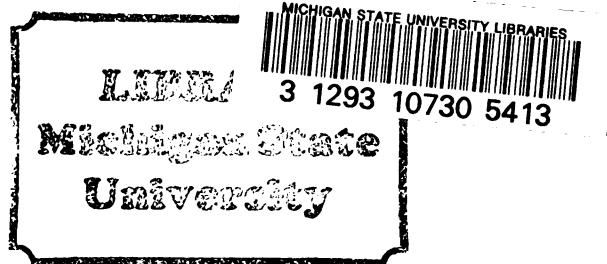


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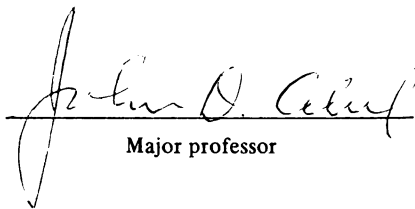
A READERSHIP SURVEY ASSESSING THE
EFFECTS AND INFLUENCES OF A
NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

presented by

James M. Bernstein

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Master's degree in Journalism


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A READERSHIP SURVEY ASSESSING THE EFFECTS
AND INFLUENCES OF A NEWSPAPER
ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

By

James M. Bernstein

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

A READERSHIP SURVEY ASSESSING THE EFFECTS AND INFLUENCES OF A NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTABILITY PROGRAM

By

James M. Bernstein

The purpose of the study was to determine the accountability perceived by a newspaper audience regularly exposed to a newspaper ombudsman program and a news criticism column.

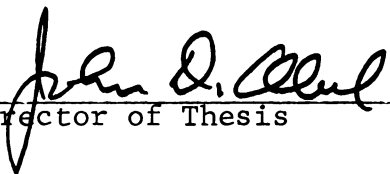
It was hypothesized that those with greater awareness of an ombudsman would have higher perceptions of newspaper accountability, and more frequent column readers would have higher perceptions of newspaper accountability.

A cross-sectional survey research design was used and telephone interviews were conducted with 393 respondents in Louisville, Ky., from March 23, 1981, to March 25, 1981.

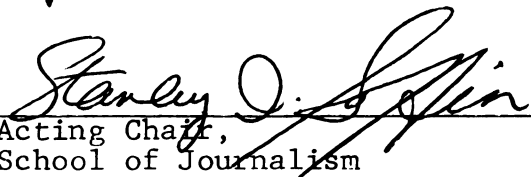
The findings support the hypothesis that those with higher awareness of the ombudsman have higher perceptions of newspaper accountability. No support existed for the hypothesis that more frequent column readership would result in higher perceptions of accountability.

The findings may be connected to the promotion of the ombudsman program by the newspapers.

Accepted by the faculty of the School of Journalism,
College of Communication Arts and Sciences, Michigan State
University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Master of Arts degree.



Director of Thesis



Acting Chair,
School of Journalism

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my parents, Madeline and
Sylvain, who instilled in me the importance of education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Input from dozens of people made this study possible. Failure to mention all of them here is the result of a lack of space and a faulty memory. Their efforts are greatly appreciated despite omission of their names.

Among those who deserve singling out is my thesis director, Dr. John Abel, whose demands seemed unmeetable at times, but whose encouragement made the attempts worthwhile. Thanks also go to the other two members of my thesis committee, Dr. Stan Soffin and Dr. Howard Bossen. Their meticulous editing and insightful comments have been appreciated.

A mention of a few employees of the Louisville newspapers is appropriate here, too. Senior editor Carol Sutton, former ombudsman Frank Hartley, former news critic Bob Schulman and Mark Schneider of the papers' corporate analysis and research department all went beyond the call of duty to supply information I needed for the study.

Finally, I'd like to thank Lynn for being nearby the last few years.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

What would have happened had Janet Cooke not been given a Pulitzer Prize? Conceivably, inaccurate biographical information transmitted by Associated Press to its members about Janet Cooke would not have been sent; The Toledo Blade's editors, troubled that the AP information conflicted with their information about Cooke, a former employee, would not have pointed out the discrepancy to AP executives; AP executives would not have checked with Cooke's employers at The Washington Post about the discrepancies; and Ben Bradlee would not have forced Cooke into a confession.

In essence, Janet Cooke might still be working for The Washington Post, having avoided the embarrassing revelations that were triggered by her winning a Pulitzer Prize. She could have escaped the resulting ignominy had her fictitious story about an eight-year-old heroin addict named Jimmy not been so poignant and believable. The truth may have caught up with her eventually, but without the prize and the accompanying notoriety, Janet Cooke could have remained as an employee of the Post.

This distinct possibility raises an important question: How many journalists have concocted stories, passed them off

as fact, and gone undetected by their employers and readers? The answer, of course, is nearly impossible to obtain, unless some journalists have desires of self-ruination. But cases exist in which reporters using questionable methods have remained in journalism, despite their modus operandi. More recently, however, these techniques are being revealed and, in some instances, journalists punished.

New York Daily News columnist Michael Daly wrote a seemingly firsthand account of a street battle in Northern Ireland shortly after the Cooke-Washington Post affair. The story, however, was exposed as a fabrication, Daly having used a composite and a false name to identify his story's central character. Teresa Carpenter wrote a series of stories for the Village Voice about Dennis Sweeney, the man accused of murdering former U.S. Representative Allard Lowenstein. The story contained several quotes from Sweeney, apparently obtained in a personal interview. But Carpenter had not talked to Sweeney, relying instead on several people who had been close to him.¹

These two incidents and the Janet Cooke episode forced journalists to examine the ethics of using literary license common to fiction, license that at times has resulted in fabrication. Although arguments have been made for both sides, several "mainstream" journalists have been critical of

¹Paul Blustein, "Some Journalists Fear Flashy Reporters Let Color Overwhelm Fact," The Wall Street Journal, May 14, 1981, p. 1.

the use of composite characters and doctored quotes.² But though Daly and Carpenter can be criticized, they cannot and have not been easily punished. Daly eventually was forced to resign his position with the Daily News, but not before admitting to having used composites and pseudonyms several times.³ Carpenter, on the other hand, received a Pulitzer Prize for her feature-writing series, one story of which was the one about Sweeney.⁴ Unlike Janet Cooke, both Daly and Carpenter went unpunished for using questionable journalistic techniques. Daly ultimately paid the consequences; Carpenter, though, was rewarded for the stories generated from her method.

There are other recent cases of journalists "mal-practicing" but going unpunished for transgressions. The Washington Post published in its gossip column, "The Ear," a story about the Carter administration wire-tapping a Blair House room inhabited by President-elect Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan. When confronted with a libel suit by the former president, the Post apologized and retracted the story, admitting it was an unsubstantiated rumor. The Post made no claim to have taken punitive action with the person or persons responsible for printing a rumor.

Two incidents in 1982 indicate that questionable

²Ibid.

³Paul Janensch, "Policies that guard against the stretching of truth in news stories," The Courier-Journal, May 17, 1981.

⁴Blustein, "Some Journalists," p. 1.

journalistic techniques are no longer being overlooked or unpunished, once discovered. The New York Times revealed that free-lance writer Christopher Jones had fabricated a story about his travels in Cambodia, a story that appeared in The New York Times Magazine. The Times was unable to take punitive action against Jones, but had considered litigation.⁵ However, widespread publicity about the incident certainly will prohibit Jones' attempts to get other free-lance work.

In May 1982 reporter Frank McGrew, a 15-year employee of the Atlantic City Press, was dismissed by the paper for reporting the business of a union meeting without having attended the meeting. McGrew's account, which was erroneous, apparently would have given readers the impression that he had been there. In addition to its action against McGrew, the paper apologized publicly to its readers and to the union.⁶

In all likelihood unethical journalistic practices occur daily, but go unpublicized and unpunished because they are never discovered. But even if they were discovered, should unethical journalists be punished? After all, constitutional protections exist for publishing falsehoods as long as the journalist has not been reckless or negligent in his pursuit of a story. And what law says a journalist cannot

⁵"N.Y. Times Freelancer admits fabricating story," Editor & Publisher, February 27, 1982, p. 20.

⁶"Phony column results in reporter's dismissal," Editor & Publisher, June 19, 1982, p. 30.

make up a story?

Should it be determined that unethical journalists should be punished, to what extent should they be punished? Dismissals or forced resignations work for staff members, but what about free-lance journalists? And does the threat of punishment result in prevention?

Absent rules and laws to deal with the unethical journalist, several journalism organizations have adopted codes of ethics designed to guide their members. But despite the existence of codes, they are unenforceable. In fact, journalists are not even required to subscribe to the codes in some instances.⁷ Journalism may be unique among the so-called professions in that its practitioners do not answer to an organization, a licensing group or the public.

Instead, journalists must rely on self-control--individual and organizational--in order to account for their actions. Whether over drinks or lunch, or in the more formal atmosphere of a convention, journalists spend a surprising amount of time discussing the right ways to do their jobs. Some have argued that no other occupation equals journalism in self-criticism.⁸

But leadership in self-criticism has not translated into high levels of honesty and ethics in the opinion of the

⁷David M. Rubin, Peter M. Sandman, and David B. Suchsman, Media: An Introductory Analysis of American Mass Communications, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976) pp. 77-79.

⁸Ibid., p. 79.

public. Two recent public opinion polls conducted by the Gallup organization ranked journalists seventh and ninth in ethical standards. Among those occupations ranking higher than journalists are clergymen, dentists, doctors, police and bankers,⁹ each more formally controlled by codes of conduct than journalists, and as a result, exposed to greater scrutiny by the public than journalists.

Assuming that journalists desire an improved public image for their attempts at self-control, the answer may lie in greater exposure to the public of journalism and its ethical considerations. Historically, the journalism profession has been reticent to explain to the public how the profession works. But in the last fifteen years journalism has made increasing attempts to provide the public the same opportunity journalism requires of other institutions: the opportunity to examine and point out transgressions. Newspaper ombudsman programs, local and regional press councils, and increased coverage of the media by the media illustrate the 15-year trend.

