources. It appears that education reporters see themselves in the center of three concentric circles (local, state, and national) and that those sources closest to the center (local, then state, and then national) are contacted most frequently.

Source Credibility. One of the most important findings of this study is the fact that the local public school superintendent, who received the highest z-score on

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the "frequency of contact" array, also has the highest average "source credibility" z-score across all three types of education reporters. In other words, education reporters consider the local superintendent an accurate source of information and contact him frequently.

Classroom teachers (public) were trusted by all three types of education reporters, but public school principals (elementary and secondary) were ranked high in source credibility by Types I and II but very low by Type III.

Source credibility rankings for the local Parent-Teachers Association were low for all three types, with Type I giving it the lowest credibility ranking of all 27 sources (z-score, -4.09). The probability is great that "messages" emanating from local PTA organizations will have minimal persuasive effectiveness upon education reporters (especially Type I).

Another finding of considerable importance is how membership or non-membership in the reporters' union (American Newspaper Guild) is reflected in the source credibility rankings of teachers' unions (AFL-CIO) as compared to rankings of "professional" teachers' organizations (NEA-MEA-local affiliate). For example, Type II (which includes all non-union reporters) ranked all levels of the

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teachers' union (American Federation of Teachers, Michigan Federation of Teachers, and the local AFL-CIO affiliate) very low, while giving higher credibility rankings to the Michigan Education Association, the National Education Association, and the local NEA-MEA affiliate (although the local NEA-MEA chapter's z-score was -0.34, just one ranking above the MFT's -1.13 z-score). On the other hand, Type I (which includes the highest percentage of reporters belonging to the American Newspaper Guild) is more positively oriented than Types II and III to the AFT and the MFT, although Type III's z-score for the local teachers' union is slightly higher than Type I's (0.23, Type III; 0.13, Type I; and -2.65, Type II).

Rejecting local "professional" sources of education information (public school administrators), Type III trusts the president of the local school board considerably more than Types I and II (more than 2.00 z-score). Type III also gave higher credibility rankings to administrators of private schools other than Catholic and to the local chapter of the MEA. Significantly, Type III finds five sources particularly inaccurate (more than 1.00 z-score) compared to Types I and II. They are public school principals (both elementary and secondary), school officials of county or

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intermediate districts, the National Education Association, and the local public school administrator in charge of public relations. A "message" emanating from any one of these five sources would have a low probability of persuasiveness effectiveness on Type III.

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CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

This study undertook to discover as much as possible about the demographic characteristics of the population. The rationale for this approach was to gather evidence pertaining to the social-psychological influences impinging upon the "gate keeping" decisions of education reporters. Demographic data were especially needed in this study to show relationships and comparisons between the "types" of education reporters in the "source credibility" Q-analysis.

Demographic data are also needed for future research studies in this area. Recognizing the importance of the "gate keeping" position which education reporters fill, framers of educational messages need to know more than current research reveals about essential demographic characteristics. This includes age and sex of education reporters, amount and type of education received, income, types of previous work experiences, newspaper employment experiences (especially the amount of turnover on the education beat),

amount of time reporters are able to devote to covering education, types of newspaper assignments other than covering education, work load and job satisfactions, memberships in "formal" groups, readership of publications, and attendance at educational conventions. Of particular importance are data indicating "significant others" and "reference groups" for these education reporters. (Refer to Appendix A for specific wording of the questions used in the demographic part of this study.)

Demographic Characteristics of Education Reporters

Age and sex. Data in Table 16 reveal that the majority of education reporters are men (81.25 per cent). Fifty per cent of these reporters are under 40 years of age, and 75 per cent are under 50 years. Thus, of the 16 respondents for this study, nine are men under the age of 50.

Education. Data in Table 17 reveal that 75 per cent of these reporters have earned a college degree or higher. Two reporters (one male and one female) have only a high school degree. The 12 reporters with a college degree or higher cited English as a special field of emphasis nine times, the social sciences eight times, journalism six times, education once, mathematics once, and law once. The physical and biological sciences were not mentioned by any of the

Table 16. Sex and Age Characteristics of Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation. (N = 16)

Age	Male		Female		Total	
Less than 30	2	(12.5)	1	(6.25)	3	(18.75)
30–39 years	3	(18.75)	2	(12.5)	5	(31.25)
40–49 years	4	(25.00)	0	(0)	4	(25.00)
50–59 years	2	(12.5)	0	(0)	2	(12.5)
60–69 years	2	(12.5)	0	(0)	2	(12.5)
TOTAL	13	(81.25)	3	(18.75)	16	(100.00)

Percentages in parentheses

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Table 17. Highest Level of Educational Attainment of Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation. (N = 16)

Highest Level of Attainment	Male		Female		Total	
High school graduate	1	(6.25)	1	(6.25)	2	(12.5)
1-3 years of college, professional or trade school	2	(12.5)	0	(0)	2[1]	(12.5)
College graduate	9	(56.25)	2	(12.5)	11[2]	(68.75)
1 or more years post-graduate	1	(6.25)	0	(0)	1[3]	(6.25)
TOTAL	13	(81.25)	3	(18.75)	16	(100.00)

Percentages in parentheses

[1] Of these two education reporters with less than a college degree but with some college work, one reporter has completed two years' work in English and social science (he still attends classes at the local community college); and the other reporter has three years of college work in English and journalism.

[2] Of these 11 college graduates, five have earned the B.A. degree in journalism (four at Michigan State University and one at Wayne State University); two reporters have the B.A. in English and social science; one has a B.A. in English, social science, and education; one has a B.A. in mathematics and economics; one has a B.A. in law; and one has a B.A. in English literature and political science.

[3] This reporter has a B.A. in English from Wayne State University and one year of graduate work toward the master's in English at WSU.

respondents. It is significant to note that five of these reporters have degrees in journalism, while only one reporter cited education as a special field of study in college (this reporter, incidentally, has no actual teaching experience).

Income and age levels. The reporter's income level is an important factor in his attitude toward teachers' salaries. More than one reporter expressed resentment about teachers asking for higher salaries (and "for only nine months work"), arguing that members of the journalistic profession are also underpaid. However, as data in Table 18 indicate, only four reporters (25 per cent) were paid less than $7,000; six reporters (37.5 per cent) were in the $7,000-$8,999 category. Four reporters (25 per cent) were earning between $9,000-$12,999 (with one reporter earning more than $11,000).

Previous Work Experiences. What types of employment other than newspaper reporting have been undertaken by this population of journalists assigned to cover education? Obviously, these previous work experiences will have considerable effect in shaping reporters' attitudes toward education. It was felt that "patterns of employment" for specific reporters should be considered here, rather than to isolate "types of employment" into separate categories.

Table 18. Income and Age Levels of Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation. (N = 16)

	Income Levels					
Age Levels	$5,000-$6,999	$7,000-$8,999	$9,000-$10,999	$11,000-$12,999	No Responses	TOTAL
Less than 30	3 (18.75)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (18.75)
30-39 years	1 (6.25)	3 (18.75)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	5 (31.25)
40-49 years	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	1 (6.25)	1 (6.25)	1 (6.25)	4 (25)
50-59 years	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	1 (6.25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (12.5)
60-69 years	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	1 (6.25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (12.5)
TOTAL	4 (25)	6 (37.5)	3 (18.75)	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	16 (100)

Percentages in parentheses

Therefore, previous work experiences, other than reporting, cited by each of the 16 respondents are listed in Table 19.

Table 19. Previous Work Experiences as Cited by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000. (N = 16)

	Types of Previous Work Experiences
Reporter No. 1	Real estate and stock speculation.
Reporter No. 2	Army and free-lance writing.
Reporter No. 3	Retail selling and "ampule testing" in a pharmacuetical factory.
Reporter No. 4	Machine shop work, playground director, various industrial assembly jobs, and mail clerk.
Reporter No. 5	Supervision of YWCA Saturday program for children.
Reporter No. 6	Factory work and free-lance writing.
Reporter No. 7	Bank clerk and public relations for a public university (sports).
Reporter No. 8	Public relations for a private university (University of Detroit).
Reporter No. 9	Store clerk.
Reporter No. 10	General odd jobs--usher, grocery clerk.
Reporter No. 11	Store manager for grocery chain (Kroger); owner and operator of small food market; owner-publisher-editor of weekly newspapers; soda fountain manager; insurance salesman; drug clerk.

Table 19. Continued.

	Types of Previous Work Experiences
Reporter No. 12	Factory work (tire plant, aircraft engines); general office work; photography.
Reporter No. 13	Public relations work (banks, public schools, life insurance, power company, Masonic order, Board of Harbor Commissioners). Does public relations work now (public schools included) on a moonlighting basis.
Reporter No. 14	Law work and merchandising-service distributor for General Electric Company.
Reporters Nos. 15 and 16	Two reporters said they had no other work experience other than newspaper reporting.

Employment Data. As data in Table 20 indicate, nine education reporters (56.25 per cent) have been employed in newspaper work for more than 15 years. It is significant to note that only two reporters (12.5 per cent) have been doing newspaper work for less than eight years. However, data in Table 20 also indicate that seven reporters (43.75 per cent) have been employed by their present newspaper for less than eight years. Moreover, ten reporters (62.5 per cent) have been assigned to the education beat

Table 20. Number of Years Employed in Newspaper Work; Number of Years Employed by Present Newspaper; Number of Years Assigned to Cover Education; and Number of Years Newspapers Have Had Specific Persons Assigned to Cover Education. (N = 16)

Number of Years	Employed in Newspaper Work	Employed by Present Newspaper	Assigned to Cover Education	Newspaper Has Had Specific Person Covering Education
0-3 years	1 (6.25)	4 (25)	8 (50)	2 (12.5)
4-7 years	1 (6.25)	3 (18.75)	2 (12.5)	1 (6.25)
8-11 years	4 (25)	1 (6.25)	3 (18.75)	1 (6.25)
12-15 years	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	3 (18.75)	3 (18.75)
16-19 years	6 (37.5)	4 (25)	0 (0)	0 (0)
20 years and over	3 (18.75)	2 (12.5)	0 (0)	9 (56.25)
TOTAL	16 (100)	16 (100)	16 (100)	16 (100)

Percentages in parentheses

for less than eight years, with eight reporters (50 per cent) assigned to cover education for less than four years. In other words, it appears that there is high turnover of reporters on the education beat, which creates problems of "re-educating" new reporters to the complexities of this important area of coverage. Data in Table 20 also indicate that nine newspapers (56.25 per cent) have had specific persons assigned to cover education news for 20 years or more, which refutes the idea that newspaper specialization in the area of education is of recent origin.

Data in Table 21 reveal that the most frequently used title for the person assigned to cover the education beat was "education reporter." Eight respondents (50 per cent) cited this designation. Two respondents (12.5 per cent) were "education editors," two (12.5 per cent) were "education staff writers," and two (12.5 per cent) were "general assignment reporters."

Time Devoted to Education. Data in Table 22 reveal that only four respondents (25 per cent) devote 100 per cent of their time to covering education, although 12 respondents (75 per cent) devote more than 50 per cent of their time to the education beat. Only four respondents (25 per cent) said that the time they are able to

Table 21. Present Title or Position of Journalists Covering Education News for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000. (N = 16)

Name of Title	Number of Times Cited
Education editor	2 (12.5)
Education staff writer	2 (12.5)
Education reporter	8 (50)
Executive editor	1 (6.25)
Education writer	1 (6.25)
General assignment reporter	2 (12.5)
TOTAL	16 (100)

Percentages in parentheses

Table 22. Percentage of Time Spent and Adequacy of Time Spent Covering Education News as Cited by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation. (N = 16)

Percentage of Time Spent Covering Education News	Adequacy of Time Spent Covering Education News: Very Adequate	Fairly Adequate	Fairly Inadequate	Very Inadequate	Total
Under 25 per cent	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
26-50 per cent	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	1 (6.25)	0 (0)	4 (25)
51-75 per cent	0 (0)	5 (31.25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	5 (31.25)
76 per cent or more	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (18.75)
100 per cent	2 (12.5)	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	1[1] (6.25)	4 (25)
TOTAL	4 (25)	9 (56.25)	2 (12.5)	1 (6.25)	16 (100)

Percentages in parentheses

[1]This is a part-time reporter who works only two full days each week covering education news exclusively.

devote to coverage of education is "very adequate," while nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said the time they devote to education is "fairly adequate." It is significant to note that of the nine respondents who said time devoted is "fairly adequate," five of these (31.25 per cent) spend 51-75 per cent of their time covering education. Moreover, of the four respondents who spend 100 per cent of their time devoted to education, two of these found the time "very adequate," one said the time was "fairly inadequate," and one said the time was "very inadequate" (this last reporter spends only two full days each week covering education news exclusively).

Work Load and Job Satisfaction. How does the total work load compare to satisfaction in being assigned to the education beat? Data in Table 23 indicate that 12 respondents (75 per cent) "thoroughly enjoy this assignment" while only two respondents (12.5 per cent) "would prefer another journalistic assignment." Of the 12 who "enjoy this assignment," four find the work load "too heavy" and seven find it "about right" (with one no response). In other words, the majority of reporters assigned to the education beat appear to "enjoy" this assignment and find the work load "about right."

Table 23. Evaluation of Present Work Load and Job Satisfaction by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation. (N = 16)

Evaluation of Job Satisfaction	Evaluation of Present Work Load: Too Heavy		About Right		Too Light		No Response		Total	
I thoroughly enjoy this assignment; I like reporting education news.	4[1]	(25)	7	(43.75)	0	(0)	1	(6.25)	12	(75)
This assignment is satisfactory; I do the job all in the line of duty.	0	(0)	1	(6.25)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(6.25)
I do not like this assignment; I would prefer another journalistic assignment.	1	(6.25)	1	(6.25)	0	(0)	0	(0)	2	(12.5)
No response.	0	(9)	0	(0)	0	(0)	1	(6.25)	1	(6.25)
TOTAL	5	(31.25)	9	(56.25)	0	(0)	2	(12.5)	16	(100)

Percentages in parentheses

[1]One reporter feels his present work load restricts "beat" coverage.

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Other Assignments. Most respondents in this study have assignments on their newspapers in addition to covering education. The two most frequent responsibilities for these reporters other than the education beat are "special features" and "general news reporting." Seven respondents cited "specified types of news or departments" and six cited "editorial functions" as job responsibilities. Data in Table 24 reveal job assignments other than education. It will be noted that some respondents have more than one assignment in addition to education.

Membership in Groups. More than one respondent mentioned that the nature of the reporter's job (i.e., evening meetings to cover) sharply limits membership in formal groups and organizations. However, data in Table 25 indicate that six respondents (37.5 per cent) belong to the American Newspaper Guild (AFL-CIO). As the previous chapter indicated, reporters' source credibility attitudes toward given sources of education information are strongly affected by membership or non-membership in the newspaper union. For example, a reporter's union or non-union affiliation affects his receptivity to messages emanating from the local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate) as contrasted to messages emanating from the local NEA-MEA affiliate.

Table 24. Job Assignments Other than Education for Education Reporters of Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000. (N = 16)

Type of Assignment	Number of Reporters Having This Responsibility
Special features	11[1] (68.75)
General news reporting	10[2] (62.5)
Specified types of news or departments	7[3] (43.75)
Editorial functions	6[4] (37.5)
Advertising and promotion	0 (0)

Percentages in parentheses

[1]One reporter writes a syndicated weekly column for the eight Michigan newspapers in the Booth chain.

[2]Two reporters said they were assigned to general reporting in emergencies only.

[3]These seven specified assignments include the following: (1) city recreation and park board; (2) medicine; (3) recreation department and charity organizations; (4) marine and coast guard; (5) travel-tourist and resort; (6) fine arts; and (7) fine arts and local history.

[4]One reporter works one day a week on the city desk editing copy and laying out pages; another reporter does daily make-up; and a third reporter takes his turn at the copy desk and the state desk.

Table 25. Membership in Groups and Organizations of Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000 (N = 16)

	Number of Times Cited
Fraternal/Social	
Alumni associations	6
Masons	1
Elks	1
Country Club	1
Junior League	1
Fraternity	1
Sorority	1
Professional	
Education Writers Association	4
Sigma Delta Chi (journalism--men)	2
Press Club	2
Theta Sigma Phi (journalism--women)	1
Midwest Travel Writers Association	1
Public Affairs/Service	
Parent-Teachers Association	2
Junior Chamber of Commerce	1
Historical Society	1
Torch Club	1
Western Michigan Travel Association	1
Boy Scouts	1
American Heart Association	1
Planned Parenthood Association	1
Union	
American Newspaper Guild (AFL-CIO)	6
Veteran/Patriotic	
Reserve Officers Association	1

Table 25. Continued.

	Number of Times Cited
Religion	
Protestant	9
Roman Catholic	4
Jewish	0
"Liberal Protestant"	1
Unattached	1
No response	1
Religious (apart from affiliation)	
Board of Missions	1
Political	
Republican	4
Democrat	1
Independent	7
No response	4
Cultural/Esthetic	
Symphony Orchestral Association	3
Art Clubs	2
Great Books Club	1
Theater Group	1
Hobby/Sports	
Golf club	3
Bowling league	1
Bridge club	1
Dance group	1
Hunting	1
Baseball	1

Table 25. Continued.

	Number of Times Cited
Hobby/Sports	
Gardening	2
Skiing and tennis	1
Flying and sailing	1
Music (violin and piano)	1
Amateur radio/photography	1
Reading/listening to music	2
Miscellaneous	
Credit Union	7

In regard to political affiliation, only one respondent identified himself as a "Democrat," four said they were "Republican," and seven identified themselves as "independent." Religious affiliation included 10 Protestants (one respondent called himself a "liberal Protestant"), four Roman Catholics, and no Jews. Membership in "professional" activities appears very limited.

Only one reported cited membership in the Junior Chamber of Commerce; it appears that membership in the Chamber of Commerce is relegated more to executives on higher editorial levels.

All in all, as data presented in Table 25 indicate, reporters' memberships in formal organizations do not appear to be extensive in terms of total numbers.

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Readership of Publications. In two different sections of the questionnaire respondents were asked to identify publications they read. Data in Table 26 reveal responses given to the open-end question in Part I (i.e., to list three "newspapers" and three "magazines" read regularly). Data in Table 27 indicate readership responses to 21 publications (listed in Part II of Appendix A)according to a four-point scale (frequently, occasionally, very seldom, and never). These 21 publications include both professional educational publications and mass circulation magazines which have special sections devoted to education.

In Part I's open-end section (Table 26), it is significant to note that 14 respondents (87.5 per cent) said they read the Detroit Free Press. Michigan newspaper reporters included in this sample appear to consider the Free Press a highly important "significant other." Eight respondents (50 per cent) said they read the Detroit News, three (18.75 per cent) said they read the New York Herald-Tribune, and three (18.75 per cent) named The Wall Street Journal. The New York Times was cited by only one reporter (6.25 per cent). In the open-end magazine category, nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said they read Time magazine, seven (43.75 per cent) named Newsweek magazine, four (25 per

Table 26. Publications Read Regularly by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000. (N = 16)

Newspapers[1]	Number of Times Cited
The Detroit Free Press	14 Reporters
The Detroit News	8 Reporters
New York Herald-Tribune	3 Reporters
The Wall Street Journal	3 Reporters
The New York Times	1 Reporter
The Chicago Tribune	1 Reporter
The Chicago Daily News	1 Reporter
The Chicago Sun-Times	1 Reporter
The Grand Rapids Press	1 Reporter
The Royal Oak Tribune	1 Reporter
Magazines	
Time	9 Reporters
Newsweek	7 Reporters
Life	4 Reporters
NEA Journal	3 Reporters
Saturday Review	2 Reporters
Reporter	2 Reporters
Harpers	2 Reporters
Saturday Evening Post	2 Reporters
New Yorker	2 Reporters
MEA Journal	2 Reporters
Look	1 Reporter
Atlantic	1 Reporter
The Nation	1 Reporter
Readers' Digest	1 Reporter
AMA Journal	1 Reporter
Editor and Publisher	1 Reporter
School Management	1 Reporter

[1]Newspapers included in this table are papers other than the reporter's own newspaper.

Table 27. Frequency Which Certain Educational and Mass Circulation Publications Are Read by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000 (N = 16)

Name of Publication	Frequently		Occasionally		Very Seldom		Never	
AASA Newsletter	1	(6.25)	3	(18.75)	1	(6.25)	11	(68.75)
American School Board Journal	2	(12.5)	3	(18.75)	2	(12.5)	9	(56.25)
American School and University (formerly Overview)	1	(6.25)	3	(18.75)	3	(18.75)	9	(56.25)
American Teacher (AFL-CIO)	1	(6.25)	0	(0)	1	(6.25)	14	(87.5)
Education section of the New York Times	2	(12.5)	5	(31.25)	4	(25)	5	(31.25)
Education section of Newsweek magazine	5	(31.25)	7	(43.75)	1	(6.25)	3	(18.75)
Education section of Time magazine	12	(75)	2	(12.5)	1	(6.25)	1	(6.25)
Education section of the Saturday Review	2	(12.5)	8	(50)	2	(12.5)	4	(25)
Education Digest	0	(0)	4	(25)	2	(12.5)	10	(62.5)

Table 27. Continued.

Name of Publication	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
Educational Leadership	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (18.75)	13 (81.25)
Education U.S.A.	7 (43.75)	1 (6.25)	3 (18.75)	5 (31.25)
Elementary Principal	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	13 (81.25)
MEA Journal	13 (81.25)	1 (6.25)	0 (0)	2 (12.5)
Michigan Teacher (AFL-CIO)	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	13 (81.25)
Nation's Schools	2 (12.5)	3 (18.75)	3 (18.75)	8 (50)
NASSP Bulletin	1 (6.25)	0 (0)	2 (12.5)	13 (81.25)
NEA Journal	13 (81.25)	2 (12.5)	1 (6.25)	0 (0)
News of the Week (State Department of Public Instruction)	11 (68.75)	1 (6.25)	3 (18.75)	1 (6.25)
Phi Delta Kappan	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	13 (81.25)

Table 27. Continued.

Name of Publication	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
PTA Magazine	4 (25)	3 (18.75)	4 (25)	5 (31.25)
School Management	3 (18.75)	4 (25)	3 (18.75)	6 (37.5)
TOTAL	80 (23.81)	53 (15.78)	45 (13.39)	158 (47.02)

Percentages in parentheses

cent) listed Life magazine, and three (18.75 per cent) named the NEA Journal.

In Part II's closed-answer response to 21 publications (Table 27), Time magazine again showed high readership, with 12 respondents (75 per cent) saying they read Time "frequently." The Department of Public Instruction's News of the Week had 11 respondents (68.75 per cent) saying they read it "frequently," and Education U.S.A. had seven respondents (43.75 per cent) giving a similar response. Both the NEA Journal and the MEA Journal had "frequently" ratings of 81.25 per cent; it is highly probably, however, that the author's past identification with the MEA may have affected these high ratings. (To substantiate this supposition, the NEA Journal was cited by only three reporters and the MEA Journal by only two reporters in Part I's open-end section.)

Surprisingly, perhaps, the education section of the Saturday Review had only two responses of "frequently" (12.5 per cent) and eight responses of "occasionally" (50 per cent) --less than Time and Newsweek magazines but ahead of the New York Times' education section.

Attendance at Conventions. As data in Table 28 indicate, education reporters do not regularly attend educational conventions. Respondents were asked to rate

Table 28. Frequency of Attendance at Educational Conventions of Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000. (N = 16)

Title of Convention	Frequency of Attendance			
	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
Citizens Conference of the Department of Public Instruction	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	1 (6.25)	12 (75)
Representative Assembly of the Michigan Education Association	2 (12.5)	3 (18.75)	3 (18.75)	8 (50)
Convention of the Michigan Association of School Boards	2 (12.5)	0 (0)	2 (12.5)	12 (75)
Convention of the Michigan Congress of Parents and Teachers	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	4 (25)	11 (68.75)
Convention of the Michigan Federation of Teachers	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (37.5)	10 (62.5)
Convention of the Michigan Association of School Administrators	2 (12.5)	2 (12.5)	2 (12.5)	10 (62.5)

Table 28. Continued.

Title of Convention	Frequency of Attendance: Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
Convention of the American Federation of Teachers	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	2 (12.5)	13 (81.25)
Convention of the American Association of School Administrators	2 (12.5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	14 (87.5)
Convention of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	0 (0)	15 (93.75)
Convention of the National School Board Association	1 (6.25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (93.75)
Representative Assembly of the National Education Association	0 (0)	3 (18.75)	2 (12.5)	11 (68.75)
TOTAL	10 (5.68)	13 (7.39)	22 (12.5)	131 (74.43)

Percentages in parentheses

frequency of attendance at 11 major educational conventions according to a four-point scale (frequently, occasionally, very seldom, and never). Of 176 total possible responses, 131 (74.43 per cent) were in the "never attend" category. Moreover, 10 of the 11 conventions listed had "never attend" responses greater than 62 per cent. The one exception was the MEA Representative Assembly, where eight respondents (50 per cent) said they "never" attend. The highest number of reporters saying they "frequently" attend a given convention is two (12.5 per cent); four conventions are so designated (MEA Representative Assembly, MASB convention, MASA convention, and AASA convention). Three of these conventions (MEA, MASB, and MASA) are at the state level and one (AASA) is at the national level.

Summary and Conclusions

A summary of the major demographic characteristics of this population (and sample) of education reporters is as follows:

1. Of the 16 respondents for this study, 13 (81.25 per cent) were men. Nine (56.25 per cent) were men under the age of 50. Eight respondents (50 per cent) were under 40 years of age, and 12 (75 per cent) were under 50 years of age.

2. Twelve respondents (75 per cent) have earned a college degree or higher. Two respondents (12.5 per cent) have only a high school degree. English, the social sciences, and journalism were the major fields of study for the college graduates. Only one reporter (6.25 per cent) cited any college work in education courses.

3. Ten respondents (62.5 per cent) were being paid less than $9,000 annually, with four respondents (25 per cent) receiving less than $7,000 annually.

