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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT TYPES
OF LETTERS OF REQUEST TO
COLLEGE STUDENTS**

presented by

John M. Fohr

**has been accepted towards fulfillment
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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT TYPES
OF LETTERS OF REQUEST TO
COLLEGE STUDENTS

By

John M. Fohr

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The Problem

The purposes of this study were: 1) to determine the action induced and reactions caused by the (a) emotional, (b) rational, and (c) combined emotional-rational approaches in persuasive letters of request to Michigan State University seniors; 2) to ascertain the effects of the use of (a) reader benefit appeal, and (b) group benefit appeal in the letters of this study.

Methods and Procedures

The sample consisted of six groups of 204 randomly selected seniors. Each group was mailed one of six different letters; each included one of two appeals and one of three approaches. The letters requested the students to arrange appointments for interviews with the writer. The personal benefits appeal letters offered to provide the reader with personal help in writing letters of application; the group benefits letters emphasized the help the readers could give the writer in assisting other members of the senior class to write letters of application.

Eighty-three students responded to the letters.

In eliciting the reactions of the respondents to the appeals and approaches of the letters they received, a "disguised" interview

technique was used, in which incidental and comparative reference to the letters of request was interwoven with the discussions of letters of application. No mention of the writer's personal purpose was made.

A similar but shortened type of interview was employed in telephone interviews with 72 non-respondent students who were contacted.

Principal Findings

Action. At the .05 level of probability, no single letter, appeal, or approach was more effective than any of the other letters, appeals, or approaches.

A significant difference was found in the higher action responses of 1) males as compared with females, and 2) upper lower-lower lower socio-economic class as compared with other socio-economic classes.

Reactions. A large majority of the respondent and telephone interviewees had favorable reactions to the letters. The most significant factor in creating these favorable reactions was the personal help which the readers believed was available from a specialist in business letter writing. Regardless of the appeal and approach used, most of the readers viewed the letters in essentially the same way--as an offer of personal help.

The emotional approach is definitely the least favored of the three approaches. However, there is insufficient difference between the reactions to the rational and the emotional-rational approaches to justify a statement that one of these two approaches is favored over the other.

The criterion groups who had the most marked favorable reactions to the letters and indicated the greatest interest in obtaining help were: 1) students in the upper lower-lower lower socio-economic class, 2) married students, 3) males, and 4) students in the 2.00-2.49 grade-point class (grade-point based on 4.0 system).

The highest percentage of negative reactions to the letters came from the interviewees who had had training in business letter writing from the writer. The most favorable attitudes to the letters were expressed by the readers who had had no training in business letter writing.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Two issues which frequently confront the teacher of business letter writing in teaching the writing of persuasive letters of request are:

1) the relative emphasis which should be given to the use of emotional and rational appeal, and 2) the stress that should be given to reader-benefit or "you-attitude" viewpoint. These two issues are the topics of this study.

Teachers of business letter writing talk about various persuasive techniques and appeals without having any convincing evidence to support their recommendations. This was the consensus of a panel of prominent teachers of business letter writing, who said: "Most of the time we teach, as if we knew for sure, many principles which in reality we are only assuming to be true." (60, p. 7) This remark is followed by a comment made by Menning, who concluded:

Many of these principles are the product of no more than thoughtful introspection on the part of the authors and close observations of what to all appearances marks the difference between success and failure of a letter as it actually performs in business . . . it appears that no material contributions may be expected until actual testing conditions for the copy of a letter can be set up and the tests carried out. (40, p. 127)

A. The Problem

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is twofold:

- (1) to determine the action induced and reactions caused by the use of (a) emotional, (b) rational, and (c) combined emotional-rational approaches in persuasive letters of request to Michigan State University seniors;
- (2) to ascertain the effects of the use of (a) reader benefit appeal, and (b) group benefit appeal in the letters of this study.

Importance of and need for the study. During the past fifteen years, one of the most frequently mentioned areas of needed research in business letter writing is effect analysis. This need was emphasized by a Research Committee of the American Business Writing Association which indicated that the biggest opportunity for research in business letter writing was in effect analysis (6, p. 16). Aurner, (7, n.p), Lesser, (37, p. 25), and Wilkinson, (60, p. 7) three highly regarded specialists in business communications, also give high priority to making effects studies.

Despite the importance attached to effects studies, only a few studies, limited almost entirely to action studies, have been made by people in business letter writing. Menning and Wilkinson found that most tests have been made on sales letters, and that some studies have been done on collection letters (41, p. 228). One fairly comprehensive effects study of personalization in collection letters was done by Allgeier (4, p. 16). Another study of a specific type of letter is Boddy's (12, pp. 72-92) action study of letters of inquiry. However, Boddy's study, as well as Allgeier's, did not involve an analysis of effects of reaction on action (see pp. 11-12 of this study).

Review of many other studies indicates that results most frequently show letter A producing more action than letter B without any systematic account of the ways in which the two letters are the same and in which they are different. Twenty years ago, Boyd (16, p. 5) first called attention to the need for controlled experiments which include other factors besides action results.

The past and present emphasis on action studies stems primarily from the accepted principle that action is the main criterion of success (6, p. 16). The investigator agrees that if a letter obtains an action response from a reader, the main objective of the reader has been achieved; however, action doesn't of itself explain reaction, nor does it present positive proof that the selected approach or appeal was the factor of success (6, p. 16). Also, an action response usually provides no measure of the goodwill reactions of the readers. An approach or appeal could induce action which might be accompanied by strong feelings of favorable or unfavorable identification with the writer or his organization. The same could be true of inaction.

Because of the writer's adherence to the hypothesis that an action response to a communication invariably involves some type of reaction (51, pp. 1-5), this study has been designed to determine not only how many of a particular sample of readers responded to two appeals and three approaches of a persuasive request, but also, by directly contacting the readers, ascertain who, what, why, and how the responses were made. No study involving the preceding procedures and objectives was found in the review of many research studies in business writing.

There is virtually complete accord that reader benefits should be given main stress. (33, pp. 39-40) Most authorities in business letter writing agree that copy in a persuasive letter of request should be neither exclusively emotional nor entirely rational, but should be a combination of both (41, p. 213), although one former president of the American Business Writing Association admits that there is no verifiable research evidence to support such views (9).

Tucker similarly remarks:

We have in our area a great deal of original observation, some critical analysis, a few hypotheses, and almost no verification of the value of adaptation and other such vaguely defined characteristics. (57, p. 12)

Business writing teachers certainly should have more objective knowledge of the effectiveness of the approaches and appeals used in persuasive letters of request.

Scope and limitations of the study. This study deals only with persuasive letters of request sent to a random sample of 204 Michigan State University Seniors during the University's 1958 fall term and first half of the 1959 winter term.

The accessibility of this group overcame one of the major difficulties business letter writing researchers have had in making effect studies. The specific situation, contained in the letters, involved a request that the readers come to the investigator's office to discuss letters of application.

The study is limited to the effects of six different letter types, each of which employed one of the two appeals (personal benefit or

group benefit), combined with one of three approaches (emotional, rational, or emotional-rational). One type letter was mailed, at specified intervals, to one of six groups of seniors in the sample. Each student received only one of the six letter types.

Each of the six groups of students represents a random sample, and it is assumed that, the responses of a group to a particular letter is typical of that of another group receiving that same letter.

As is discussed in Chapter III on "Methods," in order to limit the study to the variables being investigated, all of the six letters were set up in the same format, organized according to the same psychological sequence, and written at virtually the same readability and human interest level. The latter involved the use of the Flesch Readability Index (see pp.30-32 of this study).

Business letter writing specialists axiomatically acknowledge that a rational approach need not be less readable than an emotional approach (41, p. 446). On the other hand, communications experts hold that a personal benefits appeal is more interesting and consequently usually makes for greater readability than what is termed, in this study, a group appeal (52, pp. 4-8).

The typical business letter writing expert would normally consider letters which stress the personal benefits appeal as more interesting and readable than letters which subordinate this appeal. However, in using the Flesch Index as a control device, it was necessary to make adjustments in the length of sentences, personal pronouns, and words

referring to human relationships in order to obtain the same level of readability and human interest in all of the letters.

Little difficulty was experienced in adapting length of sentences and number of syllables per word. However, some adjustments were necessary which might suggest an "unnatural" use of personal words and sentences, and human-relations words in the group benefit letters. Only through these adjustments was it possible to retain the same reading and human interest levels in the letters and conform with requirements for control of all the variables except those which are being tested.

The experienced business letter writer might question the length and necessity of using as many subsidiary appeals as are used in the test letters. A lesser number of subsidiary appeals or merely an invitation to obtain professional help might be all that would be necessary to get action. This, however, would limit, for experimental purposes, the potential range of reaction to only a few aspects of content stimuli. To encompass as wide a range as possible to fit the anticipated categories to be analyzed in the study, a variety of elements were included in the test letters.

B. Definitions of Terms

Persuasive letter of request. As used in this investigation, the persuasive letter of request involved a request for action in a situation in which the benefit or merit in taking action was not directly or immediately apparent to the reader.

Business writers believe that there is an initial tendency on the part of a reader to react negatively to this type of request (14, p. 40). As a consequence, all the letters are psychologically structured so that the explicit request for action is not made until most of the reasons or benefits for the reader's compliance are established. (41, pp. 106-113).

Appeal. Throughout this study the term "appeal" should be interpreted to mean the main stimulus or incentive used to influence the reader to take action. The two main appeals used in the letters of this study are 1) personal benefit appeal and 2) group benefit appeal.

Personal benefit appeal. This appeal emphasizes the benefit to the reader in taking the action suggested. An offer of help from the writer is the motivating incentive. This is the appeal used in the three Type I letters of this study.

Group benefit appeal. As emphasized in the letters of this study, the group benefit appeal stresses the benefit to the group of which the reader is a member in taking the action suggested. The motivating incentive is the help the reader can give to others--particularly his peer group at the University. This appeal was used in the three Type II letters of this study.

Approach. This is the angle of attack used in presenting the appeals. Three approaches were used in setting up the letters: 1) emotional (used in letter types I-A and II-A; 2) rational (used in types I-B and II-B; 3) emotional-rational (used in types I-C and II-C).

Emotional approach. The principal emphasis in this approach is directed at the reader's emotions rather than his intellect.

Rational approach. This approach is used when main stress is given to an intellectual, logical, or rational plan of attack.

Emotional-rational approach. This is a combined emotional-rational plan of attack.

C. Basic Hypotheses

The following are the investigator's hypotheses: 1) the most effective approach uses a combined emotional-rational approach; 2) the personal benefit appeal will produce more action and more favorable reactions than the group appeal; 3) the appeal factor will be more significant in formulating reader decision and attitude than the approach factor.

D. Plan of Study

This study is divided into seven chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the problem, a statement of the problem, importance of the problem, the limitations and scope of the study, definitions of terms and basic hypotheses. Chapter II is a review of pertinent literature in business writing and communications research in related areas concerning the use of emotional, rational approaches and personal and group benefits appeals. Chapter III deals with the procedures and techniques used in the study, including composition of the letters, use of the Flesch

Readability Index, critical review of letters by experts, pilot study of the letters, drawing the sample, mailing system used, interview schedules and techniques used, coding, and machine tabulation.

Chapter IV is an analysis of action results induced by the appeals and approaches. Chapter V is an analysis of reaction responses to the appeals and approaches by letter classifications. Chapter VI is an analysis of reaction responses of the criterion classification groups. Chapter VII presents the summary, conclusions, and some implications for further research and the teaching of business letter writing.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A comprehensive review of available published and unpublished literature in business writing revealed that much has been written about the need for effects studies in business letter writing, but little has been done in making such studies. No published action-reaction effects studies of persuasive letters of request were located.

While there are few studies which relate to effects analysis on letters, either in business writing or related areas of persuasive communications, there is a considerable amount of empirical data and a number of experimental tests and studies on the types of appeals and approaches employed in this study. This research material has been useful in providing ideas, hypotheses, and suggestions in interpreting the results of this study. In consequence, most of this chapter is concentrated on a review of literature pertaining to appeals and approaches.

I. Literature on Effect Studies

Action-effect studies by teachers of business letter writing. Most studies by teachers of business letter writing in both published and unpublished media deal mainly with the techniques of writing and the methods and materials of teaching. Often "testing" of effectiveness consists of making a selection of letters on the basis of professional

standards of effectiveness or the judgment of a single man or panel rather than upon scientifically controlled experimentation (61, p. 105).

An examination of writings in theses, monographs, and articles on business letter writing, written between 1930-1941 (59, pp. 10-18) reveals only one study which was related to an effects analysis of a particular letter type. This was a controlled action study of letters of inquiry by Boddy (12, pp. 72-92). The purpose of the investigation was to determine the action-inducing effectiveness of various factors in letters of request sent to a random sample of 432 business firms. The letters used were non-sales, unsolicited, personal inquiries requesting information. One of the letters, termed the base-line letter, was deliberately designed to include violations of all the accepted rules of writing a direct inquiry; a second letter employed a direct request in the lead, and another letter used an indirect or inductive arrangement in making its request (this is the structure used in the present study). Boddy's findings were:

- 1) There was no significant difference in the replies of the three letters. Actually, the letter which violated all the rules and was supposed to be virtually worthless as an answer-getter outpulled both the direct and indirect letters. The indirect letter did only slightly better than the direct letter.
- 2) Little difference was found in favor of an individually typed letter as compared with a mimeographed one having the same content.
- 3) Letters without enclosures did almost as well as those having an easy-answer device.

- 4) Letters mailed by an unidentified writer pulled almost as many replies as letters mailed from a prestige source.

In brief, Boddy found considerable discrepancy in what textbooks said about letters of inquiry and what his findings indicated.

In answering the question "Upon what does a successful inquiry depend for its effectiveness?" (12, p. 84) Boddy concluded:

The vital point seems that of reasonableness . . . if the investigation [request] is justified and reasonable, the results will be nearly the same whatever method is used in gathering the material and whatever may be the garnishings placed upon the letter itself (12, pp. 85-86).

This year the American Business Writing Association published an index on articles written in The ABWA Bulletin from December, 1938 to May, 1958 (25) (The ABWA Bulletin is regarded as the most authoritative source of research studies in the field of business writing). In this index, only one study, Allgeier's, (4, pp. 10-14) involved effects analysis. Allgeier's study is summarized here.

In making an analysis of the effects of personalization in collection letters, Allgeier sent four collection letters to two groups of debtors. The first group was termed the test group, the second the control group. Allgeier prepared the letters which were sent to the test group. These letters were individually-typed form letters written in a friendly, personal, and informal style. Four different collection appeals were used.

The letters sent to the control group were standard form letters which had been used by 85 different retail stores. These letters were written in a stiff and stilted language, used stock expressions, and showed little or no interest in the reader.

The criterion of effectiveness was the difference in receiving payments from the two groups. Responses were classed as full payment, part payment, and explanation or promises.

Allgeier found little significant difference between the groups in the way payments were made. He was surprised to find that for the first six months of delinquency there was no significant difference in results of the first four letters sent. However, he did find that personalization did make a significant difference in results in the latter stage of collection (after six months' delinquency).

An important difference between Allgeier's study and the present study is that he had no direct knowledge of his reader's reaction to the letters. No follow-up questionnaire or interview was used. Because of Allgeier's limited information about his readers, his study is essentially an action-effects study.

Action-effect studies and tests in direct mail. Numerous action studies have been made on sales letters and similar types by people in the direct mail field (55, pp. 3-4). However, most of these studies and tests deal with methods and techniques in effectively using direct mail, rather than with content of letters.

Test methods employed by direct mail people apparently have been unchanged during the past 20 years. In 1939, Boyd (16, pp. 4-5) observed that testing for content was not done by direct mail practitioners. All the tests which were being made were tests of mechanical things: color of stamp, color of copy, alternate offer or singleness of

aim, name fill-in or headline, and so forth. Because of the tendency of mail users to keep their most successful results confidential, such findings, when they were published, were presented in such generalized form as to make them valueless for other test applications. The discussion which follows indicates that the situation as Boyd found it in 1939 has remained essentially the same.

In recent literature, many action-effects tests were found, but, surprisingly, none was found which was limited solely to a test of the two basic appeals or the three approaches used in the present study.

The test findings or methods which are regarded as having functional significance in direct mail may not have the same significant value in other applications or writing situations. Boyd mentioned this in 1939:

Almost axiomatic among these men (direct mail), however, is that one must make his own tests, because almost identical mailings have produced widely different results (16, p. 5).

Such suggestion has been made by Henry Hoke, editor and publisher of The Reporter of Direct Mail Advertising, who said:

There has been altogether too much bunk handed out in classrooms and in books about so-called "tested methods" . . . without defining exactly what uses or types are affected by the "methods" suggested (29, p. 9).

For certain types of letters Hoke believes testing may not be applicable; however, he continues:

. . . with persuasive direct mail, testing may be very important, but . . . your results with persuasive direct mail depend to a great extent on what kind of action you want your persuasion to induce (30, pp. 17-18).

Thus, the action one could expect in inducing people to come to a writer's office to obtain cost-free help for themselves or others would be different from inducing readers to buy paint brushes in a direct mail situation. Also, a test situation which employs follow-up interviews of readers would not be comparable to direct mail testing because of the absence of interviews in direct mail procedure. Only one study in direct mail was found which involved interviewing people who had received mail. This study by Starch (54, pp. 28-29) was designed to measure sales produced by a mailed circular (no letter was included). Interviews were made of a random sample of customers in retail sales. No questions pertaining to reader reaction to the circular were asked. The principal finding was that circular-receiving customers who came to a store (without ordering by mail) bought more than the non-circular customers.

Because no comparable methods or conditions in direct mail testing could be found, research data from direct mail was excluded from consideration in the planning of this study. This is in accord with Hoke's advice:

If you quote statistics or case histories from results of others, be sure the cases quoted correspond as closely as possible to your own overall problems,--your own type of direct mail used, and your own functional use of these types (30, p. 17).