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a pioneering effort begun in 1967 to allow public scrutiny by the newspapers in Louisville, Kentucky, The Courier-Journal (circulation 182,705) and The Louisville Times (circulation 147,472). The Louisville newspapers' attempts to be accountable to their readers have incorporated

⁹Gallup, George, The Gallup Poll, a news release, September 20, 1981, Princeton, New Jersey.

several aspects: 1) an ombudsman program, which allows readers to contact a full-time employee of the newspaper when they have complaints about editorial fairness and accuracy, delivery or advertising; 2) a news critic, whose responsibilities included writing regular columns, evaluating the work of the area news media, including those owned by his publisher;¹⁰ and 3) weekly columns by the newspapers' executive editor and by the Times' managing editor.

The ombudsman program at the Louisville newspapers was the first of its kind, started in June 1967 and prompted by an article in The New York Times Magazine.¹¹ In that article, author A.H. Raskin charged that newspapers failed to adequately respond to reader complaints and often neglected to cover stories fairly and adequately. The solution, Raskin said, was the establishment of a "Department of Internal Criticism" at each newspaper, a department designed to examine the standards of the newspaper and to act as a public protector.¹²

As conceived by the executive editor of the Louisville newspapers at the time, Norman Isaacs, the ombudsman was to

¹⁰The news criticism column, which began in January 1974, was discontinued in March 1981, when columnist Bob Schulman resigned to take another position. As yet, he has not been replaced.

¹¹John Ed Pearce, "Herch Hangs It Up," The Courier-Journal Magazine, August 26, 1979, p. 30.

¹²A.H. Raskin, "What's Wrong With American Newspapers?" The New York Times Magazine, June 11, 1967, p. 28.

respond only to reader complaints. Other newspapers--most notably The Washington Post and the St. Petersburg Times--have established their own ombudsman positions, but the responsibilities at those newspapers are self-executing. That is, the ombudsman may, in fact, respond to reader outcry, but most of the ombudsman investigations have been the result of a problem perceived by the individual ombudsman or by members of another internal department.

This distinction, said the current executive editor of the Louisville newspapers, makes the Louisville ombudsman program more effective. For example, the executive editor of The Courier-Journal and Louisville Times, Paul Janensch, said the Janet Cooke incident would have been uncovered sooner had The Washington Post had an ombudsman who answered complaints. "There was criticism from the (Washington,) D.C. community (about the 'Jimmy's World' story)," Janensch said. "If the Post had an ombudsman that listened to complaints, it would have come to light much sooner. The Janet Cooke incident would have been handled differently here."¹³ (The Post ombudsman position traditionally has been self-executing. That is, rather than take complaints, the ombudsman evaluates the newspaper's performance as he sees fit.) Only after Janet Cooke won a Pulitzer Prize for her story did readers of The Washington Post receive an explanation of how the story happened.

¹³Interview with Paul Janensch, The Courier-Journal and Louisville Times, December 23, 1981.

The differences among the approaches to the ombudsman concept seem to be at the core of the controversy over whether newspapers should have such a program. Although the 18,000-word report by Washington Post ombudsman Bill Green may have restored some credibility among readers, many editors around the country apparently believed that had the program worked properly, suspicions about the Cooke story would have been investigated shortly after the story was published. This type of failure by ombudsman programs has eventually led to claims that they are merely public relations gimmicks-- "window dressing," as one editor put it.¹⁴ On the other hand, ombudsman advocates say that editor's attitude illustrates the arrogance with which many editors view their readers. As Los Angeles Times media critic David Shaw asked: "Why shouldn't the media wash its own dirty linen in public--just as they wash everyone else's dirty linen in public? Wouldn't that be fair play and good public relations?"¹⁵

One must also ask whether it would make any difference, for it seems only natural for journalists to wonder whether they risk anything by exposing themselves to the public. Could a backlash or backfire result from the exposure of transgression? The purpose of this study was to determine how two co-owned newspapers' attempts to "wash its own dirty

¹⁴David Shaw, "Ethics in journalism," St. Petersburg Times, October 4, 1981, p. 3-D.

¹⁵Ibid.

linen in public" affected and influenced the public's perceptions of the newspapers. Has the attempt by The Courier-Journal and Louisville Times to explain journalism and the function of the newspapers, to be openly and actively responsible to readers, and to be self-critical, worked? In other words, do the means justify the end?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is divided into two parts. The first part is a review of some of the criticisms and evaluations of the press written during the twentieth century. It is not an exhaustive review, but rather intended to give the reader an idea of how the concept of self-criticism and accountability evolved. The works included in this part are primarily nonscholarly.

The second part is an exhaustive review of the scholarly articles written about newspaper accountability programs. It is intended to provide the reader information about the research that has been conducted so far, and why this study was necessary and justified. This part of the review concludes with the statements of the hypotheses and the rationale for them.

Review of Twentieth-Century Press Criticism

Public scrutiny of the press is not a recent phenomenon in American journalism; criticisms have been aimed at the press since "the dawn of newspaper publishing," the earliest

having come from the government.¹ Government criticisms of the press continued throughout the twentieth century, most notably during the New Deal and Vietnam eras.

Most of the press criticisms originated by governmental officials seem, of course, politically oriented and motivated. Though ostensibly critical of network television news because of the ill effects its coverage was having on the American public, Vice President Spiro Agnew was in fact more interested in the success of Nixon administration policies than the improvement of the quality of network news coverage.² Agnew's criticisms, directed at the most powerful news media, epitomized the Nixon administration's perception of a threat from the news media. Likewise, thirty years earlier, Roosevelt administration officials took aim at newspapers that editorialized against New Deal economic policies.³

Despite these better known examples of government-initiated criticism of the press in the twentieth century, the bulk of the press evaluation literature in this century considers the press from the perspective of a social and cultural institution. The works reviewed in this section emphasize this perspective. Although they are representative

¹Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, The Press and America, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 481.

²Spiro T. Agnew, "Television News Coverage," Vital Speeches, December 1, 1969, pp. 98-101.

³Emery and Emery, The Press and America, p. 481.

of this type of criticism, they are but a few of the works written about the press in the last eighty years. They were chosen because they represent typical media criticisms of the period.

One of the first press evaluations of this century was a fifteen-part series written for Collier's magazine by Will Irwin.⁴ Irwin provided American readers with a unique, behind-the-scenes look at the state of American journalism. Impartial and detached, Irwin gave many Americans their first glimpses at the decision-making processes in some of the most important American institutions. His careful documentation of the relationship between publishers and American corporations presaged a burgeoning symbiosis of the press and the nation's corporate structure.⁵

The press-business relationship was the theme of other news critics of the first half of the century. Former newspapermen Silas Bent and George Seldes, liberal holdovers from the Progressive Era, both saw political implications in the social and cultural roles the press played during the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. In his book Ballyhoo, Silas Bent urged publishers to be cautious as they developed relationships with business institutions. He was especially concerned that the influence of advertisers on the press would stifle investigative reporting. However, Bent saw some

⁴Will Irwin, "The American Newspaper: A Study of Journalism in Its Relation to the Public," Collier's, January 21-July 29, 1911.

⁵Ibid., January 21, 1911, p. 15.

attributes of "big business" he thought could benefit newspapers. For example, he believed newspapers had fallen behind in the development of new production techniques, saying the increase in efficiency and quality would be great enough to outweigh the risks of standardization.⁶

George Seldes, on the other hand, was far more skeptical of the press, its relationship with and mimicry of big business, and its influence on society and government policy. Three books Seldes authored illustrate his skepticism: Lords of the Press, in which he accused publishers of using editorial pages to attack the labor movement;⁷ You Can't Print That, where he said publishers were influencing American foreign policy through their editorials;⁸ and Never Tire of Protesting, in which Seldes summarizes his earlier charges that newspapers were negligent in their reporting of the relationship between lung cancer and cigarette smoking.⁹

Seldes makes valid points in all three works, but his tendency to use individual examples to make universal condemnations sometimes detracts from his credibility. Perhaps the most important contribution Seldes has made to criticism of the press is his depiction of the establishment press as self-righteous, self-serving and self-aggrandizing, the

⁷George Seldes, Lords of the Press (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927).

⁸George Seldes, You Can't Print That (New York: Payson and Clarke Ltd., 1929).

⁹George Seldes, Never Tire of Protesting (New York: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1968), p. 71.

antithesis of the image the press has tried to preserve. It is that theme that contemporary press critics have emphasized.

One of the major evaluations of the news media during the twentieth century was conducted in the late 1940s by a group of individuals who had no involvement with journalism. The Commission on Freedom of the Press was composed of social scientists and university professors primarily, a fact that drew great criticism from journalists. However, the commission's detractors failed to mention the fact that the commission had been underwritten by Henry Luce, the publisher of Time.

The commission's report addressed many of the same issues and problems discussed by Irwin, Bent and Seldes: sensationalism, the influence of advertisers and the ramifications of chain ownership and monopolies. Rather than express a desire to eliminate any practices of the media barons, the commission stated clearly that it wanted to achieve a method through which the consuming public could scrutinize these practices. It was also clear that the commission opposed the government's providing the method for public scrutiny. The commission said increased self-regulation and increased public awareness of the press's functions would insure a free and responsible press. More laws, it said, would not solve the problems. "Everyone concerned. . . should put forth the effort to make the press accountable," the commission wrote. "If it does not become so of its own motion, the power of the government will be

used, as a last resort, to do so."¹⁰

The call for accountability and responsiveness to media consumers was repeated throughout the commission report. The increase in concentration of ownership, accompanied by advancing technology in the electronic media, prompted commission members to be cautiously optimistic that the public would be heard and eventually well-served.