4. Respondents indicated a wide variety of previous work experiences. Retail selling, factory work, and public relations work were mentioned most frequently. Two respondents (12.5 per cent) said they had no other work experience other than newspaper reporting.

5. Nine respondents (56.25 per cent) have been employed in newspaper work for more than 15 years. Only two respondents (12.5 per cent) have been doing newspaper work for less than eight years. However, seven respondents (43.75 per cent) have been employed by their present newspaper for less than eight years. Significantly, ten respondents (62.5 per cent) have been assigned to the "education beat" for less than eight years, with eight respondents (50 per cent) assigned to cover education for less than four years.

6. Nine newspapers (56.25 per cent) have had specific persons assigned to cover education for 20 years or more, which tends to refute the idea that newspaper specialization in the area of education is of recent origin.

7. Eight respondents (50 per cent) had the title of "education reporter"; only two respondents (12.5 per cent) were designated as "education editors."

8. Only four respondents (25 per cent) devote 100 per cent of their time to covering education, although 12 respondents (75 per cent) devote more than 50 per cent of their time to the education beat. Only four respondents (25 per cent) said that the time they are able to devote to coverage of education is "very adequate," while nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said the time they are able to devote to education is "fairly adequate."

9. Most respondents assigned to the education beat appear to "enjoy" this assignment and find the work load "about right." Twelve respondents (75 per cent) said they "thoroughly enjoy this assignment"; only two respondents (12.5 per cent) said they "would prefer another journalistic assignment." Five respondents (31.25 per cent) said their work load was "too heavy" and nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said their work load was "about right."

10. Most respondents in this study have assignments on their newspapers in addition to covering education. In the order of frequency of mention, respondents cited these responsibilities: special features, general news reporting, specified types of news or departments, and editorial functions.

11. Respondents' memberships in formal organizations did not appear to be extensive in terms of total numbers. Membership in "professional" activities (press clubs and/or journalism organizations or fraternities) appears to be very limited. However, six respondents (37.5 per cent) said they belong to the American Newspaper Guild (AFL-CIO). Respondents indicated political affiliation as follows: one Democrat, four Republicans, seven independents, and four no responses. Religious affiliation included 10 Protestants, four Roman Catholics, and two no responses.

12. Education reporters appear to consider the Detroit Free Press and Time magazine as highly important "significant others." In the open-end section of Part I, 14 respondents (87.5 per cent) said they read the Detroit Free Press. Time magazine showed high readership in both the open-end section of Part I and the forced-choice section of Part II. In Part I, nine respondents (56.25 per cent)

said they read Time, and in Part II, 12 respondents (75 per cent) said they read Time "frequently."

13. Education reporters do not regularly attend educational conventions. Respondents were asked to rate frequency of attendance at 11 major educational conventions. Ten of these 11 conventions had "never attend" responses greater than 62 per cent. The one exception was the MEA Representative Assembly, where eight respondents (50 per cent) said they "never" attend. The highest number of reporters who said they "frequently" attend a given convention is two (12.5 per cent); four conventions were so designated (MEA Representative Assembly, convention of the Michigan Association of School Boards, convention of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, and convention of the American Association of School Administrators).

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF INTERVIEW DATA

In this chapter answers to eight open-end interview questions will be summarized and interpreted. Specifically, the eight questions listed in Appendix B will be analyzed in this section.

Advantages and disadvantages of structured questions were discussed in Chapter III. Recognizing the exploratory nature of this study and the need for additional data about the operational procedures of education reporters, it was decided that open-end questions would prove most fruitful for the purpose of this study. As Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook[1] pointed out in Chapter III, the questions and their order are predetermined in most open-end interviews, but the interviewer is permitted to use at his discretion such non-directive probes as "Won't you tell me more?", "What makes you think that...?", "Why?", "In what way...?", etc. The

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[1] Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, op. cit., p. 173.

interviewer's task, according to Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, is to encourage the respondent to talk freely and fully in response to the questions included in the interview schedule and to make a verbatim record of his replies. Assisted by a tape recorder, we attempted to follow this procedure in this study.

Compared to the simple process of tabulating the pre-coded responses of the poll-type interviews, the analysis of open-end interviews is difficult and complex. To interpret verbatim comments, it is necessary to devise a category system by which comments can be grouped for meaningful analysis. However, as Backstrom and Hursh[2] indicate, "the economy of a category system is not sufficient justification for sacrificing subtle meanings of the data. A common fault of sketchy categorical schemes is that the flavor and intensity of responses often are lost in the process of grouping them." Our approach in this study was to organize the data by clustering them on the basis of logical relationships, noting the significant consensus response trends.

It was mentioned previously that the Battle Creek respondent did not participate in the interview part of

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[2] Backstrom and Hursh, op. cit., p. 74.

this study, although he did answer the written questionnaire (Appendix A). By making three direct telephone calls to the Battle Creek respondent, it was possible to compile data for all 17 newspapers in the population, including Battle Creek, for interview questions 1, 2, and 4 in this chapter. Four interview questions (3, 5, 6, and 7) were answered by 16 respondents (all respondents except Battle Creek). One question (8) was answered by 14 respondents (all except Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, and Monroe).

We proceed now to an examination of the eight open-end interview questions (Appendix B).

Patterns of Educational Coverage

> Question 1: "Would you please describe how your newspaper is organized to cover education? Do you cover the intermediate district? Non-public schools? Higher education?"

For all 17 newspapers, the major assignment for all reporters who participated in this survey is to cover school board meetings. For all but one newspaper (Royal Oak), this involves giving the most time and space to covering activities of the local city board of education (i.e., the Bay City Times gives its chief emphasis to the Bay City board of education and Bay City public schools). The reporter for the Royal Oak Tribune says he has no single central district to

cover. Instead, this newspaper attempts to cover equally the 14 separate suburban school districts within the newspaper's circulation area. For the most part, reporters seem to be looking for "hard news" (appointments made, resolutions adopted, decisions approved, contracts awarded, teachers hired or fired, and so on).

The number of school districts which these 17 newspapers attempt to cover varies from 11 (Ann Arbor) to 120 (Benton Harbor) and 125 (both Detroit newspapers). The quality and quantity of coverage each of these 17 newspapers is able to give individual school districts within their circulation areas varies according to the newspaper's resources, interest, and initiative. Because of space and time limitations, many reporters confess that they concentrate on the local city district and cover other surrounding districts and all other education news on a "brush fire" basis--sending a reporter out to cover a story when an "issue" flares up.

Various patterns of coverage of suburban and outlying school districts are evident, however. With two exceptions (Jackson and Saginaw), in most instances other reporters (other than those assigned to the city "education beat") are assigned to cover school news emanating from suburban and

surrounding school districts; they do so as part of their over-all responsibility for covering specified geographic areas or specified political units. In other words, these reporters are responsible for covering all news--governmental, crime, education, etc.--which "happens" within their assigned geographic areas. Generally, therefore, education news occurring outside the central city district is covered on an area basis (i.e., political unit or geographic area) rather than on a topical basis (i.e., education or government). In some instances reporters covering suburban and area schools work out of the central newspaper offices. For example, in Kalamazoo three regular city-side reporters, working out of the Kalamazoo Gazette office, are assigned to each of the larger, outlying areas (Comstock, Parchment, and Portage City); their "beats" include township, city, and village activities--along with school events--in these areas. In Muskegon five general reporters (out of a seven-man staff) are each assigned to cover one school district (seven major school districts presently are in the Greater Muskegon area, which means that two districts "go by default"). In Pontiac, 25 separate school districts are divided among four area reporters who work out of the Pontiac Press office; these reporters cover all news within their respective geographic areas. Each Detroit newspaper (Free Press and

News) has four area correspondents covering all news--including education--within the Detroit suburban areas; about 125 separate school districts are involved in these four areas.

Four newspapers (Benton Harbor, Bay City, Flint, and Port Huron) have full-time reporters assigned to "bureaus" in outlying areas within their circulation limits. These reporters, who live and work away from the central office, are also responsible for covering all news--including schools--within their assigned areas. Benton Harbor has full-time bureaus in South Haven, Paw Paw, and St. Joseph.[3] Bay City's bureaus are in Bad Axe, Midland, Alpena, and Tawas; Flint's are in Clio, Fenton, and soon in Lapeer; and Port Huron's are in Algonac, Bad Axe, and Sandusky.

Part-time "stringers" or "area correspondents" are utilized by nine newspapers to cover all news--including education--within specified geographic areas (generally not the immediate suburban areas). For the most part, these stringers are not "professional" journalists, and the competency of their efforts was frequently condemned by the education reporters who participated in this survey.

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[3]See page 177 for an explanation of the joint ownership of the two newspapers in the twin cities of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph.

Occasionally, if a story "too big" for the stringer to handle "breaks" in one of these outlying districts, the newspaper will assign a regular full-time reporter to cover it (obviously, the full-time reporter going in to cover this kind of story is handicapped by limited background knowledge of the local situation). Generally, stringers phone in their stories (sometimes they mail them in) to the "state desk." Thus, the "state editor," not the education editor or education writer, is responsible for all stringer copy; he makes the "gatekeeping" decisions as to what goes in and what does not go in. A very frequent practice is for the newspaper to allocate a specified number of pages within the newspaper to a specified area, region, or zone. Under the general supervision of the state editor, news sent in or phoned in from these areas, regions, or zones is edited by area editors, regional editors, and zone editors. All news (except for major stories)--including school news--which is reported from these areas, regions, or zones appears on these special pages. For example, "area pages" appear in the Pontiac Press six days a week (not on Saturdays). Occasionally, these pages will consist almost entirely of education news, especially when school board elections and/or school millage or bonding elections are held. A frequent editorial device is to combine all school

news from an area under one label heading such as "Area School Elections" or "Area School News" with sub-headings identifying the individual school districts.

On 12 newspapers, the education reporter interviewed also was responsible for covering the intermediate school district. On three other newspapers, the reporter who had the "county beat" also covered the intermediate school district offices. On two newspapers, this responsibility was not clearly defined. With but two exceptions (Pontiac and Royal Oak--both newspapers cover the Oakland County Intermediate School District), most reporters noted that little news emanates from the intermediate district offices.

Coverage of non-public schools is also the responsibility of 15 education reporters[4] assigned to cover the central city's public schools. Nearly every reporter admitted that coverage of non-public schools was less comprehensive and that information was more difficult to obtain. Frequently cited as a handicap in reporting non-public school news (especially Roman Catholic schools) was the lack of centralized information channels; reporters complained that often they had to get desired data from individual

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[4]Not included are Monroe and Battle Creek.

parochial school principals and then combine these data to get over-all totals. Said one reporter: "It's all we can do to get the correct opening and closing dates for parochial schools." Another reporter (Newspaper No. 4) put it this way:

> The problem for parochial schools is that there isn't the centralized agency. If you want attendance figures or something like that, it's much harder to obtain them from parochial schools than for the public schools. With our 12 parochial schools, we have to go and ask the same question at each school. It's more time-consuming to get to the right person. They're willing to give us the information; it's just more of a mechanical job to do it.

Coverage of higher education news generally is the responsibility of the education reporter who has the city public school beat. This is true in every case where a local community college is located within the newspaper's primary circulation area. However, the Ann Arbor reporter who has the city's public school beat does not cover the University of Michigan, and the Lansing reporter who has the city's public school beat covers the community college but does not cover Michigan State University. In both these instances other reporters are assigned to cover the U-M and MSU. The Kalamazoo reporter who has the city's public school beat covers Nazareth College, but the newspaper's city hall reporter covers Kalamazoo College and Western Michigan

University. Delta College and Saginaw Valley College are covered by both the Bay City and Saginaw newspapers; MSU-Oakland University is covered by both the Pontiac and Royal Oak newspapers. Both Detroit newspapers attempt to cover the major higher education institutions in Michigan. The Detroit News education writer personally covers all five higher education institutions within the Detroit area; the News also has one reporter assigned to cover the U-M and MSU. The Detroit Free Press education writer (who works only two full days a week) unhappily admitted that she relies almost entirely upon the news released by the public relations' persons from the higher education institutions, although the Free Press does have a correspondent in Ann Arbor to check on the U-M and the Free Press's bureau in Lansing is supposed to cover MSU. Significantly, all of the eight Booth newspapers[5] will frequently print the same article relating to education in Michigan written either by one of the Booth bureau men in Lansing or by a reporter from one of the Booth papers who has a special interest in education problems.

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[5]An explanation of the Booth newspaper chain appears in the next section of this chapter on page 197.

Each Newspaper's Coverage Pattern. Believing that a brief description of each newspaper's unique coverage pattern for education would be helpful to identify problems and worthwhile practices and that no newspaper would have cause to become alarmed over being so identified, the following section begins an alphabetical summarization of all 17 newspapers' organizational methods in covering news of education.

Ann Arbor. "My regular assignment is to cover the Ann Arbor board of education meetings (three times a month) and to handle a Teen Page--actually it is a junior-senior high notes column--which we run once a week. Besides this, I am expected to have one feature on the public schools a month and any news that might come out of PTA meetings. News that comes out of the University of Michigan is handled by another reporter. We do cover the U-M very extensively, and that's why one reporter is assigned to cover this beat. A third reporter covers the Ypsilanti school board quite thoroughly and to a certain extent school news of other districts. The reporter who has the county beat covers the intermediate school district. We carry only a limited amount of school news from outlying districts. Except for Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, most of our school news is called in by stringers, but they are regular stringers who call in

any other news items. We don't have special stringers who cover only school news." Eleven separate school districts are covered by this paper (Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Willow Run, Saline, South Lyon, Manchester, Chelsea, Milan, Whitmore Lake, Clinton, and Lincoln).

Battle Creek. "Two public school systems (Battle Creek and Lakeview) receive most of my attention; I regularly attend their board meetings in person. I cover board meetings and most other news by telephone of three other public school districts (Pennfield, Harper Creek, and Springfield). The five parochial schools in the city receive casual coverage. I also am responsible for covering Kellogg Community College. Outside of Battle Creek, our regional department covers major news, through correspondents, of the high school districts in our circulation area, which comprises all of Calhoun county and portions of four adjacent counties. Instead of 'stringers,' we call them correspondents, and they have regular assigned responsibilities regarding regional news coverage, including school news. They never are used locally."

Bay City. "The education beat on this newspaper is relatively new (since 1961), and I am the only one who handles education news, except for days off, vacations, etc.

I have the responsibility of covering all of Bay county. We always attend meetings of the Bay City board of education and the two college boards (Delta College and the newly-created Saginaw Valley College) in person. The intermediate school district and the outlying districts of Essexville-Hampton, Bangor township, and Pinconning we cover intermittently by telephone. We should cover the suburban areas more, but we can't. Generally we talk to the superintendent or the president of the board of education. We have four area stringers on the payroll, and these four reporters are assigned to do general reportage--government, police, schools, and so forth--in their geographic areas (Bad Axe, Alpena, Midland, and Tawas). We also use stringers for general reporting in other areas; they are paid by the amount of work they do (generally by the column inch printed in the paper). These stringers are responsible to the state editor, and what we use, of course, is what he feels is important. Sports are really well covered. I don't think we get much education copy that way, but if they would just tip us off to something that is of interest, we would send out one of our salaried reporters to check on it."

Benton Harbor. "No one specific person is assigned to cover education by this newspaper. All our staff members

handle school news. An attempt is made to keep the same man on each school system for as long as possible. We have one reporter whose assignment is to cover the Benton Harbor school board regularly. We also have bureau men at key points in our own county and surrounding counties, and they cover the large K-12 districts in person. Our bureau men are located in South Haven, Paw Paw, and St. Joseph. Our situation is unique in that one publishing firm publishes two newspapers in this twin-city area--the St. Joseph Herald-Press (about 7,000 circulation) and the Benton Harbor News-Palladium (about 26,000 circulation). The Herald-Press operates, in effect, as a bureau for the News-Palladium in that its staff covers the St. Joseph board of education and Lake Shore, which is another large K-12 district in the immediate metropolitan area. In the counties in which these two papers circulate there are more than 120 school districts that we either cover completely or else cover as far as all their significant events are concerned. For routine-type things that are community-oriented, we rely generally on stringers who live in that area. These stringers will actually go to school board meetings and sit through them. Their stories are usually phoned in. Some of these stringers, of course, are very experienced. Some are not so good, and in those cases we sometimes will assign a staff man to go

out and cover their meetings during this period of crisis or construction or whatever it happens to be."

Detroit (Free Press). "As education writer for this newspaper, I work only two days a week--normally, Tuesdays and Wednesdays--which are chosen because the board of education usually meets on Tuesday. Theoretically, I should be covering all phases of education, and as far as the Free Press is concerned, that would go through the elementary schools, the high schools, the colleges, and everything. In practice, obviously, I can't do that. So I've concentrated almost entirely on the Detroit public schools because that in itself is a running story which should have full-time coverage without even worrying about the other beats. When I am not here, it falls to whomever happens to be available at the moment. A great deal comes by telephone to the rewrite desk. Sometimes if there is something that should be covered and I can't cover it, they'll send somebody out. Usually they try to send somebody who has covered the beat before; we have a very large collection of ex-education writers on this staff. It also can be somebody who has never officially covered the beat. The Free Press works with a pretty tight staff. Most of the people on this staff are expected to be able to cover just about any kind of story. Suburban school stories generally are covered by our sub-

urban correspondents. There are four of them; they have somebody downriver, somebody in the west suburbs, somebody in the north suburbs, and somebody in the south suburbs. They're expected to cover city hall and whatever else goes on. The net result is that people will come to me from some little school district that I've never heard of begging me to get something in the paper about their millage campaign because they can't seem to get any publicity for it. Besides a tight staff, we also have a tight paper, and we don't have room for a lot of things that are of interest to a certain group of people but are not of enough general interest to push aside something else slanted for everybody in our circulation area--which we consider bounded by Flint, Ann Arbor, and Mount Clemens. So we hope the local papers will take care of their people with their millage campaigns, school board elections, and that sort of thing. We do have 'zone' pages (under the supervision of zone editors) where a certain amount of space is directed to certain areas. Certain pages of the paper will have advertising from advertisers in certain areas, and sometimes one can get school news on those pages from school districts in those areas. In my opinion this is a very haphazard arrangement. There is no real systematic coverage of these local school issues--unless there is a great big fight or they kick a teacher out

for teaching evolution or that kind of thing. Then it naturally will receive a lot of publicity, but the day-to-day things which keep people in touch with what their school boards are doing does not get into our paper. Higher education is also a very touch-and-go operation. We actually count on the public relations people from the colleges to keep us in touch. The University of Michigan simply floods us with material; it's hard to pick the wheat from the chaff. We do have a stringer on the Ann Arbor campus, however, who is supposed to evaluate this stuff so we aren't two days late in coming out with a really good story. If we see something of general interest coming up on the Michigan State University campus, we'll try to get somebody to cover it. Usually the anticipation now is that somebody from our Lansing bureau will cover MSU events, but frequently somebody from the Lansing bureau doesn't. I'm also responsible for the intermediate school office, but very little news generates from there."

Detroit (News). "I take care of the Detroit board of education, which is the single biggest source of our education news. I'm also responsible for the parochial schools in the archdiocese which covers these counties. Naturally, we don't have much news outside of Detroit or the

type of news that applies to the diocese as a whole. I also cover the intermediate school district. On the college level, I take care of Wayne State University and the University of Detroit, which are the two largest; Marygrove and Mercy, which are girls' schools; Detroit Institute of Technology; and Lawrence Institute of Technology--all five of which are either in the city or quite close to the city. Outside of Detroit at the college level, we have a man who takes care of Michigan State University and the University of Michigan, but he works for the state editor and is assigned. Now this doesn't preclude me from doing stories at any of these colleges which I want to do and requires only that I tell the state desk that I am going to do them. On the suburban school districts, generally we do not cover any school board meetings as a regular practice unless some particular issue comes up. We have our suburban area divided into four segments, each of which is covered by an individual reporter who works out there all the time. This man generally covers the school issues that come up, as well as everything else--crime, government, etc. Altogether the total number of school districts is about 125. Thus with these 125 districts divided among the four reporters, each man has quite a few to take care of. Here again I am

not precluded from doing stories in these districts if I want to. Many times the suburban reporter and I both will do stories on a school development--the suburban man might do a 'hard news' story and I might do a background story on the same thing. We don't have any regular set-up for contacts outstate with the schools, although we do have a whole system of stringers on our state desk who inform us on matters that might pertain to schools. This works much the same way that our suburban coverage does."

Flint. "It's a complicated situation here. For the Flint school district alone there are two of us who cover education. The reason I checked 75 per cent of my time devoted to education is that I work one day a week on the city desk as a sort of assistant city editor--so I leave my beat for that day. But we have a young lady here who works full-time on the schools. I used to have the job that she has now until about two years ago when we did some internal switching. We divide up the schools. I cover the board of education meetings (twice a month) and most of the things from the administrative levels. I'm very close to the superintendent and his staff and the coordinators and consultants in the administrative building. I also cover Flint Junior College, the Flint College of the University of Michigan, and the intermediate school district. Actually

the young lady and I work very closely together. She covers classroom activities (adult education, enrichment classes, and so on) and edits our weekly school page. She also covers the PTA's, the Child Study Clubs, and parent groups. Roughly, there have been two of us on this assignment as long as I've been here (about 11 years) with some varying changes in the internal set-up here. The Mott Foundation is a big thing here in Flint, and we both have responsibilities for that. Outside the city we have what we call our regional departments which cover all the suburban schools in Genesee county and parts of neighboring counties. Two reporters work full-time out of our office here; they cover all the news in these suburban areas, including education. Recently we have also opened up two bureaus; we've put a full-time man in Clio, which is in the northern part of the county, and another full-time man in Fenton, in the southern part of the county. We also have been grooming a man to send over to Lapeer to open a third full-time bureau there. These men will cover the school activities in those areas as well as everything else. Actually, there are now six of us covering schools in this area. Then, in addition, we have a couple of specialists. For example, our art-music-and-drama editor covers school activities quite frequently."

Grand Rapids. "I cover the Grand Rapids board of education and the city's public and parochial schools. Occasionally, I cover some of the suburban schools, but in a city this size it is too much to cover them all. In addition to Grand Rapids, which receives the bulk of our coverage, we give major attention to nine suburban school districts (Comstock Park, Forest Hills, Godfrey-Lee, Godwin, Kelloggsville, Kenowa Hills, Kentwood, Northview, and Wyoming). The intermediate school board is covered by the reporter on the county beat, but we don't follow it as closely as we do the city district or some of the suburbs. We use stringers for outlying school districts, but mostly for sports. One man handles most of the outlying districts, but we don't give them very much coverage."

Jackson. "Basically, I'm the only one on this staff assigned to cover education. My beat includes the Union (Jackson) school board and administrative offices, the city's parochial schools, the intermediate school office, the community colleges, the Jackson Education Association, and coverage--as best as possible--of the surrounding school districts in this county and adjacent counties. The city schools are covered extensively, but the other schools in the county are handled poorly. For the most part information

from these outlying districts is called in. News is reported late, incompletely, and inaccurately. I try to work directly through the superintendents as much as possible. However, even such basic things as school board meetings are reported in rather hit-and-miss fashion. Much as we would like to have them reported regularly, we haven't been able to work out a schedule with the schools to have them reported--by telephone--with any great success. It seems to me that the work of the intermediate school district is a little different--more of a continuing process--and a bit more difficult to pick out high points such as this is being done or that is being done. As a result, I try to contact them regularly just to see how things are progressing, but they aren't covered nearly as extensively as the city school district is."

Kalamazoo. "I am a full-time reporter assigned to education. My beat includes covering the Kalamazoo board of education in person and a regular check of administrative offices. I also am responsible for covering the Catholic school system and the private schools--in this city, the Christian schools. I also cover Nazareth College, a four-year Catholic college for women. Another reporter--the city hall reporter--covers Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College. He covers the WMU board meetings in person,

but we do not cover board meetings in person at Kalamazoo College or Nazareth College because these are private institutions. However, our editor is a member of the Kalamazoo College board, and he keeps us very well informed. Regular city-side reporters who work out of the Kalamazoo office are assigned to each of the larger, closer outlying areas (Comstock, Parchment, and Portage City). Their beats include township, city, or village activities along with school activities in these areas. Often they will cover school board meetings in person. Outside Kalamazoo county, school news is covered by the state desk. Coverage includes five other counties besides Kalamazoo county. We have a two-man state desk here and about 50 correspondents who live in these areas and who are supposed to call up the morning after school board meetings. On this newspaper there has been some question about coverage of the intermediate school office. I am officially assigned, but many of the intermediate school board meetings conflict with the Kalamazoo school board schedule so the county building reporter has been covering some of the intermediate district meetings."

Lansing. "The education beat to which I am assigned has not firmed itself up yet. This beat originally encompassed two beats--the county government and the circuit

courts on the one hand and the Lansing school district on the other. It has been handled this way for a number of years, up until this year when the management decided to make education a separate beat. Because of the quantity of education news that was coming out, they decided to assign one full-time person to this beat. The county beat was separated and given to another reporter. Specifically, my beat, as it now stands, encompasses the Lansing school district, Waverly school district, the intermediate school district, Lansing Community College, and all of the area non-public schools. My assignment also involves writing on such state-wide issues as the recent law suit filed on the school bus law here in Lansing--also issues such as prayers in public schools and things like that. These are issues not necessarily confined just to the Lansing school district. Part of one reporter's assignment is to cover the East Lansing school board. Another reporter covers Michigan State University on almost a full-time basis. These two reporters also cover the East Lansing city government on an alternating basis. A third reporter handles three immediate school districts--Okemos, Holt, and Haslett. Three other outlying districts--Potterville, Webberville, and Williamston--have been handled by a 'roving' reporter who covers them for the state desk. Three other school districts in Ingham county--

Leslie, Mason, and Stockbridge--are handled by stringers who work with the state editor. They phone their stories in directly to him, and they go on the state page. Thus I have no responsibility for these stories. Other school districts in Clinton and Eaton counties are also covered by part-time stringers. All of these stories also go on the state page. Normally, offices of the State Department of Public Instruction are covered by reporters assigned to the State Capitol buildings. This process of reorganization of our newspaper's coverage of education just started within the last several months. The possibility exists that I may be handling more school districts than I do right now. I don't know how far this is going to be expanded."