Newspaper readership effects studies. Newspaper and advertising people have for a long time been conducting readership studies to test the effectiveness of their media. A number of such readership studies were reviewed. Particularly helpful in suggesting the interview technique used in the present study was the 138-Study Summary, (56, p. 58)

an extensive readership study, conducted by the Bureau of Advertising of the American Newspaper Publishers Association. In newspaper readership studies, trained interviewers call upon a sampling of readers a short time after a newspaper has appeared, and ask the reader what he had read or noticed in the newspaper. Such tests are sometimes extended by further questions about the depths of the impressions or attitudes which may have resulted from reading an article or advertisement (35, p. 567). In the present investigation, the interview method used also involved personal contact with readers to ascertain their impressions and attitudes; however, here the readers were requested to call upon the interviewer; calls were made to the readers only when there was no response.

II. Literature on Appeals

Personal benefits appeal. Business letter writers almost unanimously agree that the one ingredient which should be contained in practically all types of letters is the personal benefits appeal, or as it is more commonly termed, the "you" attitude. Saunders well reflects this acceptance in stating:

The correspondent . . . seeks techniques of persuasion which are to be found in such cardinal qualities of business letters as the "you" attitude, adaptation, personalization, courtesy, character, the human touch, the positive aspect of ideas, and vividness of their presentation . . . The first and foremost of these techniques we call the "you" attitude (49, p. 168).

Further evidence of the prime rank which the personal benefit appeal has among business letter writers is revealed in Keithley's (33, pp. 39-40)

review of issues of The ABWA Bulletin published from 1952 to 1958. This review indicates that the idea most frequently mentioned or stressed in the articles of the issues was the personal benefit appeal.

The emphasis given to this appeal has long pervaded the teaching and writing of business letters. Boyd, one of the first members of the American Business Writing Association, wrote:

For thirty years now we have based our material and ways on an expanding conception of the "you" viewpoint (15, p. 4).

The unquestioned acceptance of this appeal by practitioners of business letter writing is predicated on human self-interest as the core of motivation. Smart and McKelvey manifest this acceptance in writing:

Each reader is primarily interested in the effect that an action will have on himself. Will he benefit from it? Is it the best thing for him? (53, p. 21)

Some evidence from social research suggests support for the strength of the personal benefits appeal. Derived from the well-demonstrated proposition that people tend to respond in the direction of reducing drives, Schramm (50, p. 210) reports that a suggestion of action is more likely to be accepted if it meets the wants and needs of individuals.

Group appeal. Much less often mentioned than personal benefit in the literature of business letter writing is the use of the group benefit appeal as a technique of persuasion. When it is recommended, it is usually couched in terms of the personal satisfaction, prestige, or self-enhancement that one can derive from doing things for others. This is typified in Fellows and Koenig's (24, pp. 13-14, 15-16) text, How to Raise Funds by Mail, which frequently makes the point that giving the reader

a chance to help others makes him feel important because his help or advice is needed by someone, and, in consequence, his life has in some way been significant.

Schramm, (50, p. 210) in quoting Krech and Crutchfield, indicates that a group appeal will be more readily accepted if the reader can be made to feel that in helping people he is supporting the norms of a group with which he identifies or wishes to identify with.

A view not evident in the literature of business letter writing, but held by some social scientists is that the group appeal may be as basic an urge as the personal benefit appeal. This view is suggested somewhat jointly by Murray (45, pp. 342-349) and Bogardus (13, p. 57) who feel that Thomas' Four Wishes are incomplete. Thomas' Four Wishes, namely, the desires for: 1) security, 2) new experience, 3) recognition, and 4) response, Murray (45, p. 342) asserts, are regarded by most sociologists as the most fundamental and universal motives or incentives. Murray who holds that Thomas' classification of motives is largely individualistic, would add other urges, such as: 1) the urge to aid others, 2) the urge for just treatment, 3) the urge for freedom, and 4) the urge to be creative (45, p. 58). Bogardus would only add a fifth basic urge, namely, to aid others. In support of his reasoning, he states:

The urge to help, to aid others in trouble, also seems at times to be generic and to operate even in the face of the other four self-building urges. It may lead to sacrificing one's life for the welfare of persons. It endures great hardships without thought of personal gain or praise (13, p. 58).

According to the writer of a monthly letter published by a Canadian bank, high responsiveness to group appeals, which involve societal objectives, indicates a high degree of personal maturity and cultural attainment (1, p. 12).

While many persuasive request letters are written with group appeals, most business letter writing experts express the belief of Menning and Wilkinson, who say:

You will write more successful favor-seeking letters if you select and emphasize reader-benefit talking points (41, p. 108).

Mass communications research. Among specialists in communications there is some doubt about the dominance of any one single appeal. Doob (23, p. 122) believes that because of an incomplete knowledge of human physiology, anthropology, and theory of human motivation that no definitive list of appeals can be produced.

Martineau, (38, p. 122) an advertising expert who recommends that major stress be given to the emotional approach in advertising, holds that:

There is no such things as a single, pure motive for anything. There are many dominant motives and subordinate motives which may be involved in people's acts . . . actually there is no completely stable aspect to motives. What I may feel impelled to do today may be changed tomorrow by circumstances, or my mood may be different; however, in a general sense, there is a definite consistency in motives (38, p. 32).

Martineau's contention about the affect of circumstances and disposition on the effectiveness of an appeal are supported by Katz and Lazarsfeld, (32, p. 216) who maintain that different types of people might react

differently to various appeals; but they claim there is no consistent data in communications research to determine what the effect of an appeal will be.

Other research data obtained by Hovland, Janis and Kelley (31, pp. 11-12) indicates that an individual's predisposition, his thinking habits about the rationale of the arguments presented to him, and his anticipation of reward and punishment are factors which form the basis of acceptance or rejection of a given appeal.

To provide some practical applications of social science research to business problems, Abelson made a survey of various studies of persuasion in communications. A summary of his survey findings which are pertinent to this study are:

1. There is nothing definite on whether the opening or closing parts of the communication should contain the more important material.
2. A strong threat is generally less effective than a mild threat.
3. A person's opinions and attitudes are strongly influenced by the groups to which he belongs or wants to belong.
4. The level of intelligence of an audience determines the effectiveness of some kinds of appeals.
5. The individual's personality traits affect his susceptibility to persuasion.
6. There will be more opinion change in the desired direction if the communicator has high-credibility than if he has low credibility.
7. Suspicion of the motives of the communicator may not work against desired opinion change (2, pp. 7-66).

A number of other studies indicate that the appeal itself might not be the prime mover. The appeal, these studies claim, affects some desire or want which was already in latent existence (for example, a desire for employment), the appeal suggests a means of obtaining employment. In this case the appeal is not the basic thing that would cause action but is a means to an end (employment). This view is sustained by Katz and Lazarsfeld:

Appeals might play a more effective role in maintaining and reinforcing decisions, once made, than in initiating them (32, p. 217).

This latter point is not at variance with accepted business letter writing practice is suggested by Williams:

The "you" attitude means the letter writer must not only be willing to see from the other person's point of view, but be able to visualize what will bring satisfaction, or joy to the other person, and get that into his letters (61, p. 93).

III. Literature on Approaches

In the literature of both business letter writing and mass communications, the terms emotional and rational are generally used as names of types of appeals. In this study, the terms have a different meaning. Here the terms represent a plan of attack, or the setting within which the two appeals are developed. The approaches thus can be considered the way in which the appeals are presented. Frequently in communication situations, "how" (or the way something is said) has more impact on action or reaction than "what" is said. This is a commonly accepted principle in business letter writing and other types of communications.

Except for the emotional-rational approach, not much pertinent data was found which dealt with the emotional or rational factors as approaches, as defined in this study.

Emotional approach. This approach attempts to provide a setting in which the tone and coloration of the content arouses feelings or an emotional state which induces the reader to be receptive to the appeal. Emphasis of the emotional approach is recommended by some communication specialists who believe that action and reaction stem mainly from feeling rather than intellect.

This viewpoint can be briefly cited in summary statements by three business communication writers, who fairly well represent the position of the advocates of this approach. Martineau, an advertising man and one of the strongest proponents of the emotional approach, says:

Communications is an interaction not of logic, but of feeling (38, p. 122).

In another part of his book, he adds:

Human communication is essentially an exchange of feeling, not information (38, p. 197).

Bedell, another advertising man, maintains that because people spend most of their time living in a subjective world they are essentially emotional:

. . . an emotional people respond to the here and now, near at hand things which have made them 'feel'. A philosopher has said that to be alive is 'to be in relation to'. We are in closer relation to things that make us laugh and cry and feel than to things that make us think . . . emotional reactions provide short circuits to instant response (10, pp. 66-68).

Dobbins, a teacher of business letter writing, holds nearly the same idea as Martineau and Bedell, in saying:

Usually we feel before we think . . . our automatic reactions are usually influenced more by the spirit behind things than by the things themselves (22, p. 27).

No specific studies made under controlled conditions were found which would substantiate the effectiveness in giving primary emphasis to the emotional approach in business letters.

Rational approach. Here the major emphasis in the setting of the appeal is intellectual, logical, or rational. In this approach facts, figures, reasons, contrast and comparison are stressed to induce the reader to be receptive to the appeal.

The rational approach in business letter writing, as Boyd (14, pp. 24-29) points out, is generally stressed in persuasive letters in which the request for action involves deliberation on the part of a discriminate reader.

Because the population of this study is college students, who are presumed to possess above average discrimination, of special interest is a report by Schramm (50, pp. 211-212) in which he indicates that there is no evidence that intelligence correlates with susceptibility to logical argument. The exception to these findings is the special case where more intelligent audiences seem to be more influenced by logical arguments, and less influenced by slogans, unsupported generalities and similar devices.

In persuasive letters, Manning and Wilkinson (41, pp. 106-114) show that the course of action suggested should be a logical outcome of the reasons given. That is, the reader should be able to deduce with a minimum of effort the conclusion that taking action will help him, or others in whom he has an interest.

Related to Menning and Wilkinson's recommendation is Klapper's (34, p. 296) report on the findings of Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield, whose research findings indicate that in any successful situation which relies primarily on "letting the facts speak for themselves" the facts presented must be sufficiently specific to require the absolute minimum of inference on the part of the audience.

Further, as cited by Klapper, (34, pp. 106-114) Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield's conclusions indicate that sole reliance on rational presentation may prove effective for only a small number of people who respond primarily to rational considerations. Most other people they say, can be motivated mainly through non-rational channels and may be highly resistant to rational considerations.

In the literature of business letter writing and other areas of persuasive communications, a number of writers suggest that the rational approach cannot be adapted well for use with a group appeal. Brewster and others (17, p. 130) state that appeals employing this approach can promote action if the copy is interesting, informative, educational, and filled with facts that emphasize benefits to the reader.

In the literature which was examined, no experimental studies could be found that tested the effectiveness of the rational approach.

Emotional-rational approach. Most writers of persuasive communications hold that it is difficult to classify any one approach as emotional or rational (44, p. 82), since it is commonly accepted that individuals respond differently to the same stimuli, a given approach could evoke an emotional response in one individual and an intellectualized response in the case of another individual.

Actually, the literature indicates it is unlikely that either approach could be used without eliciting a mixed emotional-rational reaction in some degree. Ogle affirms this with regard to attendant emotional responses to any type of communications, by saying:

It is probably almost impossible to convey any meaning whatsoever by use of language without evoking emotional side-responses (46, p. 69).

Emotional reaction is likewise present in communications of a rational nature which involve needs and wants. Hepner makes this observation in writing:

When a need or want is keenly felt, it becomes an emotionally-tinted reaction (28, p. 670).

An hypothesis for the presence of different degrees of mixed reactions to a communication is provided by Albig:

The ways of thinking characterized as reason and emotion are not distinct entities motivating particular instances of behavior, but exist in varying proportions in the different situations. Man is never exclusively, usually not even essentially, a reasoning being. Feelings, emotions, likes, dislikes, in varying degree are component parts of every human situation. It is only for descriptive purposes that one may use the terms 'reason' and 'emotion' (3, pp. 89-90).

The belief that emotion is as important as reason is reflected in many of the articles and books written by people in business communications. Representative of this belief is Aurner's following comment:

We must bring within the scope of our teachings both the rational and emotional, both fact and feeling. And one of our greater teaching difficulties is to interpret clearly to the student the complex way in which facts may have an impact upon human feeling and the way in which human feelings may, in turn, seriously affect the interpretation of fact (8, p. 13).

Few business letter writers recommend the exclusive use of either the emotional or the rational approach. Most of these writers would use a combined emotional-rational approach. To create attention and interest in a letter, a subjective or emotional treatment would be used first, followed by an objective or factual treatment which would provide reason for taking action. This technique follows the approach suggested by Menning and Wilkinson, who say:

Man is both rational and emotional. He needs a rational reason why to support an emotional desire for something (41, p. 213).

Expanding Menning and Wilkinson's recommendation, Bedell indicates the same line of reasoning for use of this approach in advertising:

People decide emotionally that they want things but consciously or unconsciously they hang back from announcing their decisions until they have rallied some "good" reasons acceptable to their intellects. Writers should supply those "good" reasons . . . recognize that people are always seeking "reasons" for doing what they want to do or for believing what they want to believe--the writer must provide a basis for rationalization . . . make the reader want something and then provide what the reader will consider a good excuse for buying (10, pp. 241-242).

Again, as in the case of the rational and emotional appeal, no tests or studies of the emotional-rational approach conducted under scientifically controlled conditions were found.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE AND TECHNIQUE OF THE STUDY

I. Initiation of Study

The planning phase of this study was begun by discussing with various associates the value of and need for making an action-reaction effects study of a particular type of business letter. Dr. Clyde W. Wilkinson, Professor in charge of the Business Writing courses at Michigan State University, encouraged the study.

A comprehensive search was made for studies in business writing, mass communications, and social science research. Materials reviewed included unpublished theses, textbooks, bulletins, pamphlets, periodicals, and speeches.

II. Preparation of the Letters

Classification of letter types. The two appeals and three different approaches employed in the six letters used in this study were divided into two groups of three letters each. The first group, termed Type I, is characterized by the use of the personal-benefits appeal in all of the letters. Only one of the three approaches is used in each of the letters of this group. Individual letters are designated I-A, I-B, and I-C.

The second group, termed Type II, is characterized by the use of the group-benefits appeal; and, like the Type I letters, each employs

only one of the three approaches. The individual letters are identified as II-A, II-B, and II-C.

Structural organization of letters. As pointed out by Hovland and others in communications research, (31, p. 99) the effectiveness of persuasive communications depends not only on the choice of motivating appeals, but also upon the organization of the arguments used in support of the position advocated.

Business letter writing experts, likewise, are aware of the need for a specific type of organizational pattern in the writing of persuasive requests. As in the case of the present study, the technique of the persuasive request is used when there is an anticipation of resistance to take action on a request the reader is probably not already willing to take. Taking action on the part of the readers of this study involves direct personal contact with the writer in order to act on the proposition of the letter. Such action might be viewed as an inconvenience by the readers. When the request appears difficult to comply with business letter writing experts maintain that the reader's first reaction is to refuse the request if it is presented in the early part of the letter, (41, p. 107). Thus as Boyd (14, p. 40) suggests, because a situation involving requests may constitute a physical or mental burden great enough to tend to deter action, the inductive technique should be used. The inductive technique defers the request for action until the benefits of complying with the request have been presented.

Each of the six letters of this study is organized according to the pattern recommended by Boyd and by Menning and Wilkinson.

Because the reader is under no obligation to act, arousal of intention and stimulation of interest are particularly urgent in a persuasive request. Cartier and Harwood say:

Attention has been viewed by experts in human communications as the sine quo non of reception and has been assumed by them to be important in formulation and transmission (19, pp. 106-110).

In the lead of each of the six letters an effort is made to elicit attention by employing some point which suggests a reader benefit or assumed interest on the part of the reader. In the Type I letters the emphasis is on the reader's personal interests; in the Type II letters, the stress is on the assumed interest of the reader in the welfare of others with whom he is associated. To sustain interest in the rest of the letter, continued emphasis is placed on what the reader can get or give. No direct request for action is made until the final paragraph.

The beginnings and endings of letters are recognized by business writers as occupying positions of high physical emphasis and visibility (41, p. 48). However, some communications specialists indicate that there is no evidence to prove that beginnings or endings convey the greatest persuasive argument (31, pp. 118-119). Newspaper readership studies definitely indicate that beginnings command the highest reader attention and influence (11, pp. 175-177).

In the preliminary test of the letters of this study, the endings of four of the six letters commanded considerably higher attention than

the lead. Because of a seemingly disproportionate attention to the closes which were written in an emotionalized or partly emotionalized approach, the close of all the letters was written the same way. The close of the letters emphasized what to do, how to do it, and tried to make action easy.

So that many details of how to take action in the close of the letters could be avoided, a printed card was enclosed with the letter. The card provided information about the specific hours the reader could telephone to make an appointment, directions concerning the location of the writer's office, and the telephone number to call (see Appendix A).

Layout and format of letters. To give the letters a personalized appearance, individually-typed form letters were prepared. The surname and title (Mr., Mrs. or Miss) of the reader were used in the salutation of the letter and on the envelope.

Flesch Readability Scoring of Letters. In Chapter I (page 5), reference is made to the Flesch Readability Index as a control device to minimize the effects of the language and style of the letters as factors in action and reaction. Use of this index made it possible to retain essentially the same reading and human interest level in all of the letters. Thus, at least theoretically, there was no difference in the readability or human interest scores of the letters.

No statistical measure of readability or human interest provides an absolute test of the characteristics measured; it is not possible to reduce language to a number. The experience in this study was that a

strict application of a readability formula could produce a mechanistic arrangement of sentences, unnatural usage of personal references, and a forced substitution of undesirable shorter or longer words to comply with a requisite syllable count.

Despite these limitations, the Flesch Readability Index is widely used in many areas of communications, and it is generally regarded as one of the most reliable measures of readability (5, p. 142).

The Flesch Readability Formula used in this study is the one described in Flesch's book, The Art of Readable Writing (26, pp. 213-216). This formula has two parts. The first measures reading ease on the basis of sentence length and word length (Reading Ease Scores). The second part measures reading interest on the basis of "personal" words and sentences (Human Interest Scores).

Table I of this study contains the human interest scores and reading ease scores of the six letters used in this study.

TABLE I
FLESCH READABILITY INDEX SCORES OF LETTERS

Letter Types	Reading Ease Score	Human Interest Score
I-A	76.5	58.2
I-B	76.0	56.0
I-C	75.3	56.5
II-A	76.5	58.0
II-B	76.0	57.0
II-C	76.4	57.5
Averages	76.4	57.2

All of the reading ease scores of the six letters are within the "fairly easy" reading level. This reading level, according to Flesch, is comparable to the general reading level used in Saturday Evening Post.