The commission recognized the possibility that radio and television would provide more channels of communication for Americans. But it feared those channels would not be managed by new ownership. Its members were aware that technology had resulted in "a trend toward concentration,"¹¹ a trend exacerbated by the advantages of operating on a large scale and the elimination of small ownerships, usually because of high labor costs.¹² The commission also made accusations of omission by the press. "By a kind of unwritten law," the panel said, "the press ignores the errors and misrepresentations, the lies and scandals of which its members are guilty."¹³ Through "vigorous mutual criticism" the press could avoid further government actions and reduce regulations, the commission said.¹⁴

¹⁰The Commission on Freedom of the Press, A Free and Responsible Press (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 80.

¹¹Ibid., p. 48.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 65.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 94.

If the press is to remain accountable--and it must be if it is to remain free--its members must discipline one another by the only means they have available, namely, public criticism.¹⁵

Public criticism of the press by members of the press existed at the time of the commission report, though it was not prevalent. One of the better known forums was a column in The New Yorker called "The Wayward Press." Robert Benchley started the column in 1927, but the column's greatest popularity came when his successor, A.J. Liebling, wrote it from 1945 to 1963. Liebling is best remembered for his ability to spot the symptoms of ailing newspapers and for his concern over the dwindling number of daily newspapers in metropolitan areas.¹⁶ He also predicted the dominance of television in presidential politics in a column just before the 1960 election.¹⁷ Liebling gained notoriety among readers of The New Yorker, but most Americans were deprived of his insight into a powerful institution because of the magazine's limited circulation.

One of the better known modern-day critics of the news media is Ben Bagdikian, a former Washington Post ombudsman and now a professor of journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. Bagdikian has developed many of the same themes as George Seldes: skepticism of the influence

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶A.J. Liebling, Press, 2nd ed. (New York: Ballentine Books, 1975).

¹⁷Ibid., p. 41. Liebling's original column appeared in The New Yorker, October 29, 1960.

advertisers have on the press, especially at the local level; reliance by editors on press agents, news releases and managed news; and the unholy alliance between the establishment press and the government.¹⁸ The latter, Bagdikian believed, could be seen in the still developing relationship between the press and the presidency, a relationship that flowered as presidents realized the power of television.¹⁹

Evaluations of the press for the public have increased in the last fifteen years, as press criticism has gained wider acceptance among news organizations and their audiences. The tendency, though, has been to develop media beats rather than criticism columns, as witnessed in The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, where media reporter David Shaw writes regularly about trends among news organizations. Reportorial in style rather than critical, Shaw's stories frequently appear on the front page of the paper instead of the opinion page and they run as long as six thousand words, a length unheard of for a newspaper story.²⁰ But press criticism columns and media beats notwithstanding, greater acceptance of media evaluations is seen most through the increase in ombudsman programs in the last fifteen years.

¹⁸Ben Bagdikian, The Effete Conspiracy and Other Crimes By the Press (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 95-102.

²⁰David Shaw, Journalism Today (New York: Harper's College Press, 1977), p. 7. Shaw had been allowed to write at that length for stories he covered for the Times prior to taking over the media beat. He said he was expected to cover the media in the same depth.

Review of Research Literature
on Newspaper Accountability

In 1967 The Courier-Journal and Louisville Times started their ombudsman program, the first formal attempt by publications with a non-specialized audience to be responsible to their readers.²¹ Since 1967, readers have been given the opportunity to complain about news content to one individual at the papers. In essence, that individual serves as a go-between for readers and members of the editorial staff. Three ombudsmen now serve the Louisville newspapers, one each for news, advertising and circulation.

Another expansion of the Louisville newspapers' accountability program came in 1974, when the Times hired journalist Bob Schulman to be the first full-time news critic employed by a U.S. newspaper.²² Schulman's column, published several times each week on the opinion page of the Times, ran until March 1981, when Schulman resigned. The column usually dealt with timely journalism issues of regional interest, and often criticized the Louisville dailies.

The news criticism column has been discontinued, but the ombudsman program stays on in Louisville. And other newspapers have followed the lead of The Courier-Journal and Times. One researcher estimated there are ombudsmen at 35

²¹"Ombudsman in Louisville," Time, July 6, 1970, p. 44.

²²"Media critic Schulman helped fill a serious gap," The Courier-Journal, March 7, 1981, editorial page.

North American newspapers.²³ In 1973 William Barnett reported that eight of 134 newspapers that responded to his mail questionnaire indicated they had "genuine" ombudsmen, that is, employees who took reader complaints and responded to them.²⁴

Two years later a survey of accountability methods revealed more newspapers implementing a variety of accountability systems, and 12 of 135 newspapers questioned had ombudsmen.²⁵ The next survey of ombudsman programs showed no substantial increase in their number, but did show an expanded and strengthened role for those programs already in existence.²⁶ Another study looked at an ombudsman program at an individual newspaper and evaluated how members of the news staff perceived the ombudsman. The researchers' results suggest the possibility for internal success for an ombudsman program at a paper where one does not exist. They also suggest the possibility of initial resentment by staff members, followed by eventual support once the program was proven

²³Richard P. Cunningham, "Guidelines established for newspaper ombudsmen," Editor and Publisher, May 22, 1982, p.12.

²⁴William L. Barnett, "Survey Shows Few Papers Are Using Ombudsmen," Journalism Quarterly 50 (Spring 1973): 153-156.

²⁵Keith P. Sanders, "What Are Newspapers Doing To Be Responsive to Readers' Criticisms? A Survey of U.S. Daily Newspaper Accountability Systems," News Research for Better Newspapers 7 (July 1975): 148-168.

²⁶Suraj Kapoor and Ralph Smith, "The Newspaper Ombudsman-- A Progress Report," Journalism Quarterly 56 (Autumn 1979): 628-631.

effective.²⁷ The researchers also suggested research be done to determine public reaction and acceptance of newspaper ombudsmen, and it is on this suggestion that the present study was conducted.

The essence of the study is to determine the attitudinal effects of the accountability program at the Louisville newspapers and the extent of reader support for the first accountability program at an American newspaper. The Louisville newspapers were chosen for their apparent originality and thoroughness; the study incorporated the entire Louisville program, including the ombudsman and the news critic.

The following research hypotheses were tested:

- H₁: The greater frequency of readership of the news criticism column, the greater the perception of accountability.
- H₂: The greater the awareness of the ombudsman program, the greater the perception of accountability.

These hypotheses were developed to determine the relationship between reader participation in the accountability program and readers' perception of accountability by the Louisville newspapers. These relationships have never been tested, though logic would indicate that people who read the news criticism column or who are aware of the ombudsman program would consider the newspaper accountable.

²⁷David R. Nelsen and Kenneth Starck, "The Newspaper Ombudsman as Viewed by the Rest of the Staff," Journalism Quarterly 51 (Autumn 1974): 453-457.

- H₃: The greater frequency of readership of the news criticism column, the greater the knowledge of current issues.
- H₄: The greater the awareness of the ombudsman program, the greater the knowledge of current issues.

These hypotheses extend the findings of a previous study by McKown and Brinton,²⁸ which evaluated the effects of newspaper content dealing with a controversial issue on an audience not involved in the issue. The researchers found support for the hypothesis that the greater amount of exposure a reader had to an issue, the greater knowledge of the issue the reader would have. Here it is believed that people who participate in the accountability program to a greater extent are more highly exposed in general to the newspapers and should have greater knowledge of current issues.

- H₅: Frequency of readership (news criticism column) will be greater among more highly educated individuals than lower educated.
- H₆: Awareness of the ombudsman program will be greater among more highly educated individuals than lower educated.
- H₇: Frequency of news criticism column readership will be greater among individuals with higher incomes.
- H₈: Awareness of the ombudsman program will be greater among individuals with higher incomes.

The last four hypotheses were tested to determine the relationship between participation in the accountability program and two demographic characteristics--education and

²⁸James E. Brinton and L. Norman McKown, "Effects on Newspaper Reading on Knowledge and Attitude," Journalism Quarterly 38 (Spring 1961): 187-195.

income--that have been connected to higher newspaper readership.²⁹

²⁹Leo Bogart, Press and Public: Who reads What, When, Where, and Why in American Newspapers (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1981), pp. 66-71.

Chapter 3

METHOD

This section provides detail about how the study was conducted and is divided into two parts. The first deals with the methods used up to and including data collection. Information about development of a measuring instrument for accountability, construction of the interview schedule, (A copy of the interview schedule is in the Appendix.) sampling, interviewer training and data collection is provided.

The second part of this section deals with the analysis of the data after it was collected. Information about the major statistical tool used in the study--analysis of variance--will be provided, as well as post-hoc tests conducted to discover significant variation across levels of awareness in the ombudsman program and readership of the news criticism column.

Development of Accountability Scale

Although several studies available have quantified the accountability programs and systems in existence at American newspapers, an extensive search of the literature failed to reveal one that attempted to determine a method

for measuring accountability. One of the focal points of the study, then, was to develop a scale that would allow the measurement of accountability by the Louisville newspapers as expressed by attitudes of Louisville residents toward the newspapers.

For the purposes of the study, "accountability" was defined as follows: a state in which an organization or individual takes responsibility for its own actions by either criticizing itself openly or opening channels through which others can give criticism. In essence, accountability relates to the feedback or complaints an organization receives as a result of its actions. Furthermore, it is a function of how much opportunity for feedback an organization allows.

It was believed a precise way existed to determine the criteria for accountability and an attempt was made to design a procedure for developing the criteria.

A summative, Likert-type scale was constructed to measure perception of accountability for the following reasons: 1) it allowed testing of an attitude without manifestation of the attitude; 2) the range of responses with a Likert scale allowed more precision than other scales; 3) summated scales are usually very reliable; and 4) they are adaptable to a variety of attitudes.

The first step in the development of the Likert-type accountability scale was assembling an item pool, each item to eventually be judged by a respondent over a five-point, "strongly agree-to-strongly disagree" continuum. Items were assembled from two focus-group interview sessions, the first

on November 6, 1980; the second, on November 10, 1980. Each focus-group session had five participants. The total of ten panel members was equally divided between men and women and consisted of people who described themselves as regular readers of a daily metropolitan newspaper. That is, panel members read the newspaper or parts of it every day. The panel was made up of both students and non-students, and its members had no knowledge of the research and no direct personal involvement with the interviewer.