Monroe. "This newspaper covers 13 school districts within the county, plus about five other surrounding school districts. Only the Monroe board of education is covered regularly in person. Coverage of the other districts--usually board actions--is via telephone following the board meetings. Almost every editorial employee on this staff covers education at one time or another; we don't specialize too much. Generally, however, two reporters do the greatest share of education reporting."

Muskegon. "My own area of responsibility is the Muskegon school board, largest of the 13 districts in the

Greater Muskegon area, and the Muskegon County Community College. This is one of a number of assignments that I have as a general assignment reporter and feature writer. The balance of our educational coverage is handled by other reporters in relation to the political unit of their own responsibility. In other words, the man covering the city of Muskegon Heights covers the Muskegon Heights schools, the Norton township man covers the Mona Shores school board, and so on for North Muskegon, Reeths-Puffer, Oakridge, and Orchard View. The Muskegon metropolitan area covers four incorporated cities and three major townships. Within these seven communities much of our staff time is devoted just to the day-to-day happenings of the so-called 'catastrophe beat'--the courts, police department, and fire department for each of these units. As a matter of expediency, the reporter assigned to the political unit handles the schools as well. From the point of view of educational coverage, I think it's a faulty arrangement because we have no co-ordinated approach to the total educational problems of this area, which overlap in so many instances. At this point we have five reporters (out of a seven-man staff) each handling one school district. The other districts go by default because we don't have the manpower to staff them. We cover

them on what amounts to a 'brush-fire' basis--if something flares up in the district, we throw a reporter in until that immediate crisis is over. Obviously, he doesn't do a competent job because he is not backgrounded in the problems of the district. He goes in long enough to skim the surface and then do a superficial story. My own feeling is that there's going to have to be room on a newspaper for an education writer who embraces the whole field of education and understands the problems of each board and how they relate to each other. Then when consolidation-merger proposals are in the offing, one man will be conversant with the total problems and can do a good job of translating them to the voters in each district. As it stands now, our emphasis is out of proportion. What may be an important story in one district to the man covering it might boil down to a couple of paragraphs in an education writer's story in relationship to the bigger problems of the major districts. The surrounding hinterland filters through our state editor--basically from stringers; this includes Fruitport, Whitehall, and Montague--communities within a 30-mile radius of Muskegon. After board meetings stringers will call in or send in written copy. Our state coverage set-up--by state I'm referring to our regional coverage within our circulation area--is weak because a majority of

our stringers are not particularly competent news analysts. They're housewives, mail clerks, and occasionally a public official in a county office who corresponds on a part-time basis. We get spotty coverage because in these small communities--often as not--our stringers are emotionally involved in one or another side of any school question which comes up. Flavored copy is the result. They're not professional newspaper people and are not objective in their reporting. When public officials are used as stringers, we get their political philosophy in their copy. The man who covers the county building also deals with the intermediate school district."

Pontiac. "I cover the city school district which covers Pontiac and portions of neighboring townships. In addition, I cover MSU-Oakland University and the county intermediate district, which has charge of an extensive special education program and furnishes educational consultants in other areas. I faithfully attend board meetings of both the city and intermediate boards. Our school page is edited by a women's page reporter. The other school districts in our circulation area are covered by our area news staff, which consists of four reporters who cover everything in their political areas such as township boards, school boards, police, and any other news that might come

out of a particular area. In other words, they cover it on an area basis, rather than on a topic basis. These four area reporters work out of this central office, and they have area pages which run every day of the week except Saturday--six days a week. Their stories run on these area pages, unless it is something exceptional--for instance, crime news makes page one particularly. In our circulation area there are about 25 school districts which we cover (out of about 30 in the county). These 25 districts are split up among the four area reporters within their respective coverage areas. In addition, Waterford township, adjacent to Pontiac, is covered by another reporter on the same basis as the area news page reporters cover their areas, although his stuff goes in the regular paper. We have no stringers on school news. In covering these outlying districts, reporters are in contact with the superintendents, and they periodically cover board meetings. They check in advance to see what is coming up at board meetings, and if something looks particularly newsworthy, they are apt to show up at the meeting. Otherwise, they'll call the superintendent the morning after the meeting. On this newspaper we are all classified as 'general assignment reporters,' and we are subject to cover anything that might happen at a given time.

However, I don't think there has been an actual instance of the reporter assigned to the education beat--myself for the past year-and-a-half--being called off an education story to cover something else. Theoretically, it could happen. For example, when a murder happens, everybody works on it--whether it's the actual covering of it or not."

Port Huron. "I cover the city board meetings. I formerly covered the county board meetings, too, but reorganization has reduced their responsibilities so much that we don't favor that any more. We don't cover the intermediate board meetings in person any more, which are very long and involved, because gradually they had very little news interest in them that we couldn't get by telephone or by letter from the superintendent. The intermediate district does very little other than its special education program. The outlying school districts are covered by other full-time local and bureau reporters who are responsible for getting all the news from their assigned geographic areas. In addition to Port Huron, other school districts which we cover include East China township, Algonac, Yale, Capac, Sandusky, and other districts in Sanilac, Huron and Tuscola counties and parts of Lapeer and Macomb counties. For example, one regular reporter from our office covers

from Marysville on down through Marine City. We also have bureau men who live in Algonac, Bad Axe, and Sandusky, and they cover everything within their respective areas--schools included. Actually the only thing I cover is the city here--public and non-public schools, but we all tie in together on the thing."

Royal Oak. "One hundred per cent of my time is spent in writing education news. My assistant devotes anywhere from 25 to 75 per cent of her time to education, depending on the work load and the amount of events to be covered. We don't have any single district which would be called a central district such as the central metropolitan district of Detroit, or even the Royal Oak school district, for that matter. We cover 14 school districts on an equal basis within our circulation area (Avondale, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Berkley, Clawson, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Lamphere, Madison, Oak Park, Royal Oak, Troy City, Southfield, and Warren). Our newspaper's circulation is concentrated in these 14 districts. We go where the news is. For example, if there is a millage election in one of our 14 districts and that's the top news of the week, we give more emphasis to that. This is based on how we judge the news. In covering board meetings of these 14 districts, which we usually don't attend in person, we call the

superintendent the next morning, ask him what happened at the meeting, and usually we rely upon his report. If we doubt the accuracy of the story we may be getting or if it requires checking with another source who is more familiar with a certain subject than the superintendent is, then we will check this source too. It's quite a comprehensive job to attempt to cover an entire board meeting in 20 minutes of telephone conversation perhaps, but we have refined our techniques to do this. The telephone is our leg man. We talk to each superintendent or one of his assistants at least once every week--usually on Friday--on the phone. We ask about all the meetings which are going to be held the next week and any other things that they know are coming up. I also cover two community colleges and Oakland University (MSU). We can't devote as much time to this, but we keep our eyes on them. I keep a close tab on the Oakland County Intermediate School District, especially the central offices because a lot of education news emanates from there. We have solid PTA coverage, but this is done by another beat. I don't handle a single PTA story. We don't use stringers, except for high school 'correspondents' who send copy for the Student Affairs Page."

Saginaw. "I devote almost 100 per cent of my time to covering education news. Obviously, my chief assignment

is to cover the Saginaw board of education and the administrative offices. My beat also includes Delta College, Saginaw Valley College, and the intermediate school district. We circulate in eight counties, and, in effect, cover all school districts in those counties. I don't know how many total school districts there are. Saginaw county alone has about 25. There are 10 K-12 districts in this county, and it's physically impossible to cover all the board meetings. Whenever a problem develops in any of these school districts, we always try to cover it. This is getting it a little bit late. And if there's a problem, you're not going to hear about it from the superintendent anyway. I will see the principals of our two big high schools (Saginaw High and Arthur Hill) at least once a week. I'll see other principals and classroom teachers depending upon what kind of story I'm working on. I don't just wander into those places to pass the time of day. If I have a specific problem, I will go to them."

Use of Bureaus and Wire Services

Question 2a: "How does your newspaper cover education news that breaks in Lansing? Is a special person from your staff assigned to cover all developments in Lansing or do you rely primarily or exclusively on the wire services? Both the

Associated Press and United Press International or just one? If just one, which one?"

Question 2b: "Who makes the decision whether or not to use wire copy relating to education? Are you ever consulted on the use of this wire copy? If so, by whom and under what conditions?"

Coverage of education news that "breaks" in Lansing or Washington, D.C., is generally the responsibility of "bureau men" or the wire services. Reporters assigned to bureaus or wire services are generally "political" reporters who will cover news relating to education only when "politics" and "education" both are involved. Of the 17 Michigan daily newspapers included in this survey, 12 are serviced by bureau reporters in Lansing and Washington, D.C.

Of high significance is the fact that eight[6] of these 17 Michigan newspapers are "official" members of the Booth newspaper chain, while a ninth newspaper (Detroit News) could be considered an "unofficial" member of the Booth organization. The eight "official" members of the Booth chain include the newspapers in Ann Arbor, Bay City, Flint, Grand Rapids, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, and

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[6] A ninth Michigan newspaper (Ypsilanti Press) also is owned by the Booth organization; it was not included in this study as its circulation is less than 20,000.

Saginaw. The Detroit News should be classified in the "unofficial" category because ownership of this newspaper is actually within the Booth family, although interlocking directorships are involved and the paper is not publicly identified as a "Booth paper." The Booth newspapers maintain a bureau of four full-time reporters in Lansing to cover the Capitol, the Legislature, state offices, and anything else of state-wide interest. The Booth papers also have one man assigned to Washington, D.C. Copy from the Booth bureaus comes over the AP wire at specially-designated times for the affiliated newspapers.

Both Detroit newspapers maintain their own separate bureaus in Lansing and Washington, D.C. The Detroit News has three full-time men assigned to Lansing (as well as having the opportunity to tap Booth resources, which it seems reluctant to do). The number of reporters assigned to the Detroit Free Press bureau in Lansing varies from two to five depending on whether or not the Legislature is in session. The News has three men covering Washington, D.C., and the Knight newspaper chain, of which the Detroit Free Press is a member, has two men assigned to Washington, D.C.

Two other Michigan newspapers, Lansing and Battle Creek, belong to the Federated Publications, Inc., chain, which also includes daily newspapers in Indiana. Serving

in a "bureau" capacity, the Lansing State Journal supplies news of statewide significance--including political-education news--to its sister publication in Battle Creek. Federated Publications also maintains a one-man bureau in Washington, D.C.

The five remaining Michigan newspapers included in this survey (Benton Harbor, Monroe, Pontiac, Port Huron, and Royal Oak) do not maintain bureaus in either Lansing or Washington, D.C. They are forced to rely exclusively upon the wire services for "breaking" news from state and federal capitals. However, two of these five newspapers--Benton Harbor and Monroe--subscribe only to the AP wire services, which means that only one channel of state and national news presently is open to the two smallest Michigan dailies included in this survey. The other 15 Michigan dailies included in this survey subscribe to both the AP and UPI wire services, and, as noted above, 12 of these newspapers also have access to bureau copy emanating from Lansing and Washington, D.C.

Education reporters for the eight Booth newspapers noted that they generally rely upon the wire services for major news breaking in Lansing or Washington, D.C., and upon their own bureaus more for localizing or sidelight items--interpretations, analyses, etc. As one reporter (Newspaper

No. 4) puts it:

> There's no point in our bureaus duplicating what we know the two regular wire services will be handling. Where there is duplication, we tend to favor our bureau copy, but this is not a hard and fast rule. It depends upon how well it is written, how understandable it is, the length, and so on.

Another reporter (Newspaper No. 10) observed:

> When we have a major news story breaking, we usually take the AP story, the UPI story, and the Booth story--sort of side by side--read them all, compare them, and run the one we think is best. We try to use Booth copy because we feel that this is one thing we can give our readers that non-Booth papers can't.

Only on very rare occasions does the education reporter personally go to Lansing (no reporter ever mentioned going to Washington, D.C.) to cover an education story. Answers to specific questions are obtained most often via long distance telephone calls or by correspondence--either through contacts with the wire services and/or bureaus (who will do the leg work in trying to track down answers) or directly through news sources, such as the State Department of Public Instruction, Michigan Education Association, and Michigan Congress of Parents and Teachers. Reporters for the Detroit News and the Saginaw News, both of whom devote 100 per cent of their time to covering education news, said they go to Lansing to cover breaking news when it affects their respective areas.

Decisions on Usage. Decisions to use wire copy pertaining to education are almost exclusively left up to the wire or telegraph editors. Education reporters say they are most often consulted about the use of wire copy when attempts to localize it seem desirable. For example, one reporter (Newspaper No. 4) summed it up this way:

> Ordinarily, the wire editor gets first crack at all the wire news. He and his associates make all the routine decisions. I am consulted quite frequently on wire copy pertaining to education if there's any local implication. For instance, if Flint, Fenton, or Davison are mentioned in any wire story, it goes to the city editor automatically. Then the city editor will bring it to the appropriate reporter. If it's education, they bring it to me or one of my associates. Nine times out of ten, it will need a little local expansion. We either know from our own background or get someone on the phone. Then we're perfectly free, and this is what we usually do, to rewrite the whole story and perhaps not even give the wire services credit for it, depending on how much of their stuff we use. Perhaps all we have to do is just bring Flint up into the lead. But we are usually consulted on wire copy when local educational issues are involved.

A variation on this practice was cited by a Detroit reporter:

> The first decision about AP or UPI copy is made by a wire editor who decides whether to throw it out or give it to another editor. Then a news editor makes the final decision in co-operation with the city editor about whether or not to use it. Very often we'll localize wire copy, in which case the wire copy is handed over to me and I'll contact the appropriate persons to add what we need to know about it. This will happen about once a month roughly.

> Occasionally I am consulted by the city editor on whether or not we should use a given wire story. I'm expected to know whether a given story really represents a major news piece or not.

The other Detroit reporter is asked to evaluate "feature" wire news. He said:

> I am frequently consulted by the copy editor if a story comes in from AP or UPI of a feature type--not of a news type. He'll ask me if it's news, if it's important, and how much space should they give it. This is a kind of advisory capacity.

Wire stories with a special "impact" can influence handling of wire copy locally. As the Bay City reporter explained:

> When Grand Valley College in Grand Rapids became a four-year college while Delta College here was being spurned, everything that happened at Grand Valley became interesting here. The wire editor and city editor would consult me frequently to see if they wanted to develop wire copy any more locally or run the story just as it came over the wire.

Generally, however, basic decisions of whether or not to use wire copy on any subject are the prerogative of the wire editor, mainly because of the mechanical nature of his job. These decisions are generally made "on-the-spot" without too much consultation with other staff members. "Generally," one reporter commented, "if wire copy reaches me, I would be doing some local angle on it and probably end up rewriting it anyway." Other reporters observed

that unused wire copy pertaining to education will frequently end up on their desk with the implied--but unspoken--suggestion that a story on the subject should be developed with a local angle.

Contact with News Sources

Question 3: "What sources do you feel are your best sources of education information and why?"

As indicated in Chapter IV, the local public superintendent of schools is the most frequently contacted source of education information and his source credibility is high across all three types. Thus the importance of the superintendent's role in creating harmonious school-press relations is obvious. For most reporters, the superintendent is the first and foremost source of information, and a quote from the superintendent is an absolute "must." Two reporters described the superintendent's key role as follows:

Newspaper No. 6

If I want the official picture of an event, let's say a budget or a spending policy or a controversial school program, I wouldn't be satisfied with the public relations' slant on it. I would want to ask the superintendent his views directly.

Newspaper No. 16

The board of education ordinarily is only as good as its superintendent. While boards of education are supposed to be policy-making boards, they are not that,

in fact, at all. They merely dispose what the superintendent proposes. He's a professional; he's a man who is aware of all developments--the old things that have been tried and proved true or discarded. A school board not willing to listen to an intelligent administrator can destroy a school system. In general, successes of these boards are attributable directly to the superintendent in charge. He's our best source for information.

Other reporters, however, noted that certain staff members are qualified to answer certain specific questions. Four examples are as follows:

Newspaper No. 8

Sometimes your news source is "anyplace you can get it in a hurry." But the general rule is to use the official responsible for this or that particular area, and, of course, I follow this as a rule.

Newspaper No. 10

Our local public schools have divided responsibility between the superintendent, who basically is in charge of personnel and curriculum, and the assistant superintendent, who is in charge of finances. These are my main sources of information. The board has given them complete authority to speak directly to the press without going through the membership of the board. So I deal regularly, frequently, and very satisfactorily with these two men for any matters of school questions other than policy, which, of course, comes from the board itself.

Newspaper No. 12

We rely mostly on the school staff--those who are directly concerned. We don't want to quote the public relations man as speaking for the administration, for himself, or anyone else. On finance, there's one real good source--the fiscal officer. I don't have to worry about him giving me any sweet story. The administrative assistant is also a good source. We also have a fine working relationship with the superintendent.

Newspaper No. 9

One of my best contacts is an administrative assistant to the superintendent. This system is organized around the superintendent, an assistant superintendent, and a third person in the main office who bears the title of administrative assistant. He is a young man who seems to know lots about lots of things--and has complete files. He has been a teacher in the school system and carries out special assignments for the superintendent. He has been very co-operative in helping me get information when I need it, especially when the superintendent is not available. I usually try the superintendent first on regular policy matters. He is very co-operative about returning my telephone calls or being there when I tell his secretary that I'll call back. One of my best sources for facts and figures is the business manager, who is able to discuss all types of millage and tax problems with me. He is able and willing to help me understand them. The public relations woman is sought out only on rare occasions; she's tapped for what the PTA program will be on Thanksgiving or something like that.

The superintendent's inaccessibility has created problems of communication in a number of Michigan cities. One reporter from a community of 100,000 said he seldom contacted the local superintendent as a source of information after a number of years due to the superintendent's inaccessibility. This reporter said he generally contacted the two assistant superintendents instead, ignoring the superintendent as much as possible.

One of the Detroit reporters explained why the superintendent normally would be the last person contacted for information:

Normally, the superintendent would be the last person I would try to contact for two or three reasons. In a school system as large as Detroit there are nine assistant superintendents who are much more knowledgeable in their special fields than the superintendent is likely to be. Granted, he is a public servant and is supposed to be available to the public. Nonetheless, I don't think the press has any right to expect the mayor, the superintendent, or the president of the Ford Motor Company to drop everything and speak to them exactly when they want to be spoken to. The superintendent should not be inaccessible, but he doesn't have to be instantaneously available. Besides, you don't get as good an answer from him very often. So I would go to one of the assistant superintendents. I've gotten to know this school system well enough that very often I know who is directly responsible for a particular phase of the operation, and I go directly to them. You are always better off working directly with the individuals involved than working through a public relations person. In the first place, you're just losing time because they usually have to relay your question to the individual anyway and then call you back. So why don't you call them in the first place. Calling the public relations person helps to this extent--sometimes you don't know who in the organization you should call, and sometimes--for instance, if I'm trying to get ahold of the superintendent for something--it helps to call the public relations person to tell him I'm trying to contact the superintendent. What I'm going to ask this PR person depends on whether or not I want him to tip the superintendent off as to what I'm after. If it's just a matter of information, I'll tell the PR person in advance so the superintendent can be prepared to answer the question. If it's something I don't want him to prepare himself to answer, then I'll just tell the PR person that I'm trying to reach the superintendent and that I'm leaving messages all over for him to call me at the earliest opportunity. I have never had any trouble in getting the superintendent when I needed him. I have the advantage of a 4:30 deadline, so I've got all day to track him down, which is a help.

Significantly, this same Detroit reporter said her best source of information is the president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO):

> When I want to know what's actually going on in the schools, I find that my best source of information is the president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers. She knows and she won her election against the Detroit Education Association that way--by knowing what's really going on. Talk about being accessible, she's apparently in constant contact with all the members she's got because she can tell you right down to the minute what's going on in the individual schools. You can call up the Detroit Education Association, and they'll say: "Well, we haven't heard too much about that." But the DFT president is a very good source as far as what's actually happening in the schools. I find that people high up in the administration don't know too much about what's going on.

Other reporters identified specific individuals as being primary sources of information for specific topics. For example, the Kalamazoo reporter said one of her best sources of information on Western Michigan University is the president of the State Board of Education, who lives in Kalamazoo. The Port Huron reporter said his primary source for information on state legislation affecting education is the state representative from the Port Huron area. He gave this description:

> We have Rep. Raymond Wurzel right here in Port Huron, who is the chairman of the House Education Committee, and we often get telephone calls from him. We can get questions answered by him anytime we want. When something happens in the State Legislature with regard to education, he calls me up. In fact, he

> called me at home when the state aid and the K-12 bills went through. He called me up at my house to tell me to be sure that we'd have it in the paper the next day--even before the wire services would have the story on the wire.

Reporters often emphasized that they are interested primarily in "local" copy and that they rely primarily--if not exclusively--upon the wire services for education stories emanating from state and national levels. The strong emphasis upon local sources was pointed out by one reporter (Newspaper No. 2) as follows:

> Practically all the copy that is written here is local copy. So in trying to assess who your primary sources would be, it's difficult to say because it depends entirely on the story. As far as contacting state or national sources is concerned, we very seldom do. We go along with the wire services and sort of take what we get. Unless we were trying to relate a ready-made wire story to the local situation, I wouldn't even be consulting any source really. We'd use the stories just as they came over the wire.

Coverage of school board meetings is a--if not "the"--riority item for all education reporters. Interviews with education reporters in this survey revealed significant tterns of behavior in the selection of quotable sources information at these meetings. It is apparent that the tors of source credibility and "significant others" play arge role in the shaping of news stories emanating from rd meetings. Following are two examples of how source libility affects the reporter's shaping of news copy:

Newspaper No. 12

> Every year three newcomers are elected to the nine-member board of education. These newcomers are of little use as news sources--with one exception. A vice president of a local manufacturing company was elected to the board last year. He caught on quickly to the financial aspects; he even represents the school board on the County Tax Allocation Board. He is articulate, direct, and likeable--and usually is very quotable.

Newspaper No. 9

> In the board's tax discussions I listen more to what the certified public accountant says than to what the housewife says--even though they both may know what they're talking about.

An example of how reporters give special attention to the "swing man" in covering highly important stories (especially the allocation of the 15 mills) emanating from the County Tax Allocation Board was cited by another reporter (Newspaper No. 7):

> I try to pick the quotes from the people who can follow through with action. For example, _____ of the County Tax Allocation Board is the chairman, and he's also the "swing man." We have a five-man board--two from the schools and two from the county government. Quite obviously, they're going to vote for their special interests, and the way the chairman votes is going to determine the split. So what he says carries more weight than anybody else. A reporter must know the people at a meeting that he covers because somebody can make a wild statement, and it doesn't mean anything. Whereas when a person like the chairman of the County Tax Allocation Board or the president of the school board makes a wild statement, it can mean a lot. Knowing the political forces at work within the schools is probably the most important thing to know if you're going to cover the schools.

In some cases where reporters do not attend school board meetings in person, they rely upon telephone calls to the superintendent the following day to obtain information for a story. Obviously, this practice allows the superintendent to selectively perceive the events that occurred at the board meeting and to give the reporter a selected summary of board action. This procedure is generally accepted, but one reporter (Newspaper No. 8) noted that he isn't always satisfied with the superintendent's telephone report:

> In covering board meetings which we don't attend in person we call the superintendent the next morning, ask what happened at the meeting, and generally we rely upon his report. If we have any reason to doubt the accuracy of his information or if it requires checking with another source who is more familiar with a certain subject than the superintendent is, then we will check that source, too.

Reporters are quick to point out that news sources may be highly credible in the information that is given out, but that "omitted" information may force the reporter to assess a given situation inaccurately and possibly to write inaccurate stories. Reporters gave these two illustrations:

Newspaper No. 2

> In evaluating possible news sources for credibility and accuracy, one must recognize (a) their bias, which is tremendous in some cases, and (b) the information that they omit as well as

the information they can tell you--the facts they give you may be perfectly true. But, for instance, you can ask the NEA how many elections they have won lately, and they'll tell you how many elections they have won--but they don't tell you how many they lost. If you go to them for specific information, you should consider your source and its reliability. I consider the NEA and MEA totally reliable in the area of statistics and that sort of thing; I think they perform a great service there. Most sources in that respect are reliable. You ask them a question, and they'll give you an answer--and it's usually right. There's hardly anybody who just takes a guess. But when you ask them a loaded question, then that's a different story.

Newspaper No. 5

In response to questions some public officials will answer up to a given point, but for some reason or another they don't give the complete answer that you're looking for. Perhaps some statement is omitted. Answers I get to questions are accurate in most cases, but sometimes they don't complete the whole story. There may be an issue lurking in the background that I don't know about--that perhaps the public official does know but doesn't tell me. So if I don't know about it and he doesn't tell me, then it is omitted. Whether or not this can be interpreted as inaccurate is a matter of personal opinion, I guess. Educators for the most part have been co-operative in giving out information to the news media. The one thing I have noticed most often--and other reporters do, too--is the tendency of educators to shy away from controversial issues. They don't seem to want to have these things discussed. I think that if it's a controversial issue, it's going to have to be brought to a head sooner or later, and they might just as well have it out in front of the public and get it settled.

Reporters freely admit that social contacts with school officials aid them in their work. One reporter proudly boasted of a close personal friendship with the local

superintendent; sailing is a mutual interest for them (it also provides an excellent opportunity to discuss public affairs, including local school events). Many reporters, as in the example below, said that social occasions with school officials are part of the modus operandi in "getting the story" (Newspaper No. 16):

> We confer frequently with members of the board of education, and that's mainly on the basis of personal acquaintanceships. We see them at lunch or drinking coffee. They often drop in to talk to us. The publisher also sees them frequently.

Admitting the influence of personal friendships with some superintendents, one Detroit reporter also revealed that certain school districts within the Detroit area are "influential" districts:

> I'm in much more frequent contact with some districts around Detroit--even when news is not coming forth--because I know the superintendents or they are particularly well known districts such as Dearborn, Birmingham, and Grosse Pointe. I will frequently talk to these superintendents on one matter or another.