Here the human interest score of the six letters is on the high side of the "highly interesting" level. The human interest scores of the rational and the emotional-rational letters of both Type I and Type II groups are higher than the level that would normally be used in a non-experimental situation--ordinarily, not so many personal references and sentences would be employed.

Faculty evaluation of preliminary test letters. At various times during the preparation of the letters, the writer consulted with four members of the business letter writing faculty to obtain their critical evaluation of the proposed content of the letters. After the first draft of the letters had been completed and the Flesch Readability Scores had been computed, the letters were submitted to the faculty. All four of the faculty agreed that the letters substantially conveyed the intended theme of the appeals and approaches. Three drafts of the letters incorporating the suggestions of the business letter writing faculty were prepared. Upon the final approval of the faculty, the letters were readied for preliminary testing with student readers.

III. Pre-Test of Letters

An attempt was made to make the pre-test as similar as possible to the planned procedure for the regular study (described on pages 36-46 of this study). The object was to provide assurance that the contemplated larger study was sound in concept and as complete as possible in every detail.

Selection of pre-test sample. Preliminary test letters were mailed to twelve randomly selected students, whose names were obtained from the enrollment card files of the Registrar's office. A "goldfish bowl" method of random selection was used.

Two letters of each individual type were mailed to the pilot test sample. Care was exercised so that one of the six letter types was received by both men and women.

Pre-test results of respondent schedules. The pilot study results caused eight changes in the interview schedules:

1. In the interviews with the respondents, it was necessary that each question be so designed that a parallel could be drawn between it and some pertinent point of contrast in the letter of request.
2. To avoid structured responses or suggested reactions, a general form of interrogation was used in constructing most of the questions. For example, instead of saying, "What did you first think about when you got a letter from an instructor offering

you help in writing a letter of application?" the following unstructured question was used: "What did you first think about the letter I sent to you?"

Several phrasings of each question were prepared to determine which seemed best adapted to the level of the students.

To make the questions appear more applicable to the respondents who received the personal benefits letters, all the questions in that schedule were phrased in a second person, personalized form. On the other hand, to avoid making the respondents of the group benefits appeal feel that they were the primary subjects of the interview, most of the questions in that schedule were phrased in the third person, impersonalized form.

The phrasing of the non-respondent schedule was second person, personalized style for the recipients of both types of appeals. Here, because of the brevity of the schedule, it was necessary to obtain direct information about the informants.

3. Suspicion seemed to be aroused when a question was too deeply probed. This appeared to be particularly evident in the first part of the interview. In consequence, the depth aspect was minimized. Because the students regarded their problem as vocational, the depth interview did not seem appropriate in this situation.

4. A "warm-up" period of casual discussion of the respondent's employment plans or other interests was used to establish rapport.
5. Care had to be exercised not to suggest in any way the interviewer's real intentions in obtaining information.
6. Placing the microphone of the tape recorder out of the student's view, and making only incidental reference to the use of it during the interview seemed to make the student less conscious of it and put him more at ease.
7. To obtain a free exchange of conversation, the interview had to assume the characteristics of a natural, personal conversation. The interviews seemed less mechanistic and seemingly more natural to the student when the interviewer stated his questions from memory rather than read from the typed schedules.
8. Reference to a letter of request at the beginning of the interview was acceptable if only a limited number of questions were asked about it.

Pre-test results of telephone interviewee schedules. In interviewing the telephone respondents, the following observations and problems were noted:

1. In these interviews there did not seem to be much difference in reaction or cooperation in presenting the questions about the letters of request first or last in the interview.

2. Because of the need to limit the number of questions and narrow the depth, specificity, and range of the questions, the pre-test indicated that it would not be possible to make direct or complete comparisons between some of the replies of the respondents.

The results of the pre-test were not included in the larger study.

IV. Sampling Procedure

Size of sample. At the outset of the study, the writer realized that a restricted sample size was imperative because of the conditions under which the study had to be made. These conditions were:

1. Only one person would conduct the study.
2. The sample group, which consisted of college seniors, would be available for a limited period.
3. The personal interview technique employed would limit the number of interviews that could be handled by one person during the time available for the interviewing.

Computation of sample size. The procedure used followed the method described by Parten (48, pp. 290-330).

As a first step, an estimate was made of the percentage of the replies which could be expected from the entire sample. The pre-test produced a 50 percent return which might be regarded as suggestive of what the action response to all six letters might be. However, since the pre-test sample was quite small there is some question as to the

accuracy of the yield of the pre-test. No data was found in the literature of business letter writing which dealt with the percentage returns which could be expected of non-sales, persuasive letters of this type. In the case of new product selling by mail, the results are usually 2 percent (18, p. 295).

When in complete doubt about an expected percentage return, Parten (48, p. 327) recommends a preliminary estimate of 50 percent. This figure was used as the initial estimate of returns.

The next step was to decide how much the percentage to be secured from the entire sample could vary from the true (unknown) value for the population and still be acceptable. Again, no specific published data was found which would indicate an acceptable limit of tolerance on returns of persuasive letters of request. However, in assisting many individuals engaged in educational research and administration, who used persuasive letters, it has been the experience of the writer that a range of 15 to 20 percent error on a 50 percent estimate return of the first request was acceptable. However, to comply with the minimum statistical requisites in selection of a sample size for this study, a 7 percent limit of error was chosen.

To determine the necessary sample size, a formula provided by Parten (48, p. 312) was used. Computation of the formula indicated that a random sample of 204 cases should yield an estimate with an assurance of 19 out of 20 that it is within the 7 percent chosen limit.

Another factor considered in the selection of the sample size was its adequacy to provide sufficient cases to take care of the number of

categories and classes into which the findings of the study were to be grouped and analyzed.

A procedure recommended by Parten (48, p. 298) was employed which provided assurance that the sample size selected should be adequate to handle the various classes of the study.

However, since the plan of the study had called for the use of two or more categories to analyze each letter class, some difficulty was anticipated in the use of the Chi-square statistic (see pp. 51, 65-67, and 87-88 of this study).

Drawing the sample. As mentioned previously, the population of the study consisted of a random sample of 204 undergraduate senior students who were registered in the fall term, 1958, at Michigan State University. The students were enrolled in every college of the University except the Basic College in which, generally, only freshmen and sophomores are enrolled.

To obtain a reliable, up-to-date listing from which a sample could be drawn, the Michigan State University Directory of Students, 1958-1959, was used.

Since a convenient listing was available, sample cases of seniors were selected at regular numerical intervals in the Directory.

The numerical interval used for the sample selection was obtained by the following computation:

$$\frac{3,433 \text{ (Total number of seniors)}}{204 \text{ (Sample number)}} = 16.82843 \text{ (sample interval)}$$

To insure that each name would have an equal chance for inclusion in the sample, this number 16.82843 was used in the whole range of the sample. This was accomplished by first using a table of random numbers (27, p. 171) to obtain the first name and number of the sample. Succeeding sample names were obtained by accumulative addition of the sample interval starting with the first sample number.

Because the sample of 204 had to be split up into six groups to whom six letters were to be sent, a further refinement of the sample had to be made. In consequence, 204 was used as a sub-universe to yield a sub-random sample for each of the six groups--in effect, a random sample (204) was used to obtain six sub-random samples containing 34 cases each.

A die was used to determine both the starting point of the sub-samples and the order in which the letter assignments to each sample group was made.

Reliability of sample. To determine how well the base random sample was proportionately representative of its universe, two comparisons were made. The comparisons had to be made of two types of information which were available about both the sample and the universe. In this study, knowledge of the sex of the students and their college registration was available. Information about the sex and college enrollment of the sample was obtained from the main entries in the Directory of Students. The Registrar's office provided information about the actual college and male-and-female enrollment of the seniors who were graduated in the 1958-1959 period.

Because these statistics were not available until July 3, 1959, the Annual Report of the Registrar for 1957-1958 was used to obtain an initial estimate of the proportionate representativeness of the sample. The Report provided data on the total number of undergraduate degrees conferred by all the colleges of the University and the percentage of men and women graduates. The percentage of women graduates in the 1957-1958 Report was 27.54 percent. The sample percentage was 29.41 percent, a difference of 1.87 percent; however, the difference between the college enrollment percentage of the sample and the Registrar's figure was an average of approximately 6 percent. Since the comparisons appeared reasonably close, allowing for possible differences in the 1958-1959 figures, the assumption was made that the sample was random.

The 1958-1959 Report from the Registrar confirmed the assumption of the random list, at least on the basis of sex and college enrollment.

A 0.45 percent difference was found between the number of male-female graduates and the number in the sample population. A Chi-square computation between the college enrollment of the graduates and the number of seniors in the sample indicated a high association between the population universe and the sample; what differences there are in this comparison could be attributed to factors of chance. The percentage difference in the proportions between the graduates of the colleges and the sample is 1.66 percent.

V. Mailing System and Appointment Scheduling

Mailing procedure. After the sample processing was completed, a mailing list was prepared from the Student Directory.

To allow for sufficient and convenient time for reader action, one of the six letter types was sent to one group each week over a period of six weeks.

The letters were mailed on Saturday afternoons from the East Lansing Post Office. Thus, the letters arrived at the students' local residences on Monday--usually in the morning.

The first letters were sent to those students who were to be graduated in the fall term. This involved the sending of all six letter types in one mailing, a practice not followed in the other mailings.

Handling appointments and calls. The students were given one week in which to make an appointment (during the week they received the letters) because a longer period might affect the retention of their initial impression and reaction to the letters. Students who, on their own accord, called after one week at the office or by phone were given appointments for interviews, but they were not classified as respondents. Telephone calls were made to students who did not respond one week after a set of letters had been mailed.

Classification of unavailable students. No other means of communication than the telephone calls was used to reach non-respondents who had no listed local telephone numbers or local addresses. Follow-up

letters or questionnaires were not used because such procedures would inject variables difficult to evaluate. However, an attempt was made to identify the non-respondent students who could not be personally reached by phone. Calls were made to former households of the students, their college departments, the Registrar's Office, and associates of the non-respondents. On the basis of the information that could be obtained about this group of non-respondents, they were classified as follows:

1. Restrained. This group included individuals who did not have equal opportunity to act on the proposition of the letters.

They included: (a) practice teachers, (b) those who lived outside a twelve-mile radius from the campus, (c) students serving internships (other than teaching), (d) drop-outs, and (4) those who changed addresses without leaving forwarding addresses.

2. Indifferent. No information could be obtained from or about this group.

VI. Preparation of Interview Schedules

Use of a disguised interview for respondents. The two principal considerations in designing the interview schedule was to construct a schedule which would cause a minimum of suspicion about the interviewer's actual purpose in (1) requesting action from the student, and (2) using an interview to obtain primarily the kind of information desired.

The essential characteristic of the disguised interview used in this study is that it conceals from the student the intent of the request for action and the interview method used and thus allows him to respond

freely without feeling he is the subject of an experiment designed to measure his feelings and attitudes about the letter he received.

Design of interviewee schedules. The respondent interview schedule was prepared to cover questions about:

1. Factual data about respondent.
2. Reaction to content and appeal of letters.
3. Reaction to writer.
4. Employment plans and job qualifications of interviewee.
5. Comparisons of letter of request and letter of application.
6. Organization of letter of application.

Of the 28 questions in this schedule, 18 pertained to information which was not directly needed for analysis purposes; they were included to provide a setting for the disguised interview.

The telephone-interviewee schedule questions were similar to those used in the respondent schedule except that no questions were included which directly referred to 1) reaction to writer, 2) comparison of letter of request and letter of application, and 3) organization of letter of application. Such questions could not be used in the interviewee schedule because they involved more detailed questioning than could be expediently handled in a telephone interview.

Each question in the respondent and telephone interviewee schedules was carefully designed and selected with the purpose of obtaining the specific kinds of pertinent information necessary to accomplish the objectives of the study. The type of analysis made of each question is illustrated in the following example:

Question: "Had you given any consideration to the possible use of a letter of application before coming here?"

Objective: This question was designed to gain information about the predisposition to action on the part of the student--was he in a state of readiness to act?

VII. Procedure in Conducting Interviews

Since the interviews were conducted entirely by one individual, under no direct supervision, various checks were made to be sure that accepted procedure was being followed. To supplement the training and experience which the investigator has had in conducting interviews, selected references were reviewed. The interview procedure most closely followed was an adaptation of the procedure described by Merton, Fiske, and Kendal, in The Focused Interview, (42). A chapter by Darley, in Brayfield's text, Readings in Modern Methods of Counseling (21, pp. 265-272), on the conduct of the interview, also proved quite helpful as a guide.

Conduct of respondent interview. The first discussion with the respondent dealt with the objectives of the interview; this was followed by an informal reference to the respondent's training or job plans.

Reference to the use of the tape recorder (a small desk-size recorder) was carefully made in terms of being an aid to the interview procedure. The machine was turned off during the discussion periods of the interview (listed as A, B, C, D, and F in the respondent schedule) and whenever any interruptions occurred.

Because the interviewer had memorized the questions, they could be asked in a conversational manner which helped to create an informal atmosphere rather than a test situation.

Care was taken to suggest little motivation for either suppression, or distortion, or put the student on the defensive.

To provide control of the interview and avoid conversational digressions, the schedule order of presentation was followed as closely as practically possible (copy of schedule is in Appendix B). Sufficient flexibility was permitted to give the student an opportunity to ask related questions about various points; thus an opening was provided for obtaining, sometimes, valuable "unanticipated" responses or views.

The interview was terminated with an expression of the interviewer's appreciation for the respondent's participation.

The average interview time was one hour, sixteen minutes, with a range of forty-eight minutes to two and one-half hours.

Conduct of telephone interview. Because the writer did not have the necessary equipment to tape-record telephone interviews, the record of the interviews was made on the schedule forms. Unlike the personal interviews, not much time was available after the initial introduction to establish rapport and explain the purpose of the call. After the objectives of the requested interview had been introduced and discussed, the questions of the schedule were asked in the sequence indicated in the telephone interview schedule (see Appendix B).

During the telephone interviews a request for a personal interview was often made. In many instances, the informants stated that they had planned to arrange for an interview, but for various reasons they were unable to call for an appointment. Such requests for appointments were granted for two reasons: (1) to avoid suspicion on the part of the informant and (2) to employ such personal interviews as another means of checking the reliability of the schedules (see pages 48-49). All office interviews of this type were classified as non-respondent interviews; however, the schedule used for analysis purposes was the one used in the regular telephone interviews.

No difficulty was experienced in obtaining information from the informants, once they were contacted by phone; and to the surprise of the investigator, the informants appeared to remember considerably more about the content of the letter than had been expected. Immediately following the interview, the investigator read through the schedule form and edited the schedule for omissions, incomplete statements, etc. The time of the interviews ranged from 17 minutes to one hour and 14 minutes. The average telephone interview time was 21 minutes.

VIII. Reliability and Validity Tests of The Interview Schedules

Three methods were employed to determine the reliability of the interview schedules. The first was a modified application of the "split-ballot" technique (48, p. 495) which was employed during the pre-test of the schedules. The second was a repetition of the telephone

interview schedule. The third method (described in the section on coding, page 54 of this study) was a comparison of the coding of assigned categories of the open-ended responses in the schedules by three graduate assistants. The first two methods are described in the following two sections.

Split-ballot test of reliability. Because of the small number of interviewees used in the pre-test, this method was employed on a very restricted basis.

To test the effect of using personal as opposed to impersonal phrasing of the questions, each question dealing with the same point of inquiry was phrased in the two opposite ways. Sequence was tested by using in the first half of one schedule questions relating to the student's personal job qualifications and a letter of application, and questions about the letter of request in the second half; in the second schedule, the arrangement was reversed.

Phrasing and sequence were combined to form two schedule types. Type A consisted of personal phrasing and the vocational qualifications sequence, and Type B was the opposite. The two schedule types were split between the six pre-test respondents and four non-respondents. While it is a somewhat questionable practice to generalize on the basis of only ten cases, the results suggested a marked difference in the reactions to the two schedule types. All the students who were interviewed with the Type A schedules had strong favorable reactions to the letter of request, while the other five students all expressed some negative

reactions to questions concerning the letter of request and seemed more suspicious of the writer's motives. Since there appeared to be two extremes here, the sequence was modified as arranged in the completed schedules.

The so-called split-ballot technique used might not properly be regarded as a test of reliability in the usual sense in which this technique is employed (reliability would be measured in terms of how closely the results of different schedules approximate one another). However, the modifications which were made as a consequence of studying the schedules suggested that the schedules would be reliable.

Reliability test of telephone interview schedule. As mentioned previously, telephone interviewees who had asked for an office interview were granted such requests. This provided an opportunity to check the reliability of the telephone interview schedule since the same schedule was used in the office interviews.

The only difference in the office interviews and the telephone interviews was the elimination of points A, B, C, and question 1-1 of the schedule used with the informants who indicated that they had received the letter of request and that they had carefully read the letter.

An average of 93.54 percent of the questions of the office interviews yielded replies which were in agreement with those of the telephone interviews. The percentage of agreement indicates a fairly high consistency in responses to the two interviews; this fact suggests that the telephone schedule can be regarded as reliable.

Since most of the questions in the telephone schedule are similar or parallel to the respondent schedule, results of the comparison of agreement between the telephone interviews and the office interviews suggest that the respondent schedule is likewise reliable.

Validity test of schedules. The complex nature of this study and its "pioneer" status made it very difficult to obtain some objective measure which could be used to test the validity of the answers to the questions contained in the various schedules.

A measure which was assumed to be indicative of validity was a comparison of the overall concept which most of the interviewees had of the six test letters with the major impressions which a selected non-test group had of the letters in terms of perceived differences and similarities of the letters.

The non-test group was composed of ten faculty members and graduate assistants in the writer's college. Each individual was asked to read three paired sets of the six test letters. The pair consisted of a Type I appeal with one of the three approaches paired with a Type II appeal and the same approach. For example, a Type I-A letter was paired with a Type II-A letter, I-B with II-B, and I-C with II-C. Each time after the individual had read one set of letters, he was asked the following questions:

1. Do you see anything in these two letters which they might have in common?

2. Do you see any difference between these letters?
3. In considering these letters, do you think there are more differences or more similarities?