The panel interviews began with a brief, general description of the research, what was to be achieved, and procedure through which it would be achieved. Interviewing in each of the hour-long sessions began with broad, general questions, eventually narrowed to specific areas mentioned by panel members and finally focused on panel members' attitudes toward specific components of the Louisville newspapers' accountability program. (See Appendix for the topics and questions discussed.)

Fifty-six attitudinal items were assembled from the transcripts of the tape-recorded sessions to form an item pool. The item pool was administered to students in a beginning news writing class of 184 on January 30, 1981. The students were asked to respond over a five-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) to the statements extracted from the focus-group interviews; they were told to base their responses on the newspapers they read most often. A total of 146 usable responses were collected, coded, keypunched and verified.

The data were then factor analyzed in an attempt to:
1) discover the dimensions of accountability and 2) reduce the number of items that comprise the dimensions. The factor analysis helped determine if there were latent aspects of accountability that had so far only been manifested through 56 individual items.

Varimax rotation was used in the factor analysis. This type of rotation provides maximum variance in the columns of the factor matrix and tends to produce high and low factors. The purpose, then, was to maximize the variance explained by the factors. (See Tables 1 and 2.) Requiring that a variable explain at least eighteen percent of a factor, but no more than eight percent of another, the analysis revealed one factor made up of nine items and another item on which two items loaded heavily (64 and 61 percent variance explained). The former was identified as the "fairness" dimension and the two-item factor was called the "complaint" dimension.

Each set of items was subjected to separate item-to-total corrected correlation reliability analyses. The alpha reliability estimate for the nine-item factor was .76572, with correlations for each item of at least .31. The alpha estimate for the two-item factor (because the SPSS reliability program requires at least three items, another was added in order to perform the analysis) was .83835 with correlations for both items of at least .64. Together the items of the two factors comprised the accountability scale that was placed in an eighteen-question interview schedule,

Table 1
Factor Loadings, Principal Factors
With Iterations, Unrotated

Item	Fairness Factor	Complaint Factor
Newspapers ignore controversial issues	.43	-.22
Newspapers will not take a stand on some issues because of fear of offending some people	.34	-.21
Newspapers should have a full-time employee to whom readers could complain about the newspaper	-.24	.44
Newspapers should have a full-time employee who listens to reader complaints and acts on them	-.38	.40
Newspapers do not give all sides of a story	.48	-.08
I don't believe many stories in the newspaper	.50	-.06
Newspapers do not provide in-depth coverage on important issues	.42	-.09
Newspapers are influenced by special interest groups	.47	-.12
Newspapers are influenced by advertisers	.28	-.22
I am skeptical of newspapers in monopoly positions	.38	-.23
Newspapers print only what they want to print	.46	-.27

Table 2
Factor Loadings With Varimax Rotation

Item	Fairness Factor	Complaint Factor
Newspapers ignore controversial issues	.56	-.01
Newspapers will not take a stand on some issues because of fear of offending some people	.49	-.12
Newspapers should have a full-time employee to whom readers could complain about the paper	.00	.80
Newspapers should have a full-time employee who listens to reader complaints and acts on them	-.10	.78
Newspapers do not give all sides of a story	.47	-.10
I don't believe many stories in the newspaper	.48	-.07
Newspapers do not provide in-depth coverage on important issues	.44	-.02
Newspapers are influenced by special interest groups	.55	-.05
Newspapers are influenced by advertisers	.47	.03
I am skeptical of newspapers in monopoly positions	.52	-.05
Newspapers print only what they want to print	.55	-.11

which is explained in the next section.

Construction of Interview Schedule

The data collection method used for the study was telephone interviewing with cross-sectional design. The interview schedule opened with a standard introduction for the interviewer to read, one in which the interviewer identified him-herself, mentioned who he/she was representing, and explained the reason for the call. The first two questions were closed-ended questions designed to find out the number of days the respondent read each of the Louisville newspapers. They were placed at the beginning of the interview schedule because they dealt with information not of a particularly sensitive nature and because answers to the questions would serve as a guide to subsequent questions.

The first question dealt with readership frequency of the morning newspaper, The Courier-Journal; the second question, with the afternoon paper, The Louisville Times. If the respondent said he/she did not read the Times, the interviewer was guided to the ninth question, one on ombudsman awareness. If the respondent indicated he/she read the Times at least one day a week, the interviewer went to the third question, one dealing with readership of the news criticism column that appeared in the Times.

The fourth and fifth questions were closed-ended multiple-choice questions, designed to help verify readership of the news criticism column. Respondents were asked to name

the author of the column and the name of the column; in each instance they were given five choices.

The next questions were three of the four open-ended questions in the interview schedule, each dealing with a reaction to the news criticism column. The sixth question asked the respondent what he/she liked about the column; the seventh, what he/she did not like; and the eighth attempted to solicit reaction toward the column's recent discontinuation.

The ninth question asked the respondent if he/she were aware of the ombudsman program. If the respondent said "yes," he/she was asked to give a brief description of the program, requiring another open-ended response. Usually any response involving the word "complain," or something to that effect, was satisfactory. If the respondent was not aware of the ombudsman program, the interviewer was guided to the tenth question, the Likert-type accountability scale.

Respondents were requested to indicate how each of the statements of the scale reflected their feelings about the Louisville newspapers by telling the interviewer whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. For nine of the items, "1" was "strongly agree" and "5" was "strongly disagree." Polarity was reversed for two of the items. A "don't know" or "neutral" response was recorded as "3."

The four items following the accountability scale were multiple-choice questions about recent issues and events in the Louisville newspapers. The questions were based on articles that appeared in both papers on the front page and

the first page of the "Metro" sections; the articles were all local or regional in nature and appeared in either editions of The Courier-Journal or Louisville Times on March 13 or 14, 1981.

Because the accountability scale was a crucial part of the study, it was placed ahead of the issues and events questions on the interview schedule. Respondents who terminated either during the issues questions or the demographic questions that followed still would provide usable data in terms of the thrust of the study: the effects of the column and the ombudsman on the perceptions of accountability.

Standard demographic questions were asked at the end of the interview: those pertaining to education level, age, and income level. Respondents were asked how much education they had completed, requiring the interviewer to circle the appropriate category; they were asked how old they were, a response that required merely filling in the age; and respondents were queried about income without having to reveal their actual income, telling the interviewer whether his/her household income was more than a particular level. Interviewers were instructed to record gender after thanking the respondent and hanging up.

Pre-test. The interview schedule was pre-tested Thursday, March 12, from 7 to 9 p.m. The interview schedule was administered to 20 respondents whose names were randomly selected from the October 1, 1980, metropolitan Louisville telephone directory. The interview schedule was essentially

identical to the one described above, except the issue and events questions were taken from March 4 and 5 issues of the Louisville newspapers.

The interview schedule took as little as five minutes to administer and as long as seven (during actual data collection for the main study eight minutes was needed at times to administer the interview schedule). Following the pre-test, the interview schedule was revised, primarily to add or delete words for easier reading and clarity.

Sampling. A total of 1,200 telephone numbers were drawn from the October 1, 1980, metropolitan Louisville telephone directory through a systematic random sample technique. The Louisville directory included all of Jefferson County (of which Louisville is the county seat) and parts of adjacent Oldham and Bullitt counties; it did not include adjacent counties in Indiana: Floyd and Clark. The area surveyed, then, was the metropolitan Louisville area in Kentucky.

In addition to the systematic random selection process, a "plus one" technique was employed in an attempt to ensure that unpublished telephone numbers were included in the sample. The process was as follows: a telephone number was chosen through the systematic random sample process and one was added to the last digit of the number. For example, if 452-6420 was chosen from the directory, 452-6421 was called by the interviewer; if 775-7739 was chosen, 775-7740 was called.

The numbers were placed on "status sheets" (25 on each), which provided each interviewer space to indicate the date and time a call was placed and the status of the call (completed interview, refusal, no answer, terminate, etc.).

Interviewer training. The twenty interviewers used during the three-day data collection period were all members of Pi Sigma Alpha, a national political science honorary, and all were students at the University of Louisville. All had conducted telephone interviews prior to collecting data for this study, most recently for an election survey for WHAS-TV, Louisville. The organization received a fee for its services, but individual interviewers were not compensated.

Between eight and ten interviewers participated each night of data collection. Because of the relative amount of experience they had, training consisted primarily of explaining the purpose of the study; providing a detailed explanation of the status sheets and the instruction sheets; going over the format of the interview schedule; and answering questions about the study and the data-collection process.

The training session lasted approximately a half-hour each night, although interviewers who had received training previously were allowed to begin collecting data on the second and third nights of interviewing. They were later joined by the new interviewers following the completion of training.

Data collection. Interviewing took place from 7 to 10 p.m. on three consecutive days--Monday, March 23, through Wednesday, March 25. Interviewers were instructed to allow each number to ring five times before indicating "no answer."

The first night interviewers made 298 calls, completing 111 interviews on telephones provided by the classified advertising department of the Louisville newspapers. The number of previously uncalled numbers dialed Tuesday was 512, 162 completions. On Wednesday 334 previously uncalled numbers were dialed and 120 interviews were completed.

The first two nights were devoted primarily to calling previously uncalled numbers, although interviewers were instructed to call back numbers for which they received a busy signal or no answer. Interviewers called back "no answers" only after they had completed dialing all 25 numbers on a status sheet. With the exception of five numbers, every number called the first two nights that was busy or for which there was no answer was called back at least once within either the first two nights of interviewing or the first 1½ hours of the third night.

The first half of the three-hour interviewing period Wednesday was devoted entirely to calling back numbers that had been tried on Monday and Tuesday. When enough callbacks had been made to indicate that there would not be adequate completions to attain the desired sample size, interviewers were instructed to resume calling previously uncalled numbers.