One young female reporter, however, expressed grave concern about the line between personal and professional relationships. She feared that as an unmarried young woman she was inclined to be a bit too informal in her dealings with school officials--such as having coffee with the school board in informal executive sessions. She suspected that

she should be more "hard-nosed" in her news-gathering activities and worried about her joking and humor with school officials.

Value of Centralized Public Relations

Question 4: "Does the local public school system have a centralized public relations or public information office? From your viewpoint, what are the advantages and/or disadvantages of centralized public relations offices?"

Presently, only six newspapers (Detroit News, Detroit Free Press, Flint Journal, Lansing State Journal, Kalamazoo Gazette, and Port Huron Times-Herald) are located in communities where the city public schools have created public relations divisions or departments. The Royal Oak Tribune, which attempts to cover 14 separate school districts equally, reports that four of these districts are staffed with public relations personnel. Thus, 10 newspapers of the 17 included in this survey do not have access to public relations departments for the city public schools and must contact news sources directly.

Whether or not the local city school system should have a centralized public relations department is a question receiving a varied response. One newspaper (Newspaper No. 17) has strongly attempted to persuade the local public schools

against hiring a public relations person. In fact, when a new superintendent came on the job in that city recently, he discussed the possibility of employing a person to handle school public relations with the publisher-editor of the newspaper, indicating that he was planning to do so. The publisher-editor objected to this idea, however, and said that the newspaper preferred to work directly with the news sources and not be "impeded by a middle man." As a consequence, the proposed school public relations person was not employed; a clerical person was hired to handle some public information functions on a limited basis.

In the five cities (Detroit, Flint, Lansing, Kalamazoo, and Port Huron) where school public relations offices now exist, the newspaper reporters expressed both satisfactions and dissatisfactions with present PR arrangements. All said the PR set-up both helped and hindered them in covering school news. One reporter (Newspaper No. 4) put it this way:

> Usually we work through the school public relations office; we have a very good relationship with them. The person who works full-time in this area is probably the one I am closest to. However, we have not reached an ideal situation; I don't think we ever will. The news people would rather go directly to a source. If a mathematics teacher is doing something important, it would be more ideal for the news person to talk directly with this teacher rather than having the public relations person talk with the

> teacher, take his notes, write a news release, and give it to the news person. Then the news person has to sit down and rewrite everything again. You've gone through so many hands here. As a practical matter, however, this has to be done in many cases; it's physically impossible to get everybody together all the time.

Probably the strongest statement in support of the school public relations office came from a reporter from the central part of the state (Newspaper No. 5):

> I think a centralized PR office in a school district is important because the newspaper reporter has not got the time to run down all the things that come up in a school district on a day-to-day basis. That's where the public information officer can be of invaluable help in getting information out to the public. The reporter may have time to cover board meetings and committee meetings, but when it comes to running down stories involving individual teachers and schools, there just isn't that much time. In _____, for instance, there are some 46 school buildings, 1,500 teachers, and 28,000 students. There is where I think the public information officer is extremely important.

The consensus among reporters is very strong, however, that school public relations offices leave much to be desired. Complaints are that these PR offices are slow to respond to breaking news stories, that they are not informed about what is going on within their own school system--especially not informed about top-level administrative policy decisions, that PR offices are overly occupied with minor news stories (such as dedications of new buildings), that working through PR offices creates unnecessary "middle man" delays (it is

more expeditious to go directly to the source, usually the superintendent), and that it is often necessary to get important information directly from the superintendent because the PR person will not ask the superintendent "sensitive" questions. "A PR person is particularly helpful in digging out details," said the Pontiac reporter, "but when it comes to actual hard news, the PR person isn't much good to us because frequently we have to have comments from the person concerned, and this usually is the superintendent." This sentiment was expressed by almost every reporter interviewed.

Dissatisfaction was expressed by a number of reporters with the qualifications of the person selected for the school public relations job. One newspaper (without a PR office in the local district) gave this account (Newspaper No. 16):

> The one experience where we had contact with a school PR man was a poor one. The man was not qualified. It takes a good experienced news man to do it, and too often people who leave the newspaper business to go into PR are not qualified. They're looking for a soft touch. They don't have the ability to handle a story, and they don't do their employer much good. Generally, we go directly to the superintendent or one of his assistants for information. Rather than hire a PR man, most school systems should pay their superintendents an extra $5,000 and get a better-type man. They'd be better off.

Another newspaper (with a PR office in the local district) expressed its feelings this way (Newspaper No. 2):

> In the first place I don't feel the job of public information officer has been very well defined. This PR person has a very clear idea of the importance of liaison between the schools and the public, but he is so personally committed to the superintendent that I don't think he has a very clear picture of what's going on. They are also quite slow to react to breaking news. We get too many handouts about dedications of new schools, appointments, etc. I think that if they generated more stories about some of the things they are doing such as educational experiments, improvements, or things of genuine interest, we could help improve the school's image to the public. I don't think they can expect us to print every nice thing that they do for everybody, but I do think they are very remiss in not informing us of the many very dynamic things that are going on in that school system. I do think, however, that this PR person is very overworked because there are a lot of people who expect him to be instantaneously available and to have all sorts of information at his finger tips which he can't have. It's impossible for anybody to have that much information. The second thing is that they don't keep him posted over there on what's going on. He's in a position of a question-answerer and not always completely adequate. I'd just rather talk to the person directly who knows most about the subject under consideration anyway.

About three years ago one Michigan school board appointed a lay citizen (with an advertising and television background) to assist the board in its public relations' efforts. This person is not an elected member of the board, nor is he a member of the paid school staff. Primarily concerned with disseminating information about millage elections, he works with the PTA groups, gives speeches to various civic

groups, and is supposed to be available to the mass media representatives. However, the newspaper reporter who covers the school board does not rely on him to any extent. According to this reporter (Newspaper No. 12):

> In an unofficial way he is the board's public relations man. I suppose the main reason the board appointed him was that it wanted the voters' image of the elections to be one of citizen concern and not just one of school board concern. He is a contact person for the board. However, I have not had a great deal of use for him. I don't say this in a derogatory sense at all. But, of course, I attend all the board meetings, and in many cases I am at least as well versed on the matter as he is. However, he has been real helpful with ideas for approaches to telling the story and for details--statistics and numbers. Mostly, however, he goes his way and we go ours, and things work out fine.

Practice of "Off-the-Record" Information

Question 5a: "Have school officials ever given you 'off the record' information? What is your reaction to this procedure?"

A very "grey" area in school-press relations concerns the problem of "off-the-record" information received by reporters. This is a practice whereby reporters are given newsworthy information but are requested not to print it at all or to withhold its publication until a later date. Obviously, considerable off-the-record information is obtained during executive sessions, but the practice of saying "this

is off the record" is not confined to official board sessions --executive or otherwise.

All 16 education reporters interviewed in this survey said they "accept" off-the-record information, but most expressed misgivings about this procedure. Here are some typical comments:

Newspaper No. 5

> From time to time school officials have given me off-the-record information--mostly about things that were coming up that they didn't want published prior to the action for various reasons. Personally, I'm unhappy about off-the-record information. I feel that if it's off-the-record, I'd just as soon they didn't say anything.

Newspaper No. 7

> I don't like off-the-record information, simply because there's always the danger that I may forget it's off-the-record and get myself in trouble--and also the person who gave it to me. Off-the-record information is only good when the "off-the-record" is not going to last too long.

Newspaper No. 8

> In about 99 per cent of the cases my reaction to off-the-record information is "if I can't quote it, don't give it to me." However, if it's the only way I can get it, I'm practical, and I may take it and promise an official that I won't quote him. But once I have the information, I can call up other persons and get it "on-the-record." Although it may sound Machiavellian, this is a matter of reportorial technique. Generally I would never commit myself this way. I feel that's compromising one's professional ability to do the job, and I can't afford to do that.

Newspaper No. 14

We discourage off-the-record information. I have received some in talking with school administrators, but I would never take any off-the-record information from school board members.

Newspaper No. 6

School officials are quite liberal in giving off-the-record information--perhaps too liberal sometimes. Sometimes you'd just as soon they didn't tell you, especially if it's real newsworthy. But, generally speaking, they will confide in you and give you information on things that are developing--things that haven't reached the point where they're going into the paper. Usually this is more or less just a tip to help prepare you to cover things better.

Newspaper No. 13

There are times when off-the-record information can confuse you. It depends on what kind of off-the-record information it is. If it's along the gossipy line, I don't care about it. But if it's solid information, it helps you to develop fuller school coverage. Normally, it comes in handy, and normally it's on the record very soon.

A number of reporters, however, feel that use of off-the-record information is not only useful, but desirable. It is generally felt that the reporter with off-the-record information has a more complete understanding of a given situation, that the reporter is able to write a better story (more accurate and complete) when off-the-record information eventually becomes on-the-record, and that the enterprising (if not always ethical) reporter can find ways of using off-the-record information by tapping other sources.

Advantages of using off-the-record information, as cited by reporters for three of Michigan's largest daily newspapers, are as follows:

Newspaper No. 3

I know reporters who say they'll never talk to anybody off the record. My opinion is that you're cheating yourself if you take this approach. I have many news sources with whom I will discuss things off the record frankly and openly. This is the only way you can get background on a lot of things. On the other hand, if I go for a specific question, I'll say this is not off the record. If I'm out trying to get a story, I don't accept anything off the record. But if I just want to discuss a thing, sometimes I'll tell them "tell me this off the record" because I know they wouldn't be quoted otherwise. Some very good reporters disagree with me on this, but I think I'm further ahead this way.

Newspaper No. 2

School officials have given me off-the-record information, and my reaction is that it is useful to have it. You're either not going to have it at all or you're going to get it off the record. At least then you know something that you didn't know before. A lot of reporters say they never want anything off the record; if it can't be printed, they'd rather not know it. I don't feel that way because I think that a confidence from someone in public life is just like a confidence from a friend. They can either trust you not to tell it or they can't. Occasionally you get stabbed; you keep it in confidence and you find that somebody else has printed it. But those are the chances you take. This is a very grey area. I think it's up to your sources whether they should give you something off the record. After all, they are the persons who will give you a tip of some sort. They don't have to tell you the whole story, but sometimes you can get a tip which as a piece of background information will clarify something that otherwise wouldn't be clarified.

Newspaper No. 4

> I do not object to off-the-record information in principle. Some reporters refuse to take any off-the-record information. This is an impractical point of view. We tend to develop very close social friendships with our news sources--in education particularly. You just can't help being around these people and sitting in on planning meetings and things like that without hearing things that are off-the-record. We are so close to all this that we almost automatically know what's off the record and what isn't. Once in awhile at a board meeting an administrator might say: "Of course, you'll hold this up until we're ready to release it." We'll just look at him and nod or something. In more touchy areas there might come a time when we would say "stop"--either tell us for the record or don't tell us. We just play this by ear.

The practice of some school officials during a public board meeting to say that certain information is "off the record" was cited by a number of reporters as a particularly irritating tactic. This puts the reporter in a compromising position before all those attending the board meeting. If the reporter uses the information, the school official making the request to keep it "off the record" will be unhappy. If he doesn't use it, he is subject to a charge of intimidation. Here is how four different reporters explained the situation:

Newspaper No. 5

> One of the experiences that I've had--and this happens quite frequently during various times at public meetings--particularly upsets me. School officials will be discussing something, and then they will turn and say "this is off the record," and they will face

toward me or some other news reporter. I personally don't regard this as a matter that should be off the record--particularly when it's being spoken in front of a group of people. As far as I'm concerned, anything that is said in a public board meeting is not off the record. I don't care what it is.

Newspaper No. 3

I do not permit any official to make a statement in a public meeting and say "this is off the record." I have had a few conflicts on this matter, and I tell them that anything that is known by more than three persons is not off the record. If it's made during a public meeting--even a small public meeting--why there's no secret about it, and it's not off the record. I think I've got our school officials pretty well trained on this idea by now.

Newspaper No. 10

I will not let a school board go off the record in a public meeting. I will honor this request only during an executive session when they're kicking things around among themselves with me present to get the background of whatever their ultimate decision might be.

Newspaper No. 4

Once in awhile a superintendent during a board meeting will turn to the news media and say "ignore this point." Usually it's superfluous for him to say that; we'd do it anyway. Anytime he asks us not to use something, we automatically ask him why and make him explain. We put him on the defensive. If he can explain a good enough reason--nine times out of ten it's all right, we'll accept his reason. But about one time out of ten we don't.

Attendance of Reporters at Executive Sessions

Question 5b: "Do you attend 'executive sessions' of the local (city) board of education? How do you feel about this procedure? What do you consider to be 'legitimate' topics for executive sessions?"

Closed meetings of public governmental agencies--including school boards--continue to a highly sensitive area in relations between these boards and the press. Prompted by an increasing awareness of the importance of effective school-community communication, the Michigan Legislature in 1959 passed a law amending the section of the School Code[7] which dealt with the general powers and duties of boards of education. Endorsed by both the Michigan Press Association and the Michigan Education Association, this special legislation requires that all meetings of boards of education be open to the public and that no person be excluded from any meeting. Boards of education retained the right to meet in executive session, but no final action is to be taken in any such session. The bill also makes public records of the board and provides for examination of these records by any person.

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[7] Michigan Public Acts 1959, No. 240, 340.561 and 340.562.

Although the legislation cited above has helped to clear up many misunderstandings, two basic questions still remain: (1) should newspaper reporters be permitted to attend executive sessions of school boards? and (2) what are "legitimate" topics that should be discussed in executive sessions? Of the 16 education reporters interviewed for this survey, 10 said they presently are able to attend executive sessions of the local city school board and five said they are not able to attend (see Table 29). In other words, 10 reporters are invited to attend and five are not. The sixteenth reporter, who attempts to cover 14 separate school districts equally, said he is able to attend executive sessions in some of these 14 districts and is unwelcome in others.

It should be noted that of Michigan's five largest daily newspapers (both Detroit papers, Grand Rapids, Flint, and Lansing), only one of these newspapers (Grand Rapids Press) presently is able to have its education reporter sit in on executive sessions of the school board. The fact that the Grand Rapids reporter attends these executive sessions did not come about by accident, but by planned strategy. The Grand Rapids reporter gave this account of how his paper "broke down" executive sessions of the school board:

Table 29. Attendance at Executive Sessions of Public School Board Meetings of Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000. (N = 15)[1]

Newspaper	Attendance: Able to Attend	Attendance: Not Able to Attend
Detroit News		X
Detroit Free Press		X
Grand Rapids Press	X	
Flint Journal		X
Lansing State Journal		X[2]
Pontiac Press	X	
Saginaw News	X	
Kalamazoo Gazette	X	
Muskegon Chronicle	X	
Jackson Citizen-Patriot	X	
Bay City Times	X	
Port Huron Times-Herald	X	
Ann Arbor News		X
Benton Harbor News-Palladium	X	
Monroe Evening News	X	
TOTAL	10 (66.66)	5 (33.33)

Percentages in parentheses

[1]A sixteenth newspaper (Royal Oak Tribune) attempts to cover 14 separate school districts equally; it is able to attend executive sessions in a few of these 14 districts but not in others. A seventeenth newspaper (Battle Creek Enquirer-News) did not answer this question.

[2]This reporter does not attend executive sessions as a regular practice, although he has attended them on two occasions.

> About 30 years ago we had a board of education that seemed to think the school's business was not the public's business. They would have star chamber sessions. The Grand Rapids Press did not like this, and we fought it. Our editors told our reporters to remain after the regular sessions were over. They did so, and on a couple of occasions forced the board to adjourn to another place. Then the Press supported a person for the school board in an election on the promise that he would let us know everything that happened in executive sessions. This man had a very meager education, but he had an astute mind when it came to knowing what was going on. And we helped elect him. He did just what he said he would do, and gradually we wore the board down. We broke this, I think, well in advance of similar situations elsewhere, making Grand Rapids one of the first "open session" school board towns in the state. We're quite happy about this situation. Since that time, we've never had any real trouble.

Although executive sessions of the Detroit board of education are not open to representatives of the press, neither reporter from Detroit's two daily newspapers appears to be particularly disturbed about this. Here is how the two Detroit education reporters view the situation:

First Detroit Reporter

> We don't attend executive sessions of the local board of education. They're all called "personnel meetings." So whenever the board has something to talk about that it doesn't want the press to hear, it is referred to the personnel committee. Theoretically, I believe they ought to be able to discuss anything in front of us and trust us to use our discretion. But it's just been proved too often by the public press that you can't trust reporters to use their discretion, and I don't blame the board for wanting privacy in these matters. Therefore, I think they have every right to discuss personalities in closed sessions. However, I don't think they have

any right to conduct public business in closed sessions. This board used to have some feeling that they ought to present a united front to the public at least. For instance, they made a very disastrous error during the first millage campaign in deciding behind closed doors how much they would ask for--an astronomical figure of 12.8 mills, I think--and they just sprung it on a waiting world. This was really too bad because I think that with a little build-up it might have been better received. The board hasn't resorted to this practice again, however.

Second Detroit Reporter

I don't think there is any real need for the education writer to attend executive sessions. I think it would be more of a burden to his work really. I know that these meetings involve a great deal of time-wasting bickering. Any reporter who is really a reporter and knows that a meeting of seven, eight, or nine people is going on and can't find out what happened at that meeting might as well give up. I don't object to executive sessions if they're not overdone. There are many things that the school board has to discuss privately first before they discuss them publicly.

Most reporters who attend executive sessions said they have been attending these meetings for some time; the younger reporters (or new reporters on the education beat) have inherited this privilege of attending executive sessions from their predecessors. One reporter, however, related how she gained admittance to executive sessions just three years ago (Newspaper No. 13):

Starting about three years ago, I became the first reporter from our newspaper to attend executive sessions of the board of education. This occurred through the co-operation of the superintendent and

> myself in working with the board. At first the board was very opposed to my attending, but they agreed to try it for a while. Very soon it became such a matter of routine that I'm like a chair or a piece of paper. I'm just taken for granted.

Many reporters across the state have worked out a so-called gentleman's agreement with boards of education. This usually means that reporters are allowed to sit in on executive sessions for background information but are not supposed to report the actual proceedings of the session. Typical examples from four different newspapers are as follows:

Newspaper No. 6

> I sit in on executive sessions with the agreement that nothing goes beyond the room we're in. This is not to say that on occasion something will happen in an executive session whereby I will elicit comment publicly from board members at a later date or even immediately following an executive session. But so far as the information related in the executive session is concerned, I am on my honor not to use this information. But as a reporter, and not being an editor, I feel it is my duty to inform my editors of anything that might be particularly out-of-line or unusual coming out of executive sessions. I would fight any attempt to exclude myself or any press person from an executive session. Most newsworthy information, however, that comes out of executive sessions eventually sees print anyway. There are ways of getting around executive sessions.

Newspaper No. 7

> We have an understanding here that the attending of executive sessions is primarily for background, but if a story does develop, we are privileged to use it on the basis that there will be no direct quotations,

unless the quotations are cleared with the individuals who are making them. We do report conclusions that are reached. This kind of arrangement gets more difficult as you have more than one reporter present because the reporters themselves have to get together to decide what is to be reported on the meeting.

Newspaper No. 14

We've been invited to every executive session--that is, every "official" one they've had. They'll say "we want you to be here to get the background information, but we don't want you to use it right now." We always reply the same way: "We're taking the information and we reserve the right to use it. If you don't want us here, kick us out." Some board members have been very nasty about this, saying, "now don't you print that and so on." But our present superintendent is a smarter man than that; he has more tact. Recently he has opened these meetings by saying that "now this is a session to give information on subjects that are coming up later, the press is here, and we know they will use their good judgment on what they print." The result is that we do attend these meetings, and we do hold information until there's no harm in releasing it--until the final fire is out. But they know--we hope they know because we tell them--that we might publish the whole thing the next day if we see fit. They give us this information under those circumstances. Some of those meetings we have reported. Before some meetings were over, everybody would realize that there weren't any earth-shaking secrets to reveal, and we have reported the thing in great detail. Now whether or not they hold other meetings in private because they are afraid that we might publish something, we just can't tell.

Newspaper No. 8

The ideal relationship is for open admission of reporters to all meetings, with the understanding that only "general" references will be used and that discretion will be applied to delicate subjects. If trusted, this system works. I don't think local government of any sort can be treated with the same

> restrictions with which "national security" is applied at the national level.

Reporters recognize that there is nothing legally to prevent a school board from meeting privately if it wants to. Said one reporter (Newspaper No. 2):

> You can't keep the school board from having executive sessions. They can say we have nothing but open meetings, and the board president can invite them all over to his house for cocktails where they can talk about school business there. There is absolutely no way of preventing them from carrying on their business in private if they want to do it.

The right of a school board to call an executive session was strongly defended by a reporter from the southwestern part of the state (Newspaper No. 16):

> First, let's determine what an executive session is. Any public body--any parliamentary body whether it's a public governmental unit or a private club--has the right to adjourn into an executive session of the committee of the whole. Now in many instances these boards are being less secretative by doing this than they would be if they met at someone's house where the public and the press would have no knowledge of what they're doing.

Reporters justify their attendance at executive sessions by pointing to the "good" they can do by knowing the background of sensitive issues. They say their "discretion" is good, and they should be in a position to use it. Obviously, there is a wide margin here for a difference of opinion by school officials and by newspapermen regarding the quality of "discretion" exercised by reporters. An

example of how a lack of information caused a reporter (Newspaper No. 10) to write a story as he did is as follows:

> A classic example of how a reporter can hurt a board and destroy public confidence by not knowing came out of our community college. The board, meeting in executive session, decided to relieve the dean of academic affairs of his responsibilities as dean and put him back into the classroom as an instructor. I was completely unaware of this until I got into the official board meeting at which the man involved requested and was granted permission to read a statement defending his position and why he felt he should be retained. I made notes frantically during his ten-minute speech, and when he left, I asked the board what this was all about. They said, "we can't give you any more than this, and the meeting is over and we will ask you to leave." Then they locked the door, and all I had to go on was the man's defense. And we printed it the next day, and the community hue and cry arose over "you can't fire that man." The board got a lot of unnecessary criticism at that time, but I had no recourse. I had only the one source of information; the board declined to give me their reasons. As it turned out later, they had adequate justification to make the move, but I didn't know it at the time. We could have handled the whole business in one paragraph in a wrap-up story, stating that this man was given the assignment as a humanities instructor and that somebody else was taking his former position--without making an issue of it. The upshot of the thing is that the man is still dean of academic affairs. The board got a hot potato, and they had to back off. They still have a nice guy but an incompetent man in the job because they declined to let the press know that they were going to dump him. Consequently, the only coverage we could give was to report his version of why he should be retained. And a year hence he's still there.

Whether or not the reporter in the example above actually would have passed up the opportunity to write a story on the above incident, especially with the note of controversy

interjected, is a matter of conjecture. However, it is significant that in his hindsight "discretion" he says he would not.

Having gained an invitation to attend executive sessions, some reporters do not find it possible to attend. Frequently, it's a matter of insufficient time. Here are two examples:

Newspaper No. 8

> Generally, I have no desire to attend executive sessions if the proper things are being discussed in those meetings. The reason is that I put in a lot of hours. When we hit midnight and I have to get up at 6 a.m., I'd just as soon go home unless something really significant is being discussed. If I'm confident that personnel matters or site negotiations are being discussed, I know that people will tell me what went on. In both of these cases they could depend on us to use discretion in reporting them anyway. My appearance at these executive sessions depends on two factors: (1) whether they are newsworthy, and (2) whether or not the local board understands the role of the press.

Newspaper No. 10

> I've been permitted to attend executive sessions as long as I've covered education. I have told them that they can say anything they want to in an executive session and I won't report it. This is background information for me. However, I don't attend them nearly as often as I could because they happen to come on my day off. If it's convenient for me, I'll go and have lunch with them and sit in on the meeting. I've covered about 75 per cent of these executive sessions. I want to be included in as many of these meetings as possible. Often it's to know what not to write as well as what to write. If a board doesn't keep a reporter informed of what it's doing, he can hear shock waves of something somewhere

> without having the whole story and do more harm than if he was sitting in on all their deliberations.

Reporters indicate that the larger city school boards recognize the differences between open public sessions and closed (to the public) executive sessions. However, it is felt that problems are created by smaller outlying school districts when lines of demarcation are not clearly drawn. This example (Newspaper No. 7) was given:

> The smaller school districts will meet once or twice a month, but they'll meet for three or four hours at a time and incorporate the qualities of an executive session into a public meeting and then be amazed when it comes out in the press that such-and-such a thing was happening. They'll say that this happened in an executive session, but they never took the time to dissolve themselves into a committee of the whole. Ground rules should be set. Anything that happens at a public meeting is public.

Legitimate Topics for Executive Sessions

What topics do education reporters feel are "legitimate" subjects to be discussed in executive sessions? The topic most frequently cited that <u>should</u> be discussed in executive session was "a morals charge brought against a school employee." Some 56.25 per cent of the respondents said this topic <u>should be</u> discussed in executive session, 43.75 per cent said it <u>may or may not</u> be discussed in discussed in executive session, and no respondents said it <u>should not</u> be discussed in executive session (see Table 30).

Table 30. Legitimacy of Topics for School Board Executive Sessions as Cited by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers Above 20,000 Circulation. (N = 16)

Possible Topic	Possible Course of Action		
	Should Be Discussed in Executive Session	May or May Not Be Discussed in Executive Session	Should Not Be Discussed in Executive Session
A morals charge brought against a school employee	9 (56.25)	7 (43.75)	0 (0)
A new salary schedule for teachers	2 (12.5)	1 (6.25)	13 (81.25)
Proposed salary for the superintendent	3 (18.75)	4 (25)	9 (56.25)
The appointment of a new superintendent	4 (25)	6 (37.5)	6 (37.5)
The appointment of a new principal	2 (12.5)	9 (56.25)	5 (31.25)

Table 30. Continued.