After the three sets had been read, the next series of questions was asked:

1. Do you see any similarities in the six letters?
2. Any differences?
3. What was most meaningful to you, the differences or the similarities?

As reported on pages 80-81 of Chapter V, there was (1) a considerable uniformity in the replies of this group and (2) a close parallel to the general concept which most of the interviewees had of the letters of request.

IX. Coding of the Responses and Classification Data

In the preparation of the data for machine tabulation and analysis, a coding system employing numerical symbols for each type of data was used.

Three types of data were coded:

1. Identification data (sample number and type of interviewee).
2. Classification data of two main types. The first was the letter types, and the second type of classification data were the criterion groups (college, sex, marital status, grade point average, socio-economic status, training in business letter writing, extra-curricular activities).

3. Responses to questions of the schedules.

The codes for all three types of data were entered on code sheets. The code sheets were used as master sheets by the IBM machine operators to enter the code on the punch cards. The code sheets also provided summary totals of the code numbers in each column.

A separate code sheet was prepared for the respondent and telephone interviewees; thus the coding for the two groups was entered on two different punch cards.

In the first assignment of code symbols for the various criterion groups and responses to the questions, broader classes were used than appear in the code sheet which was used for mechanical tabulation. Because of the small sample size and the use of the Chi-square statistic, it was necessary to reduce the classes and categories to the smallest feasible combinations. Thus, the codes which were entered on the punch cards represent the combined classes and categories.

Letter types. The six letter types (two basic appeals and three approaches) were used as classification data to ascertain how the interviewees as a whole, that is, without regard to college enrollment, sex, marital status, etc., responded to the two appeals and three approaches. The letters were first coded and recorded on the punch cards as six classes (0-5 codes); however, in order to use the Chi-square statistic to determine significance, the six classes had to be broken down into the two classes of the appeals and, again, set up as three classes of the approaches.

College enrollment. Eight of the ten colleges which comprise the University were included as a criterion group. The colleges which were excluded were the Basic College and the Honors College.

The first classification table of colleges was broken down into two college groups. One group included those colleges whose main function involved technical laboratory studies. This combination of colleges is identified as the "Science" group. They included the following colleges:

Agriculture	Engineering
Home Economics	Science and Arts*
Veterinary Medicine	

The "Applied Arts" college group is the second division. This group consisted of the colleges of:

Business and Public Service	Education
Communication Arts	Science and Arts*

Sex. This particular classification presented no special problem.

Marital status. Only two classes--married and single--were used. The Student Directory did not provide information about those students who were separated, divorced, etc.

Grade point average. A rather broad range was used here to avoid the use of more classes than the data could handle. Three grade

*Students in the Science and Arts College who were in the non-technical departments of this College (Art and Foreign Languages, Foreign Studies, History, etc.) were classified with the second group of colleges, and those who were in the technical departments were classified with the first group.

classes were used:

2.00-2.49

2.50-2.99

3.00-4.00

Extra-curricular activities. Three code classes were used:

Very active: Participant in three or more organizations;
or elected officer in an organization.

Active: Affiliated with fewer than three organizations;
not an elected officer; active in minor committee
work.

Inactive: Not a member of any organization, or inactive
member in one organization.

Socio-economic status. This classification, based on skill, status, and economic position, is a modification of Alba Edward's (43, pp. 367-368) and W. L. Warner and others' (58, p. 66) occupational classification according to socio-economic status.

The three classifications are:

Upper upper-Lower upper

Upper middle-Lower middle

Upper lower-Lower lower

Training in business letter writing. To determine whether there is any relationship between the responses of the interviewees and their experience with business letter writing training, three classes were employed.

Had course or was taking course from writer.

Had course or was being trained by other Business Letter
Writing instructors.

Had not had course and was not enrolled.

Reliability Test of coding. Three assistant instructors from the writer's college were employed to check the reliability of the coding of the various categories of the responses to the open-ended questions of the schedules (one criterion question--socio-economic status--was included in the reliability check). To assist the code verifiers, the edited verbatim responses to the open-ended questions were typed on separate pages.

A typed page was provided which included the coded categories and typical responses subsumed by the categories. The checkers were instructed to code the verbatim responses to each question in accordance with the code which they believed was appropriate. The checkers worked independently. Their coding was recorded on separate forms which were provided (see Appendix C).

After the code check was completed by the verifiers, their coding of each question was compared with one another's to determine agreement in the coding of the questions. A table for each question was prepared.

The average percent of agreement in the coding of the answers of the respondent schedule was 87.23 percent, the average percent of agreement in the case of the telephone responses was 89.23 percent.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF ACTION EFFECTIVENESS OF LETTERS

This chapter deals with the first objective of the study: determination of which letter type and approach will produce the most action from the sample. An action analysis employing Chi-squares and percentages is made of the letters, letter types, and approaches in terms of: 1) action responses, 2) telephone responses, and 3) no responses. The same kind of response analysis is made of the criterion classification groups for the respondents and telephone interviewees. Because of a lack of information, the analysis of the criterion groups of the no-reply group is limited to criterion classifications of: 1) college enrollment, 2) sex, and 3) marital status.

I. Action Analysis

Total responses to letters. Table II presents a summary of the action responses to all six letters and two letter types (appeals). No significant difference at the .05 level of probability was found between letter types of--

- (a) Respondents
- (b) Telephone interviewees
- (c) No reply group
- (d) Respondents and telephone interviewees.

TABLE II
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ACTION RESPONSES
TO LETTERS AND LETTER TYPES

Letters	Respondents		Telephone Contacts		Total Contacted		No Replies		Total Letter Sample	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
I-A	¹ 35.3	12	35.3	12	70.6	24	29.4	10		34
I-B	44.1	15	35.3	12	79.4	27	20.6	7		34
I-C	50.0	17	20.6	7	70.6	24	29.4	10		34
² Totals Letter type I	(53.0)	44	(43.0)	31	(48.4)	75	(55.1)	27		102
II-A	26.5	9	52.9	18	79.4	27	20.6	7		34
II-B	38.2	13	44.1	15	82.3	28	17.7	6		34
II-C	50.0	17	23.5	8	73.5	25	26.5	9		34
² Totals Letter type II	(47.0)	39	(57.0)	41	(51.6)	80	(44.9)	22		102
³ Totals of Letter Types	(40.7)	83	(35.3)	72	(76.0)	155	(24.0)	49		204

¹Percentage based on 34 cases of each letter.

²Percentage in parenthesis--percentage based on column totals.

³Percentage in parenthesis--percentage based on 204 cases of sample

The above was also true of the significance of difference among the individual letters. Further analysis of the significance of differences among the approaches used in both letter types also indicates no significance of differences in reactions to the approaches. Thus in terms of action, no particular letter, letter type, or approach was more effective than any of the other letters, letter types, or approaches (there was a significant difference at the .07 level which favored the emotional-rational approach).

However, examination of Table II shows that with respect to percentages for both Type I and II letters, the action response is least for the I-A and II-A letters, greater for the I-B and II-B letters, and greatest for the I-C and II-C letters. This pattern of action response, together with the higher percentage response to the Type I letters, is in accord with the hypotheses that the emotional-rational approach and the personal benefits appeal will obtain the larger proportion of action responses. However, in view of the small numerical differences in the action responses, the percentages are not highly indicative of any real difference as verified by the Chi-square statistic, which showed no significant differences at the .05 percent level.

II. Criterion Group Analysis

The analysis of the criterion classification groups included four classes of students to whom letters were sent: 1) respondents, 2) telephone interviewees, 3) no reply group, and 4) restrained group.

The following are the action results of the cross-tabulation of the criterion groups and their respective classes:

1. There were no significant differences at the .05 level of probability between--
 - a. The colleges and the four classes of students.
 - b. Marital status and the four classes of students.
 - c. Extra-curricular activities and number of respondents or telephone interviewees in each category of activity.
 - d. Grade point average and the two classes of respondents and telephone interviewees.
2. The cross tabulations which showed significant differences at the .05 level of probability were:
 - a. Sex and the four classes of students.
 - b. Socio-economic status and the two types of students who were contacted.
 - c. Training in business letter writing and the number of respondents and telephone interviewees in each category.

III. Percentage Analysis of Criterion Groups

Percentagewise, almost twice as many males replied as did females. This could be a normal incidence since males are usually more concerned about obtaining employment. Another marked difference is found in the number of restrained females; more than two and a half times as many females than males were in the restrained classification. This difference could possibly account for the large difference in the action response between the two groups. Many of the females in the restrained group were practice teachers who were off campus most of the school term.

Compared with the percentage of letters sent to each of the eight colleges, students from the College of Business and Public Service had the highest percentage of the total action responses. The action response of these students exceeded the percentage of letters mailed to them by 11.1 percent. This indicates a slight bias in the proportionate percentage of responses received from this college.

The action responses of students from the College of Education were the lowest in terms of the percentage of letters mailed to them (7.8 percent less than the letters sent). Usually, few Education majors are enrolled in the business letter writing course; also, the action response may have been affected by the number of students from that College who were engaged in practice teaching during the test period.

The aspect of socio-economic circumstances appears to have some influence on the action responses. The lowest percentage of response (45.5 percent) is from students in the Upper Upper-Lower Upper scale of socio-economic status. On the other hand, there is a marked high action response (80.8 percent) from the students in the Upper Lower-Lower Lower scale. A fairly high degree of homogeneity is indicated by the fact that 75.5 percent of the two interviewee classes are in the Upper Middle-Lower Middle socio-economic scale.

Of the 83 students who responded to the letters, 32 had training in business letter writing. This represents 38.6 percent of the total action response. This percentage is virtually identical with the percentage action response from students in the College of Business and Public Service (38.55 percent), which would suggest that practically all the

respondent students from this college had training in business letter writing (actually, about one-third of the average enrollment in the course includes students from other colleges in the University). Most of the departments of the college require the course.

Married students indicated a stronger interest than single students in taking action; 60.8 percent of the respondents were married. Single students constituted the majority of the telephone interviewees (54.0 percent). A difference in the awareness of need or value of help is suggested by the difference in the response.

Little difference is found in the percentage of response and the extent of participation in extra-curricular activities for both types of interviewees. The action response of the very active groups was only slightly higher than that of the inactive groups.

Students in the lowest grade point range appear to have the greatest interest in responding; 63.2 percent of the interviewees (both types) in the 2.00-2.49 range took action. This difference in response might be due to a greater consciousness of need--the student in this grade point level might feel that his opportunity for obtaining employment is less than that of students with higher grade point averages, or he might believe that he cannot present his qualifications as adequately as students with higher grades. In connection with the feeling of inadequacy, Hovland and others (31, pp. 276-277) report that the results of one study with college students suggested that students with strong feelings of inadequacy were predisposed to be highly influenced by persuasive communications. In another part of the same book

(31, pp. 287-289), Hovland states that differences in mental ability may affect the extent to which an individual is susceptible to persuasion. Individuals with high intellectual ability, Hovland continues, more readily learn what is presented in a communication and draw appropriate inferences more effectively than individuals of average mental capacity; but those possessing higher mental ability are prone to be more critical in accepting arguments and in rejecting persuasive communications.

To check one aspect of need, a percentage cross tabulation was made of the two respondents grade point groups and their use of a letter of application. The results indicated that the need factor was stronger among the 2.00-2.49 students; 38.6 percent of this latter group of students said that they planned to use a letter of application as a primary means of obtaining employment, while 24.3 percent of the 3.00-4.00 students said the same.

III. Analysis of No Replies

Three kinds of information were directly available from the Student Directory about all of the no-reply group: 1) college enrollment, 2) sex, and 3) marital status. In most instances the correct addresses of the students were also available. To obtain additional data about this group other sources of information used were: 1) the departments of students, 2) registrar's office, 3) telephone calls to former residences, associates, and instructors. As much knowledge as could be obtained about this group was necessary to learn about the composition of the group, and to provide

some idea about what effect the omission of this group had with regard to the letters.

One serious problem in contacting this group was the fact that 38 of the 49 no-reply students had no listed local phone numbers; 19 resided out of the city, the other half were local residents.

Restrained group. An examination of the information from the various sources revealed that 30 of the 49 students who were not reached did not have an equal opportunity to take action on the request of the letter. There was no significant probability differences with regard to the letters and the identifications of the restrained groups. One-half of the students in the restrained group lived outside of a radius of twelve miles from Lansing.

The second highest restrained group were the students engaged in practice teaching off campus (30.0 percent). These two groups comprised 80.0 percent of the restrained group.

No significant chi-square or percentage differences were found between the individual letters and the following classifications of the restrained groups:

1. College enrollment.
2. Sex.
3. Marital status.

Analysis of unrestrained, no-reply group. Only 19 of the 49 no-reply students were in this group.

The following tabulations of the letter types and the respective classifications showed no significant difference:

1. Coded college enrollment and letters.
2. Sex and letters.
3. Marital status and letters.

Almost 80.0 percent of the unrestrained no-reply group were from the Colleges of Business and Public Service, Education, and Science and Arts.

Because no significant differences were found in any of the classifications of the no-reply group, and since this was also generally true of the responses of the two types of interviewees, the assumption can be made that the inclusion of the no-reply group would not have materially affected the overall action response to the six letters.

Summary. No significant probability or percentage differences were found in the action responses to the individual letters, letter types, and approaches. Cross tabulations of the criterion classification groups indicated the following significant differences:

1. Almost twice as many males replied as females.
2. More than two and one-half times as many females as males were classified as restrained.
3. Students who had training in business writing and were enrolled in the College of Business and Public Service had the highest proportionate action response in terms of total percentage of letters mailed.

4. The highest action response in the grade point classifications came from the 2.00-2.49 class.

No significant differences were found in any of the classifications of the unrestrained no-reply group.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF REACTION RESPONSES TO LETTER TYPES AND APPROACHES BY LETTER CLASSIFICATIONS

This chapter presents an analysis of the interviewees' reactions to the letters, appeals, and approaches used. This was the second objective of the study.

I. Reconciliation of the Use of the Chi-square Statistic*

Because of the limited sample size, used in this study, some difficulties were encountered in combining various categories and classes to obtain sufficiently large enough expected frequencies to make feasible the use of the contingency tables and the Chi-square statistic used in this study.

In computing Chi-square it is desirable to have no expected frequency less than 10; if that is not possible, and if an expected frequency is less than ten but greater than five, Chi-square may be used if one is cautious as to the conclusions drawn (39, p. 222). McNemar suggests (39, p. 222) combining categories to attain the minimum number of expected frequencies. In this study it was necessary to combine a number of related categories of the responses and to broaden the dimensions of some of the criterion groups which were used for cross

*The statistical procedures involving the Chi-square statistic and percentage analysis used in this investigation were based on advice given the writer by Dr. Charles H. Proctor of the Michigan State University Statistics Department.

tabulation purposes. Because of the small number of total cases and more particularly the extreme dichotomies of some of the marginal totals, a large number of small expected frequencies did occur in spite of the combinations made. In many instances the observed frequencies for the cells in some of the tables were zero. However, in those cases where fourfold contingency tables were hand-computed, and any one expected frequency was less than ten, Yates' correction (39, p. 231) for continuity was used.

Computation of Chi-squares of letter types. The following is an example and explanation of what was done in computing Chi-squares for the letter types:

Question: (respondent schedule) "What did you first think about the letter I sent to you?"

Number Responding to Each Category

Letters	Reaction to Media	Reaction to Content	Total Response to Each Letter
I-A	8	4	12
I-B	13	2	15
I-C	13	4	17
II-A	4	5	9
II-B	10	3	13
II-C	<u>12</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>17</u>
Totals	60	23	83

Inspection of the above observed frequencies indicates a large number expected frequencies below ten if the six letters and two categories were used as six rows and two columns respectively in computation of Chi-square. Since it was not statistically feasible to compute a Chi-square or use Yates' correction continuity for the above arrangement, the totals of the categories and total response to each letter of Letter Type I and Letter Type II were compared in computation of Chi-square. This provided a means of ascertaining the significance of difference between the two appeals but, because of the inadequacy of the data, there was still no means of determining the significance of the differences among the specific letters.

To use the Chi-square statistic to determine the significance of the difference among the three approaches, it was necessary to combine each of the three sets of approaches used in the two appeals. For example, the emotional approach-personal benefit appeal data was combined with the emotional approach-group benefit appeal; rational approach-personal benefit appeal was combined with rational approach-group benefit appeal, etc.

The lumping together of the three sets of approaches has, of course, the effect of obscuring the differences of the individual letters; likewise, hidden are the differences between the approaches in the two appeals, the difference, for example, between the emotional approach-personal benefit and the emotional approach-group benefit. However, the combination which included a mixture of the two variables (the appeals) in the three combined classes, makes it possible to analyze the effect of bringing together each of the three approaches in one class.

II. Letter Classification Analysis

Significance of difference of reactions of interviewees to appeals and approaches. No significance of difference at the .05 level was found between the reaction responses to any of the questions in the schedules and the two appeals of the letters.

However, significant differences at the .05 level or better were noted between a number of reaction responses to various questions in the schedules and the three approaches. A few significant differences were also indicated between cross tabulations of different questions in a) the respondent schedules, b) the telephone interviewee schedule, and c) the respondent and telephone interviewee schedules.

The reaction responses to the approaches and different questions in the schedules which showed significant differences at the .05 level or better are identified by an asterisk in the following percentage analysis.

III. Percentage Analysis of Reaction Responses to Appeals and Approaches

In using a percentage analysis, the writer was aware of the cautions required in using such an analysis with data which showed no significant differences. As McNemar points out:

One is not justified in singling out proportions (or columns) which give large differences for the purpose of testing the significance of differences since such selection tends to capitalize on chance differences (39, p. 233).

However, as suggested by Dr. Charles Proctor of the Michigan State University Statistics Department, an extended analysis using percentages was a useful supplement in this study because of the directional pattern and marked consistencies which were noted in many tabulations of the data.

Analysis of reaction responses to appeals. The following responses to questions in the schedules indicate the effect of the reactions of the interviewees to the two appeals in the letters of request. Effectiveness is indicated mainly by the overall direction of the total responses of cross tabulated categories of a question and comparison of reactions to related questions within a schedule and between the schedules:

1. Interest in "personal help" was the principal first reaction response of 65.1 percent of the respondents. Only 7.2 percent of the respondents to both letter types (appeals) mentioned "help to others"; 75 percent of the respondents to the Type I letters stated "personal help" as their first reaction, but 53.7 percent of Type II respondents also mentioned the same category.