In all, 1,144 numbers were dialed. Interviewers reached 136 non-resident telephone numbers, including business

and "junk" numbers, and 129 disconnected numbers. Of the 879 calls for which there was a potential respondent, 393 interviews were completed; 48 were terminated; 43 lines were busy; there were 198 "non answers"; and there were 197 refusals. The completion rate was 44.7 percent, calculated by dividing the number of completions by the number of calls for which there was a potential respondent.

Analysis of data. Data were analyzed with a Control Data Corporation Cyber 170 Model 750 computer at Michigan State University in East Lansing. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used.

The major statistical tool used to make comparisons among three levels of ombudsman awareness and four levels of column readership was analysis of variance. Scheffé post-hoc comparison tests were conducted to isolate the source of significant variations when they were found.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This section is divided into four parts: a description of the sample according to demographic characteristics; a sample description based on responses to readership, awareness, accountability and issue variables; a report of the results dealing with the hypotheses being tested in the study; a final summary of the results; and additional analyses on prediction of perceived accountability.

Demographic Characteristics

A majority of the respondents were male. More than half the sample displays the following characteristics: less than 50 years old, high school graduates, and in households whose incomes are less than \$25,000. The mean age for the sample was nearly 43 years, and the median was just over 40; respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 86. (See Table 3.)

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

A. Gender of Respondents	n	PCT.
Male	210	53.4
Female	183	46.6
TOTAL	393	100.0
B. Education Level of Respondents	n	PCT.
Less than high school degree	96	24.4
High School degree plhs	210	53.4
College degree plus	54	13.7
Graduate degree	23	5.9
Missing Data	10	2.5
TOTAL	393	100.0
C. Income Level of Respondents	n	PCT.
\$15,000 and under	129	32.8
\$15,001 to \$25,000	105	26.7
\$25,001 to \$35,000	38	9.7
More than \$35,000	61	15.5
Don't know	16	4.1
Missing Data	44	11.1
TOTAL	393	100.0
D. Age Level of Respondents	n	PCT.
18 to 34	157	39.9
35 to 49	73	18.6
50 to 65	96	24.4
Over 65	51	13.0
Missing Data	16	4.1
TOTAL	393	100.0
Mean:	42.9	
Median:	40.1	

Sample Description Across Pertinent Variables

This portion of the results section reports the frequency of readership of both Louisville newspapers and the news criticism column; amount of awareness of the ombudsman program; and aggregate scores on the accountability and issues variables.

Newspaper Readership

All respondents were asked how many days a week they read each newspaper, The Courier-Journal and The Louisville Times. Readership of the morning newspaper, The Courier-Journal, exceeded the afternoon Times among those in the sample. Nearly 50 percent of the respondents said they read The Courier-Journal every day, while almost 40 percent said they were everyday Times readers. (Everyday readers for The Courier-Journal read seven days a week; the Times publishes six days a week.) The number of respondents who said they read the Times every day equalled the number of respondents who said they never read the Times; 18 percent of the respondents said they never read The Courier-Journal. (See Table 4.)

Column Readership

Only those respondents who said they read The Louisville Times were asked the question referring to

Table 4
Newspaper Readership

A. Readership of <u>The Courier-Journal</u>		
DAYS A WEEK	n	PCT.
0	70	17.8
1	63	16.0
2	17	4.3
3	26	6.6
4	7	1.8
5	7	1.8
6	14	3.6
7	183	46.6
Missing data	6	1.5
TOTAL	393	100.0
B. Readership of <u>The Louisville Times</u>		
DAYS A WEEK	n	PCT.
0	157	39.9
1	35	8.9
2	14	3.6
3	11	2.8
4	10	2.5
5	7	1.8
6	157	39.9
Missing Data	2	.5
TOTAL	393	100.0

frequency of readership of the news criticism column. Even though the column appeared once a month in the Sunday Courier-Journal, it originated and ran more frequently (twice a week) in the Times.

More than 45 percent of the respondents said they read the news criticism column at least once a month, 12 percent said they never read the column, and more than 40 percent did not respond, representing those who said they never read the afternoon paper. (See Table 5.)

Table 5
Readership of News Criticism Column

	n	PCT.
Twice a week	89	22.6
Once a week	47	12.0
Once a month	43	10.9
Never	47	12.0
Don't know	9	2.3
Missing Data*	158	40.2
TOTAL	393	100.0

*The news criticism column normally appeared in The Louisville Times, so respondents who said they did not read the Times were not asked the column readership question. This accounts for the missing data.

In an attempt to verify respondents' claims to have read the news criticism column, interviewers asked two

multiple-choice questions about the column, one dealing with the name of the column (In All Fairness), the other with the name of the columnist (Bob Schulman). Nearly two-thirds (62%) of those who claimed to have read the column could name neither the name of the column nor the writer. (See Table 6.)

Table 6
Column Readership Verification

	n	PCT.
Can name both	25	6.4
Can name the columnist	44	11.2
Can name the column	3	.8
Can name neither	117	29.8
Missing data*	204	51.9
TOTAL	393	100.0

*Those in "missing data" include respondents who said they did not read either The Louisville Times or the column.

Awareness of Ombudsman

All respondents were asked about their awareness of the ombudsman program at the Louisville newspapers, regardless of newspaper readership or column readership. In another attempt to verify a respondent's answer, interviewers asked those who said they were aware of the program for a description of the program. Respondents who mentioned ideas

such as "complaining to the paper" or "handling corrections" were considered more aware of the program than those who either could not describe the ombudsman's function or who described it incorrectly. ("Eyeballing" some of the data indicates most of those less aware of the program could not describe the ombudsman's function rather than incorrectly describing it.) Respondents who said they were unaware of the program were considered the least aware. Using these determinants, results show more than half (55.7%) the sample unaware of the program, while slightly more than one-fifth (22.9%) of the respondents were most aware of the ombudsman. (See Table 7.)

Table 7
Awareness of Ombudsman Program

	n	PCT.
Aware, can describe	90	22.9
Aware, cannot describe	66	16.8
Not Aware	219	55.7
Don't know	12	3.1
Missing Data	6	1.5
TOTAL	393	100.0

Perception of Accountability

An 11-item Likert-type scale was administered to determine respondents' perception of accountability by the Louisville newspapers. (See Method section for information on development of the scale.) Nine items made up the "fairness" factor, and two items, the "complaint" factor. The alpha reliability estimate after data collection for the "fairness" factor was .71738; for the "complaint" factor it was .74054. However, when combined into one factor, the alpha reliability estimate was .67558. As a result of the higher reliability estimate attained when the two-item complaint factor was deleted, subsequent data analysis was conducted with the nine-item factor and the two-item factor separately. Scores on both factors will be reported. (See Tables 8 and 9.)

Possible scores on the nine-item scale ranged from 9 to 45, the higher score indicating maximum perceived accountability. The actual range of the scores for the 393 respondents was 10 to 42; normal distribution in the accountability scores was observed. (See histogram in Figure 1.)

As mentioned above, two items were deleted from the accountability scale because of the increased reliability attained. It is also believed that the items--both dealing with whether the Louisville newspapers should have an employee who performs the duties of an ombudsman--addressed a moot issue because, in fact, the newspapers have such an employee. However, the results on the responses are reported

Table 8

Reliability Analysis for Fairness Factor

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
Newspapers ignore controversial issues	.36655
Newspapers will not take a stand on some issues because of fear of offending people	.37291
Newspapers do not give all sides of a story	.38788
I don't believe many stories in the newspaper	.43204
Newspapers do not provide in-depth coverage on important issues	.46641
Newspapers are influenced by special interest groups	.44305
Newspapers are influenced by advertisers	.37207
I am skeptical of newspapers in monopoly positions	.28191
Newspapers print only what they want to print	.39537