Possible Topic	Possible Course of Action: Should Be Discussed in Executive Session	May or May Not Be Discussed in Executive Session	Should Not Be Discussed in Executive Session
The appointment of a new football coach	2 (12.5)	9 (56.25)	5 (31.25)
The selection of a site for a new school	4 (25)	4 (25)	8 (50)
Whether to expel a student charged with illicit sexual behavior	8 (50)	8 (50)	0 (0)

Percentages in parentheses

The topic most frequently cited that should not be discussed in executive session was "a new salary schedule for teachers." Some 81.25 per cent of the respondents said this topic should not be discussed in executive session, 6.25 per cent said it may or may not be discussed, and 12.5 per cent said it should be discussed in executive session.

All the reporters indicated that considerable caution should be exercised in the handling of "personnel matters." Most felt that this is a proper topic for executive sessions, as a reporter from the southwestern part of the state (Newspaper No. 16) explained:

> I certainly feel that some things should be talked about privately. For example, if you have a charge of immorality against a teacher, it's not at this stage subject to proof. But there is a question, and the superintendent will want to tell his board so that they won't hear about it out in public and come back and tell the superintendent he's not up on his toes. Yet you don't want to destroy this teacher's reputation because he may be perfectly innocent. There has to be some method of discussing this privately. If you have a man--say the head janitor--who has been a good man all his life and worked for the school board for 25 or 30 years and suddenly he starts drinking, you don't want to blurt this out at a school board meeting and ruin the man when the superintendent may be doing everything he can to get the man back on the straight and narrow. I think the editor has to be sharp. He has to determine whether this thing is hiding information from the public which should be given out. And then he goes after someone hammer and tongs who does that. If we detect that any board is attempting to use this system to hide unworthy motives in its consideration of a problem, why the wraps are off and we publish whatever we can get. But as long

> as they're operating within bounds, it's just friendly to co-operate when no public interest is being voided. A lot of this is a problem of the newspaper establishing confidence in its fairness. Incidentally, not as much happens in these executive sessions as the public often thinks.

Having school officials and newspapermen agree as to what qualifies as being "within bounds" is a task of considerable magnitude.

Both Detroit reporters cited the same example--the suspension of an assistant superintendent--to illustrate how they thought the school board mishandled a "personnel matter" in an executive session. Here are their observations:

First Detroit Reporter

> Personnel matters generally should be discussed in executive session. However, we had a case here in Detroit last winter where the board met in executive session and decided that an assistant superintendent would be suspended, and this was not announced--except by me later. But I don't think this is right. I don't think the board should suspend a superintendent, a teacher, or anyone else without making it public. On the other hand, if they're just going to discuss the possibility, they should be able to discuss it privately. The board discussed the suspension of this assistant superintendent in executive session and decided that the superintendent would suspend him. But this was a board decision which directed the superintendent, who, of course, had the authority to do it in the first place. Legally perhaps they did not take any action in executive session which requires that a record be made, but morally they did act upon an important school official and tried to keep it secret. The board should have announced at a public meeting that this action--ordering the superintendent to suspend this individual--had been taken. In this

particular case there was an official board meeting after the action took place in executive session, and nothing was mentioned about it in the public session.

Second Detroit Reporter

A recent example of how an executive session can be mismanaged was the suspension of an assistant superintendent for school housing because they found that he had accepted favors from suppliers. The suspension was done very quietly, and I can well understand why--with the idea of protecting the man's reputation. I honestly don't think they were doing it to try to protect the school system any more than they were trying to protect this man himself. But it leaked out, which was a very unfortunate way of having it reach the public. It should have been announced, after all, for the greater good of the whole school system--at least that he was being suspended until the charges were cleared up one way or another. This information leaked out through one of the maintenance unions, which was one of this man's areas of responsibility. It got out that way, but it was a very poor attempt at news management. It put them in all sorts of difficulties.

Although most reporters agree that personnel matters should be discussed in executive sessions, there appear to be very few guidelines to help reporters decide how to dispose of these cases. One reporter from the western part of the state (Newspaper No. 3) said there are "no hard and fast rules"--that each case has to be decided separately:

There are cases in which we don't print the news. We have had hearings on teacher dismissals, for instance, which involve personal matters. Unless it contains something of vital interest to the public, we don't drag these things out. I can recall one case which involved a considerable degree of drunkenness, and we kept our desk informed of what was going

> on but we didn't print it. Of course, a lot would depend on who is involved. If the superintendent were involved in something like this, we couldn't avoid printing it because he is closely identified with the public. But if it's an obscure school employee, that's something else. The only value in it would be sensationalism. You have to use judgment on these things and play it by ear until you weigh the values and decide what is news and what isn't. There are so many factors involved that you can't make hard and fast rules. You have to take each case individually.

Another reporter from the southeastern part of the state (Newspaper No. 8) said that "public interest" will dictate whether or not to publish articles dealing with sensitive personnel issues:

> Because of the singular nature of these problems, my key criterion is the matter of "public interest." If it is "in the public interest" to report a morals charge or illicit sexual behavior--perhaps reflecting gross neglect on the part of the administrators--it should be reported. When you attempt to spell out what "should" or "should not" be discussed in executive sessions, you find one party taking advantage--the newshound looking for a "hot story" or a school board trying to cover up an embarrassing matter.

Another reporter from the eastern side of the state (Newspaper No. 14) outlined some of the specific guidelines his newspaper uses in reporting stories in this sensitive area:

> I received a call not long ago from an area school superintendent who asked me if we had any information on a criminal charge that had been made against a particular teacher, and we replied that we had. He asked: "What are you going to do with it?" I said I hadn't seen the story yet. This dealt with

> a morals offense. The superintendent said the school board had scheduled a hearing on this teacher, and they hoped the newspaper wouldn't use the story until disposition was made. After I read the story, I called the man back and told him that we did not normally use a story on this particular type of offense until a final disposition had been made in court. Furthermore, we would not identify this man as a teacher unless his morals offense occurred in connection with his capacity as a teacher. Ultimately, the man was convicted in court, and in this particular instance the offense did not occur in the city in which he taught. We carried his name, address, and so forth; he was readily identifiable by anyone in the school district who knew him. We did not carry a designation that he was a teacher at such-and-such school. The school board dismissed him. We told the board that this information would be in the paper if the man was convicted in court. Whether this had any bearing or not on his dismissal, I have no idea. This is a general practice as far as this particular type of offense is concerned. On a morals offense we generally wait because of the nature of the charge until the court disposition is made. Usually these are made rather speedily; in some instances they hang on for two or three months. We do not use the drunk and disorderly cases in the paper, and we would never single out a teacher.

A number of reporters expressed fears that discussing personnel matters in print undermines public confidence in the schools. One reporter (Newspaper No. 10) put it this way:

> Personnel problems within a system are linen that can well be laundered in the privacy of an executive session and not before the public. To me, anything that tends to undermine the confidence of the public in the administrators of its schools is detrimental to the whole program of education. These are things that the board is privileged to discuss in private and that the press should have no part in reporting. Let's take a current case.

> There were four teachers whose contracts were not renewed this year. The reasons they were not to be renewed were presented to the board by the superintendent. The board concurred in every one of the cases. In at least two of them there were situations which would harm the individual involved and do the public no good by reporting them. One was a case of homosexuality involving a couple of confrontations with students and another was a completely amoral female teacher. They just didn't feel that these persons were desirable members of their staff, and they let them go. These cases I think certainly should be handled in executive session.

With 81.25 per cent of the respondents saying that "a new salary schedule for teachers" and 56.25 per cent saying that a "proposed salary for the superintendent" should not be discussed in executive session, the potential for school-press misunderstandings in this area is high unless some well-defined ground rules are agreed to. It is interesting to note that both Detroit reporters, who do not attend executive sessions, believe that discussions on teachers' salaries should be held in public. They had this to say:

First Detroit Reporter

> One area which I think the board should discuss publicly, which they seldom do, is the question of raises for teachers. There are several reasons why I believe this. The most important is that teachers--and there are 10,000 here--would probably be interested in how their welfare is faring at the hands of the board of education. But this has never been discussed in Detroit at the board meetings until the time came

to actually vote on the proposed increase, and then generally it was a unanimous vote on a predetermined figure. Salary proposals for teachers, I believe, should be discussed in public sessions.

Second Detroit Reporter

When you're talking about spending the public's money--it's sad but true--the public has a right to know. Teachers' salaries are on a published scale, and, therefore, I think those discussions are perfectly valid to be held in public. There's a salary debate going on now that we know about between the union, working through the Teachers' Representation Committee, and administration officials which has not been discussed in public at all. And I presume what will come out of it will be a proposed new pay scale which the superintendent will present to the board of education. I don't think there is any advantage particularly in carrying on these negotiations in public. When the pay scale is finally proposed, the superintendent will give his reasons for arriving at that particular scale, and that's time enough to debate it. The debate at that point will hopefully be an open debate. On the other hand, I don't think the superintendent's salary should be discussed openly. Certainly they ought to be able to talk privately about whether he's worth another $3,000 or another $5,000. I think that it should be kept quiet because, after all, there is a morale factor there. I don't think the whole world at large needs to know whether the school board had a hard time or an easy time deciding what the chief administrator was worth.

A reporter from the western part of the state (Newspaper No. 10) also felt that discussion of the superintendent's salary should be kept quiet:

I think the question of the superintendent's salary is well handled in an executive session. We have traditionally reported the salary of the superintendent when it was established, but I think

> considerations of the board in arriving at this salary are not necessarily germane to good public information.

A reporter from the central part of the state said that on only two occasions has he been requested to leave a school board meeting--one concerned teachers' salaries and the other a firing of a superintendent. In regard to the request to leave the meeting when salaries were at issue, this reporter (Newspaper No. 12) said:

> A small school district on the west side of the city was talking about teachers' salaries. This was the only time I had ever covered this board; they never had a reporter out there before, I believe, at least not in recent years. So when the teachers came forth with their recommendations for salaries, the superintendent and the board asked that I leave because, as they put it, "this was a rather personal and private matter." But we differed on that, and I stayed.

It is somewhat surprising to note that 50 per cent of the respondents in this survey said that "the selection of a site for a new school" <u>should not</u> be discussed in an executive session. Twenty-five per cent said this topic <u>should</u> be discussed in executive session, and 25 per cent said it <u>may or may not</u> be discussed. A reporter from the eastern part of the state (Newspaper No. 14) explained why he thought school property acquisitions should be discussed in public sessions:

> There are two hard-core matters--personnel matters and proposed property acquisitions--that the local school board insists on dealing with in executive sessions. We try to discourage executive sessions whenever we can. School boards are courting danger when executive sessions are used indiscriminately. But as far as property acquisitions are concerned, we have argued fruitlessly for the most part that the people whose property is going to be bought invariably know that the schools are trying to buy it anyway. If the schools cannot reach a proper price, they can always wind up in condemnation procedures, which is a public process anyway. We find it is very hard to defend secret meetings on property acquisitions, although this is one of the things that the school people always go back to. Our point is simply this: the school board is dealing with public business, it is elected by the public, it is spending public money, and that for the most part more harm than good will come from making decisions privately and spending money privately.

A Detroit reporter suggested that law suits were also an appropriate topic for executive sessions:

> I think the board can legitimately have executive sessions to discuss law suits such as we're involved here in Detroit at the moment on integration problems. I don't think it's wise to air these publicly. They're going to be aired in court anyway, and I think they can honestly talk about them privately.

Use of Press Conferences by School Officials

Question 6: "Should school officials make wider use of the press conference (i.e., open interviewing by members of the mass media) in the dissemination of school news? Why?"

Fifteen of the 16 respondents answered the above question negatively. Press conferences were almost unanimously rejected for the following reasons: time is wasted, very little happens at a press conference of real news significance, and reporters prefer to follow up their own "angles" rather than sharing their ideas with their competitors.

The one reporter who indicated a desire for more press conferences did so only for specific circumstances. She said (Newspaper No. 9):

> School officials should make wider use of the press conference, especially during millage campaigns. This was done here during a campaign quite successfully. An hour a week would satisfy for a press conference with the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and the woman who handles public relations. They discussed all our questions quite freely. We got information we needed immediately, and we all had it at the same time. We had a chance to hear what other people were asking, thinking, and doing. However, I would question press conferences on a regular basis--other than during something like a millage campaign or a major controversy in the school system. At the previously cited press conferences I was the only person from the mass media who was there regularly. There usually was one other mass media person there, but they were always different persons at different times. The radio-TV people seemed interested, but for some reason I always came early and left late.

One reason school press conferences were rejected is that reporters feel they are not needed. Reporters from

six different newspapers gave the following six different examples:

Newspaper No. 10

> News representatives for the other media here do not attend school board meetings, so any press conference would amount to my sitting down with the board and asking questions. This is what I do anyway since I'm the only one other than the board present. They have always given me complete latitude in interrupting their proceedings at any point to inquire what they're talking about. So our monthly board meetings amount to a press conference anyway.

Newspaper No. 6

> I can't see where school officials could make good use of the press conference since any action of a school board takes place at an open meeting. I'd just as soon get my information at the open meeting and pursue any other angles I might want to pursue privately with board members. Now this is not to preclude school officials from calling in the news media to point out certain things in the school system that are newsworthy at a particular time--something we might not be aware of.

Newspaper No. 13

> For the most part we could dispense with the press conference. Generally, they take up too much time at the wrong time, and it's information you can get on your own. When you're sitting on top of a story, usually you can have your questions answered prior to an official announcement. Of course, there is one good thing about it. When one is called, I often go out ahead of time--so it makes me more enterprising. Usually I have my story written before I go to the press conference, and I attend the conference merely to protect myself to see if everything I have is correct. The community college here used to call press conferences, and that was a real problem to me in regard to the time element. By the

time I got out to the college and back--they always called conferences for 9:30 a.m.--it was about 11 a.m. when I got back in the office. It was pretty difficult to get anything from the press conference in the first edition of that day's paper. I can understand press conferences when state or national officials are in this area and they want to call people in--something along this line. But for our daily normal coverage procedures I'd rather do it myself.

Newspaper No. 16

I don't think the press conference is needed. Usually the press conference is a method in attempting to control the news, not to disseminate it. As it is practiced in most areas below the level of the White House, the press conference is simply a reading of a prepared statement. Then if embarrassing questions are asked, the person in charge responds, "I'm not prepared to comment on that at this time" or something to that effect.

Newspaper No. 12

I can recall only two press conferences in my four years on the school beat. One was to announce redistricting of high school districts here when a new high school was added. There was some concern about who would go to what school, so there was a press conference in connection with that. This press conference was held more for the benefit of the radio and TV people because they were not familiar with the details of it. I had attended all of the board meetings leading up to this. These meetings were open to the press but closed to the public, and we went along with the school board on withholding news of the redistricting temporarily. This information also would have been available to the radio-TV people, of course, presumably with a string tied to it that they would withhold it until the school board felt the time was appropriate. The second press conference was called to announce the appointment of a new superintendent. It also was more for the benefit of the radio-TV people than for myself.

Newspaper No. 8

> I haven't had much of a hankering for nor much experience with press conferences. The few times the press conference has been used, it worked out well as a public relations effort and as an opportunity to throw off-the-cuff discussion on the table. But at our level of coverage the press conference is a rather needless phenomenon, and this is so because there aren't that many newspapers--or anybody else--covering these school districts.

Reporters from Michigan's smaller metropolitan areas, although rejecting press conferences for themselves, generally thought conferences would be of some value to reporters in the larger cities where competitors are more numerous. However, reporters in these larger cities--Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint, and Lansing--had their own doubts about press conferences. Said one reporter (Newspaper No. 3):

> The press conference is a vastly over-rated thing. In the first place it doesn't give the individual reporter the opportunity to develop his own angles without giving away his ideas to everybody else. It's one of the gadgets put out by public relations firms to try to be impartial to all media. Personally I could pass up all press conferences and do the job in my own way.

Detroit presently is the only Michigan city with competing daily newspapers. Both Detroit reporters, however, expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of press conferences. The city superintendent's practice of meeting with the press for about a half hour before school board meetings was also

called ineffectual by both reporters. Comments from the two Detroit reporters are as follows:

First Detroit Reporter

> I don't feel there is any real urgency for wider use of the press conference, mainly because I don't have any trouble interviewing the people I want to interview anyway. The superintendent started the idea of meeting with the press for about a half hour before the school board meetings, but I didn't find these particularly satisfactory or useful. He just reviewed the things that were already written in the agenda and didn't add anything to them. And after the meeting was over, we would interview everyone anyway, so there didn't seem to be any real use or need for them.

Second Detroit Reporter

> I am only moderately impressed with the value of a press conference. Press conferences definitely have their place. When news breaks, the person in charge should immediately be available to all the press simultaneously. To me, however, a much more effective situation would be to be able to have a private conference--even an off-the-record conference if necessary--with the superintendent once every two weeks just to clear up the type of questions that keep reoccurring and are never clarified. When I talk about a separate briefing, I am not saying that anybody should give information to me that they wouldn't give to anybody else or even that they should talk off-the-record. But we tried one press conference here with the superintendent, the reporter from the other Detroit daily paper, and myself. It was only moderately successful because in the first place the conference took place past the other reporter's deadline and he wasn't interested in it. That's another problem--when to have it? We even have the problem now of not being able to get the board agenda until we arrive at the meeting, because there is such competition all along. If the other paper gets the agenda in the morning, it can even

> release the information before the meeting. If both papers get the agenda as privileged information not to be released until the meeting, this gives the advantage to our paper. So the only answer was not to give it to anybody until we both got to the meeting, which is a real headache to the reporters in Detroit where agendas often include more than 40 pages of reports, charts, tables, and so on. The trouble with press conferences is that all reporters come out with the same story. There are times when that is the only story to come out with obviously, but I've never liked press conferences of any kind. I would rather have a chance to pursue my own line of questioning for my own purposes.

The idea of private conferences with the superintendent--rather than public press conferences--appeals to a number of reporters. A reporter from the southeastern part of the state (Newspaper No. 8) revealed this procedure:

> I have my own form of press conferences. It's lunches with the superintendents. I accomplish a lot in these sessions because we talk off-the-cuff, and I don't feel I'm sacrificing any of my ethics. They feel more relaxed, and consequently, I get a pretty good lead on many things. To be frank, I'd have to say that these meetings are initiated more by the superintendents than they are by me, but we both benefit. Perhaps we'll just tell jokes throughout the entire luncheon. Perhaps we'll get into a rousing discussion of the new school program, and through it all a few little things are dropped here and there which let me know what's going on inside the district.

In summary, with only minor exceptions, the press conference is viewed by reporters as not particularly helpful in the dissemination of school news. Rather, it is looked upon as an ineffective, non-productive, time-wasting, initiative-thwarting procedure.

Most Difficult Education Topics to Report

Question 7: "What topics relating to education are the most difficult to cover? Why?"

Education reporters decisively feel that problems relating to school finance are the most difficult to cover. Fifteen of the 16 reporters interviewed mentioned this topic (school aid formula, millage, deductible millage, assessed valuation, equalized valuation, bond issues, budgets, transfers from one fund to another, limitations on different funds, and retirement funds). Moreover, 13 of these 15 reporters listed "school finance" as the most difficult topic to report (see Table 31). The overwhelming selection of this topic by the reporters is indicated by the far lesser mention given to four other educational topics: four reporters cited stories relating to new curriculum ideas, three cited problems of school integration, one cited religious practices in public schools, and one cited college admission policies.

Thus, without question, the reporting of public school finances poses serious problems to the newspaper reporter, veteran and neophyte alike. Not only is there the problem for the reporter to keep up with proposed tax changes and governmental actions as they occur, but also the extremely

Table 31. Topics Cited as the Most Difficult to Cover by Education Reporters for Michigan Daily Newspapers with Circulations Above 20,000. (N = 16)

Newspaper	Educational Topics				
	School Finance	Integration Problems	Religious Issues	Curriculum Changes	College Admissions
Newspaper No. 1	2	1			
Newspaper No. 2	2	1			
Newspaper No. 3	1			2	
Newspaper No. 4	1				
Newspaper No. 5	1			2	
Newspaper No. 6	1				
Newspaper No. 7	1			2	3
Newspaper No. 8	1			2	
Newspaper No. 9		2	1		
Newspaper No. 10	1				

Table 31. Continued.

Newspaper	Educational Topics				
	School Finance	Integration Problems	Religious Issues	Curriculum Changes	College Admissions
Newspaper No. 12[1]	1				
Newspaper No. 13	1				
Newspaper No. 14	1				
Newspaper No. 15	1				
Newspaper No. 16	1				
Newspaper No. 17	1				

[1]Newspaper No. 11 did not participate in the oral interviews.

KEY: "1" cited as most difficult topic in open-end response; "2" cited second most difficult; "3" cited third most difficult.

difficult problem of "translating" complicated tax procedures and language into "understandable" terms for a less sophisticated audience. A veteran reporter (Newspaper No. 14) gave this example:

> By far the most difficult topic to report relates to finances where we have assessed valuation, equalized valuation, mills, and tax rates. In a district like ours we have several different townships and the city of Port Huron involved. We have ten different taxing units, ten different factors when assessed valuation is related to equalized valuation. In a millage election when we try to explain to people in ten different taxing units how much it's going to cost them--how much five mills means to them--we really get into some problems because we tell one taxing unit it's going to cost them $6.18 on each $1,000 of assessed valuation and another one it's going to cost them $7.22. We can explain this 50 times, yet the minute we say this, people will say "how come we're paying more than they are?" Very closely related to this is a difficulty in our district--or in any reorganized district--where some districts have an old bonded indebtedness which is not taken care of in the new district. This is the situation in East China township. This further complicates the problem because not only is there a difference in tax rates, but there is also a difference in the taxes they are paying because some are paying on the old debt and some are not. When you get into this taxing, finance, and equalization, it's really a headache.

Supporting this position is a reporter from the opposite side of the state (Newspaper No. 16):

> Michigan's unusual tax structure, which has both assessed and equalized valuation, makes it difficult to explain to the public just exactly what school money proposals will mean to them. If we could arrive at some sort of system in Michigan by which there was one tax for one piece of property

> rather than an assessed valuation and an equalized valuation, I think it would clear up a great deal of the confusion that now surrounds all public school money elections.

Another view of this same over-all problem--with county, state, and federal implications--was described in these terms (Newspaper No. 5):

> Without question the most difficult topic to report is finances because schools have such extremely involved methods of financing--very much unlike most other units of government. School districts have three or four different sources of school taxes or finances. In a millage vote it is extremely difficult to explain exactly what the school board is asking for in extra voted millage and tie that in with what they get from state aid, county allocated taxes, and perhaps federal funds. There is a tendency to oversimply school finances among the public. When you report these things, you have to go into a great deal of detail to explain sources of revenue and expenditures--where it is going to be used and why. In a building program, for example, people will frequently raise questions such as "why does that particular building have to cost so much?" or "why is a building needed here?" To explain this, you have to go into a very detailed study and report on the size of the building, the number of classrooms and students, the type of materials to be used, and the curriculum. It's a difficult thing to explain without going into great detail.

Here is where a dilemma is presented. On the one hand, some reporters, like the one above, believe that adequate reporting of school finance stories requires considerable newspaper space with many details. Others, however, see an approach almost diametrically opposed. For example, one reporter (Newspaper No. 12) has this view:

> I find school finance stories difficult because somehow you've got to explain what it's all about and do it in a way that a busy person, who is expected to read many other things in the paper, can read it quickly and understand it. This, of course, means it has to be concise both in language and in space. Money and budgets are the most difficult things to put into readable English language.

The amount of space which can be devoted to a school finance story is one problem. Others are "reader interest" and "message construction." Some reporters feel that complex school finance stories should be reduced down to common denominators. A reporter (Newspaper No. 10) gave this illustration:

> The toughest assignment is to report the continuing increasing financial needs of the schools. This is a hard thing to sell to the public. I feel that we have to do a selling job in seeing that the schools get the money they need to do a competent job. But in a working man's town it's difficult to spell out; we have to be pretty selective in our terminology and phrasing to make a supporting case. By this I'm not saying that we editorialize the news, but in reporting financial issues, we sometimes resort to the vernacular. A year ago we had a proposal on the ballot to transfer three mills from the building and site fund to operations, and we pointed out at the time that this was possible because the buildings were completed. There was no further need for building and site millage, but there was a need for increased operating revenue. We referred to the proposal as a "swap." This was a term that our readership understood, and the millage question passed about 6 to 1. When the voters saw the rather complex proposal on the ballot, they remembered this was a "swap"--not an increase in taxes--and they bought the proposal.

Whether or not use of the word "swap" by the newspaper in the example above could be considered an important factor in the millage proposal's passage is an open question. The fact remains, however, that reporters generally see it as their responsibility to do this "translating." In the process of translation, however, is the schoolman's great fear that precise, operational language will become garbled and inaccurate. One reporter's copy used the phrase "15-mill tax melon" time after time without any further explanation. How many readers will clearly understand this seemingly simple phrase? The probability is not high.

Three reporters mentioned integration problems as one of the most difficult topics to cover. The fact that only three reporters cited this topic is significant. It's highly probable that many reporters, so fully absorbed perhaps with covering school finance stories and other "hard news," are not fully aware of growing integration problems and pressures within their own areas.

Both Detroit education writers, however, are aware that integration is a sensitive area to cover. Said one Detroit reporter:

> The all-time champion for difficulty is integration, and the reasons are obvious. You have to be very careful about injuring the feelings of people and at the same time try to give

the feeling of what's said, which is frequently said very circumspectly--too circumspectly for direct reporting--and often by innuendo. But I think it's important to make the positions clear and again without hurting anybody's feelings.

The other Detroit reporter agreed:

The integration story is very hard to report. We've had very good luck in Detroit so far, as nobody has laid down in front of a bulldozer yet or nobody has demanded that children be bussed around the city. A newspaper doesn't perform a public service by rocking the boat any more than necessary. At the same time this is one of the biggest breaking stories in education. It's extremely difficult to write this story just from the pure problem of semantics as much as anything. One of the topics that is most difficult to report is this problem of educating the "disadvantaged" child. We have a picture of our average reader, which is just about one step above the television people's picture of the average watcher, but I know it doesn't do me any good to talk to my own mother about the disadvantaged child. She really isn't paying attention to what I'm talking about, and even if they are culturally or socially deprived, she doesn't know what it is all about. I think this is one of the hardest stories to get across--what the problems of these children are and why they need more and better education. A good percentage of our readers, many who fought for their own education, are lower-middle in the social structure, and they don't have any feeling for the problems of these people.