*A significant difference was observed between the responses of the interviewees to the "personal help" appeal. The main first reaction response of the telephone interviewees was "personal help." This was mentioned by 36.1 percent of these interviewees as contrasted with 65.1 percent of the respondents.

The total percentage response of both types of interviewees to the "personal help" appeal was 51.6 percent; only 9.7 percent responded to

"helping others." Thus, in terms of percentages the highest response of the two types of interviewees was to "personal help."

The first reaction response of the interviewees was considered of paramount importance, because many experts in communications regard the initial reaction of the reader as a controlling factor in a reader's overall reaction to a message (19, pp. 117-118), (49, pp. 22, 312), and (50, pp. 120-121).

*2. A total of 77.2 percent of the respondents were seeking jobs. None of the telephone interviewees specifically stated that they were seeking jobs; however, one-third of them indicated that they planned to make some use of a job-seeking letter (most of these people had had business writing training or planned to get help from other sources); 13 of the telephone interviewees asked for office interviews ("personal help" was their main reason for making such request). Almost all of the respondents (95.2 percent) planned to make some use of the letter of application.

Actually, all of the respondents were seeking help of one sort or another. Some asked for help in writing letters to graduate and professional schools. Others wanted help in order to obtain better jobs than they had been offered. Some wanted to know how to write a job letter so they could use such a letter when they needed it in the future. Many of the engineering students came to the interview to learn how to write job refusal letters! Without exception, even the respondents of the Type II letters, who claimed that they responded to provide help

for others, sought some information which was of personal benefit to themselves.

3. Almost the same percentage of Type I and Type II respondents viewed "personal help" as the principal appeal of the letters (47.4 and 46.7 percent, respectively). On the other hand, only 17.9 percent (all Type II) indicated that the principal appeal was a chance to "help others." Thus, only a small percentage of the respondents were motivated to action as a consequence of either an altruistic or group feeling.

A further analysis of all the principal appeal responses suggested the possibility that all of the responses could be covert personal benefits responses. Personal gain or interest may be acknowledged in different ways by different readers and still mean the same thing to all the readers. For example, in the present analysis, one respondent said, "I came because I thought you would help me." This is a direct statement of personal gain. Another respondent said, "I liked the sincerity and friendliness of the letter; that's why I came to see you." This latter expression may mean the same thing to a reader as the previous statement. Because the letter seemed sincere and friendly, the reader assumed that the writer would provide personal help.

In the case of the Type I letters, since there was no suggestion of help to others in the letters, it is likely that most of the total responses would relate to personal benefits. This may also hold, to a lesser extent, of the Type II respondents, since they might not be

willing to admit directly that their purpose was to obtain personal help. That this might be true is indicated by the analysis of the responses of the non-test group (see pp. 80-82 of this study).

4. Most of the interviewees' attitude responses were favorable; 85.5 percent of the respondents and 75.4 percent of the telephone interviewees had favorable first reaction attitudes toward the letters. An analysis of these responses showed that 65.6 percent of the favorable attitudes of the interviewees stemmed from expectations of receiving help or the feeling that an offer of help was intended.

The action response of the 14.5 percent who had unfavorable or no expressed attitudes indicates that even unfavorable responses may produce a positive action response if the reader has a strongly felt need. Of the twelve individuals who had unfavorable first reaction attitudes, eight said that the principal appeal was the personal advantage which the letter offered to them.

5. One cross tabulation revealed that 56.5 percent of the Type II respondents did not observe the group benefit appeal in the letters they received. The individual's perception of the content of the letters and the writer's intention were quite different.

The uniformity of reaction responses by both types of interviewees to many questions in this study suggests that both groups perceived essentially the same things in the letters because of the presence of functional values which had a strong interest to both groups.

6. All of the replies of the respondents to the question pertaining to their main impression of the interview had a personal benefit orientation; there were no responses which directly related to the value which the findings of this study might have for others.

*7. The responses to the question pertaining to "reactions to the writer" indicate that the investigator was regarded as an expert in business letter writing; 60.2 percent of the respondents said that they would not have acted if the letters had been sent by someone other than a business letter writing instructor. Ninety percent of this group regarded the writer as an expert. There was little difference in the percentage responses of the two types of interviewees with regard to this question (Type I and II respondents). That such high credibility could have had a significant effect on action and reaction to content is suggested by Hovland and others who say:

Expectations of being given false arguments on judgments are least likely to occur when the communicator is perceived as being highly expert. The relationship between expertness and acceptance would be particularly pronounced whenever the issue is perceived to be one that can be fairly well settled by making special kinds of observations or by making a skilled judgment (31, p. 294).

The principal finding in the analysis of the reactions to the letter types is that few respondents indicated that structure of the letters, or personalized form, or approaches, or any other aspect of letter style was the principal reason for taking action. This was likewise true of the telephone interviewees; only four of these students said that the above factors were instrumental in their decision not to act.

The difference in the action and inaction of the two types of interviewees, in view of the similarity of their responses, suggests a distinction between action and reaction. Reaction, as pointed out by Schreier, without the presence of goals or the desire for gratification is merely a non-volitional response to a stimulus. "In reaction," Schreier says, "the experience of freedom of a possible choice is missing; it is meaningless to say, 'I could have reacted in a different way' . . . Decision on action, on the other hand, is always a choice, which is usually accompanied by some conscious or subconscious purpose" (51, pp. 73-74). As revealed in the present findings, most of the telephone interviewees indicated an absence of need or of purpose in taking action at the time suggested--they merely reacted.

Analysis of reaction responses to approaches. The most definite evidence of difference in reader reaction to the three approaches is revealed by an analysis of those questions in the schedules which contain negative or unfavorable categories of responses to the approaches. As Table III indicates, the emotional approach letters (I-A and II-A) consistently obtained the highest percentage of the total negative or unfavorable reaction responses from both the respondent and telephone interviewees.

Table III indicates that in each response of both schedules in which negative reactions were expressed that the emotional approach letters obtained from 50 to 90 percent of such reactions. Also, letter II-A, with three exceptions, had higher negative reaction percentages than letter I-A.

TABLE III
 PERCENTAGE OF NEGATIVE RESPONSES, IN VARIOUS TABULATIONS,
 TO EMOTIONAL APPROACH LETTERS BY THE
 TWO TYPES OF INTERVIEWEES

Responses	Percentages		Percent of Total Negative Response
	Letter I-A	Letter II-A	
First reaction	28.6	57.1	85.7
*First reaction	30.0	60.0	90.0
First reaction to style factors	25.0	50.0	75.0
First reaction attitude	22.0	33.3	55.3
*First reaction attitude	11.7	52.9	64.6
Principal appeal	50.0	...	50.0
Reaction to selected parts of letters	66.7	16.7	83.4
*Reaction to selected parts of letters	14.3	47.6	61.9
Effect of reaction to selected parts on whole letter	40.0	10.0	50.0
*Effect of reaction to selected parts on whole letter	16.7	58.3	75.0
Difference-similarity of job letters and letters of request	29.0	25.8	54.8
*Changes in letters of request	13.9	41.7	55.6

*Telephone interviewee responses.

Other tabulations which showed significant reactions to the approaches follow:

*1. The strongest suggestion of change in the letters of request by the telephone interviewees concerned the "affective elements" in the emotional approach letters, particularly letter II-A; over one-half on the "too affective" negative responses pertained to letter II-A; also, over one-half of the suggested changes made by these interviewees were directed to letter II-A.

*2. Both types of interviewees showed an inclination to more closely associate the emotional-rational approach with the emotional approach rather than with the rational approach. This was evident in two tabulations: a) the responses of both types of interviewees indicated that letter I-A and II-A had 88.2 percent of the "unnatural style" responses; the remaining 11.8 percent was shared by the I-C and II-C letters. None of the interviewees said that the rational approach letters contained "unnatural style" elements; b) in the emotional-rational approach respondent letters the percentage of "liked affective" elements was considerably higher than the "liked factual" elements (65.7 and 17.2 percent, respectively).

The preference which the emotional-rational respondents had for the "affective" elements is in accord with Clements' observation:

Our automatic responses are usually influenced more by the spirit behind things than by the things themselves (20, p. 27).

Because an affective element in a communication is usually more vivid than a rational element, it is possible, as suggested by Hovland

and others (31, pp. 57-60) that the emotional is more easily recalled and that it leaves a more intense impression with regard to what is said in a communication.

*3. In the preparation of the six letters an attempt had been made to exclude rational elements in the emotional approach letters, emotional elements in the rational approach letters, and include both emotional and rational elements in the combined approach letters. An indication that this objective had been realized to a great extent is suggested by the fact that there were no "liked factual" elements responses to either of the emotional approach letters; and only 7.2 percent of the responses to the rational approach letters referred to "liked effective" elements; the interviewees who received the combined approach letters recognized both the emotional and rational elements in those letters, however as pointed out in item 2 above, the response to "liked affective" elements was significantly higher than to the "factual elements."

*4. There was almost a 100 percent consistency in the responses of the interviewees with regard to their reactions to component parts in the letters and their reactions to the letters as a whole. That is, those who liked either the affective or factual elements, for the most part, said that this liking produced a positive attitude toward the letter as a whole; on the other hand, negative reactions to parts in the letters yielded a 100 percent negative attitude towards the letters.

These reactions indicate that "key" words, phrases, and other parts in the letters had special attention interest to the interviewees, and

this selective reaction affected their reactions to the whole letters.

Schreier points out that:

It is generally recognized in modern psychology that perception is 'selective.' When we react, we do not react to all the characteristics of a stimulus; there are specific characteristics of the stimulus which produce the reaction (51, p. 78).

5. On the basis of the percentage analysis of various tabulations of responses to the approaches, the rational approach had the greatest acceptance from both types of interviewees. This is indicated, in the main, by the following findings:

a) the rational approach letters had the lowest percentage of negative responses from both types of interviewees; however, the percentage was not significantly different as compared with the emotional-rational approach responses;

b) 69.6 percent of the telephone interviewees indicated a preference for factual or logical organization of letters;

c) the respondents likewise showed a greater awareness of and interest in the structural and logical aspects than in the personal or effective aspects--63.9 percent of the respondents indicated such a preference;

d) the main impression that 59.1 percent of the respondents had of the interviews was the knowledge of how to organize a letter of application, which indicated a higher consciousness of the rational than of the effective aspects.

While the preceding tabulations in item 5 suggest a greater interest or preference on the part of the interviewees for the rational approach

letters, there was not enough difference in most of the different tabulation of responses to the rational and emotional approaches to conclusively state that either of the two approaches was more effective than the other. However, the interviewees did conclusively indicate that the emotional approach letters were the least favored, especially the group benefits-emotional approach letters.

As mentioned on pages 73-74, the reactions to the approaches actually were not the principal cause of action or inaction. There is little evidence that if the letters had been written as many of the interviewees suggested that they would have been more responsive. Purpose and need played a more important role in the decisions of the interviewees.

IV. Use of Non-test Group to Check Validity of Reaction Responses to the Test Letters

Purpose of validity check. In view of the similarity of many of the reaction responses to most of the questions in the schedules, there was some question as to what the responses might have been if readers had had a chance to read and compare all of the six letters. Since the original test group could not be used for such an evaluation, a group of ten faculty members and assistant instructors, not engaged in business writing, was selected from the writer's college.

As mentioned in Chapter III (pages 49-50), a schedule containing six questions was prepared to obtain the reactions of each individual to: 1) paired sets of each letter type and approach, and 2) a comparison of all six letters (a copy of the schedule of questions is included in

Appendix B, p. 124). Each individual was interviewed separately and requested to be as frank and objective as possible in answering the questions.

Findings of test. The responses of this group showed even greater uniformity than was found in the responses of the test interviewees.

The main similarity noted by 70 per cent of the group was "help to the reader" for all three sets of the letters. Thus, despite the presence of the group benefit appeal, most of the readers thought that help could be obtained.

Half of the non-test group noted, with regard to the emotional and emotional-rational letters, that the Type II letters were more emotional than the Type I's. All except one individual noticed that the Type I rational letters were more direct or specific than their counterpart letters. "Specificness" and "directness" here meant that a more explicit and direct offer of personal help was made in the Type I letters.

The interviewees saw greater similarity than differences between the letter types of the emotional and rational letter sets. Only one individual believed that there was more difference than similarity between letters I-C and II-C of the emotional-rational set of letters---even this individual thought that the letter types were similar in terms of purpose, but differed in that, he thought, unlike the other letters, II-C contained more than one appeal.

Similarity in function or purpose was the main reason given by the non-test group as their reason for the greater similarity between the

two letters of any set. Even though nine out of ten individuals recognized the difference in the basic appeals of the letters, they agreed that despite the group-oriented appeal of the Type II letters, that the average reader, as well as themselves, would naturally assume he could obtain some kind of personal help. Some typical remarks made in this connection were:

I see that one of the letters asks me to help, but I also see an opportunity to obtain help for myself.

In helping others in such a situation, I can naturally expect to get some help that I can use.

The basic difference between the letters is that one is more direct than the other in the way help is offered.

The above statements and consensus of agreement appear to confirm Krech and Crutchfield's contention that perception is selective; meaning to an individual is interpreted in terms of the perceiver's own needs, own emotions, own personality, and own previously formed cognitive patterns (36, p. 126).

The non-test interviewees assumed that in a student-teacher relationship, which involved a vocational need or interest, students would view the letters as a proffer of help to themselves, and that this would be especially true when a student receives a personal letter of the type used in this study. These impressions of the non-test group are further confirmed in their responses to the six letters as a whole.

All of the non-test group said that the similarity of the six letters was the most meaningful to them (similarity was interpreted as functional meaning to the intended readers).

While most of the non-test group believed that the emotional approach letters were unduly effusive, two individuals who selected letters II-A and II-C provided a plausible suggestion for the action and reactions of the respondents of the emotional and emotional-rational approach Type II letters. One of the individuals (Victor Doherty of the Department of Production and Personnel Administration) said:

These letters gave me an excuse to obtain help. The personal benefits letters struck me as being too superior-subordinate; they reminded me of an inadequacy I have in writing such letters (letters of application), but the group-oriented letters would give me the chance to ostensibly provide help by cooperating, that is, giving information and at the same time indirectly obtaining help without revealing ignorance on my part. These letters would provide me with a face-saving means. If I were a student, I think I would, to appear sophisticated, indicate a negative reaction to the emotionalized group benefit appeal because I think I would be expected to do so. A college student is expected to favor the rational, the logical, and be contemptuous of emotional persuasion.

Thus, on the basis of Mr. Doherty's remarks, while a student might express a negative reaction to specific affective elements in a letter, this is no necessary deterrent to action, as long as the student knows or assumes that he can obtain competent help from the writer.

The non-test group was not asked to select which letter they personally favored. However, seven of the group made such selections. The selections indicate no significantly different preference on the part of the test group, as was true of the student group. However, as in the case of the student interviewees, the non-test group showed a less favorable attitude toward the emotional approach, and indicated that personal benefits, expressed or implied had the strongest influence on action and reaction.

V. Summary

The percentage analysis between the totals of responses to the questions and the letter types and cross-tabulations between the responses to various questions within and between the schedules showed that whether or not explicitly expressed in the letters, the expectation of receiving personal benefit had the strongest effect on the reactions of both types of interviewees.

Both the respondent and telephone interviewees conclusively indicated that the emotional approach was the one which they least favored. While the rational approach obtained the highest percentage of positive reaction responses, there was insufficient overall difference in the tabulations of most of the responses to the approaches to conclusively state that the rational approach was more effective in stimulating goodwill than the emotional-rational approach.

The approaches had little significant effect on the interviewees' decisions to act. The expectation of obtaining help and the need of the interviewees were the most significant motivating factors.

The non-test group who read and compared all six letters indicated that they saw little difference among the letters in terms of the function or purpose which the letters would have for student readers. The main similarity noted by most of the non-test group was the express or implied offer of help in the letters. While 90 per cent of the group recognized the difference in the basic appeals of the letters, they agreed that the average reader would naturally assume that he would attain some kind of personal help.

As in the case of the student interviewees, the non-test group showed the least favorable attitude toward the emotional approach and said that the expectation of personal benefit had the strongest influence on action and reaction.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF REACTION RESPONSES OF CRITERION CLASSIFICATION GROUPS

The function of this chapter is to determine whether there is any difference in the reactions of the various classifications which were used in grouping individuals of the sample.

A principle of persuasion frequently mentioned by specialists in communications is that mass communication doesn't influence the individual directly but rather indirectly through the groups to which he belongs (2, p. 37).

Most business communications experts also maintain that knowledge of group affiliations or "frames of reference" of people is important in personal communications, especially in persuasive letters (47, p. 23).

In writing unsolicited sales letters (a form of persuasive request), Menning and Wilkinson specify that primary factors in adapting such letters to the reader are considerations of sex, vocation, location, age, sources and amount of income, and social, professional, or educational status (41, p. 213).

I. Method of Analysis

In this study, the students were classified according to college enrollment, sex, marital status, grade point average, participation in extra-curricular activities, socio-economic status, and training in

business letter writing. How these classifications affected the reactions of the interviewees was determined by cross-tabulations of the responses with three criterion classifications. Since the questions and categories of responses are the same for the criterion classification groups as for the letter classifications, and the responses are made by the same individuals, the numerical totals of the categories of the responses are the same. However, because the individual responses are cross-tabulated with each class of the various criterion groups, the responses reflect the particular reaction of each class to the various questions.

When Chi-squares for the letter classification group were being computed the responses to the six letters were combined to form tabulation tables of the two appeals and three approaches. When Chi-squares for the criterion groups were computed, considerably greater difficulties were encountered. Instead of using only one set of six letters for combination purposes, in the case of the criterion groups two or three sets of the six letters were used simultaneously.

In this situation, the only feasible way to use the Chi-square statistic was to combine the totals of the categories of responses to each question with the two or three classes of each group to form a tabulation table.

Thus, there is no differentiation between the appeals and the approaches; they are subsumed in the totals. This was the only significance of difference test which could possibly be used because of statistical impracticality of dealing with a large number of zero observations

and low frequencies of many of the cells in the tables having two or three classes and two or three categories.