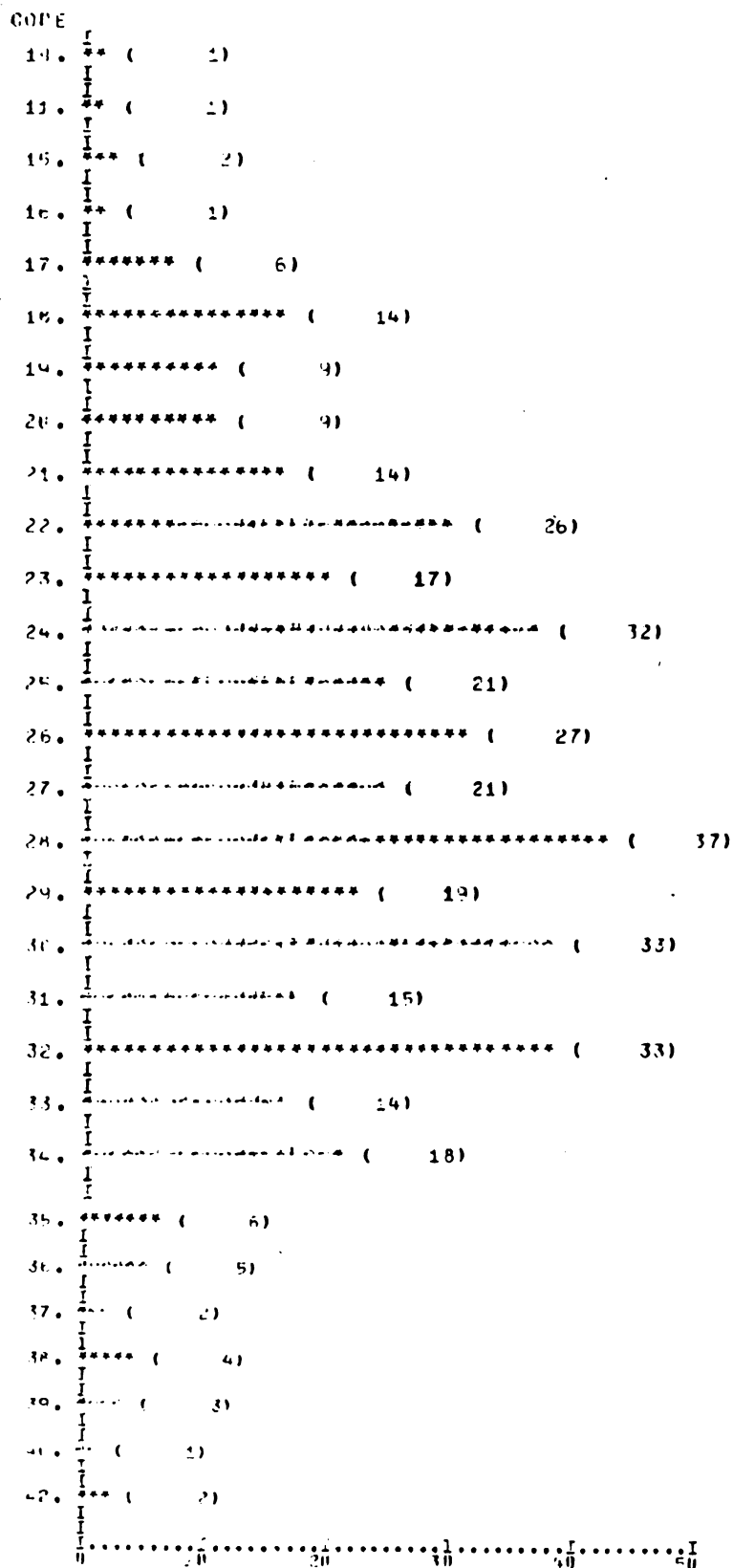
Table 9

Reliability Analysis for Complaint Factor

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
Newspapers should have a full-time employee to whom readers could complain about the paper	.28779
Newspapers should have a full-time employee who listens to reader complaints and acts on them	.30661

Figure 1

Distribution of accountability scores



here because they indicate strong support for the ombudsman concept.

An overwhelming majority of respondents agreed with the statement: "Newspapers should have a full-time employee to whom readers could complain about the paper." An even larger majority agreed with the statement: "Newspapers should have a full-time employee who listens to reader complaints and acts on them." Although these two items may not indicate that a respondent perceives the newspapers as accountable, they seem to show a desire for this type of program. (See Table 10.)

Table 10
Two Items of "Complaint" Factor

Item	SA	A	D	SD	DK
Newspapers should have full-time employee to whom readers could complain	64 (16.3%)	278 (70.7%)	30 (7.6%)	3 (.8%)	18 (4.6%)
Newspapers should have a full-time employee who listens to reader complaints and acts on them	63 (16%)	284 (72.3%)	29 (7.4%)	2 (.5%)	15 (3.8%)

Knowledge of Current Issues

Respondents were asked four multiple-choice questions dealing with local and regional issues current during the week the interviews were conducted. More than 90 percent of

the respondents were able to correctly answer at least one of the questions, but few could answer all of them correctly. (See Table 11.)

Table 11
Knowledge of Current Issues

SCORE	n	PCT.
0	23	5.9
1	137	34.9
2	137	34.9
3	75	19.1
4	21	5.3
TOTAL	393	100.0

HIGHEST POSSIBLE SCORE:	4
LOWEST POSSIBLE SCORE:	0
MEAN:	1.832
MEDIAN:	1.766
STANDARD DEVIATION:	.981
VARIANCE:	.962

Tests of the Hypotheses

The first two hypotheses dealt with the effects of the two components of the Louisville newspapers' accountability program on the accountability perceived by the readership.

H_1 : The greater frequency of readership of the news criticism column, the greater the perception of accountability.

H₂: The greater awareness of the ombudsman program, the greater the perception of accountability.

These hypotheses were developed to determine the relationship between reader participation in the accountability program and readers' perception of accountability by the Louisville newspapers. It may seem logical that people who read the news criticism column or who are aware of the ombudsman program would consider the newspapers accountable, but until this study, these relationships had not been tested.

An analysis of variance showed no significant difference in accountability scores among four news criticism column readership groups. (See Table 12.) This apparent lack of difference in perceived accountability among those who read the column twice a week, once a week, once a month, and never indicates that readership of the news criticism column has little influence over whether individuals believe the newspapers are accountable.

Significant differences among the three levels of awareness of the ombudsman program did exist. (See Table 13.) Those who said they were aware of the program and could describe it scored higher on the accountability scale than those in the other two groups--aware and cannot describe and not aware. Scheffé post-hoc comparisons found that these differences were significant at the .05 level, but the difference between the "aware, cannot describe" group and the "not aware" group was not significant. (See Table 16.) This indicates that awareness of the ombudsman program does influence perceived accountability of the newspapers.

Table 12

Differences in Perception of Accountability Among
Four Levels of News Criticism Column Readership

Group Means (Standard Deviations)					
Reads Twice A Week	Reads Once A Week	Reads Once A Month	Never Reads		
27.9551 (4.8662)	27.1489 (4.9694)	27.3488 (5.3669)	28.1489 (5.5246)		
SOURCE	D.F.	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARE	F RATIO	F PROB.
Between Groups	3	34.8027	11.6009	.441	.7236
Within Groups	222	5833.5026	26.2770		
Total	225	5868.3053			

Table 13

Differences in Perception of Accountability Among
Three Levels of Awareness of the Ombudsman Program

Group Means (Standard Deviations)					
Aware Can Describe	Aware Cannot Describe	Not Aware			
29.3778 (5.4496)	26.3333 (4.9438)	26.3151 (5.1586)			
SOURCE	D.F.	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARE	F RATIO	F PROB.
Between Groups	2	639.8508	319.9254	11.862	.0000
Within Groups	372	10033.0825	26.9707		
Total	374	10672.9333			

- H₃: The greater frequency of readership of the news criticism column, the greater knowledge of current issues.
- H₄: The greater awareness of the ombudsman program, the greater knowledge of current issues.

As mentioned earlier, these hypotheses are extensions of a previous study by McKown and Brinton that found support for the hypothesis that the greater amount of exposure a reader had to an issue, the greater knowledge of the issue the reader would have. It is believed that people who participate to a greater extent in the accountability program are more highly exposed to the newspapers in general.

An analysis of variance shows no significant differences in knowledge of issues among the four news criticism readership groups. (See Table 14.) Those who read the column frequently (twice a week or once a week) correctly answered no more current-issue questions than those who read the column less frequently (once a month or never), indicating that the amount of column readership has no relationship with knowledge of current issues.

As it was with accountability, awareness of the ombudsman program was related to knowledge of current issues. (See Table 15.) Significant differences existed between: 1) the "aware, can describe" group and the "aware, cannot describe" group; 2) the "aware, can describe" group and the "not aware" group; and 3) the "aware, cannot describe" group and the "not aware" group. (See Table 16.) These results indicate a relationship between awareness of the ombudsman program and knowledge of current issues.

Table 14

Differences in Knowledge of Current Issues Among
Four Levels of News Criticism Column Readership

Group Means (Standard Deviations)					
Reads Twice A Week	Reads Once A Week	Reads Once A Month	Never Reads		
2.1573 (.9641)	1.8723 (1.0346)	1.9302 (1.0094)	1.7747 (.8961)		
SOURCE	D.F.	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARE	F RATIO	F PROB.
Between Groups	3	6.0245	2.0082	2.115	.0991
Within Groups	222	210.7587	.9494		
Total	225	216.7832			

Table 15

Differences in Knowledge of Current Issues Among
Three Levels of Awareness of the Ombudsman Program

Group Means (Standard Deviations)					
Aware Can Describe	Aware Cannot Describe	Not Aware			
2.3778 (.9311)	2.0000 (.9446)	1.5616 (.9185)			
SOURCE	D.F.	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARES	F RATIO	F PROB.
Between Groups	2	44.6760	22.3380	26.043	.0000
Within Groups	372	319.0734	.8577		
Total	374	363.7493			

Table 16

A. Scheffé contrasts between "aware, can describe" group and "aware, cannot describe" group and levels of significance

Dependent variables	Contrast	Significance	H ₀
Knowledge of current issues	.3778	.05	reject
Perception of newspaper accountability	3.0445	.05	reject

B. Scheffé contrasts between "aware, can describe" group and "not aware" group and levels of significance

Dependent variables	Contrast	Significance	H ₀
Knowledge of current issues	.8162	.05	reject
Perception of newspaper accountability	3.0627	.05	reject

C. Scheffé contrasts between "aware, cannot describe" group and "not aware" group and levels of significance

Dependent variables	Contrast	Significance	H ₀
Knowledge of current issues	.4384	.05	reject
Perception of newspaper accountability	.0182	n.s.	accept

- H₅: Frequency of news criticism column readership will be greater among more highly educated individuals than lower educated.
- H₆: Awareness of the ombudsman program will be greater among more highly educated individuals than lower educated.
- H₇: Frequency of news criticism column readership will be greater among individuals with higher incomes.
- H₈: Awareness of the ombudsman program will be greater among individuals with higher incomes.

These four hypotheses were tested to determine the relationship between the two components of the accountability program at the Louisville newspapers and two demographic characteristics--education and income--that have been connected to newspaper readership. To make cross-tabulation more manageable, seven original education categories were collapsed into four categories. Four income categories were also used. A chi-square test showed no significant relationships between readership of the news criticism column and the two demographic independent variables. (See Tables 17 and 18.) But both independent variables were significantly related to awareness of the ombudsman program. (See Tables 19 and 20.)

Difference of proportions tests were performed for each significant relationship to determine if the difference were "true" or a function of the disproportionate frequencies in some of the cells of the contingency tables. Again, it was necessary to combine categories in the original 3 x 4 tables. The four education categories were collapsed into two: those with up to some college education and those with a college degree or above. The four income categories were also collapsed: those with incomes up to \$25,000 and those

Table 17

Chi-square Test--Frequency of News Criticism Column
Readership by Amount of Formal Education, in percent.