A third reporter (Newspaper No. 9) felt the integration situation in her area was quiet now, but potentially explosive. Expressing indecision as to how best to handle this story, she said:

> The civil rights issue has not erupted here in the schools. It may, and it probably will next year because a junior high school located in a predominately Negro neighborhood here is gradually being discontinued. The school board's reason is that the enrollment is too small to offer enough classes. However, because of the character of the neighborhood, difficulties will be involved in reassigning these students to another junior high school and we're expecting problems. We're discussing now how best to approach this situation. When the school board said it was going to close the school, we announced this in the paper and we've described as much as we know about how the students will be reassigned and what provisions will be made for getting them to their new schools. Our problem has been to know how or when to discuss the racial issue regarding this area.

Four reporters cited stories relating to curriculum as a difficult topic to cover. A certain feeling of inadequacy was expressed. For example, one reporter (Newspaper No. 8) gave this example:

> Curriculum stories are obviously complicated because they deal with a great deal of theory. When you're attempting to translate theory into practice, you've got a delicate proposition, no matter what area you're in. Practically any education story is difficult because of the complicated material you're dealing with. You can't write a simple accident story; you can't write a simple speech story. Whenever you do cover an educator's speech, he seems to be talking in abstractions and new-fangled theories. It takes an expert to understand them.

"It is difficult," said one reporter, "to put across the new ideas in education because so many people think of what they did as children as the thing that their children

or grandchildren should be doing today." Another reporter felt proposed curriculum changes and resultant costs should be specified more clearly. He said (Newspaper No. 7):

> Curriculum changes--how they affect children and why they are being made--are difficult to report. An example is the recent national report proposing free education for the thirteenth and fourteenth year. These reports are difficult to write about primarily because there is no real good reason ever--or seldom--given by these pressure groups why this should be other than the vague idea that it is a good one, and very, very seldom do they ever indicate how much it's going to cost. The general public will understand dollars and cents, whereas sometimes it won't understand the value of something else that's going on in education, and the two have to be tied together if there is going to be any kind of clear interpretation to the public of what something is going to do and how much it is going to cost them.

Only once was the issue of religious instruction in public schools cited as a difficult topic to cover. This one instance can be traced back to a local situation where this issue was a factor a number of years ago in the dismissal of the local superintendent. The issue created a great deal of community controversy then, which still flares up occasionally. "School officials are willing to talk about Bible reading and religious instruction in the public schools," this reporter observed, "but their approach is more than slightly reluctant."

Finally, one reporter (Newspaper No. 7) said a difficult story to cover concerns college admissions policies:

> The biggest story in Michigan today is at the college level, primarily at the freshman and sophomore levels where the curve marking system can knock out some students who otherwise would make it--simply because they happened to get into a class with a lot of smart kids. If we could explain the college situation as it relates to children, I think all other things would fall into place. It's difficult to get across to parents that they can no longer expect to send their children to the college of their choice. People don't understand education simply because it's too diverse; there are too many conflicting opinions within the educational system. Take higher education, for example. I fail to see why the community colleges and the four-year colleges can't live in harmony.

Editorials on Education

Question 8: "Do you write editorials on education? How often and under what conditions?"

Of the 14 reporters[8] responding to this question, only one reporter replied that he writes editorials as a regular practice, seven reporters said they write editorials occasionally, and six reporters said they never write editorials.

The one reporter who writes editorials frequently is a full-time education reporter for a Booth newspaper in a community of 100,000. When the editorial writer writes editorials on education, he usually confers with this

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[8] Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, and Monroe did not answer this question.

reporter. Because of his growing interest in education, this reporter is considered a "significant other" on this topic by other editors and reporters. Frequently, his articles on state and national educational issues are published by other Booth newspapers under this reporter's byline. He is considered an "expert" on school finance by other editors and reporters, especially within the Booth chain.

Content of education editorials written by the seven reporters who write an occasional editorial is confined mostly to local issues. These seven reporters said that they more often serve in a consulting role than in an editorial-writing capacity. Although they seldom write editorials themselves, reporters said that editorial writers often check facts with them and ask them for advice. A typical example (Newspaper No. 6) is as follows:

> I have read over editorials prior to their being in the paper, and I have even written editorials. Generally, however, I do not have anything to do with the editorial content. Usually, if I am consulted, it's to make sure that facts are correct.

Two education reporters who have served previously in editorial-writing capacities on a part-time or full-time basis say they are asked to fill in for the editorial writers when they are ill or on vacation. On these occasions, the

education reporters say they are likely to write an editorial on education.

A number of education reporters expressed complete confidence in their editorial writers, as this example (Newspaper No. 12) testifies:

> Our editorial writer has had long experience in newspaper work and is very familiar with our school system--partly because he has personal friendships with school people and partly because he was a member of a school board before it was annexed here. He has a greater reservoir of information than I have. So it's not so much my speaking out my opinions for the basis of an editorial as much as it is my reactions to what he has written--is it fair, is it factually correct, what facts are presented, and so forth? To that extent I have a hand in editorial writing--as little as it may be.

One reporter (Newspaper No. 4) mentioned that the editorial writer on his paper sometimes accompanies him to a school board meeting to get background data for an editorial:

> We have a full-time editorial writer on our staff who tries to follow all local situations quite closely. He pays particular attention to education--to the extent even of attending a meeting once in awhile. If there's a board meeting on a particularly pertinent subject, he'll attend the meeting himself just to add to his own background.

Another reporter (Newspaper No. 14) said his paper's management encourages all staff reporters to write editorials, giving this example:

> Our editorial writer has said many times: "If you have something to write, write it up." At times I have written excellent education editorials. Recently I read an editorial on education in our paper and went to the editorial writer to compliment him on it. He said another reporter who covers everything in his area--schools, state police, city and county affairs, everything--had written it himself. This reporter was very interested in education, and when this controversy came up, he wrote this editorial. On other editorials the editorial writer picks out ideas from stories that we've written. Sometimes he gets a little nudge from a reporter who is particularly interested in something.

The six education reporters who do not write education editorials also said they are called upon to ascertain accuracy of facts, to provide background information, and to concur or disagree with proposed editorial stands before they are published. Two examples of how reporters assist in this capacity are as follows:

Newspaper No. 8

> I have never written an editorial on education. I do assist by providing the managing editor, who does the editorial writing, with background and perhaps recommendations on the stand I think he should take. We took a stand in support of some millage propositions not so long ago and basically the recommendations I made were in the editorials. I'd say that probably about 70 to 80 per cent of the times I recommend something it is approved. There are times when voluntary stands are taken by the management itself. These would be on something of general interest--an issue of great significance to the entire area.

Newspaper No. 9

> I could write editorials, but I haven't. I've been called in on a number of occasions to assist in formulating editorial policy on such matters as millage elections and school board elections. I've been asked my views on candidates and on activities of the board during millage campaigns. We support candidates for school board positions in a very weak way. We say "so-and-so is a good candidate and so is so-and-so, and, on the other hand, so-and-so is too." Our intended meaning is that the first one mentioned is the best candidate. But we don't say that.

Although neither Detroit education reporter writes editorials on education, the two reporters give entirely different versions of their relationships with editorial writers. The following version from one Detroit reporter gives a picture of almost complete harmony:

> I never write editorials on education because we have a very competent man who is a school board member in one of the suburbs and knows all about education. He is very well qualified to write editorials. However, we do talk at length about the editorials he writes. I influence him only by argument, not by any authority of position. He always checks his editorials with me prior to publication. He's very careful to make sure that the facts on which he bases his editorial are correct, and I'll say this is a refreshing tendency in an editorial writer. Whenever there is any question, he usually talks to me to be quite sure about it.

The reporter for the other Detroit newspaper, however, finds far less co-operation between beat reporters and editorial writers:

I never write editorials on education. In fact, on this staff hardly anybody but the editorial writers ever writes an editorial. Moreover, I'm only rarely consulted about them, which drives me out of my mind. We have a policy here that editorial writers are supposed to do their own research. So they'll pick up a story in the morning and then start calling all over to get the same facts all over again. I've tried to get our editorial writer assigned to educational subjects to at least come to a school board meeting with me, so he'd have an idea what these board meetings are like. He never "has the time," which I can understand. He does come down occasionally now to ask me about something, and he is doing it more now because I got very upset with him about this finally. But there is often a divergence between the attitudes the editorial writers take toward a given event and the attitude that we either took in our copy or between the essence of a situation which you can get only by being there. Our editorial writers don't work nearly in close enough conjunction with the person on any beat. They're very inclined to make their own decisions and write their own editorials. For example, the three best people on the school board are leaving simultaneously this year. There are now three leading candidates for the board after a long hard struggle. This paper, along with most of the leaders of Detroit, has conducted an all-out search to get responsible persons to run for the board. They haven't been too successful. I don't blame them for not wanting to run. Our paper is partly responsible. It's things like the newspaper going after you every time you make a mistake. If all you read about are lumps for the board of education, why would you volunteer for this unpaid job, which takes from 10 to 20 hours a week? But last week one of the leading candidates for the board called me up and said he was coming up to talk to our editorial writer. He wanted to know if he could stop by and meet me while he was in the building. I was annoyed to say the least. I told him that I hoped to be at the meeting with the editorial writer, who I later called up in hopes of getting invited to the

> meeting, which I did get invited to finally. But it was held at a time when I was writing for deadlines, and so I missed most of it. Then this morning the man who is in charge of writing editorials just happened to drop into the conversation that another one of the leading candidates had been up here yesterday afternoon, and they had had a long interview with him. At that point I really blew my stack because this just means that here they have had an interview in depth with the man, and if I want to find out the same information, I have to go through the whole thing with him again. This isn't fair to him, and it sure makes the paper look bad--not to let your right hand know what your left hand is doing. This is a great weakness in this particular department--holding these little sessions up here with people and feeling it's not important to let the writer on the beat even know the person is in the building.

Summary and Conclusions

Question 1: Patterns of Educational Coverage

1. For all 17 newspapers,[9] the major assignment for all education reporters who participated in this study is to cover school board meetings. For the most part, reporters seem to be looking for "hard news" (appointments made, contracts awarded, etc.).

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[9]Questions 1, 2, and 4 were answered by all 17 respondents in the population. Four questions (3, 5, 6, and 7) were answered by 16 respondents (all except Battle Creek). One question (8) was answered by 14 respondents (all except Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, and Monroe).

2. The number of school districts which these 17 newspapers attempt to cover varies from 11 (Ann Arbor) to 120 (Benton Harbor) and 125 (both Detroit newspapers). Because of space and time limitations, many reporters admit that they concentrate on the local city district and cover other surrounding districts and all other education news on a "brush fire" basis--sending a reporter out to cover a story when an "issue" flares up.

3. Generally, education news occurring outside the central city district is covered on an area basis (i.e., political unit or geographical area) rather than on a topical basis (i.e., education or government). With only two exceptions, reporters other than those assigned to the central city "education beat" are responsible for covering education news emanating from suburban and surrounding school districts.

4. Four newspapers (Benton Harbor, Bay City, Flint, and Port Huron) have full-time reporters assigned to "bureaus" in outlying areas within their circulation limits. These reporters, who live and work away from the central office, are responsible for covering all news--including education--within their assigned area.

5. Part-time "stringers" or "area correspondents" are utilized by nine newspapers to cover all news--including education--within specified geographic areas (generally not the immediate suburban areas). For the most part, these stringers are not "professional" journalists, and the competency of their efforts was criticized by education reporters who participated in this study.

6. On 12 of the 17 newspapers, the education reporter assigned to cover the central city's schools was also responsible for covering the intermediate school district offices.

7. Coverage of non-public schools is also the responsibility of 15 education reporters assigned to cover the central city's public schools. Reporters said that coverage of non-public schools was less comprehensive and that information was more difficult to obtain.

8. Coverage of higher education news generally is the responsibility of the education reporter who has the city public school beat. This is true in every case where a local community college is located within the newspaper's primary circulation area. This coverage pattern, however, does not extend in all cases to the degree-granting institutions.

Question 2: Use of Bureaus and Wire Services

1. Coverage of education news that "breaks" in Lansing or Washington, D.C., is generally the responsibility of "bureau men" or the wire services. Of the 17 newspapers in this survey, 12 are serviced by bureau reporters in Lansing and Washington, D.C.

2. Eight of these 17 newspapers are "official" members of the Booth newspaper chain, while a ninth newspaper (Detroit News) could be considered an "unofficial" member of the Booth organization. Although not publicly announced, the News is, in effect, owned by the Booth chain. Thus, executives within the Booth organization have considerable potential (if not actual) "significant other" influence in the reporting of news for these nine Booth newspapers.

3. Fifteen Michigan dailies subscribe to both Associated Press and United Press International wire services. Two newspapers subscribe to only one wire service (AP); these two newspapers, moreover, do not maintain bureaus in the state and national capitals. Thus their access to state and national news depends almost exclusively upon the AP.

4. Generally, basic decisions of whether or not to use wire service copy on any subject--including education--

are the prerogative of the wire editor. Education reporters are most often consulted on the use of wire copy when the wire editor feels a local angle should be incorporated into the story.

Question 3: Contact with News Sources

1. For most reporters, the public school superintendent is the first and foremost source of information. Other reporters noted, however, that certain staff members are qualified to answer certain specific questions.

2. Specific individuals were cited as being primary sources of information for specific topics. The president of a local teachers' union, the president of the State Board of Education, and the chairman of the House Education Committee were named by three different reporters as particularly good information sources.

3. Reporters emphasized that they are interested primarily in "local" copy and that they rely primarily--if not exclusively--upon the wire services for education stories emanating from state and national levels.

4. It is apparent that the factor of source credibility influences the reporting of school board meeting news. School board members in "authority" positions appear to be observed more closely (and quoted more often) than those with less authoritative positions.

5. Reporters said that social contacts with school officials generally aid them in their work.

6. Certain school districts which enjoy high "source credibility" ratings with education reporters appear to exert a "significant other" influence on these reporters.

Question 4: Value of Centralized Public Relations

1. Only six Michigan newspapers included in this study are located in communities where the city public schools have created public relations departments. Thus, 10 newspapers of the 17 above 20,000 circulation do not have access to public relations departments for the city public schools and must contact news sources directly.

2. Whether or not the local city school system should have a centralized public relations department is a question which received a varied response. Reporters frequently complained that the operations of present school public relations departments leave much to be desired. They complained that these PR offices are slow to respond to breaking news stories, that they are not informed about what is going on within their own school system--especially not informed about top-level administrative policy decisions, that PR offices are overly occupied with minor news stories, that working through PR offices creates unnecessary and

time-consuming "middle man" delays, and that the PR person often will not ask the superintendent "sensitive" questions.

3. Most reporters expressed the desire to contact all news sources directly.

4. Dissatisfaction was expressed by a number of reporters with the qualifications of the person selected for the school public relations job.

Question 5: "Off-the-Record" Information and Executive Sessions

1. All 16 education reporters interviewed in this survey said they "accept" off-the-record information, but most expressed misgivings about this procedure.

2. Respondents generally felt that the reporter with off-the-record information has a more complete understanding of a given situation, that the reporter is able to write a better story (more accurate and complete) when off-the-record information eventually becomes on-the-record, and that the enterprising reporter can find ways of using off-the-record information by tapping other sources.

3. The practice of some school officials during a public board meeting to say that certain information is "off the record" was cited by a number of reporters as a particularly irritating habit.

4. Of the 16 education reporters interviewed for this study, 10 said they presently are able to attend executive sessions of the local city school board and five said they are not able to attend (the sixteenth reporter attempts to cover 14 districts equally--some of these 14 districts permit him to attend and others do not). Of Michigan's five largest daily newspapers, only one (Grand Rapids) allows the education reporter to sit in on executive sessions. Most reporters who attend executive sessions said they have been attending these meetings for some time.

5. Reporters who attend executive sessions have worked out a so-called gentleman's agreement with boards of education. This usually means that reporters are allowed to sit in on executive sessions for background information but are not supposed to report the actual proceedings of the session.

6. Reporters justify their attendance at executive sessions by pointing out the "good" they can do by knowing the background of sensitive issues. They say their "discretion" is good, and they should be in a position to use it.

7. Reporters indicate that the large city school boards recognize the difference between open public sessions

and closed (to the public) executive sessions. However, some felt that problems are created by smaller outlying school districts when lines of demarcation are not clearly drawn.

8. The topic most frequently cited (56.25 per cent) that should be discussed in executive session was "a morals charge brought against a school employee." All the reporters indicated that considerable caution should be exercised in the handling of "personnel matters."

9. The topic most frequently cited (81.25 per cent) that should not be discussed in executive session was "a new salary schedule for teachers." With 56.25 per cent saying that a "proposed salary for the superintendent" should not be discussed in executive session, the potential for school-press misunderstandings in this salary area is high unless some well-defined ground rules are agreed to.

10. Surprisingly, 50 per cent of the respondents said that "the selection of a site for a new school" should not be discussed in an executive session. Twenty-five per cent said this topic should be discussed in executive session, and 25 per cent said it may or may not be discussed.

Question 6: Use of Press Conferences by School Officials

1. Respondents almost unanimously rejected the idea that school officials make wider use of the press conference. Reasons given were as follows: time is wasted, very little happens at a press conference of real news significance, and reporters prefer to follow up their own "angles" rather than sharing their ideas with their competitors.

2. The one reporter who expressed a desire for more press conferences did so only for specific circumstances (i.e., during millage campaigns).

3. Both Detroit reporters felt that the superintendent's practice of meeting with the press for about half an hour before school board meetings was ineffectual.

4. The idea of private conferences with the superintendent--rather than public press conferences--appealed to a number of reporters.

Question 7: Most Difficult Topic to Report

1. Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that problems relating to school finance are the most difficult to report. Fifteen of the 16 reporters interviewed mentioned this topic. Moreover, 13 of these 15 reporters listed "school finance" as the most difficult topic to cover.

2. Far lesser mention was given to four other educational topics: four reporters cited stories relating

to new curriculum ideas, three cited problems of school integration, one cited religious practices in public schools, and one cited college admission policies.

3. Not only is there the problem for the reporter to keep up with proposed tax changes and governmental actions as they occur, but also the extremely difficult problem of "translating" complicated tax procedures and language into "understandable" terms for a less sophisticated audience. Many conflicting courses of action were proposed: (1) to reduce complex school finance stories down to "common denominators"; (2) to give considerable space to finance stories with many details; and (3) to keep finance stories concise "both in language and in space."

Question 8: Editorials on Education

1. Only one reporter said that he writes editorials on education as a regular practice, seven reporters said they write editorials occasionally, six reporters said they never write editorials, and two did not answer this question.

2. The one reporter who writes editorials frequently is a full-time education reporter for a Booth newspaper in a community of 100,000. Because of his growing interest in education, this reporter is considered a "significant other"

on this topic by other editors and reporters--especially within the Booth chain where his articles have been reprinted.

3. Content of education editorials written by the seven reporters who write an occasional editorial is confined mostly to local issues. These seven reporters said that they more often serve in a consulting role than in an editorial-writing capacity. Although they seldom write editorials themselves, reporters said that editorial writers often check "facts" with them and ask them for advice.

4. The six education reporters who do not write education editorials also said they are called upon to ascertain accuracy of facts, to provide background information, and to concur or disagree with proposed editorial stands before they are published.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The press constitutes a--if not "the"--major channel of communication through which the community learns about and interprets the policies, programs, and activities of its schools. Despite the importance of this relationship, there is a paucity of research about basic patterns of school-press interactions. This study set out to probe the news-gathering practices of education reporters and to obtain credibility rankings for various possible sources of education information.

Specifically, this study was an exploratory study with three major objectives: (1) to examine demographic characteristics of education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000; (2) to assess frequency of contact and credibility rankings for 27 sources of education information as judged by these education reporters; and (3) to investigate "gate keeping" practices of these education reporters. It was assumed

that if the framers of education "messages" could have some index of how well or how poorly the press is likely to receive and use messages emanating from various sources of education information, then the implications for attributing the "correct" sources to different education messages are obvious.

This study was organized into seven chapters. Chapter I presented an introduction. Chapter II reviewed relevant research in four areas: (1) basic behavioral science research; (2) communication research, with emphasis on "source credibility" and "gate keeper" studies; (3) school-community communications research; and (4) use of Q-technique as research methodology. Chapter III explained how this study was conducted. Chapter IV analyzed the "frequency of contact" ratings and the Q-analysis of source credibility for 27 sources of education information, with education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000 doing the Q-sorts. Chapter V analyzed demographic data pertaining to these education reporters. Chapter VI analyzed responses to open-end interview questions on the news-gathering practices of these education reporters. Chapter VII presents a summary, conclusions, and recommendations (for future research and suggestions for school officials and newspaper officials).

Summary of Significant Related Research

To attempt to understand the effects and interactions of the communication process requires the combined efforts of many behavioral disciplines--sociology, anthropology, experimental and social psychology, linguistics, political science--together with research in applied fields, including mass communication. A summary of significant research is as follows:

1. "News" is what the reporter perceives it to be. Thus it is apparent that even the actual physical events (the criterion events) are reported by two reporters in two different perceptual frameworks and that the two men bring to the "story" different sets of experiences, attitudes, and expectations.

2. The social groups to which each person belongs or refers will influence his chances to being exposed to any message or media campaign, his perception and interpretation of the content, and its impact upon him. Mass communications, therefore, must be viewed as functioning within the larger sociological perspective of the culture, social organization, and human groups. Freedom to communicate does not automatically reduce misperceptions or improve attitudes.

3. The social-psychological forces which control the flow of news from source to reporter and into the press have been demonstrated in numerous "gate keeper" studies. These studies have revealed that the "fate" of a given story is determined by the demands of the reference group of which the communicator is a member, not by the needs of the community or mass audience. The newsman's source of rewards is located among his colleagues and superiors, not among his readers. Journalists are inclined to follow "opinion leaders" in making editorial decisions. "Craft orientation" helps shape the reporter's approach to the gathering of news--resulting in "frozen news patterns."

4. Experimental studies have shown that audience perceptions of the source of a communication affect acceptance of information and opinion. Sources regarded as credible apparently abet persuasion; while sources inspiring more negative images apparently hinder persuasion.

5. Face-to-face discourse has frequently been shown to be a more effective instrument of persuasion than the mass media. The combined use of several media plus face-to-face contact, formal or informal, is believed to be a peculiarly effective technique of persuasion. The mass media appear to be themselves differentially effective as channels for persuasive communication, over and above the

fact that they normally draw on somewhat different audiences. Certain characteristics of each medium (e.g., the ability of television to permit "personal participation") are believed to provide that medium with unique capabilities as a persuasive instrument. None of these characteristics has been explicitly shown to contribute to persuasion. In laboratory experiments, face-to-face contact is more efficiently persuasive than radio, which, in turn, is more efficient than print. TV and films probably rank between personal contact and radio.

6. Research in the field of school public relations is only in the beginning stages of adapting present knowledge in the behavioral sciences and communication to school purposes. Hopefully, research projects such as Stanford University's public relations studies and other similar projects are helping school public relations to move away from mere "rule-of-thumb" understandings to more scientific analyses.

7. Q-technique, an idiodynamic approach to the study of human behavior, is an appropriate methodology used to describe persons in terms of major patterns of belief ("type psychology"). Especially during the past decade Q-technique has been used increasingly in research designs in many fields: clinical psychology, self psychology, type psychology, social psychology, and communication research.

Summary of Research Design and Methodology

As previously stated, this study encompassed three major areas: (1) basic demographic data pertaining to education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000; (2) an analysis of "gate keeping" functions of these education reporters; and (3) an analysis of "frequency of contact" by these education reporters of 27 education information sources and a Q-analysis of the "source credibility" of these same 27 education information sources, with the education reporters doing the Q-sorting. A summary of this study's research design and methodology is as follows:

1. Because of the degree of specialization now practiced by the larger daily newspapers, the sample for this study was limited to the 17 Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000. Selection of this population permitted in-depth, face-to-face interviews with the respondents.

2. Both a written questionnaire (Appendix A) and personal interviews (Appendix B) were employed in the data collecting. Consultations with knowledgeable persons in education, communication, sociology, and related disciplines

were undertaken to select appropriate questions for the questionnaire and interview schedule.

3. One pre-testing of the questionnaire and interview procedures was conducted with an education reporter for a Michigan daily newspaper with a circulation just under 20,000. Only minor revisions in the questionnaire and interview procedures resulted from this trial interview. Data from this trial interview are not included in this study's findings.

4. Data were collected over a three-month period (May 18, 1964, to July 15, 1964). Letters requesting participation in this study were sent to 13 "education editors" as listed in Editor and Publisher, 1964 and to appropriate journalists for four other newspapers as identified by their publishers (Appendices C and D). In one sense, 100 per cent participation was achieved. However, one respondent answered only the written questionnaire, and another newspaper consented to participate only in a "group oral interview" with five of the newspaper's editorial staff members present.

5. Demographic data were collected for two major purposes: (1) to reveal relationships and comparisons in the "source credibility" Q-analysis; and (2) to reveal significant demographic patterns of response for a selected

population of education reporters. Methodology utilized to analyze the demographic data was a compilation of responses by aggregate percentages.

6. Variables in behavior patterns of education reporters are not well identified. It was felt that it would be unwise to structure interview questions at this stage of research into a rigid design. Recognizing the limited available knowledge as to the kind of answers particular questions would be likely to provoke from education reporters, it was decided to use questions of the "open-end" type. Questions were designed to probe the "gate keeping" functions of education reporters, especially in regard to their selection of sources of education information. To analyze the open-end interview responses, the verbatim answers (as transcribed from the taped interviews) were segregated into separate question categories, analyzed for major response trends, and summarized according to consensus and minority viewpoints.