Percentage comparisons were made of those cross tabulations of reaction responses to questions which indicated significant differences, similarities, and other meaningful relationships concerning the reactions, preferences and needs of the students.

II. Significant Differences of Reactions by Interviewees

Cross tabulations of criterion classification group reaction responses to questions which showed significant differences at the .05 level or better are cited in the following two headings:

Respondent criterion groups:

- *1. Sex and "first reaction"--significant at .05 level.
- *2. College enrollment and main emphasis of difference or similarity--significant at .01 level.
- *3. Sex and job plans--significant at .01 level.
- 4. Marital status and surprise factor--significant at .05 level.
- *5. Extra-curricular activities and job plans--significant at .05 level.
- *6. Training in business letter writing and special effects of particulars in letters--significant at .01 level.
- *7. Training in business letter writing and attitude toward

whole letter based on effects of particulars in letters---
significant at .01 level.

Telephone interviewee criterion groups:

- *1. Grade point average and attitude toward whole letter based on reactions to particulars in letters---significant at .01 level.
- *2. Grade point average and plans to use letter of application---significant at .01 level.
- *3. Socio-economic status and attitude toward whole letter based on reactions to particulars in letters---significant at .02 level.

The asterisks before the tabulations of both interviewee classification groups indicate that, except for one tabulation, marital status and surprise factor, all of the tabulations may contain distorted statistical chi-square values, because some categories contain less than minimum required frequencies for chi-square computations.

III. Percentage Analysis of Cross-Tabulations
of Respondent Reactions

In this analysis the responses to respondent questions were contrasted with the responses of comparable questions in the telephone interviewee schedule.

1. The cross-tabulation between sex and first reaction to the letters of request indicated that 77.6 percent of the males responded to

"content," which included the sub-categories of "personal help" and "help others," and 22.4 percent responded to "media." The females, on the other hand, were equally split on these two categories. These percentage differences suggest that the males were more interested in the "help" aspect than the females. This difference would seem reasonable in view of the fact that females are usually less concerned with occupational or professional careers than males.

While not markedly different, the females indicated a higher response to the emotional and emotional-rational letters than to the rational approach letters. The responses of the males, on the other hand, was lowest for the emotional approach letters, especially letter II-A, which obtained only half as many responses from the males as did any other approach, except I-A. This difference, may suggest that the females were more influenced by the emotional factors than were the males.

In contrast, the reaction responses of the male-female telephone interviewees to the "help" categories showed an almost perfect positive correlation between the two categories of the question. Here, also, there was no difference in the responses to the individual letters which would suggest a preference for any of the approaches by either of the sexes.

2. The principal difference between the males and females was in the percentage of females having no job plans; 18.8 percent of the females had no job plans as contrasted with 1.5 percent of the males. Since some of the women had matrimonial plans, the higher percentage of

women without job plans should be expected--three girls who attended the interviews came to obtain help for their prospective husbands, who claimed to be deficient in writing skills.

However, a slightly larger percentage of females than males was seeking jobs (75.0 and 73.1 percent, respectively). This indicates that a higher percentage of females was interested in help than was shown in their first reaction to the letter, which was 50 percent.

"Personal reasons" appeared to be the main reason for non-response on the part of telephone interviewee females; 60 percent of the girls gave various personal reasons for not attending the interview--conflicts in social engagements was one of the more frequently mentioned reasons for not arranging an interview.

Seventy-six percent of the male telephone interviewees gave "other commitments" as the main reason for non-response. Most of these people indicated that they had jobs or job offers (this cross-tabulation was significant at the .10 level).

3. The respondents classified in the "Science" college group showed a significantly higher awareness of the structural and logical similarities and differences than the "Applied Arts" college group (87.5 to 55.9%). This difference would suggest the possibility that the relatively higher objectivity of the sciences might be reflected in the preference for the more objective aspects of the letters by the science group. However, no such significantly different percentage preference is indicated by the telephone interviewee Science group in their responses to changes in

the letters (the most nearly comparable response category). In this cross-tabulation, 91.7 percent of the Applied Arts group who received letter II-A suggested that the letter be changed, contrasted with 66.7 percent of the Science group who proposed a change in the same letter.

Thus, no conclusive evidence is provided that the interviewees of either college group had a greater preference for the objective aspects of the letters.

4. The lowest percentage of the respondent interviewees who "were seeking jobs" (53.5%) were those who were the most active in extra-curricular activities. The responses of the "active" and "inactive" groups showed that a high percentage of these students were seeking jobs (81.3% of the "actives" and 87% of the "inactives"). These percentages suggest that students who were very active in extra-curricular activities had the least need for help. However, an analysis of the uncoded telephone interviewee responses of the "reasons for non-response" shows no significant differences among the three extra-curricular classification groups with regard to the number of students who were "seeking jobs."

5. A significantly large percentage of the respondents who had training from the writer indicated a negative reaction to particulars in the letters of request (70.0%). Respondents who had training in business writing from other instructors indicated the next highest percentage of negative reactions (27.7%). Only 11.7% of those who had no training said that they had a negative reaction. Apparently, the writer's former students expressed greater criticism because they knew what was supposed

to be "acceptable practice in writing business letters," and they may have felt that they were being put to a test. The same seemed to be true, to a lesser extent, of the students who were trained by other instructors. The students who had no training, of course, were not familiar with accepted practice. These latter two classes of students indicated a high preference for "affective elements" in the letters (54.6% and 53.0%); only 10 percent of the writer's students said that they were impressed by such elements. Thus, it is possible that the writer's students felt a greater restraint in making their responses than the other two classes of respondents.

No significant percentage difference was found in a cross-tabulation between the same classifications and categories in the responses of the telephone interviewees (only two of the writer's former students failed to respond).

6. As in the preceding percentage analysis, the writer's former students had the highest negative reaction to the letters of request (50 percent); again, the responses, most likely, reflected the students' knowledge of acceptable practice. The respondents who had been taught by other business writing instructors and those who had no training in business writing both had highly favorable attitudes (86.4% and 96.1%, respectively).

In contrast, 50 percent of both the writer's and other business writing instructors' telephone interviewee students responded negatively to the letters of request. Students without training did not indicate

so high a favorable response as did their respondent counterparts. Nevertheless a substantial majority (80.0%) had a favorable attitude toward the letters. Since 88.8 percent of the telephone interviewees were students without training in business letter writing, the largest proportion of those having favorable attitudes towards the letters of request were people without a specialized knowledge of business letter writing.

7. The married students had a higher response to "content" than the single students (82.8% and 64.6%, respectively). Since "content" pertains to the "help aspect," the married students may have been more interested in help than the single students. This is further suggested by the telephone interviewee responses to the same question, which shows that 60 percent of the married students responded to "content," compared with 42.5% of the single students who responded in the same way.

8. The cross-tabulation of marital status and job plans shows a close correlation with the preceding cross-tabulation. Here 85.7 percent of the married students indicated that they were "seeking jobs" (82.8% had responded to the "help aspect"); on the other hand, 64.6 percent of the single students said the same (64.4% of them responded to the "help aspect"). The consistency in the responses to these two cross-tabulations strongly indicates that the married students had the greater interest in obtaining help.

No significant difference was found between the percentage of married and single telephone interviewees whose main "reason for

non-response" was "previous commitments" (67.7 and 68.3%). Here there was little difference in the need aspect.

9. The upper lower lower lower group were the least suspicious (4.8%) of the writer's intentions and were most inclined to regard him as an expert (66.7%). The class which showed the highest percentage of suspicious students (60%) and lowest percentage who regarded the writer as an expert was the upper upper lower upper class.

The seemingly greater trust and regard for the writer's expertness by the upper lower lower lower class might be due to fewer opportunities to obtain jobs by means other than a letter of application. This is suggested by a cross-tabulation of the socio-economic classes with "job plans" and "plans to use the letter of application." The cross-tabulation showed no significant percentage differences among the classes with regard to the percentage of students "seeking jobs" (UU-LU had lowest percentage); however, the upper lower lower lower class had the highest percentage of students (71.4%) who planned to use the letter of application primarily to obtain employment. The UU-LU had the next highest percentage--60% (only five students in this class), and the UM-LM class students showed the least primary dependence upon the job letter (43.8%).

A comparison between the socio-economic statuses of the telephone interviewees and their plans to use job letters suggested that a large percentage of the upper lower lower lower students had responded to the letters of request. Only five UL-LL telephone interviewees were listed,

which proportionately is considerably lower than the action response from this class (21 UL-LL students responded). Three of the five students in the nonrespondent group of this class had jobs, one planned to go to graduate school, and one couldn't arrange for an interview because of outside part-time employment.

The results of the two cross-tabulations strongly indicate that occupational opportunity is related to need for help and attitude toward the writer.

Various social studies have shown that college graduates from the upper lower-lower lower socio-economic classes generally have less opportunity than other classes of obtaining employment in their specialized areas of training through personal contacts and other direct referrals. These people most frequently have to depend upon their own personal resources and chance opportunities for help (58, pp. 152-157).

10. Training in business writing was found to be positively related to use of the letter of application as a primary means of obtaining employment." The respondents who had training from the writer (90%) and those who received training from other instructors (59%) indicated primary use of the job letter. Only 41.2 percent of the students who had no training planned to use the job letter primarily.

No significant percentage differences among the three classes were found in a cross-tabulation of the telephone interviewee responses.

IV. Percentage Analysis of Cross-Tabulations of Telephone Interviewee Reactions

1. While each of the three grade-point classes showed highly favorable attitudes towards the letters, all of the 21 students in the 2.00-2.49 grade class had favorable attitudes toward the letters.

A cross-tabulation between grade-point average and plans to use a letter of application by the telephone interviewees showed that the 2.00-2.49 students indicated the highest percentage of affirmative responses (61.9%) with regard to using a letter of application to secure employment. Only 21.6 percent and 23.5 percent of the other two grade classes said that they planned to use a letter of application. The respondent 2.00-2.49 grade-point students had the highest percentage response to "primary use of the letter of application" (58.3%), the percentages of the other two grade classes were 50.0 and 45 percent.

Almost one-half of the office interviews were with the 2.00-2.49 telephone interviewee grade-point students. Thus, on the basis of the above cross-tabulations, the 2.00-2.49 grade-point class indicated that they were more aware of the value of letters of application than the other two grade-point classes.

2. While there were only five students in the non-respondent upper lower-lower lower interviewee class, all of them had a favorable attitude toward the letters they received. As mentioned before, four of these students cited prior "commitments" as the "reason for non-response." While none of the other cross-tabulations provide possible reasons for

the unanimous reaction of this group, the favorable attitude and the need indicated by the same class of the respondent group suggest a higher awareness of the value of job letters as a probable reason.

V. Summary

The data in this chapter provide little evidence that the reactions of the various classification groups directly reflect distinctive patterns of class or group behavior reactions to the various questions.

Actually, in this particular situation, the classification groups exhibited few of the characteristics associated with group consciousness or identification. Since there was no interaction or exchange of experience between the various groups, there were few emotional attachments, loyalties, status roles, traditions, and symbols which directly affected the behavior of individual members of the different classification groups. Furthermore, the questions of the schedules involved no opinions which required conformity, upholding of group standards, or a need to validate one's self through agreement with others. The exception to the latter point was the high percentage of negative responses to particulars in the letters by former students of the writer.

In the main, the various classification groups appeared to act as an aggregate of individuals who were separate and detached from the groups with whom they were classified. This fact should, to some extent, be expected in the case of the readers of the Type I letters: the letters promised them personal aid. However, group consciousness more evident

than what was found in the study might be expected of the Type II readers because of group benefit appeal in the letters they received. While many of the Type II readers were aware of the basic appeal of the letters and the effort made to identify the readers with the common group to which they belonged, membership or association with the group didn't to any significant degree make them desirous to provide help or advance the interests of the common group. Only 9.7 percent of the 155 interviewees indicated an interest in helping others.

In this particular situation which involved a means of securing employment most of the readers acted, thought, and reacted in terms of their own individual needs. The "frame of reference" was the individual's own needs.

Analysis of the many questions which showed no significant differences in the responses invariably was related to the recognition, presence or absence of need fulfillment on the part of the readers. The readers who had a specific, felt need of help and those who viewed the letters as an effort to fulfill a need which could have personal value to themselves reacted in fairly much the same way; on the other hand, the overall responses were balanced by the common reaction of those who had no individual need and by those who saw no identification of self interest in the letters. Content of the letters was infrequently mentioned as the cause of action or reaction.

The reactions or replies of the readers were also mainly related to the aspect of need as shown by the cross-tabulations of criterion group

responses which showed significant differences. Here the responses reflected conditions or circumstances which made the need for help more imperative or immediate for the members of one of the classes of a criterion group. This was shown in the greater needs of the 1) upper lower-lower lower socio-economic class, 2) married students, 3) males, and 4) students in the 2.00-2.49 grade-point class.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING OF BUSINESS LETTER WRITING

I. Summary

The problem. The purposes of this study were: 1) to determine the action induced and reactions caused by the (a) emotional, (b) rational, and (c) combined emotional-rational approaches in persuasive letters of request to Michigan State University seniors; 2) to ascertain the effects of the use of (a) reader benefit appeal, and (b) group benefit appeal in the letters of this study.

Methods and procedures. The total sample consisted of six groups of 204 randomly selected senior students. Each group was mailed one of six different letters which included one of two appeals and one of three approaches. The letters requested the students to arrange an office appointment for an interview with the writer. The personal benefits appeal letters offered to provide the readers with personal help in writing letters of application; the group benefits letters emphasized the help the readers could give the writer in providing assistance to members of the university senior class in writing letters of application.

To provide the same reading and human interest levels in all of the letters, the Flesch Readability Index was used.

A pilot study was made to pretest the questions and interview methods to be used in the regular study.

In a test of the sample, the percentage of men and women in the regular sample was approximately the same as that found in the total senior population. The same was true of the college enrollment of the sample.

Three methods were used to determine the reliability of the interview schedules: 1) "split-ballot" technique, 2) repetition of the telephone interview schedule, 3) comparison by three graduate students of the coding of assigned categories of the open-ended responses.

Eighty-three students responded to the letters.

To elicit the reactions of the respondents to the appeals and approaches of the particular letters they received, a "disguised" interview technique was used, in which incidental and comparative reference to the letters of request was interwoven with the major discussions of letters of application. No direct mention of the writer's purpose was made.

A similar but shortened type of interview was employed in telephone interviews with 72 non-respondent students who were contacted.

Chi-squares were used to determine whether the responses, obtained from the respondent and telephone interviewee schedules, were significantly different at the .05 percent level or better:

1. Action responses of the interviewees to the different letters, letter types and approaches.
2. Personal benefit and group benefit appeals of the letter classifications.
3. Approaches of the letter classifications.
4. Responses to the letters as a whole by the various classes of the criterion groups used in the study.

To further analyze the data and supplement the findings of the chi-square statistic, a percentage analysis was made of most of the tabulations.

The validity of the student reactions to the letters and their respective appeals and approaches was tested by a comparison of the responses and impressions which a non-test group of instructors had of all six letters used in the study.

II. Principal Findings

Action analysis.

1. At the .05 level of probability, no single letter, appeal, or approach is more effective than any of the other letters, appeals, or approaches.

2. On the basis of percentages, the emotional-rational approach letters elicited the highest action response, the emotional approach letters obtained the lowest action response. Percentagewise, the personal benefits appeal letters elicited a larger response than the group benefits appeals letters. On the basis of percentages, almost

twice as many males replied as did females; this represented a significant difference in response.

3. There was a significant difference in the number of females, as compared with males, who were unable to take action because of various conditions which restrained them from taking action.

4. The upper lower-lower lower socio-economic class of respondents had a markedly higher response than other socio-economic classes of students.

Reactions to letters, appeals, and approaches of letter classifications. The Chi-square computations, percentage tables, and cross tabulations reported for the reactions to the letter classifications, generally, point up similarities rather than differences. The most marked findings were the followings:

1. The majority of those who responded had a definite need for and interest in obtaining personal help. a) The percentage of respondents to the personal benefits letters (95.7 percent) and of recipients of the group benefits letters (94.9 percent) who indicated they planned to make some use of letters of application were very close. A significantly higher percentage of group benefits respondents than personal benefits respondents (64.1 percent and 40.0 percent) mentioned that they planned to use job letters primarily to obtain employment, b) significantly higher than any other first reaction response of both the respondents and telephone interviewees was mention of "personal help" (51.6 percent), the next highest response to this question was only 17.4 percent,

c) the principal appeal to a majority (47 percent) of both types of respondents was "personal help" (the content of the other principal appeals strongly suggests that most of these replies were covertly related to the help aspect), d) the offer or suggestion of personal help elicited the largest percentage response from the telephone interviewees (36.1 percent), e) a breakdown analysis of the main difference or similarity between letters of application and letters of request revealed that most of the respondents (56.5 percent) viewed the letters of request as being of personal help to themselves, f) all of the replies to the question of the main impression obtained from the interview had a personal benefit orientation, g) the personal benefits appeal obtained higher favorable attitude percentage responses than the group benefit appeals from both types of interviewees, h) seventy percent of the suggested changes in the letters of request from the telephone interviewees concerned Type II letters, i) the non-test group indicated that their major impression of all the letters was the personal help which students would expect to obtain, regardless of letter type or approach.

2. Only a small percentage of the respondents referred to the group benefits appeal as a significant first reaction or principal appeal (9.7 percent of both types of interviewees mentioned it in their first-reaction responses, and 8.5 percent of the two respondent groups cited it as a principal appeal). However, 48.7 percent of the Type II respondents indicated an awareness of the group benefits in the letters they received. All of the non-test group referred to the group appeal, but felt that it was of minor consequence in the letters.

3. In all cross tabulations involving negative responses to questions in both respondent and telephone interview schedules, the emotional approach letters obtained significantly higher negative reactions than either of the two other approaches. In these cross tabulations the emotional approach letters received from 50 to 90 percent of the total negative responses.

4. In both interviewee schedules the group benefit-emotional approach letter (Type II, letter II-A) had a markedly higher percentage of negative reactions than the personal benefit-emotional approach letter (Type I, letter I-A). Sixty percent of the suggested changes in the Type II letters from the telephone interviewees pertained to letter II-A. Letter II-C (group benefit-emotional-rational approach) had the third highest percentage of negative responses.