	Less than High School Degree	High School Degree Plus	College Degree Plus	Graduate Degree
Reads Twice A week	31.7	41.3	33.3	41.7
Reads Once A week	26.8	18.8	26.7	8.3
Reads Once A Month	17.1	17.4	23.3	41.7
Never Reads	24.4	22.5	16.7	8.3
	n=41	n=138	n=30	n=12
$\chi^2 = 8.596$ with nine degrees of freedom Not Significant				

Table 18

Chi-square Test--Frequency of News Criticism Column
Readership by Level of Household Income, in percent

	Less than High School Degree	High School Degree Plus	College Degree Plus	Graduate Degree
Reads Twice A Week	38.4	30.6	36.4	48.8
Reads Once A Week	17.8	27.4	27.3	12.2
Reads Once A Month	20.5	19.4	13.6	22.0
Never Reads	23.3	22.6	22.7	17.1
	n=73	n=62	n=22	n=41
$\chi^2 = 6.767$ with nine degrees of freedom Not Significant				

Table 19

Chi-square Test--Awareness of Ombudsman Program
by Amount of Formal Education, in percent

	Less than High School Degree	High School Degree Plus	College Degree Plus	Graduate Degree
Aware Can Describe	4.4	22.9	43.1	73.9
Aware, Cannot Describe	12.1	21.9	19.6	0
Not Aware	83.5	55.2	37.3	26.1
	n=91	n=201	n=51	n=23

$\chi^2 = 71.807$ with six degrees of freedom
p < .00001

Table 20

Chi-square Test--Awareness of Ombudsman Program
by Level of Household Income, in percent

	\$0-15,000	\$15,001- 25,000	\$25,001- 35,000	\$35,001 Plus
Aware, Can Describe	15.7	21.2	31.6	42.4
Aware, Cannot Describe	16.5	17.2	18.4	23.7
Not Aware	67.8	61.6	50.0	33.9
	n=121	n=99	n=38	n=59

$\chi^2 = 22.671$ with six degrees of freedom
p < .001

with incomes of \$25,001 and more.

Requiring a .05 significance level and a one-tailed test because the direction of the difference had been predicted, a Z score of more than 1.65 was necessary to reject the following null hypotheses: 1) there is no difference between the two education groups in awareness of the ombudsman program; and 2) there is no difference between the two income groups in awareness of the ombudsman program.

For the education hypothesis a Z score of 6.45 was achieved, allowing a rejection of the null hypothesis. For the income hypothesis, the Z score was 3.66, and again, the null hypothesis could be rejected. As a result, support can be found for both hypotheses involving awareness of the ombudsman program and the demographic variables.

Finally, data analysis was performed using the two-item "complaints" factor as the dependent variable and column readership frequency and ombudsman awareness as the independent variables.

H₉: The greater frequency of readership of the news criticism column, the less the perceived need for someone to complain to at the newspaper.

H₁₀: The greater awareness of the ombudsman program, the less the perceived need for someone to complain to at the newspaper.

It was believed that the more a person knew about the Louisville newspapers' accountability program, the more likely the person was to believe there was no need for an employee to answer reader complaints. In neither the case of column readership nor ombudsman awareness was there a significant difference in perceived need for the newspapers to

have someone to complain to. (See Tables 21 and 22.)

Table 21

Differences in Perceived Need for Someone to Complain
to Among Four Levels of News
Criticism Column Readership

Group Means (Standard Deviations)					
Reads Twice A Week	Reads Once A Week	Reads Once A Month	Never Reads		
7.9326 (1.3964)	7.9149 (1.3486)	7.9535 (1.3444)	8.0638 (1.2581)		
SOURCE	D.F.	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARE	F RATIO	F PROB.
Between Groups	3	.6710	.2237	.123	.9465
Within Groups	222	403.9706	1.8197		
Total	225	404.6416			

Table 22

Differences in Perceived Need for Someone to Complain
to Among Three Levels of Awareness
of the Ombudsman Program

Group Means (Standard Deviations)					
Aware Can Describe	Aware Cannot Describe	Not Aware			
8.0222 (1.5212)	7.9242 (1.2442)	7.8630 (1.2487)			
SOURCE	D.F.	SUM OF SQUARES	MEAN SQUARE	F RATIO	F PROB.
Between Groups	2	1.6288	.8144	.469	.6262
Within Groups	372	646.4672	1.7378		
Total	374	648.0960			

Summary of Readership and
Accountability Data

More than half the respondents in the study said they were reading The Courier-Journal, Louisville's morning newspaper, regularly (at least four days a week). About 44 percent said they were reading the evening Louisville Times regularly. Of those who said they were reading the Times, more than 45 percent said they read the newspaper's news criticism column at least once a month. However, only slightly more than one-third of those who said they read the column could name either the columnist and/or the column title.

The results show more than half the respondents said they were not aware of the ombudsman program. More than half of the nearly 40 percent who said they were aware of it could describe it accurately, thereby indicating a greater level of awareness.

Respondents' scores on the nine-item Likert-type accountability scale were normally distributed with a mean of just more than 27 of a possible 45. More than three-fourths of the respondents could not answer correctly more than two of the four questions about regional and local issues current at the time the interview schedule was administered. The results also show strong support among respondents for a full-time employee at the newspapers who answers reader complaints.

Summary of the Tests of the Hypotheses

The major findings of the study are: 1) no significant relationship exists between frequency of news criticism column readership and either perception of accountability or knowledge of issues; 2) a significant relationship exists between awareness of the ombudsman program and both perceived accountability and knowledge of issues. Those who are most aware of the ombudsman program have greater perceived accountability and greater knowledge of issues than those who indicate lesser awareness.

Awareness of the ombudsman program increased as levels of education and income increased. On the other hand, there were no significant relationships between readership of the news criticism column and levels of income and education.

Predicting Perceived Accountability

Additional analyses, correlation and regression, were performed following the previous analyses. A zero-order correlation analysis provided further examination of the relationships among certain variables; a regression analysis was performed to predict perceived accountability of the Louisville newspapers by respondents. The nine variables used in the analyses were the dependent variable, the "fairness" factor, and eight independent variables: column readership, ombudsman awareness, the "complaint" factor,

education, age, income, Courier-Journal readership, and Louisville Times readership.

The nine-item fairness factor was significantly related to five other variables. (See Table 23.) This variable, perceived accountability, was related to readership of The Courier-Journal ($r=.136$), readership of The Louisville Times ($r=.152$) and awareness of the ombudsman program ($r=.221$). Perceived accountability was also related to level of formal education ($r=.393$). Age was negatively related to the perception by respondents that the newspapers are accountable ($r=-.159$).

Other significant relationships should be noted from the data:

1) news criticism column readership is related to both readership of The Courier-Journal ($r=.273$) and The Louisville Times ($r=.283$).

2) ombudsman awareness is also related to readership of the newspapers ($r=.256$ for The Courier-Journal; $r=.243$ for The Louisville Times).

3) awareness of the ombudsman program is related to readership of the news criticism column ($r=.237$).

4) education, age and income are positively related to reading The Courier-Journal ($r=.150$, $.160$, $.151$ respectively); only education is significantly related to reading The Louisville Times ($r=.144$).

5) a significant relationship exists between income and awareness of the ombudsman program ($r=.181$).

Table 23
Correlation Matrix of Nine Variables for Total Sample

	Courier- Journal Reading	Louisville Time Reading	Column Readership	Ombudsman Awareness	Complaint Factor	Fairness Factor	Education	Age	Income
Courier-Journal Reading	1.00								
Louisville Times Reading	-.024	1.00							
Column Reading	.273	.283	1.00						
Ombudsman Awareness	.256	.243	.237	1.00					
Complaint Factor	.016	.093	-.034	.050	1.00				
Fairness Factor	.136	.152	-.003	.221	-.041	1.00			
Education	.150	.144	.106	.393	.067	.190	1.00		
Age	.160	.045	.132	.050	-.161	-.159	-.069	1.00	
Income	.151	.099	.083	.181	-.052	-.036	.315	.023	1.00

$r \geq .132$ is significant at the .05 level

A multiple regression analysis was performed to predict the perceived accountability of the Louisville newspapers by respondents. In this analysis the nine-item "fairness" factor was treated as the dependent variable and the eight other variables of the correlational analysis as independent variables. The analysis shows the relative influence of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable, controlling for other independent variables in the equation. The indirect relationships among all variables can be examined in the correlation matrix.

Five of the eight independent variables in Table 24 were significant at the .05 level: readership of both newspapers, income, age, and awareness of the ombudsman program. Table 24 also shows that the eight independent variables influencing perceived accountability of the Louisville newspapers account for 15 percent of variance. The multiple R for these variables is .38. Table 25 summarizes the analysis of variance test for the regression.

Table 24

Regression Coefficients for Eight Independent
Variables with Perceived Accountability

Courier-Journal Reading	.2897
Louisville Times Reading	.3116
Column Readership	-.5030
Ombudsman Awareness	.9689
Complaint Factor	-.4620
Education	.4349
Age	-.4941
Income	-.4642
$R^2 = .15$	

Table 25

Analysis of Variance Test of Regression
With All Variables in the Equation

		df	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F
R=.38	Regression	8	882.729	110.341	4.473
$R^2=.15$	Residual	208	5131.546	24.671	$p<.000$

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This section includes a brief summary of the major findings reported in the previous section, a discussion of the possible interpretations of the results, a discussion of the limitations of the study that the reader should know, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Results

The major findings of the study include:

--Significant differences in perceived accountability exist among levels of awareness of the ombudsman program at the Louisville newspapers. The mean score for the nine-item "fairness" factor was highest for the group made up of respondents who were most aware of the program.

--The group with greatest awareness of the ombudsman program has significantly greater knowledge of current local and regional issues than groups with lesser awareness.

--Two demographic independent variables, education and income, were significantly related to awareness of the ombudsman program.