7. More rigorous investigation tools were employed for the "frequency of contact" and "source credibility" analyses of the 27 sources of education information. Factor analysis and Q-methodology were considered especially appropriate for the "source credibility" analysis. Factor analysis is a useful tool in the behavioral sciences where

control is sometimes impossible, where a predictive hypothesis can be as misleading as helpful, where the crucial variables are unknown or not clear, and where the direction of causation is unknown. Q-methodology also was particularly appropriate for our purposes, i.e., to make discoveries rather than to test our reasoning. The Q-technique was selected to isolate useful and meaningful typologies of education reporters. No specific hypotheses were tested. It was our plan to derive hypotheses for future studies from analyzing our Q-sorts.

8. Sixteen respondents were asked to evaluate the 27 education information sources according to a four-point scale for "frequency of contact" (frequently, occasionally, very seldom, and never) and according to an 11-point scale for "source credibility" (from "most accurate" to "least accurate"). Because subjects said they "never" contact certain sources (especially "state" and "national" sources), they refused to give "credibility" Q-scores for these sources. Therefore, 22.9 per cent of all Q-scores used in this "credibility" Q-analysis are arithmetic mean scores and not <u>actual</u> credibility evaluations by the respondents.

9. Essentially, the six major steps in Q-analysis

as suggested by MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott[1] were followed in the "source credibility" analysis. Relying on evidence showing that free and forced Q-sorts do not give strikingly different results, however, this study permitted a "free sorting," rather than a "forced sorting" of Q-items according to a symmetrical distribution.

10. Because of the high loading on factor I in the "frequency of contact" factor loading matrix, it was decided to convert this single factor array into *z*-scores.

11. In the "source credibility" Q-sort, however, the factor analytic model constructed three <u>hypothetical</u> types of persons based on the way the subjects rated the 27 Q-items. After the three arrays of weighted item scores were computed, they were converted to *z*-scores.

12. The final two steps (Steps 5 and 6) as suggested by MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott in our Q-analysis were presented in Chapter IV. These two steps encompassed: (1) a description of the three hypothetical types of persons that the factor analytic model had constructed on the basis of the actual Q-sorts of the subjects interviewed; and (2) comparisons of how the three types relate to each other.

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[1] See Chapter III, page 84.

Summary of Q-Sort Data

Frequency of Contact. A significant finding of this study is the strong preference of education reporters for contacting local sources of education information. Respondents identified the local superintendent of schools (public), the president of the local school board, public school principals (elementary and secondary), and the local administrator (public) in charge of school public relations as the five most frequently contacted sources of education information. Moreover, it is significant to note that state-level sources of education information are contacted more frequently than national-level sources. It appears that education reporters see themselves in the center of three concentric circles (local, state, and national) and that those sources closest to the center (local, then state, and then national) are contacted most frequently.

Source Credibility. In the source credibility Q-sort, the factor analytic model constructed three hypothetical types of persons based on the way the subjects rated the 27 Q-items (the 27 sources of education information). These three types are described in the following three paragraphs.

Type I is younger than Types II and III (all Type I's are less than 39), is more likely to be a woman (half of Type I's are women), and has less formal education than Types II and III (half of Type I's are only high school graduates). Type I is more likely to belong to a newspaper union than Types II and III. Type I is more likely to be Protestant than Type II, but with about equal probability to Type III.

All Type II's are men and all are college graduates. Type II is evenly represented in all age categories. Type II is more likely to be a non-union newspaperman and Roman Catholic than Types I and III. In fact, no Type II belongs to the American Newspaper Guild.

Similar to Type II, all Type III's are college graduates. However, Type III includes both men and women (twice as many men as women), and Type III's are likely to be young (less than 39) or old (more than 60). Like Type I, Type III is likely to be Protestant. Type III could be either a union or non-union newspaperman (with greater probability for non-union affiliation).

One of the most important findings of this study is the fact that the local public school superintendent, who received the highest z-score on the "frequency of contact"

array, also has the highest average "source credibility" z-score across all three types of education reporters. In other words, education reporters consider the local superintendent an accurate source of information and contact him frequently.

Classroom teachers (public) were trusted by all three types of education reporters, but public school principals (elementary and secondary) were ranked high in source credibility by Types I and II but very low by Type III.

Source credibility rankings for the local Parent-Teachers Association were low for all three types, with Type I giving it the lowest credibility ranking of all 27 sources (z-score, -4.09). The probability is great that "messages" emanating from local PTA organizations will have minimal persuasive effectiveness upon education reporters (especially Type I).

Another finding of considerable importance is how membership or non-membership in the reporters' union (American Newspaper Guild) is reflected in the source credibility rankings of teachers' unions (AFL-CIO) as compared to rankings of "professional" teachers' organizations (NEA-MEA-local affiliate). For example, Type II (which includes all non-union reporters) ranked all levels of the

teachers' union (American Federation of Teachers, Michigan Federation of Teachers, and the local AFL-CIO affiliate) very low, while giving higher credibility rankings to the Michigan Education Association, the National Education Association, and the local NEA-MEA affiliate (although the local NEA-MEA chapter's *z*-score was -0.34, just one ranking above the MFT's -1.13 *z*-score). On the other hand, Type I (which includes the highest percentage of reporters belonging to the American Newspaper Guild) is more positively oriented than Types II and III to the AFT and the MFT, although Type III's *z*-score for the local teachers' union is slightly higher than Type I's (0.23, Type III; 0.13, Type I; and -2.65, Type II).

Rejecting local "professional" sources of education information (public school administrators), Type III trusts the president of the local school board considerably more than Types I and II (more than 2.00 *z*-score). Type III also gave higher credibility rankings to administrators of private schools other than Catholic and to the local chapter of the MEA. Significantly, Type III finds five sources particularly inaccurate (more than 1.00 *z*-score) compared to Types I and II. They are public school principals (both elementary and secondary), school officials of county

or intermediate districts, the National Education Association, and the local public school administrator in charge of public relations. A "message" emanating from any one of these five sources would have a low probability of persuasiveness effectiveness on Type III.

Summary of Demographic Data

A summary of the major demographic characteristics of this population (and sample) of education reporters is as follows:

1. Of the 16 respondents for this study, 13 (81.25 per cent) were men. Nine (56.25 per cent) were men under the age of 50. Eight respondents (50 per cent) were under 40 years of age, and 12 (75 per cent) were under 50 years of age.

2. Twelve respondents (75 per cent) have earned a college degree or higher. Two respondents (12.5 per cent) have only a high school degree. English, the social sciences, and journalism were the major fields of study for the college graduates. Only one reporter (6.25 per cent) cited any college work in education courses.

3. Ten respondents (62.5 per cent) were being paid less than $9,000 annually, with four respondents (25 per cent) receiving less than $7,000 annually.

4. Respondents indicated a wide variety of previous work experiences. Retail selling, factory work, and public relations work were mentioned most frequently. Two respondents (12.5 per cent) said they had no work experience other than newspaper reporting.

5. Nine respondents (56.25 per cent) have been employed in newspaper work for more than 15 years. Only two respondents (12.5 per cent) have been doing newspaper work for less than eight years. However, seven respondents (43.75 per cent) have been employed by their present newspaper for less than eight years. Significantly, ten respondents (62.5 per cent) have been assigned to the "education beat" for less than eight years, with eight respondents (50 per cent) assigned to cover education for less than four years.

6. Nine newspapers (56.25 per cent) have had specific persons assigned to cover education for 20 years or more, which tends to refute the idea that newspaper specialization in the area of education is of recent origin.

7. Eight respondents (50 per cent) had the title of "education reporter"; only two respondents (12.5 per cent) were designated as "education editors."

8. Only four respondents (25 per cent) devote 100 per cent of their time to covering education, although 12 respondents (75 per cent) devote more than 50 per cent of their time to the education beat. Only four respondents (25 per cent) said that the time they are able to devote to coverage of education is "very adequate," while nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said the time they are able to devote to education is "fairly adequate."

9. Most respondents assigned to the education beat appear to "enjoy" this assignment and find the work load "about right." Twelve respondents (75 per cent) said they "thoroughly enjoy this assignment"; only two respondents (12.5 per cent) said they "would prefer another journalistic assignment." Five respondents (31.25 per cent) said their work load was "too heavy" and nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said their work load was "about right."

10. Most respondents in this study have assignments on their newspapers in addition to covering education. In the order of frequency of mention, respondents cited these responsibilities: special features, general news reporting, specified types of news or departments, and editorial functions.

11. Respondents' membership in formal organizations did not appear to be extensive in terms of total numbers.

Membership in "professional" activities (press clubs and/or journalism organizations or fraternities) appears to be very limited. However, six respondents (37.5 per cent) said they belong to the American Newspaper Guild (AFL-CIO). Respondents indicated political affiliation as follows: one Democrat, four Republicans, seven independents, and four no responses. Religious affiliation included 10 Protestants, four Roman Catholics, and two no responses.

12. Education reporters appear to consider the Detroit Free Press and Time magazine as highly important "significant others." In the open-end section of Part I, 14 respondents (87.5 per cent) said they read the Detroit Free Press. Time magazine showed high readership in both the open-end section of Part I and the forced-choice section of Part II. In Part I, nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said they read Time, and in Part II, 12 respondents (75 per cent) said they read Time "frequently."

13. Education reporters do not regularly attend educational conventions. Respondents were asked to rate frequency of attendance at 11 major educational conventions according to a four-point scale (frequently, occasionally, very seldom, and never). Of 176 total possible responses, 131 (74.43 per cent) were in the "never attend" category. Moreover, 10 of the 11 conventions had "never attend"

responses greater than 62 per cent. The one exception was the MEA Representative Assembly, where eight respondents (50 per cent) said they "never" attend. The highest number of reporters who said they "frequently" attend a given convention is two (12.5 per cent); four conventions were so designated (MEA Representative Assembly, convention of the Michigan Association of School Boards, convention of the Michigan Association of School Administrators, and convention of the American Association of School Administrators).

Summary of Open-end Interview Data

Question 1: Patterns of Educational Coverage

1. For all 17 newspapers,[2] the major assignment for all education reporters who participated in this study is to cover school board meetings. For the most part, reporters seem to be looking for "hard news" (appointments made, contracts awarded, etc.).

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[2]By making direct telephone calls to the Battle Creek respondent, it was possible to compile data for all 17 newspapers in the population for three interview questions (1, 2, and 4). Four interview questions (3, 5, 6, and 7) were answered by 16 subjects (all respondents except Battle Creek). One question (8) was answered by 14 respondents (all except Battle Creek, Benton Harbor, and Monroe).

2. The number of school districts which these 17 newspapers attempt to cover varies from 11 (Ann Arbor) to 120 (Benton Harbor) and 125 (both Detroit newspapers). Because of space and time limitations, many reporters admit that they concentrate on the local city district and cover other surrounding districts and all other education news on a "brush fire" basis--sending a reporter out to cover a story when an "issue" flares up.

3. Generally, education news occurring outside the central city district is covered on an area basis (i.e., political unit or geographical area) rather than on a topical basis (i.e., education or government). With only two exceptions, reporters other than those assigned to the central city "education beat" are responsible for covering education news emanating from suburban and surrounding school districts.

4. Four newspapers (Benton Harbor, Bay City, Flint, and Port Huron) have full-time reporters assigned to "bureaus" in outlying areas within their circulation limits. These reporters, who live and work away from the central office, are responsible for covering all news--including education--within their assigned area.

5. Part-time "stringers" or "area correspondents" are utilized by nine newspapers to cover all news--including education--within specified geographic areas (generally not the immediate suburban areas). For the most part, these stringers are not "professional" journalists, and the competency of their efforts was critized by education reporters who participated in this study.

6. On 12 of the 17 newspapers, the education reporter assigned to cover the central city's schools was also responsible for covering the intermediate school district offices.

7. Coverage of non-public schools is also the responsibility of 15 education reporters assigned to cover the central city's public schools. Reporters said that coverage of non-public schools was less comprehensive and that information was more difficult to obtain.

8. Coverage of higher education news generally is the responsibility of the education reporter who has the city public school beat. This is true in every case where a local community college is located within the newspaper's primary circulation area. This coverage pattern, however, does not extend in all cases to the degree-granting institutions.

Question 2: Use of Bureaus and Wire Services

1. Coverage of education news that "breaks" in Lansing or Washington, D.C., is generally the responsibility of "bureau men" or the wire services. Of the 17 newspapers in this survey, 12 are serviced by bureau reporters in Lansing and Washington, D.C.

2. Eight of these 17 newspapers are "official" members of the Booth newspaper chain, while a ninth newspaper (Detroit News) could be considered an "unofficial" member of the Booth organization. Although not publicly announced, the News is, in effect, owned by the Booth chain. Thus, executives within the Booth organization have considerable potential (if not actual) "significant other" influence in the reporting of news for these nine Booth newspapers.

3. Fifteen Michigan dailies subscribe to both Associated Press and United Press International wire services. Two newspapers subscribe to only one wire service (AP); these two newspapers, moreover, do not maintain bureaus in the state and national capitals. Thus their access to state and national news depends almost exclusively upon the AP.

4. Generally, basic decisions of whether or not to use wire service copy on any subject--including education--

are the prerogative of the wire editor. Education reporters are most often consulted on the use of wire copy when the wire editor feels a local angle should be incorporated into the story.

Question 3: Contact with News Sources

1. For most reporters, the public school superintendent is the first and foremost source of information. Other reporters noted, however, that certain staff members are qualified to answer certain specific questions.

2. Specific individuals were cited as being primary sources of information for specific topics. The president of a local teachers' union, the president of the State Board of Education, and the chairman of the House Education Committee were named by three different reporters as particularly good information sources.

3. Reporters emphasized that they are interested primarily in "local" copy and that they rely primarily--if not exclusively--upon the wire services for education stories emanating from state and national levels.

4. It is apparent that the factor of source credibility influences the reporting of school board meeting news. School board members in "authority" positions

appear to be observed more closely (and quoted more often) than those with less authoritative positions.

5. Reporters said that social contacts with school officials generally aid them in their work.

6. Certain school districts which enjoy high "source credibility" ratings with education reporters appear to exert a "significant other" influence on these reporters.

Question 4: Value of Centralized Public Relations

1. Only six Michigan newspapers included in this study are located in communities where the city public schools have created public relations departments. Thus, 10 newspapers of the 17 above 20,000 circulation do not have access to public relations departments for the city public schools and must contact news sources directly.

2. Whether or not the local city school system should have a centralized public relations department is a question which received a varied response. Reporters frequently complained that the operations of present school public relations departments leave much to be desired. They complained that these PR offices are slow to respond to breaking news stories, that they are not informed about what is going on within their own school system--especially not informed about top-level administrative policy decisions,

that PR offices are overly occupied with minor news stories, that working through PR offices creates unnecessary and time-consuming "middle man" delays, and that the PR person often will not ask the superintendent "sensitive" questions.

3. Most reporters expressed the desire to contact all news sources directly.

4. Dissatisfaction was expressed by a number of reporters with the qualifications of the person selected for the school public relations job.

Question 5: "Off-the-Record" Information and Executive Sessions

1. All 16 education reporters interviewed in this survey said they "accept" off-the-record information, but most expressed misgivings about this procedure.

2. Respondents generally felt that the reporter with off-the-record information has a more complete understanding of a given situation, that the reporter is able to write a better story (more accurate and complete) when off-the-record information eventually becomes on-the-record, and that the enterprising reporter can find ways of using off-the-record information by tapping other sources.

3. The practice of some school officials during a public board meeting to say that certain information is

"off the record" was cited by a number of reporters as a particularly irritating habit.

4. Of the 16 education reporters interviewed for this study, 10 said they presently are able to attend executive sessions of the local city school board and five said they are not able to attend (the sixteenth reporter attempts to cover 14 districts equally--some of these 14 districts permit him to attend and others do not). Of Michigan's five largest daily newspapers, only one (Grand Rapids) allows the education reporter to sit in on executive sessions. Most reporters who attend executive sessions said they have been attending these meetings for some time.

5. Reporters who attend executive sessions have worked out a so-called gentleman's agreement with boards of education. This usually means that reporters are allowed to sit in on executive sessions for background information but are not supposed to report the actual proceedings of the session.

6. Reporters justify their attendance at executive sessions by pointing out the "good" they can do by knowing the background of sensitive issues. They say their "discretion" is good, and they should be in a position to use it.

7. Reporters indicate that the large city school boards recognize the difference between open public sessions and closed (to the public) executive sessions. However, some felt that problems are created by smaller outlying school districts when lines of demarcation are not clearly drawn.

8. The topic most frequently cited (56.25 per cent) that should be discussed in executive session was "a morals charge brought against a school employee." All the reporters indicated that considerable caution should be exercised in the handling of "personnel matters."

9. The topic most frequently cited (81.25 per cent) that should not be discussed in executive session was "a new salary schedule for teachers." With 56.25 per cent saying that a "proposed salary for the superintendent" should not be discussed in executive session, the potential for school-press misunderstandings in this salary area is high unless some well-defined ground rules are agreed to.

10. Surprisingly, 50 per cent of the respondents said that "the selection of a site for a new school" should not be discussed in an executive session. Twenty-five per cent said this topic should be discussed in executive session, and 25 per cent said it may or may not be discussed.

Question 6: Use of Press Conferences by School Officials

1. Respondents almost unanimously rejected the idea that school officials make wider use of the press conference. Reasons given were as follows: time is wasted, very little happens at a press conference of real news significance, and reporters prefer to follow up their own "angles" rather than sharing their ideas with their competitors.

2. The one reporter who expressed a desire for more press conferences did so only for specific circumstances (i.e., during millage campaigns).

3. Both Detroit reporters felt that the superintendent's practice of meeting with the press for about half an hour before school board meetings was ineffectual.

4. The idea of private conferences with the superintendent--rather than public press conferences--appealed to a number of reporters.

Question 7: Most Difficult Topic to Report

1. Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that problems relating to school finance are the most difficult to report. Fifteen of the 16 reporters interviewed mentioned this topic. Moreover, 13 of these 15 reporters listed "school finance" as the most difficult topic to cover.

2. Far lesser mention was given to four other educational topics: four reporters cited stories relating to new curriculum ideas, three cited problems of school integration, one cited religious practices in public schools, and one cited college admission policies.

3. Not only is there the problem for the reporter to keep up with proposed tax changes and governmental actions as they occur, but also the extremely difficult problem of "translating" complicated tax procedures and language into "understandable" terms for a less sophisticated audience. Many conflicting courses of action were proposed: (1) to reduce complex school finance stories down to "common denominators"; (2) to give considerable space to finance stories with many details; and (3) to keep finance stories concise "both in language and in space."

Question 8: Editorials on Education

1. Only one reporter said that he writes editorials on education as a regular practice, seven reporters said they write editorials occasionally, six reporters said they never write editorials, and two did not answer this question.

2. The one reporter who writes editorials frequently is a full-time education reporter for a Booth newspaper in

a community of 100,000. Because of his growing interest in education, this reporter is considered a "significant other" on this topic by other editors and reporters--especially within the Booth chain where his articles have been reprinted.

3. Content of education editorials written by the seven reporters who write an occasional editorial is confined mostly to local issues. These seven reporters said that they more often serve in a consulting role than in an editorial-writing capacity. Although they seldom write editorials themselves, reporters said that editorial writers often check "facts" with them and ask them for advice.

4. The six education reporters who do not write education editorials also said they are called upon to ascertain accuracy of facts, to provide background information, and to concur or disagree with proposed editorial stands before they are published.

Recommendations for Research

1. Research similar to that undertaken by MSU's Department of Communication for the United States Office of Civil Defense[3] would appear to be an appropriate next step. As previously stated, this study was an exploratory study with three major objectives: (1) to determine demographic characteristics of education reporters; (2) to assess frequency of contact and credibility rankings for various sources of education information; and (3) to investigate "gate keeping" practices of education reporters. This research represents only a beginning. Taking a cue from the research of Rokeach[4] and the methodology of Stephenson,[5] one could proceed next to determine the hierarchy of beliefs concerning education that education reporters have. Selecting from a comprehensive sample of a large variety of viewpoints on education, reporters could be asked to distribute these viewpoints along a belief-disbelief dimension. Assuming that this sample of statements would be adequate and meaningful, then a prediction

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[3] MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott, op. cit.

[4] Rokeach, op. cit.

[5] Stephenson, op. cit.

could be made as to what a reporter is likely to do under certain circumstances by examining the pattern or hierarchy of beliefs he has arranged. This is a necessary next step. Many questions, however, remain to be answered. For example, the MSU Civil Defense study puts the problem in this perspective:

> Given a communication goal, what kinds of messages work best for each of the types? For some purposes, are there communication techniques which will work for all the types isolated? What about changing a pattern of beliefs about one of the areas? How can this be accomplished? What kinds of unintended effects would be involved if you could change a belief pattern? Given the typal belief patterns and persuasive communication techniques for them, how do the types distribute regionally, rural-urban, etc.--necessary information for message distribution? What communication media are more likely to reach which types? The present research does not provide full answers to such questions. It only provides suggestions. The next step is to follow up these suggestions in further research both in the field (regional and national surveys) and the laboratory (experimental studies). In the quest for answers to crucial, strategic communication questions, the development of appropriate research methods must have top priority.[6]

2. A study similar to that proposed above for education reporters should be carried out on teachers. Such a study should examine the source credibility evaluations of teachers, as well as their hierarchy of beliefs of viewpoints

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[6]MacLean, Danbury, and Talbott, op. cit., p. 48.

on education. With the intensified conflict between teachers' unions (AFL-CIO) and the professional associations (NEA-state-local), it would be wise for those who desire to see teachers' organizations remain independent--and not affiliated with a single segment of society--to correctly assess source credibility rankings and patterns of belief of teachers in the United States.

3. Much greater co-operation is needed between the various academic disciplines, especially between the colleges of education and the colleges of communication. School public relations has done very little to adapt present knowledge in the behavioral sciences and communication to school purposes. Rigorous research in the field of school public relations is sorely needed, including an analytical model of the public relations process (Ciernick's study[7] is an important step in this direction).

4. In future research there should be more emphasis upon the content consequences of different patterns of interaction, and upon the relationships between specific news source individuals and specific "gate keepers." Continuing research into newsgathering processes and into the role relationships of newsmen and news sources should have

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[7] Ciernick, op. cit.

implications for theory development in mass communications and should also have action consequences for journalists, news sources, and students of public opinion. All of the "gate-keeper" research findings reveal the need for further investigation of "role analysis" and "reference groups" in the newsgathering processes.

5. There would be real value in longitudinal studies of the goals and values of young recruits and of these same people as they remain in the field and become socialized into the ways of the mass media occupational group. There is abundant room for inquiry into what kinds of people--in terms of personality attributes--are attracted into and retained by the mass media (enlarging upon Swanson's study[8]).

6. More data is also needed of the kind gathered by Breed[9] about the newsroom milieu and the patterns of influence and pressure in the newsroom. The functional approach can be used in the institutional analysis of any mass medium or organization in mass communication, examining

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[8] G. E. Swanson, "Agitation Through the Press: Study of Personalities of Publicists," Public Opinion Quarterly, XX, 1956, 441-456.

[9] Breed, op. cit.

the function of some repeated and patterned operation within that organization. Here there are good possibilities of obtaining essential data for empirical verification of hypotheses, through case studies, comparative analysis of differently organized media, or direct experimentation.

7. Admitting the difficulty of controlling the many mediating variables in the field situation, a rigorous study should be conducted to test the effects of "threat appeals" (low, medium, and extreme) in school millage or bonding elections. In other words, what effects do "extreme threats" (i.e., withdrawing school services, curtailing the curriculum, eliminating athletic programs) have on communication (and voting) persuasiveness? A series of fairly recent studies presents remarkably consistent findings to the effect that persuasive communications which employ "threat appeals" are likely to be less effective as the threat becomes more extreme.[10] Most of these studies, however, were performed under tightly controlled laboratory conditions.

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[10] Klapper, op. cit. pp. 117-119.

Recommendations for School Officials

1. It is recommended (1) that face-to-face contacts be utilized to a much greater extent (supplemented by multi-media usage) and (2) that credible sources of education information within each community be identified and utilized for the various audiences. Recognizing the persuasive effectiveness of credible sources of information, school officials should exercise much greater selectivity in the framing and dissemination of educational "messages." Too often school public relations programs have been equated with "publicity" programs. School officials have naively assumed that the solution to better public understanding of school programs was merely to turn on the mimeograph machines and printing presses at full speed. It should also be recognized that framing one educational message for all audiences with the expectation of universal acceptance is a utopian dream. The school PR communicator must attempt to understand the attitudes and beliefs of his various audiences and shape appropriate differentiated educational messages.

2. To develop within reporters a greater awareness of how educational problems transcend local district boundaries, state school officials, where possible, should

attempt to channel their messages through local sources of high credibility. State school officials (DPI, MEA, MASA, and MASB) would be wise to heed the findings revealed in this study relative to the reliance of education reporters on local sources of education information. As this study points out, the local public school superintendent is the most frequently contacted source of information and also is the recipient of the highest average credibility z-score across all three types of reporters. Like it or not, most education reporters are provincially-oriented and have little understanding or appreciation of how educational problems on state or national levels affect local educational programs.

3. Interview data in this study seem to indicate that state school officials should exercise much greater selectivity in the dissemination of information, especially press releases. Presently the shotgun appears to be used much more than the rifle. As a consequence, "publics" of considerable importance to schools are being neglected, and education reporters frequently are swamped with trivial press releases (thereby tending to ignore significant press releases when they are disseminated).

4. School officials of small school districts should recognize the key "gate keeping" function of the state editor in regard to school news. For the large daily newspaper (above 20,000 circulation), the state editor, not the education reporter or editor, is responsible for making the "in" and "out" decisions regarding school news emanating from outlying school districts.

5. The school public relations specialist should be a high-ranking member of the administrative team or cabinet. This status might be indicated by such titles as associate superintendent or assistant superintendent in charge of community relations. The title should denote administrative authority. Too often the public relations man is brought into a situation after a policy or program has been adopted, and his only assignment is to defend or sell that policy. To do the job adequately, the public relations representative can no longer simply "write about" his institution; rather, he must take an active part in its management, helping to shape policies and guide operations with his special knowledge of public need and public responsiveness.