5. Both types of interviewees indicated, in several cross tabulations, a greater preference for the structural, logical, and factual aspects than for the personal and affective elements in the letters. However, the affective elements in the emotional-rational letters were more favorably regarded than the factual elements in the same letters; this was particularly true of letter I-A.

6. The rational approach letters had the lowest percentage of total negative reactions in cross tabulations of both interviewee schedules. However, letter I-C fared almost as well as the rational approach letters.

7. The majority of the non-test group reacted negatively to the emotional approach letters. However, this group did not indicate any significantly different preference for any of the individual letters.

8. The role of the writer as an expert in business letter writing had an important effect on the respondent's decision to take action.

9. The respondents most suspicious of the writer's intentions were those who had no training in business writing.

10. Respondents and telephone interviewees indicated highly favorable attitudes towards the letters (over 75 percent of the interviewees had favorable reactions to the letters).

11. A significantly larger percentage of the respondents (73.6 percent) than nonrespondents were seeking jobs. A higher percentage of Type II respondents were looking for employment than Type I respondents. Only a small percentage of the telephone interviewees indicated that they were seeking employment.

Reactions of criterion classifications groups.

1. Respondent males indicated a significantly higher interest than females in obtaining help (77.6 to 50 percent). However, a slightly larger percentage of females than males were seeking jobs (75.0 and 73.1 percent).

2. The respondents who were classified as the "Science" college group showed a significantly higher awareness of the structural and logical aspects of the letters than the "Applied Arts" group (87.5 to 55.9 percent).

3. The lowest percentage of respondent interviewees who were seeking jobs were those who were most active in extra-curricular activities, which suggests that these students had the least need for help.

4. The highest percentage of negative reactions to particulars in the letters and to the letters as a whole came from students who had had training in business letter writing from the investigator. These people apparently were more critical because they knew what was supposed to be "acceptable practice in writing persuasive requests," and may have felt that they were being "tested." Interviewees (both types) who had the most favorable attitudes towards particulars in the letters and to the letters as a whole were those who had had no training in business letter writing.

5. Married students were more responsive to the help aspect of the letters than were single students. This includes both types of interviewees. A significantly higher percentage of married respondents than single students were seeking jobs (85.7 and 64.6 percent).

6. The upper lower-lower lower class of respondents were the least suspicious of the writer's intentions and were the most inclined to regard him as an expert. This class also had the highest percentage of students (71.4 percent) who planned to use a letter of application as a primary means of obtaining employment. The significant difference in the plans of the three socio-economic classes with regard to using letters of application as a primary means of obtaining a job suggests that the greater dependency of the upper lower-lower lower class upon the letter of application might be due to fewer opportunities to obtain jobs by means other than a letter of application.

7. Training in business letter writing is positively related to use of the letter of application as primary means of obtaining employment. The respondents who had had training indicated a greater primary use of the letter of application than those with no training.

8. Telephone interviewees in the 2.00-2.49 grade-point class indicated a significantly greater awareness of the value of letters of application than the other two higher grade point classes.

9. The socio-economic class of telephone interviewees who had the most favorable attitudes towards the letters of requests was the upper lower-lower lower class.

III. Conclusions

On the basis of the findings of this investigation, the following conclusions seem warranted:

1. The most important factor in the content of the letters, regardless of type or approach, in stimulating action and favorable reaction was the belief of the readers that personal help from a specialist was available.

2. While most of the readers were aware of what was in the letters in terms of appeals, approaches, structural organization, factual and affective elements, and format of the letters, the reactions (positive or negative) to these factors had a minor effect in producing action.

3. What the readers perceived in the letters, in light of their own needs and personal situation, was more significant than the "built-in"

differences of the letters. In this particular situation, the readers expected some form of personal help from the writer because of his role as a teacher and specialist in a problem in which they had a need or interest. Thus, it made little difference whether the personal benefit appeal was explicitly stated or merely implied in the letters, most of the readers viewed the appeals in essentially the same way--as an offer of personal help. The same was true, to lesser extent, of the approaches. While the reaction to the emotional approach letters was clearly more negative than to the other letters, there was no significant difference in the action responses.

4. The action, inaction, and reactions of the readers stemmed largely from personal considerations of need fulfillment rather than considerations of group affiliations or needs.

5. The findings indicate that letters which are regarded as poorly written or objectionable in various ways by readers can elicit action or goodwill if the readers can perceive some benefit or personal interest in the letters.

6. In terms of reader reaction, the emotional approach definitely is the least favored of the three approaches. However, there is little statistical difference between the reactions to the rational and the emotional-rational approaches to indicate which of these two approaches is favored more than the other. Slight percentage differences of various cross tabulations suggest that the rational approach has the highest acceptance. No conclusive evidence was obtained to support the hypothesis

that the emotional-rational approach would stimulate the most favorable reaction or goodwill.

7. There is a more marked distinction among the approaches in the three letters than between the two appeals of the letters. However, as hypothesized, the personal benefit appeal had the greatest influence on action and reaction. In consequence, what was said or perceived about the main topic of the letters had more effect than how the content was presented.

8. The findings in this study support the emphasis which business letter writing experts have given to personal benefits appeals, but like Boddy's findings (see pages 11-12 of this study), questions the effectiveness of the approaches and techniques which are taught in presenting the appeals of persuasive letters of request.

IV. Suggestions for Further Research and Implications for Teaching Business Letter Writing

1. A comparable study should be made of other groups of readers, who represent a larger sample than the one employed in this study. Such a study would have to use a staff trained in social and communications research. Adequate financing from business organizations such as large insurance companies and other business firms, whose principal contacts with their customers is by mail, should be solicited.

2. Teachers of business letter writing should be given greater encouragement to obtain training and experience in communications

research with principal emphasis in the various areas of the social sciences. Greater knowledge of what is going on inside and outside of people is necessary to more fully understand how to more effectively adapt business communications to meet the needs and desires of individuals. As this study suggests, effective motivation goes beyond an ordinary knowledge of proper organization, structure, form, and phrasing. A more comprehensive knowledge of human motivation obtained through communications research would provide for the teacher of business letter writing a means of demonstrating to his students how business letter writing can provide 1) a functional point of reference for the practical application of many kinds of knowledge and experience, and 2) a greater appreciation of the vitality and social significance of business communications. This suggests the need of teachers who have a broad and varied background in addition to a specialized knowledge of the English language and business operations.

3. Educational administrators should give greater consideration to the effects which their letters have on the attitudes and reactions of students.

4. A comparable study should be made to test the differences in actions and reactions of similar groups of people to the same message used in letters and in mass communications media.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**TEST LETTERS AND CARD ENCLOSURE
USED WITH LETTERS**

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE • LAW • AND REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

Letter type: I-A

Dear Mr. Smith:

How much interest do you think an employer is going to have in your job qualifications?--The college education you are working so hard to get.

To get ahead, Emerson once said, "Build a better mouse-trap, and the world will beat a path to your door." Probably pretty sound advice for Emerson's day and times--there wasn't too much competition. Today without active promotional push even the best improvement will collect "dust on the shelves."

When you leave this university, a lot of highly qualified applicants will be seeking the same job you want. How do you plan to let an employer know what you can do as well as or better than someone else? That you are "worth your salt"?

As is often heard, even if there is a promised future, the mature person is prepared to take care of himself in any changed situation and be ready for any opportunity which comes along. Could you do it? Would you be able to take care of yourself or those who depend upon you?

Of course nobody has all the answers; sometimes we are too close to ourselves to fully understand ourselves. This seems especially true when we try to explain ourselves to others, as you would in a letter of application. So that we could consider how a fuller measure of your talents can be realized in a job letter, I'd like to have a personal chat with you.

It is said, personal abilities, in many instances, are like the pure gold locked in gold ore--it takes a bit of refining to get what one is looking for. However, the effort is invariably lighter and richer when more than one share the toil.

To arrange a convenient get-together, please telephone me at my department office, Ed. 2-1511, Extension 2201. You can call at any of the hours listed on the enclosed card. Please tell me the time and day next week you would prefer to stop in at my office, Room 5 B, in the Business Administration Building.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fohr
Instructor in Business Writing

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE • LAW • AND REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

Letter type: I-B

Dear Mr. Smith

Recently the United States Department of Labor reported that the college graduate's lifetime earnings average \$113,000 more than those of a high school graduate.

Of course, you know that not all college graduates will get the same; some will earn more, some less. Chance or luck, as you realize, can play some part in what will be your lifetime earning level.

You have learned, I'm sure, there are some things you can do to help affect how far up or down you will range from an average. Current research gives you some helpful suggestions. One of the most significant findings is that your ability to convince others that you can do well on a job will greatly enhance your progress.

In both my business and college teaching experience I have studied this problem. Most college students, I have found, need help in presenting their skills most effectively. This even applies to students of high ability and achievement. If more effective techniques were used, more job progress and satisfaction could be realized. This is suggested in a study made by the placement bureau of a large university. The study reveals that 2 out of 3 college graduates are not satisfied with their first jobs. You realize that such dissatisfaction can bring about many personal problems and waste of ability. Also, longer time is needed to reach one's maximum earning level.

A good letter of application, experience has proved, can help you avert such problems. So that we could consider how your abilities might be more effectively presented in a letter of application, I would like to have a meeting with you.

To arrange a convenient get-together, please telephone me at my department office, Ed. 2-1511, Extension 2201. You can call at any of the hours listed on the enclosed card. Please let me know the time and day next week that you would prefer to stop in at my office, Room 5 B, in the Business Administration Building.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fohr
Instructor in Business Writing

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE • LAW • AND REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

Letter type: I-C

Dear Mr. Smith:

If averages mean anything, when you complete your college education, your lifetime earnings should be at least \$113,000 more than what you would have earned as a high school graduate. That's quite a difference, isn't it?

Surely, you know there's going to be strong competition for good jobs and salaries. Not everyone will realize the same return from his college education. Some will have better jobs and more pay than others. Where will you stand in the ranks?

According to many studies, your dependence on chance or luck can be reduced if you know how to sell your job qualifications. Certainly, you have learned that it isn't always the top people who get the best jobs. Often the reason this is true, as many employers reveal, is that the best qualified people don't always make the most effective display of their abilities. It's like selling anything, merits must be made known and proved. How would you present your personal merits and prove that you have something of value to offer to an employer?

You know, I have seen some remarkable results with letters of application. Many times, students who had given up on other means realized success with letters of Application. Of course, such success requires thorough self-analysis. So that we could consider how a fuller measure of your abilities can be realized in a job letter, I'd like to have a personal talk with you.

Regardless of what a student's opinion had been, I have seldom talked to a student who didn't have more "on the ball" than he realized--the trick is finding how you can make the most of what you have to offer.

To arrange a convenient get-together, please telephone me at my department office, Ed. 2-1511, Extension 2201. You can call at any of the hours listed on the enclosed card. Please let me know the time and day next week that you would prefer to stop in at my office, Room 5 B, in the Business Administration Building.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fohr
Instructor in Business Writing

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE • LAW • AND REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

Letter type: II-A

Dear Mr. Smith:

It's a proud feeling, isn't it--to be a part of a great university? And because you are a part, whatever fame or success that is attained by Michigan State will always be shared with you.

The spirit and power of our university is, of course, its people--you, your fellow students, and your instructors are the core. Such spirit and power will always be a mighty force as long as loyalty, pride, and goodwill prevails in the hearts of every Spartan.

Just as "A person is known by the company he keeps," so, too, the success and achievements of those with whom you have shared your most memorable experience will speak well of you.

The wellspring of what we are and can become flows from others; the spring runs deeper during college life. Here we share a common life and common problems. Because of this, the answer to many problems can best be obtained from the people who are part of this life.

One big obstacle to the aspirations of many students is: how can they more effectively present their job qualifications to employers? As a selected member of your college class, you can help your fellow students realize their ambitions. You can do this by discussing with me whatever plans or problems you might expect to have in "selling" your services in a letter of application. A study of such plans and problems, I believe, will help us locate a pattern from which improvements can be made to aid others.

Remember, any effort made for the happiness of others lifts us above ourselves. Such effort is the golden chain by which we are bound together.

To arrange a convenient get-together, please telephone me at my department office, Ed. 2-1511, Extension 2201. You can call at any of the hours listed on the enclosed card. Please tell me the time and day next week you would prefer to stop in at my office, Room 5 B, in the Business Administration Building.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fohr
Instructor in Business Writing

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE • LAW • AND REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

Letter type: II-B

Dear Mr. Smith:

It's an evident fact, as you know, that world distances have shrunk in size. Speed which has narrowed space has also widened the scope of other areas. Job opportunity for our college people is such an area.

As you have learned, today there are a decreasing number of regions of specialization. No longer, you find, are cars made almost entirely in Michigan, textiles in New England, beer in Milwaukee, etc. Today our college-trained people can seek jobs nearly anywhere.

As you realize, an increased span of job opportunity, however, does not assure one of getting a desired job. Some means of contact is needed. One consistently good method has been the use of job letters. They can cover a wider area of potential employment, at less cost, than any other means.

Like other devices, job letters must be adapted to meet the demands of modern developments. There is a difference in writing a letter to a firm in California and one in your home city or state.

During my ten years at M.S.U., I have noted that many of our students have difficulty in adapting their job skills to specific job requirements. This, you can understand, means many lost opportunities for otherwise able people. Such loss affects all of us.

Because the success of all our students is one measure of our University's quality and prestige, it behooves us to seek improvement. As a typical member of your college class, you experience the problems of your class. Thus, your knowledge of these problems and whatever ideas you might have about writing job letters could help us better adapt the job skills of our students to new changes.

To arrange a convenient get-together, please telephone me at my department office, Ed. 2-1511, Extension 2201. You can call at any of the hours listed on the enclosed card. Please let me know the time and day next week that you would prefer to stop in at my office, Room 5 B, in the Business Administration Building.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fohr
Instructor in Business Writing

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE

DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE • LAW • AND REAL ESTATE ADMINISTRATION

Letter type: II-C

Dear Mr. Smith:

How many of your classmates, do you think, will know what they will be doing or where they will be five years from now? If we had better control of the future you could better answer such questions.

In our society, as you know, the current of life moves swiftly, and rapid change is an accepted part of life. Because we are closer together than ever before, working together and fitting ourselves to new demands is more important than ever. We must move together with the flow of progress or be swept away.

Our economy constantly changes: plant shifts, expansions, declines, mergers, etc. Out of these changes emerge changes in job opportunities.

Obviously, since we can't be everywhere at the same time, there is a limit to the job opportunities which can be considered. That is, unless we use job letters, which because of their flexibility can present our work qualifications in any number of opportune places at the same time.

Yes, a job letter can be a highly successful means of job contact for our students. However, improvements are needed. We need to know more about our students' difficulties in adapting their qualifications to job requirements or changed conditions. Here cooperation is the key which can unlock the door to new job opportunities. You can provide such a key.

What you know or don't know about job letters can help fill the gaps in what must be done to gain greater effectiveness. A personal discussion with you would help us realign our sights.

To prepare for the future, we must know the best direction. Your cooperation can help us find this direction and assure continued progress.

To arrange a convenient get-together, please telephone me at my department office, Ed. 2-1511, Extension 2201. You can call at any of the hours listed on the enclosed card. Please let me know the time and day next week that you would prefer to stop in at my office, Room 5 B, in the Business Administration Building.

Sincerely yours,

John M. Fohr
Instructor in Business Writing

CARD ENCLOSURE USED WITH LETTERS

Please telephone Ed. 2-1511, Extension 2201
at any of the following times:

Mon-Wed-Fri: 9-10, 11:15-1:00, 2:15-5:00

Tues & Thurs: Any time from 9 to 5 PM

(If more convenient to you, you can stop
at my office at any of these times to
arrange an appointment.)

My office, Room 5B, is in the north end of
the Business Administration Building.

John M. Fohr

APPENDIX B

RESPONDENT AND TELEPHONE INTERVIEWEE
SCHEDULE FORMS

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR
TYPE I LETTER RESPONDENTS

Sample Number:

Letter Type:

College:

Marital Status:

A. Introduce self.

1-1. Request respondent's name, college, and marital status
(serves as check on above Student Directory data).

B. Discuss objectives of interview:

C. Refer to tape recorder:

2-1. "So that I can identify this recording, your name again, is:

3-1. "What did you first think about the letter I sent to you?"

3-1-2. "What made you feel that way?"

3-2. "Do you think you would have come to this interview if you had received the letter from someone in another department of the University--someone not directly engaged in business letter writing?"

3-3. "Did you notice the title of the writer of the letter?"

4-1. "Have you thought about how you will look for a job when you leave the University?"

4-1-2. (If reply is "yes" to 4-1) "What means have you considered?":

4-1-3. (If reply is "no" to 4-1) "Is there any reason why you haven't thought about looking for a job?"

4-2. (If not included in 4-1-2) "Had you given any consideration to the possible use of a letter of application before coming here?":

5-1. "Assuming that you had occasion to use a letter of application, what do you think should be first considered before you write such a letter?":

5-2. "What do you consider your principal personal qualification for a job?":

"Education?"--training:

"Scholarship?"--grade point average:

"Work experience?"--amount and kind:

"Extracurricular activities?"--number of organizations, participation as a member, officer, special project activity, etc.

"Other?":

5-3. "Since you believe that your _____ is your principal personal qualification, how do you think you might handle this to your best advantage in the letter--that is, what would you say about it, where would you place it in your letter?":

5-3-1. "To give you a better idea of what I mean, let us compare the letter I sent you with our present problem. Let's see if we can dig something out of that letter to demonstrate the principle we are talking about." (present copy of letter sent to respondent)

"Was there anything in this letter which particularly induced you to see me?":

5-3-2. "What impressed you about that point?":

5-4. "Now, for purposes of comparison, in what way or ways should a letter of application be different from the letter you received?":

5-4-1. (If not stated in 5-4) "Why?":

5-4-2. "In what way or ways should a letter of application be the same as the letter you received?":

5-4-3. (If not stated in 5-4-2) "Why?":

D. (Cut recorder off) "Now let us see what kind of letter of application we can put together by considering what has been said about the writing of the job letter, job qualifications, handling of a principal qualification, and the contrast between a job letter and the letter you received."