6. It is time for colleges of education--in co-operation with colleges of communication and the behavioral

disciplines--to establish specific training programs to prepare people for careers in school public relations. Such a title as suggested in the recommendation above would be sheer hypocrisy unless the individual has the qualifications the term implies. Failure to recruit and train the right kind of people for these public relations assignments will result in inadequacy or failure of school programs, for want of public understanding and support.

7. School officials should re-evaluate their procedures in working with the mass media before, during, and after school board meetings. If at all feasible, it is recommended that meeting dates and board agendas be mailed to representatives of the mass media in advance of school board meetings. Superintendents and board members should be aware of a justifiable complaint frequently voiced by reporters, i.e., that during public sessions of the board school officials will say something in a confidential manner and then turn to the reporters present and warn "this is off-the-record--don't quote me." Reporters find this practice highly objectionable, as they consider that anything said at a public meeting is "fair game" for their stories. School officials should confine such "off-the-record" comments to executive sessions if there is a need for such comments to be expressed.

8. School officials should intensify their present efforts to obtain accurate "feedback" data concerning their operations. Warnings from the Stanford University research relative to public apathy and public attitudes ("school officials don't care what citizens think") have serious implications for school administrators. School programs and school PR programs together must help combat these harmful attitudes.

9. Noting the high degree of turnover on the education beat, school officials should recognize that reporters covering their school activities may be in need of continual "in-service education" stressing the purposes and practices of schools in today's world. Data in this study indicated that 10 respondents (62.5 per cent) have been assigned to the "education beat" for less than eight years, with eight respondents (50 per cent) assigned to cover education for less than four years. However, only two respondents (12.5 per cent) have been doing newspaper work for less than eight years.

10. Local school officials--in co-operation with local representatives of the mass media--should seek to establish workable ground rules to determine which topics should be discussed in open public sessions and which topics

in closed executive sessions. With 81.25 per cent of the respondents saying that "a new salary schedule for teachers" and 50 per cent saying that "the selection of a site for a new school" should not be discussed in executive session, it appears that these are potential areas of school-press misunderstandings.

Recommendations for Newspaper Officials

1. Newspaper publishers and editors should give serious consideration to the qualifications necessary for reporters assigned to cover education. This study revealed that 75 per cent of the respondents have earned a B.A. degree or higher; two education reporters (12.5 per cent) have only a high school education. It would seem that at least a B.A. degree would be desirable for reporters assigned to cover the "education beat." If reporters with some academic experience in education (or actual teaching experience) are available, they should be given first consideration. A reporter's interest in covering this beat is certainly going to affect his job performance, and those reporters who do not like this assignment (12.5 per cent in this study) should be replaced with others more kindly disposed.

2. Efforts should be made to keep the presently high turnover on this education beat to a minimum. Covering complexities of school operations requires experienced reporters, not neophytes.

3. Newspaper publishers and editors should seriously re-evaluate their present operational patterns for covering education. Because of their attempts to cover a multiplicity of topics in a multiplicity of political and/or school districts, newspapers often are getting fractionalized reporting--fractionalized political news, fractionalized education news, etc. Instead of having a number of different reporters covering a multiplicity of school districts, it is recommended that one reporter--relieved of all other responsibilities--be assigned to cover a given topic (e.g., education) for a larger geographic and/or political area. Because reporters often are assigned to cover all topics (courts, police and fire departments, schools, etc.) within a small geographic or political area, frequently there is no co-ordinated approach to the total educational problems of the larger area--which overlap in so many instances. The result is coverage on a "brush fire" basis. If one education reporter could be assigned to cover the entire topic of education for a larger area,

he would be able to understand the problems of all local school boards within the area--and how they relate to each other. Then when consolidation proposals are in the offing, this one education reporter would be conversant with problems for the entire area, and, hopefully, could translate them to the voters in each district. As it stands now, the emphasis often is out of proportion. What may be an important story in one district to the reporter covering it might amount to a couple of paragraphs in relation to the bigger problems of the entire area, if these problems were properly assessed and reported.

4. Education reporters should be allowed to devote full-time to this important beat. Education reporters need more time to develop better coverage for this beat; many reporters are bogged down with other assignments. Only four respondents (25 per cent) said that the time they are able to devote to coverage of education is "very adequate," while nine respondents (56.25 per cent) said the time they devote to education is "fairly adequate."

5. Newspaper publishers and editors should permit education reporters to attend more educational conventions. To help achieve a greater appreciation of how educational problems transcend local school district boundaries, educa-

tion reporters should have much greater exposure to education information emanating from state and national sources.

6. As cited in No. 10 of "Recommendations for School Officials," newspaper officials--in co-operation with local school officials--should work to establish workable ground rules to determine which topics should be discussed in closed executive sessions and which topics in open public sessions.

Summary

This chapter summarizes the purposes of this study and the methodology and analysis of data employed to fulfill these purposes. Because of the study's exploratory nature, no specific hypotheses were tested. Rather, this study had three objectives: (1) to examine demographic characteristics of education reporters for Michigan daily newspapers with circulations above 20,000; (2) to assess the frequency of contact and source credibility rankings for 27 sources of education information; and (3) to investigate "gate keeping" practices of these reporters.

To analyze the data, the methodology utilized varied to fit the three purposes cited above: (1) compilations of aggregate percentages for the demographic

survey data; (2) use of factor analysis and Q-technique for the frequency of contact and source credibility data; and (3) consensus summarizations for the open-end interview data.

Incorporating evidence presented in this study and in other research, recommendations were suggested for further research (to extend scientific knowledge in the area of communication); for school officials (to help improve school-press relations); and for newspaper officials (to help improve school-press relations).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL-PRESS SURVEY

Part I

1. Age: Check the category that includes your age:

_____Less than 30
_____30-39 years
_____40-49 years
_____50-59 years
_____60-69 years
_____70 or over

2. Check the category that describes the last schooling you completed:

_____Junior high school
_____High school short of graduation
_____High school graduate
_____1-3 years of college, professional, or trade school. Please specify _____
_____College graduate. Please specify_____
_____1 or more years post-graduate. Specify _____
_____

3. Any special field of emphasis in your college schooling:

_____English
_____Journalism
_____Social Sciences
_____Education
_____Science
_____Other (please specify) _____

4. What other kinds of work besides newspaper work have you done?

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____

5. For how many years altogether have you been doing newspaper work?

_____0-3 years
_____4-7 years
_____8-11 years
_____12-15 years
_____16-19 years
_____20 years and over

6. How long have you been associated with your present newspaper?

_____0-3 years
_____4-7 years
_____8-11 years
_____12-15 years
_____16-19 years
_____20 years and over

7. Please estimate the number of years your newspaper has had a specific person assigned to cover education news.

_____0-3 years
_____4-7 years
_____8-11 years
_____12-15 years
_____16-19 years
_____20 years and over
_____No specific person is assigned

8. What is your present title or position?

_____School Editor
_____Education Editor
_____Education Staff Writer
_____Education Reporter
_____Other (please specify)_____

9. How long have you been in your present position (covering education news)?

_____0-3 years
_____4-7 years
_____8-11 years
_____12-15 years
_____16-19 years
_____20 years and over

10. About what portion of your newspaper work time is spent handling education news?

_____Under 25 per cent
_____26-50 per cent
_____51-75 per cent
_____76 per cent or more
_____100 per cent

11. Do you feel the amount of time you are able to devote to covering education is:

_____Very adequate
_____Fairly adequate
_____Fairly inadequate
_____Very inadequate

12. What other assignments, if any, do you handle?

_____General news
_____Specified types of news or departments (please specify) _____
_____Features
_____Editorial functions
_____Advertising and promotion
_____None
_____Other (please specify)_____

13. a) Are other staff members besides yourself assigned to cover education news?
_____Yes
_____No
b) If you answered "yes" above, are specific individuals given specific educational areas, levels, or topics to cover?
_____Yes
_____No
If so, please describe _____

_____

14. Do you have a regular education beat? ____Yes ____No
If so, who is included on this beat?

1)_____ 2)_____

3)_____ 4)_____

5)_____ 6)_____

15. How many separate school districts are covered by your paper? _____ Please name them:

1)_____ 2)_____

3)_____ 4)_____

5)_____ 6)_____

16. Does your newspaper use "stringers" to cover educational developments in outlying school districts? ____Yes ____ No
If "yes," please describe how this system operates:

_____

_____

_____

17. Do you like your assignment as an education editor or reporter? Check one line below:
_____I thoroughly enjoy this assignment; I like reporting education news.
_____This assignment is satisfactory; I do the job all in the line of duty.
_____I do not like this assignment; I would prefer another journalistic assignment.

18. Do you feel your work load on your present job is too heavy, about right, or too light?

_____Too heavy _____Too light _____About right

19. Please indicate the category of your present income (confidential):

_____Under $4999
_____$5000 to $6999
_____$7000 to $8999
_____$9000 to $10999
_____$11000 to $12999
_____$13000 and over

20. To which of the following groups or organizations do you belong? Please check all the groups of which you are presently a member.

a) Fraternal/social

____Masons
____Elks
____Moose
____Kiwanis
____Rotary
____Optimists
____Shriners
____Toastmasters
____Eastern Star
____Alumni associations
____Country club
____Fraternities
____Sororities
____Other (please specify)_____

b) Professional

____Sigma Delta Chi
____Educational Writers Association of America
____National School Public Relations Association
____Other (please specify)_____

c) Public affairs

____League of Women Voters
____American Civil Liberties Union
____Parent-Teachers Association
____National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
____Other (plea e specify) _____

d) Public service

____Red Cross
____Alcoholics Anonymous
____Civil Defense
____Scout leaders
____Other (please specify)_____

e) Farm associations

____Farm Bureau Federation
____Farmers Union
____Grange
____Other (please specify)_____

f) Business

____Chamber of Commerce
____Goodwill Industries
____Other (please specify)_____

g) Union

____Newspaper Guild of America
____Other (please specify) _____

h) Religion

____Protestant
____Roman Catholic
____Jewish
____Other (please specify)_____

i) Church or religious (apart from church affiliation)

____Knights of Columbus
____Ladies Aids and Guilds
____Other (please specify)_____

j) Veteran/patriotic

____American Legion
____Veterans of Foreign Wars
____American Jewish Veterans
____National Guard
____Reserve Officers Association
____John Birch Society
____Other (please specify)_____

k) Political

____Republican
____Democrat
____Independent
____Other (please specify)_____

l) Cultural/esthetic

____Great Books Club
____Theater Group
____Symphony Orchestral Association
____Other (please specify)_____

m) Hobby/sports

____Garden clubs
____Bridge club
____Dance group
____Golf club
____Bowling league
____Other (please specify)_____

n) Miscellaneous

____Credit Union
____Other (please specify)_____

21. What newspapers and magazines do you read regularly?

Newspapers:	Magazines:
1)_____	1)_____
2)_____	2)_____
3)_____	3)_____

22. Please indicate your opinion as to whether the following topics should or should not be discussed in executive sessions. Please check the appropriate box for each of the following eight topics:

Topic	Should be discussed in executive session	May or may not be discussed in executive session	Should not be discussed in executive session
A morals charge brought against a school employee			
A new salary schedule for teachers			
Proposed salary for the superintendent			
The appointment of a new superintendent			
The appointment of a new principal			
The appointment of a new football coach			
The selection of a site for a new school			
Whether to expel a student charged with illicit sexual behavior			

Part II

23. Which of the following conventions of educators and/or citizens interested in education do you attend? Please check the appropriate box (frequently, occasionally, very seldom, or never).

Convention	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
Citizens Conference of the Dept. of Public Instruction				
Representative Assembly of the Mich. Education Association				
Convention of the Mich. Assn. of School Boards				
Convention of the Mich. Congress of Parents and Teachers				
Convention of the Mich. Federation of Teachers				
Convention of the Mich. Assn. of School Administrators				
Convention of the American Federation of Teachers				
Convention of the American Assn. of School Administrators				
Convention of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers				
Convention of the National Assn. of School Boards				
Representative Assembly of National Education Association				

24. Which of the following publications relating to education do you read? Please check the appropriate box.

Publication	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
AASA Newsletter				
American School Board Journal				
American School and University (formerly Overview)				
American Teacher (AFL-CIO)				
Education section of the New York Times				
Education section of Newsweek magazine				
Education section of Time magazine				
Education section of the Saturday Review				
Education Digest				
Educational Leadership				
Education U.S.A.				
Elementary Principal				
MEA Journal				
Michigan Teacher (AFL-CIO)				
Nation's Schools				
NASSP Bulletin				
NEA Journal				

Publication	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
News of the Week (State Department of Public Instruction)				
Phi Delta Kappan				
PTA Magazine				
School Management				

25. On the following two pages is a listing of possible educational news sources. Please check the frequency which the following sources are used by you in covering stories relating to education. Check either frequently, occasionally, very seldom, or never.

Possible sources	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
State Department of Public Instruction				
U.S. Office of Education				
Local superintendent of schools (public)				
Local public school administrator other than superintendent in charge of school public relations				
President of the local school board				
School board members other than president				
School officials of county or intermediate districts				
Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)				
Administrators of private schools other than Catholic				
Michigan Education Association (state level)				

Possible sources	Frequently	Occasionally	Very Seldom	Never
National Education Assn.				
Local teachers' assn. (NEA-MEA affiliate)				
American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)				
Michigan Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)				
Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)				
National Association of School Boards				
Michigan Association of School Boards				
National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA)				
Michigan Congress of Parents and Teachers				
Local PTA officers				
American Association of School Administrators				
Michigan Association of School Administrators				
Professors of Education				
College professors other than professors of education				
Secondary school principals (public)				
Elementary school principals (public)				
Classroom teachers (public)				

26. Please evaluate each of the following news sources for "credibility" or accuracy of information. Give scores of 11, 10, or 9 to those sources which are "highly accurate"; give scores of 8, 7, 6, 5, or 4 to those sources which are "moderately accurate"; and give scores of 3, 2, or 1 to sources which are "less accurate."

Possible sources	Highly Accurate			Moderately Accurate					Less Accurate		
State Department of Public Instruction	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
U.S. Office of Education	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Local superintendent of schools (public)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Local public school administrator other than superintendent in charge of school public relations	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
President of the local school board	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
School board members other than president	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
School officials of county or intermediate districts	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Superintendent of Catholic schools (local archdiocese)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Administrators of private schools other than Catholic	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Michigan Education Assn. (state level)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
National Education Assn.	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Possible sources	Highly Accurate			Moderately Accurate					Less Accurate		
Local teachers' assn. (NEA-MEA affiliate)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Michigan Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Local teachers' union (AFL-CIO affiliate)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
National Association of School Boards	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Michigan Association of School Boards	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Michigan Congress of Parents and Teachers	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Local PTA officers	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
American Association of School Administrators	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Michigan Association of School Administrators	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Professors of education	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
College professors other than professors of education	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Secondary school principals (public)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Elementary school principals (public)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Classroom teachers (public)	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

APPENDIX B

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Would you please describe how your newspaper is organized to cover education? Do you cover the intermediate school district? Non-public schools? Higher education?

2. a) How does your newspaper cover education news that breaks in Lansing? Is a special person from your staff assigned to cover all developments in Lansing or do you rely primarily or exclusively on the wire services? Both the Associated Press and United Press International or just one? If just one, which one?

   b) Who makes the decision whether or not to use wire copy relating to education? Are you ever consulted on the use of this wire copy? If so, by whom and under what conditions?

3. What sources do you feel are your best sources of education information and why?

4. Does the local public school system have a centralized public relations or public information office? From your viewpoint, what are the advantages and/or disadvantages of centralized public relations offices?

5. a) Have school officials ever given you "off the record" information? What is your reaction to this procedure?

   b) Do you attend "executive sessions" of the local (city) board of education? How do you feel about this procedure? What do you consider to be legitimate topics for executive sessions?

6. Should school officials make wider use of the press conference (i.e., open interviewing by members of the mass media) in the dissemination of school news? Why?

7. What topics relating to education are the most difficult to cover? Why?

8. Do you write editorials on education? How often and under what conditions?

APPENDIX C

FIRST LETTER SENT TO NEWSPAPERS WITH EDUCATION REPORTERS DESIGNATED IN EDITOR AND PUBLISHER YEARBOOK, 1964

Dear _____:

On behalf of the College of Education and the Department of Communications of Michigan State University, we are asking education editors of 17 selected Michigan daily newspapers to participate in a study of school-press relations. We are trying to find ways which now--or might in the future--help to improve relations between public schools and the press.

A number of factors appear to be making a difference in how well the schools and the press get along together. These are the factors we would like to ask you about. You have been selected because you have a significant role in your community. You are a person who is in a position to know about relations between schools and your community. Your opinions are important for the purposes of this study.

The answers we receive will furnish a picture of present school-press relations in Michigan. It is our intention to show the overall situation, and we will not embarrass in any way education editors who participate in this study. The information you give will never be quoted above your name.

Specifically, we hope you will allow us to interview you in (name of city) at a time and place personally convenient to you (hopefully free from distracting interruptions). The interview would take approximately two hours. A stamped addressed envelope and a brief form to indicate what specific time would be best to conduct the

interview are enclosed. We hope you will indicate your willingness to help in this project by returning the enclosed form as soon as possible.

If you have further questions, please contact me immediately. My address is 412 Erickson Hall, College of Education, Michigan State University. Office telephone: 355-9637. Home telephone: IV 9-3505.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur H. Rice Jr.
Project Director
MSU School-Press Survey

Copies of this letter were sent to education reporters of the following thirteen newspapers: Detroit News, Detroit Free Press, Grand Rapids Press, Flint Journal, Lansing State Journal, Pontiac Press, Saginaw News, Royal Oak Tribune, Kalamazoo Gazette, Jackson Citizen-Patriot, Bay City Times, Port Huron Times-Herald, and Ann Arbor News.

APPENDIX D

FIRST LETTER SENT TO NEWSPAPERS WITHOUT EDUCATION REPORTERS DESIGNATED IN EDITOR AND PUBLISHER YEARBOOK, 1964

Dear _____:

On behalf of the College of Education and the Department of Communications of Michigan State University, we are asking education editors of 17 selected Michigan daily newspapers to participate in a study of school-press relations. We are trying to find ways which now--or might in the future--help to improve relations between public schools and the press.

A number of factors appear to be making a difference in how well the schools and the press get along together. These are the factors we would like to discuss with the person on your staff who is chiefly responsible for reporting education news. Your newspaper is in a position to know about relations between schools and your community. The opinions of your newspaper are important for the purposes of this study.

The answers we receive will furnish a picture of present school-press relations in Michigan. It is our intention to show the overall situation, and we will not embarrass in any way newspapers which participate in this study. The information your staff member gives will never be quoted above his name or your newspaper's name.

Specifically, we hope you will send us the name of the individual on your staff who is responsible for the education beat. It is our plan to contact this person to set up an interview in (name of city) within the very near future. The interview would take approximately two hours. A stamped addressed envelope and a brief form

to indicate the name of the person on your staff who we should contact are enclosed. We hope you will indicate your willingness to help in this project by returning the enclosed form as soon as possible.

If you have further questions, please contact me immediately. My address is 412 Erickson Hall, College of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing. Office telephone: 355-9637. Home telephone: IV 9-3505.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur H. Rice Jr.
Project Director
MSU School-Press Survey

Copies of this letter were sent to the publishers of the following four newspapers: Muskegon Chronicle, Battle Creek Enquirer & News, Benton Harbor News-Palladium, and Monroe Evening News. Follow-up letters were sent to the staff members designated by the publishers.

APPENDIX E

DATA MATRIX: FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH SOURCES

Q Item	Q Scores for Subjects															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. DPI	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	3	1	2	2	0	3
2. USOE	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1
3. Local supt.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
4. School PR	3	3	3	3	3	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
5. Board pres.	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
6. Board member	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	1
7. Int. off.	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	1	0	3
8. Catholic	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	2
9. Private	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	2	2	3	1	2	2
10. MEA (state)	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	3	0	2	0	0	1
11. NEA	2	1	0	1	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
12. MEA (local)	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3
13. AFT	3	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3

Q Item	Q Scores for Subjects															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
14. MFT	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
15. Union (local)	3	3	2	2	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	2
16. NASB	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
17. MASB	3	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
18. PTA (national)	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
19. PTA (state)	2	2	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
20. PTA (local)	3	3	3	3	3	1	2	2	3	1	3	0	3	1	2	2
21. AASA	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
22. MASA	2	0	2	2	0	1	3	2	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0
23. Profs. of ed.	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	3
24. Profs. not ed.	3	3	2	3	1	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	1	0	3
25. Principals (sec.)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3
26. Principals (el.)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3
27. Teachers	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	2	3

APPENDIX F

DATA MATRIX: SOURCE CREDIBILITY

	Q Scores for Subjects															
Q Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. DPI	11	9	8	10	9	8	11	8	7	8	10	10	10	10	9.1	11
2. USOE	10.7	10	9.4	10	10	8	11	11	7	8	10	10	10	9	9.1	10.3
3. Local supt.	11	9	10	10	11	11	11	10.1	10	11	10	10	11	10	10	11
4. School PR	11	6	10	10	10	8	11	10.1	10	10	8	10	11	10	10	11
5. Board pres.	10	10	10	9	9	10	11	10.1	10	10	10	9	10	8	10	11
6. Board mem.	10	10	10	9	9	10	11	11	10	8	7	8	10	8	9	8
7. Int. off.	11	6	9.4	9	10	11	10	11	6	6	11	10	9	7	9.1	10
8. Catholic	11	9	10	9	10	11	11	10.1	8	9	10	9	11	10	10	11
9. Private	10	10	10	9	10	8	10.5	10.1	8	8	7	10	11	10	10	11
10. MEA (state)	11	9	9	10	8	9	11	11	9	6	11	8	10	10	9.1	11
11. NEA	11	6	9	10	8	10	11	11	9	6	11	8	10	10	9.1	10.3
12. MEA (local)	11	10	10	9	8	9	10	9	7	8	10	8	10	9	10	10.3
13. AFT	11	6	8	7	9.5	10	10.5	9	8.2	6	9.4	8.7	10	9.2	9.1	10.3
14. MFT	11	6	9.4	7	9.5	9	10.5	9	8.2	8.3	9.4	8.7	10	9	9.1	10.3

		Q Scores for Subjects															
Q	Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
15.	Union (loc.)	11	9	8	7	9.5	9	8	9	8.2	8.3	9.4	8.7	10	9	9	6
16.	NASB	11	8.2	9.4	10	9.5	8	11	11	8.2	8.3	9.4	8.7	8	9.2	9.1	10.3
17.	MASB	11	8.2	9.4	10	9.5	8	11	11	8.2	8.3	9.4	8.7	7	9.2	9.1	10.3
18.	PTA (natl.)	10	8.2	9.4	9	9.5	8	11	10.1	7	8.3	10	8.7	9.2	9.2	9.1	10.3
19.	PTA (state)	10	8.2	9.4	9	9	8	11	10.1	7	8.3	10	8.7	7	9.2	9.1	10.3
20.	PTA (local)	11	8	10	9	8	8	10	10.1	5	8	5	4	3	9	8	9
21.	AASA	11	8.2	9.4	10	9.5	9	11	10.1	8.2	8.3	10	8.7	7	9.2	9.1	10.3
22.	MASA	11	8.2	9.4	10	9.5	9	11	10.1	8.2	8.3	10	8.7	7	9	9.1	10.3
23.	Profs.--ed.	11	8	9	9	9	11	8	9	9	9	10	8	9	10	8	11
24.	Other profs.	11	8	9	9	9.5	11	8	9	8	9	10	8	9	10	9.1	11
25.	Prin. (sec.)	10	7	10	10	11	11	11	11	10	10	10	9	10	9	7	11
26.	Prin. (el.)	10	7	10	10	11	11	11	11	10	9	10	9	10	9	7	11
27.	Teachers	9	9	10	9	11	10	11	11	7	8	7	9	10	9	10	11

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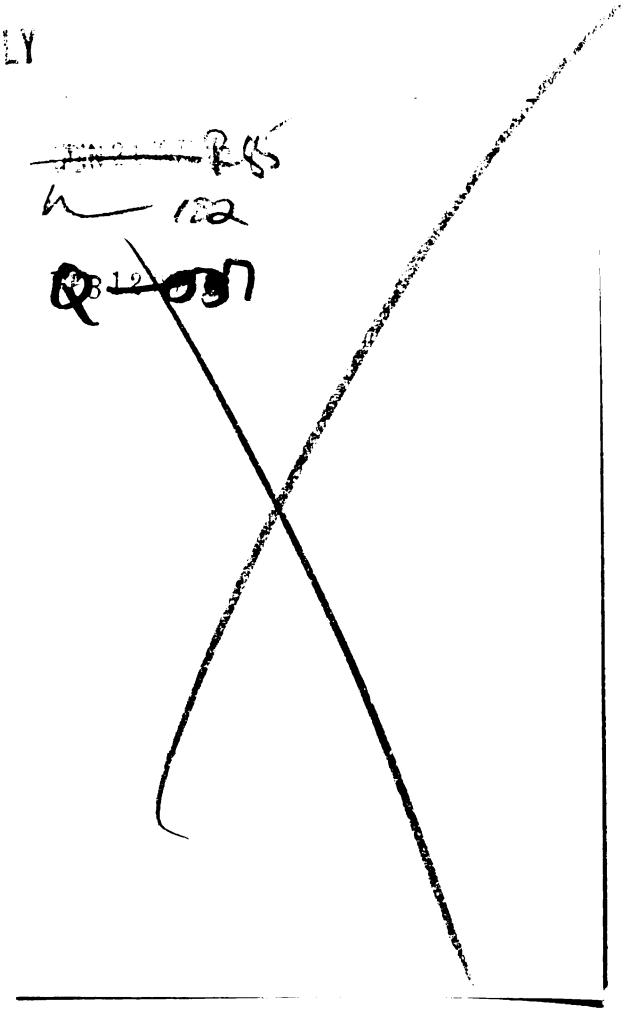

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