6-1. (Start recorder) "By the way, in the letter you received, was there any word, phrase, idea, or part which by itself had a special effect on you?":

6-1-2. "What was it about that (word, phrase, idea, part, etc.) that caused you to feel that way?":

6-1-3. "Did that in any way affect your attitude toward the letter as a whole?":

E. (Cut recorder off) Discuss the need for care in avoiding negative connotations in job letters.

7-1. "What is your main impression of what has been said or done in this interview about letters of application?":

8-1. "Other than in this interview, have you discussed the writing of letters of application with any other teachers at MSU since you have been here?":

8-1-2. "From whom?":

8-1-3. "Has your father ever talked to you about the possible use of a letter of application?":

8-1-4. "What kind of work does your father do?":

F. "Your answers have been very helpful in giving me a better idea of how I might improve at least one means of assisting people in getting jobs so that they may make the best use of their education and experience. I plan to make a report which will incorporate your suggestions, ideas, and problems in writing job letters. I, also, plan to prepare a publication in writing job letters especially adapted to our students. This publication will be available to any Michigan State University student. If you wish, I will be glad to send the publication to you when it is completed. Thanks again for your help.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR
TYPE II LETTER RESPONDENTS

Sample number:

Letter Type:

College:

Marital Status:

A. Introduce self.

1-1. Request respondent's name, college, and marital status
(serve as check on above data from Student Directory).

B. Discuss objectives of interview:

C. Refer to tape recorder:

2-1. "So that I can identify this recording, your name, again, is?:

3-1. What did you first think about the letter I sent to you?

3-1-2. "What made you feel that way?":

3-2. "Do you think you would have come to this interview if you had received the letter from someone in another department of the University--someone not directly engaged in business letter writing?:

3-3. "Did you notice the title of the writer of the letter?":

4-1. "Have you thought about how you will look for a job when you leave the University?":

4-1-2. (If reply is "yes" to 4-1) "What means have you considered?":

4-1-3. If reply is "no" to 4-1) "Is there any reason why you haven't thought about looking for a job?":

4-2. (If not included in 4-1-2) "Had you given any consideration to the possible use of a letter of application before coming here?":

5-1. "What should be considered first before a letter of application is written?":

5-2. "What would you consider your principal personal qualification for a job?":

"Education?"--training:

"Scholarship?"--grade point average:

"Work experience?"--amount and kind:

"Extracurricular activities?"--number of organizations, participation as a member, officer, special project activity, etc.

"Other?":

5-3. "Assuming that (qualification mentioned in 5-2) is an applicant's principal qualification how might this be handled to the best advantage in a letter of application--that is, what should be said about it, where ought it be placed in the letter?":

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR
TELEPHONE INTERVIEWEES

Sample number:

Letter type:

College:

Marital status:

A. "May I please speak to Mr. _____?"

B. "This is John Fohr, an instructor in Business Administration at the University.

C. "Mr. _____, I'm doing a follow-up on a letter I sent out last week requesting selected seniors to help provide me with information that could be used to improve the job-getting effectiveness of letters of application."

1-1. "Since you were one of a very limited group to whom I sent such a letter, I'd like to know if you received the letter?":

1-1-2. (If "No") "Do you recall seeing an envelope with an Insurance, Law, and Real Estate Department designation?":

1-1-3. (If response to 1-1-2 is negative) "Well, since something apparently went amiss, would you please call me at Extension 2201 if you receive such a letter so that I could have a record of the mailing."

1-1-4. (If "Yes" to 1-1) "Mr. _____, even though an interview has not been arranged for, I'd like to ask you a few questions about your job plans and the letter. Because you are a member of a highly selected group of seniors that I'm studying, your frank answers would very importantly contribute to the study.

"Mr. Doe, did you carefully read the letter?":

1-1-5. (If "no") "Was there any particular thing about the letter which caused you to review it only briefly?":

1-1-6. (If "yes" to 1-1-5) "What was your feeling about that?":

1-2. (If "yes" to 1-1-4) "Do you recall the request of the letter?"

1-2-1. "What did you think about the request?"

1-3. "Do you recall any other particulars about the letter?"

1-3-1. "What was your reaction to them?"

1-3-2. "Did this reaction in any way affect your feelings, attitude or decision with respect to the whole letter?"

1-4. "Do you believe that you would have been more interested or responsive if the letter had been written in some way other than the way it was written?"

2-1. "What type of work do you plan to do?"

2-1-1. (If student doesn't know) "Would you consider the type of work your father does?" (If student knows type of work he wants to do) "Is this work similar to your father's job?"

2-1-2. "Have you thought about what means you will use to get a job?"

2-1-3. "Have you considered a letter of application?"

2-1-4. (If "no") "Why not?"

3-1. "What do you consider your principal qualification for a job?":

"Education"

"Work experience"

"Grade point average--what could we do with this?"

"Extracurricular activities"

D. For the purpose of this follow-up, you have given me some helpful information which should be of great value in this study. Thanks for your fine cooperation.

APPENDIX C

MASTER CODE SHEETS USED IN CODING DATA

**FORMS USED TO CHECK CODING OF RESPONSES
TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

**CODED RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
OF SCHEDULES**

[illegible]

RELIABILITY CHECK ON CODING OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES OF RESPONDENTS

Letter Type	Sample Number	1 First Reaction to I.R.	2 Secondary Reaction (style factors)	3 Attitude Toward I.R.	4 Principal Appeal of I.R.	5 Special Effects of Terms	6 Best Understanding of I.A.	7 Soc.-Econ. Status
I-A	2985							
	1269							
	1067							
	761							
	2884							
	2379							
	1461							
	1370							
	259							
	2180							
	3288							
	2076							
	1085							
	1478							
I-B	2800							
	2197							
	2093							
	175							
	1689							
	-1588							
	3106							
	3103							
	1992							
	781							
	74							
	882							
	1187							
	898							
I-C	192							
	2312							
	696							

RELIABILITY CHECK ON CODING OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES OF RESPONDENTS - Continued

Letter Type	Sample Number	1 First Reaction to L.R.	2 Secondary Reaction (style factors)	3 Attitude Toward L.R.	4 Principal Appeal of L.R.	5 Special Effects of Terms	6 Best Understanding of L.A.	7 Soc. Econ. Status
II-B Cont'd	2215							
	1639							
	3355							
	2951							
II-C	23							
	-818							
	343							
	3372							
	1050							
	1154							
	10							
	1555							
	2060							
	2163							
	1959							
	1656							
	-616							
	2564							
	111							
	747							
	-919							
	-2665							

RELIABILITY CHECK ON CODING OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES BY TELEPHONE INTERVIEWEES

Letter Type	Sample Number	(1) Reaction to Request (1-4)	(2) Recalled Particulars in L.R. and Reaction to Them (1-5 and 1-5-1)	(3) Attitude Based-- First Reaction and Particulars (1-4 & 1-5, 1-5-1)	(4) Reaction to Change in Writing (1-6)
I-A	158				
	360				
	562				
	663				
	966				
	1572				
	1673				
	1773				
	2278				
	2783				
	3086				
	3389				
	376				
	680				
I-B	983				
	2194				
	2295				
	2396				
	2598				
	2699				
	2901				
	3002				
	3204				
	3305				
I-C	293				
	999				
	1100				
	1201				
	1302				

RELIABILITY CHECK ON CODING OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES BY TELEPHONE INTERVIEWEES - Continued

Letter Type	Sample Number	(1) Reaction to Request (1-4)	(2) Recalled Particulars in L.R. and Reaction to Them (1-5 and 1-5-1)	(3) Attitude Based-- First Reaction and Particulars (1-4 & 1-5, 1-5-1)	(4) Reaction to Change in Writing (1-6)
I-C	2514				
	2716				
II-A	7				
	107				
	208				
	612				
	713				
	814				
	1117				
	1420				
	1622				
	1824				
	2026				
	2228				
	2329				
	2531				
II-B	2632				
	2834				
	2835				
	3238				
	124				
	225				
	225				
	326				
	427				
	528				
	730				
	932				
	1134				

RELIABILITY CHECK ON CODING OF OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES BY TELEPHONE INTERVIEWEES - Continued

Letter Type	Sample Number	(1) Reaction to Request (1-4)	(2) Recalled Particulars in L.R. and Reaction to Them (1-5 and 1-5-1)	(3) Attitude Based-- First Reaction and Particulars (1-4 & 1-5, 1-5-1)	(4) Reaction to Change in Writing (1-6)
II-B	1437				
	1841				
	2447				
	2649				
	2750				
II-C	2851				
	3153				
	4444				
	1252				
	1353				
	2362				
	2766				
	2867				
	3170				
	3271				

CODINGRespondent Schedule

Column 1: "What did you first think about the letter I sent to you?"

CategoriesCode

0 : Reaction to content (as guide to future action):

Sub-categories:

Offer of personal help--

Wanted help or information
 Never heard of such an offer
 This is what I wanted or was looking for
 Something quite necessary
 Good idea . . . wouldn't cost me anything
 Wanted to know something about letter of application (L.A.)
 Wanted help for self and boy friend

Chance to help others--

Thought I could help you (investigator)
 Could help the University
 Help other students
 Help to myself and others (not boy friend, husband, wife, etc.)

1 Reaction to media:

Sub-categories:

Aroused curiosity, attention, interest--

Wondered why you'd go out of your way to help
 Thought I was in trouble with the University
 Thought someone else told you to help me
 Suspected it was a study, survey, experiment, etc.

Personalized appearance or tone--

Wasn't a form or mimeographed
 Personally addressed to me . . . was intended for me

Unnatural style--

Overemotional or too sentimental
 Unlike writer's (investigator) style
 Too gushy, slushy, flowery
 Didn't know what was going on--what's this?

Column 2: Derived from question in column 1 as a secondary or additional response. Termed "Secondary Reaction--style factors"

Categories

Code

0 Response to style factors:

Sub-categories:

Too indirect

Personal style--

Friendly, sincere, warm
 Interesting

Well-organized--

Good structure
 Clear and understandable
 Logical treatment
 Got to the point

Too affective--

Overly emotional
 Exaggerated
 Far-fetched
 Sales pitch

1 Response to personal factors:

Sub-categories:

Made me think of myself
 One of my professors recommended that I accept offer

Seniors get all kinds of letters
 Help offered
 If I had received a phone call I'd been more interested
 Thought I was in trouble with MSU
 Wife wants to go to California
 Friend got the same letter

2 No further comment about first reaction

Column 3: Attitude toward Letter of Request--first reaction.
 (Use listing in Column 1--"First Reaction" as basis for
 determining attitudes)

Categories

Code

0 Favorable

In all cases in which help for self or others is indicated.
 Impressed by personalized appearance or tone.

1 Unfavorable

Trouble with the University (initial reaction)

2 No indication (of reaction)

(In those cases where the context of answer did not suggest attitude of
 reader, respondent was asked what his attitude was--please note parenthe-
 did after certain replies in the listing.)

Column 4: Principal appeal of letter of request.

Categories

Code

0 Reaction to content (as a guide to future action)

Sub-categories:

Help to me

Help to others--

To the University
Self and others
Help to writer
Help to somebody

1 Reaction to media

Sub-categories:

Personality or affective aspects of letter--

Sincerity or friendliness of letter
Interest aroused or shown
Positive interest in quotations or affective terms and phrases,
e.g., "gold ore," "fuller measure, etc.," "mousetrap,"
"wellspring," "obstacles,"--reference to loyalty, pride, etc.
Liked use of personal pronouns, e.g., "as you know, etc."
Informality of letter

Negative effect--

Overemotional or dislike of affective aspects--phrases, terms,
etc.
Suspicious of writer's motives

Logical aspects or structure of letter--

Main emphasis on conviction, proof
Use of L.A. as means of contact
Remarkable results, success, or value of L.A.
Like factual approach
Good organization
Adaptation
"Two out of three students dissatisfied"

Monetary or competitive advantage--

Competition with others
Salary differences
Money angle (\$113,000)

Column 5: "In the letter you received was there any word, phrase, idea, or appeal which by itself had a special effect on you?"

Categories

Code

0 Liked affective elements

Sub-categories:

Affective--

Quotations

Personal style or words

Competition (fear, security, insecurity, desire to excel)

Emotional aspects--loyalty, pride, etc.

Chance and luck

Sell self

1 Liked factual elements

Sub-categories:

Offer of proof, conviction, value

Improved techniques of writing

Research findings

Provide job opportunity

Monetary gain*

Reference to California

Adaptation

Importance of L.A.

Success of L.A.

2 Negative reaction or no singular impression

Negative reaction to affective elements (See 0 above)

No singular impression--came because of help

Negative reaction to factual elements (see 1 above)

*Regard as affective if affective effects are indicated.

Column 6: "Of all the things we have discussed and done in connection with letters of application, what is your main impression?"
(Purpose: determine what has helped respondent most in getting a better understanding of letters of application.)

Categories

Code

0 Organization of letter of application

Sub-categories:

How to organize L.A.---

Integration of personal and technical qualifications
Planning of L.A.
Systematization
Proper balance
Specific treatment of qualifications
Treatment of experience (relate technical experience to requirements)
Adaptation
Review of sample letters of application

1 Treatment of personal factors

Sub-categories:

Job value of non-technical qualifications--

Value of non-related experience
Value of personal qualifications or traits
Personality

Positive approach--

How to sell myself
Confidence in self
Use of "you" approach

Treatment of negative factors--

How to handle low grade point average
How to handle lack of related experience

How to avoid bragging, boasting

*Interview of no help (only one such respondent--list as *)

Column 7: "What kind of work does your father do?"
(Purpose: determine socio-economic status.)

Categories

Code

0 Upper Upper-Lower Upper:

Major executives of large business organizations (Pres., Vice-Pres.)
Owners of large business organizations
Sales executives of large organizations
Executives of large divisions or departments of large organizations

1 Upper Middle-Lower Middle:

Minor executives of large organizations (Sec. Treas., Managers, etc.)
Professionals (physicians, college teachers, engineers, C.P.A., etc.)
Semi-Professionals (technical or commercial consultants)
Officials (union officer, director of state or federal agencies,
officer of other government agencies or institutions)
Owners of medium-sized business
Farm owners

Lower Middle:

Skilled workers
Salesman and clerks
Foremen and supervisors (production and personnel)
Owners of small business
High school and Elementary teachers

2 Upper-Lower-Lower Lower:

Semi-skilled workers
Operatives
Unskilled workers and laborers

* Not indicated.

CODINGTelephone Interviewee ScheduleCategoriesCode0 Reaction to content (as a guide to possible action)

Sub-categories:

Impressed by offer of personal help--

Too late to help me, but liked offer of personal help

Wanted appointment

Saw it as a personal service

Gratifying that a teacher would make such an offer

Helpful to others--

Should help a lot of people

Too late to help me, but helpful to others

1 Reaction to media

Sub-categories:

Aroused curiosity, attention, interest--

Why was I singled out, or selected?

Puzzled by typed 'form' letter

Suspected it was an experiment, study, etc.

Wondered why I got letter, have a job

Thought writer was trying to set a special course

Unusual interest in students

Wondered or surprised I got letter, you're in another college

Letter got my attention and interest

Personalized appearance or tone--

Surprised to receive typed letter

Looked personal, wasn't routine

Letter was different

Interesting letter, sounded sincere

Too unnatural or affective--

Thought you were trying to sell me something
 Gimmick, high pressure
 Hearts and flowers stuff, gushy
 Thought letter was a joke
 Surprised to get 'that kind' or 'type' of letter
 'Gung-ho' stuff
 Too emotional

Other--Didn't read letter carefully, going to grad school;
 Letter artfully designed, good persuasion; Well organized,
 natural flow; Didn't know how I could help or be helped;
 letter was somewhat circumlocutious; good letter

Column 2: "Do you recall any other particulars about the letter?"
 and "What was your reaction to them?"
 (Purpose: Determine reaction to the selected aspects of the
 letter--other than first reaction to letter.)

Categories

Code

0 Liked affective elements

Sub-categories:

Impressed by offer of help

Impressed by offer of help to others

Liked personality or affective aspects of letter--

Sincerity or friendliness of letter

Positive interest in quotations or affective terms and
 phrases, e.g., "gold ore," "mousetrap," "wellspring,"
 "obstacles," etc.

Competition (fear, security, insecurity, desire to excel)

Personal style, form, or wording

Made one feel kindly toward the University

Letter showed an interest in me

Came from a department of the University

1 Liked factual, logical, or structural elements

Sub-categories:

Main emphasis on proof, conviction, factual approach
 Good organization or good presentation of facts
 Easy to read
 Help with writing techniques
 Importance of letter of application
 Monetary gain
 Reference to 'California'
 Job opportunities

2 Negative reaction

Sub-categories:

Negative reaction to affective aspects---

Overemotional, flowery, poetic, gushy
 Dislike of affective aspects, phrases, terms, etc.
 Can't identify with MSU--no loyalty, pride, etc. in MSU
 Too much 'togetherness'

Negative reaction to structural aspects--

Letter too long or too much buildup

Other negative aspects---

Can't see any value to business letter writing
 Don't think I could help other students; don't remember
 particulars
 Trying to organize special class

*No comment--only one.

Column 3: Attitude toward letter based on combined review of Column 1 and Column 2. (How particulars affected attitude toward whole letter.)

Categories

*Read both listings, based judgment on strongest attitudinal direction.

Code

- 0 Favorable
- 1 Unfavorable (if one statement in either listing is predominately unfavorable and the other statement is favorable-- indicate an unfavorable attitude.)
- 2 No indication or indefinite commitment on attitude.

Column 4: "Do you believe that you would have been more interested or responsive if the letter had been written in some way other than the way it was written?"

CategoriesCode

- 0 No, wouldn't change

Sub-categories:

Wouldn't have made any difference

If you could be as convincing or interesting in another way--yes

Wish I could have written that way

- 1 Would change

Sub-categories:

Would suggest structural change--

Cut down on length

Less detailed

Mention objective in first part or lead

More direct, concise

More specific about setting a time for interview

Identify source of letter

Reorganization of parts of letter

Prefer more reserved, factual, or logical style or emphasis--

Omit quotations and affective elements

Omit pride, loyalty, etc. references

Less sentiment

More meaningful if written in any other way

Limit to reader interests and needs--

Avoid group appeal

Stress benefits to reader

Uncertain about change or don't know

*No comment--list as * (only 2 students)

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