--No significant relationships exist between frequency

of news criticism column readership and perception of accountability and knowledge of current issues.

--No significant relationships exist between readership of the news criticism column and two demographic independent variables, education and income.

--Significant positive correlations exist between readership of both Louisville newspapers and awareness of the ombudsman program.

--Significant positive correlations exist between readership of both newspapers and perceived accountability.

--Five of eight independent variables are significant predictors of perceived accountability: readership of The Courier-Journal, readership of The Louisville Times, income, age, and awareness of the ombudsman program.

--The eight independent variables influencing perceived accountability explain 15 percent of the variance in perceived accountability.

Interpretation of the Results

The positive relationship between readership of the two Louisville dailies and both ombudsman awareness and perceived accountability was to be expected, particularly when one considers the amount of promotional activity the newspapers have given the ombudsman system. Every issue of both newspapers has a standing column that lists the names and numbers of various editors, all three ombudsmen and the purpose of having ombudsmen. The papers have also provided

the address of the National News Council for readers who cannot get satisfaction from the ombudsman. (See Appendix.)

Executive editor Paul Janensch and Louisville Times managing editor Leonard Pardue have also taken several opportunities to explain what the ombudsman program is about in their columns. These occasions have arisen recently when the papers' ombudsman retired and in the aftermath of the Janet Cooke incident. (See Appendix for copies of columns.) The constant promotional effort through the columns and the prominent display of ombudsmen and National News Council responsibilities surely help explain the relationship between readership and ombudsman awareness, and as a result, ombudsman awareness and perceived accountability.

The lack of a significant relationship involving the news criticism column as either an independent or dependent variable might also be explained through the newspapers' promotional efforts or lack thereof. Although 45 percent of respondents said they read the column at least once a month, it appears that respondents have not connected the column and attempts by the newspapers to be accountable. The newspapers did not promote the column as greatly as they have the ombudsman program, and no attempt has been made to replace columnist Bob Schulman, who resigned in March 1981.

That a positive relationship exists between readership and perceived accountability might also be explained by a loyalty factor. It seems likely that people who read the newspapers frequently would see the papers in a more favorable light or their readership might not be justified.

Conversely, infrequent or non-readers of the newspapers would feel no attachment to them, and, therefore, no compulsion to respond favorably about the newspapers.

The aforementioned explanations would indicate that an ombudsman program would do little to attract new readers to a newspaper, at least not alone. On the other hand, an ombudsman may work well as a public relations device with current readers. This is not to suggest (as ombudsman critics have) that it is merely a public relations gimmick. However, it is to point out, as former Washington Post ombudsman Bill Green did in August 1981, that the newspaper industry has to listen to its consumers if it is to retain them. "The newspaper industry is not a growth industry," Green said.¹

Interestingly, initiation of the Louisville ombudsman program came at the time when the organized consumer movement was growing. Among the responses by businesses to increased consumerism of the 1960s was seeing things from the customer's viewpoint. In a similar manner, the primary function of the newspaper ombudsman is to listen and respond to the consumer point of view. It is possible, then, to see the newspaper ombudsman program as an outgrowth of consumerism, which has been described by Kotler as "the ultimate form of the marketing concept."² It is doubtful, however, that newspaper

¹Association for Education in Journalism, "Proceedings of Elected Standing Committee on Professional Freedom and Responsibility," East Lansing, Mich., August 11, 1981.

²Philip Kotler, Marketing Management, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), p. 695.

executives in Louisville have consciously used the ombudsman program as a marketing technique, even though it may serve that purpose.

In 1971 publisher Barry Bingham Jr. said newspapers' survival depended on greater openness to readers by journalists. He suggested that journalists should be more willing to admit mistakes in order to restore reader confidence, implying that doing so may even help circulation. Opening lines of communication with readers, Bingham said, would keep editors from treating the newspaper business like "an occult ritual which the layman cannot hope to understand."³

For Barry Bingham Sr., practical reasons for being open with the public existed, though in 1973 he found loftier principles were also involved:

A free society cannot endure without a free press, and the freedom of the press ultimately rests on public understanding of, and trust in, its work.⁴

More recently, executive editor Paul Janensch said the motives for having the ombudsman come from the realization that the newspapers are dominant, a monopoly in the market.⁵ The inference here is that the newspapers have philosophical reasons for having the program: "it's the right thing to do." But the need to offset the typical

³Barry Bingham Jr., "Does the American Press Deserve To Survive?" The Quill, January 1971, pp. 13-17.

⁴Barry Bingham Sr., "Birth of a Media Council," Columbia Journalism Review, March-April, 1973, p. 43.

⁵Interview with Paul Janensch, The Courier-Journal and Louisville Times, 23 December 1981.

criticisms of monopolies--the practicality--is also present.

In summary, a number of observations can be made:

--The promotion of the Louisville ombudsman program may be a possible reason for the positive relationships among newspaper readership, ombudsman awareness and perceived accountability.

--The lack of promotion of the news criticism column may account for no significant relationships in hypotheses involving news criticism column readership.

--Though certainly not conclusive, an ombudsman-like program may be a way to retain readership. Conversely, it is unlikely to attract new readership.

--Reasons Louisville newspaper executives have given for having an ombudsman and similar programs are both practical and philosophical, though it is doubtful that the Louisville ombudsman program was actually conceived for strictly practical purposes.

Limitations of the Research

The limitations of the study relate to methodological considerations. Although the methodological problems exist, it is not believed they detract from the major findings of the study: those who are most aware of the ombudsman program believe the Louisville newspapers are more accountable than those with lesser awareness and awareness of the program and perception of accountability are positively related to readership of the newspapers.

1) The response rate of 44.7 percent is considered low for a telephone administered interview schedule, and therefore subject to error on a systematic basis rather than randomly.

2) The focus group interview sessions were not conducted with people from the Louisville market. Because of time and financial limitations, the focus groups were held with individuals from the greater Lansing, Michigan, area. Ideally, the participants in any future focus group should be from the market in which the main study is conducted.

3) The 56 attitudinal items collected from the focus group interviews were also not administered to people from Louisville for the factor analysis, again for time and financial reasons.

It has been suggested that in this stage of the scale development process researchers use 10 respondents for every item to be factor analyzed. For this study three respondents participated for every item.

4) The reader should be careful not to generalize the data reported here for other newspapers that have ombudsmen.

5) The SPSS manual warns against using the pairwise deletion option used in the regression analysis for this study because of the possibility of computational inaccuracies.⁶ However, because the alternative, listwise deletion, would have resulted in too great a reduction of usable cases for many variables in the regression equation, the pairwise

⁶Jae-On Kim and Frank J. Kohout, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1975), p. 353.

option was used. It should be noted that the computational anomalies suggested by the manual did not occur.

Although the methodological shortcomings do not detract from the major findings of the study, they do suggest possibilities for future research of newspaper accountability programs. This study is apparently the first attempt to discover the influences and effects ombudsman programs and other evaluation techniques have on newspaper audiences. As a result, fine-tuning the scale development process is not only necessary in subsequent studies, but encouraged. Because the number of ombudsman programs has increased during the last five years, attempts to determine their impact should be undertaken, particularly in markets where the program is as widely publicized as in Louisville. A study of accountability in newspaper markets where no programs exist should be considered. Even though the Louisville program is not effective in attracting new readers, the relationship between perception of accountability and newspaper readership indicates the possibility that it is effective for retaining readers. Newspapers whose strategies emphasize high retention of readers might explore implementing an ombudsman or readers' representative program, first measuring subscribers' perception of accountability, their desire for an ombudsman-like employee at the newspaper, and the relationship between the perception and the desire.

Newspapers that are making greater attempts to attract new readers may also use the accountability scale to determine whether a program would be likely to influence the

decision to subscribe.

Future research should also include comparisons between newspapers whose ombudsmen write columns and newspapers where they do not. And comparisons could be made between self-executing ombudsman programs, like the one at The Washington Post, and reader-executing ones, like the Louisville program.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

ACCOUNTABILITY STUDY
BERNSTEIN: 452-6420

COLS.

ID# () 1-3

INTERVIEWER NAME# ()

PHONE# ()

CALLBACKS: 1 2 3 4 5

INTRODUCTION: Hello, may I speak with the man of the house?

IF RS IS NOT HOME, ASK TO SPEAK WITH A HOUSEHOLD MEMBER WHO IS
18 YEARS OF AGE OR OVER.

IF PROPER RESPONDENT: Hello, I'm _____ calling for the School
of Journalism at Michigan State University. We're doing a study of the Louisville
newspapers and I have a few questions I'd like to ask you.

1. First, how many days a week do you read the Courier-Journal?

(0) (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) 4

2. How many days a week do you read the Louisville Times?

(0) (GO TO 9) (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) 5

3. How often would you say you read the news criticism column in the
Louisville Times? Twice a week, once a week, or once a month?

(1) TWICE A WEEK (3) ONCE A MONTH (5) DK
(2) ONCE A WEEK (4) NEVER (GO TO 9) 6

Now, I have some questions about the news criticism column...

4. Was the writer of the news criticism column:

(1) Leonard Pardue (4) Gordon Anderson
(2) Tom Mathews (5) Paul Janensch
(3) Bob Schulman (6) DK 7

5. Was the name of the news criticism column:

(1) News and Views (4) Newswatch
(2) As We See It (5) Watchdog on the Press
(3) In All Fairness (6) DK 8

6. What do you like about the news criticism column?

()
()
() 9

7. What do you not like about the news criticism column?

()
()
() 10

8. Earlier this month the news criticism was discontinued.
How do you feel about the column being discontinued?

(_____)
(_____)
(_____)

11

9. Are you aware of the program at the Louisville newspapers called an ombudsman program?

(1) YES (GO TO 9a) (2) NO (GO TO 10)
(3) DK (GO TO 10)

- 9a. Could you give me a brief description of the program?

(_____)
(_____)

12

10. I'm going to read some statements a person might say about newspapers. I'd like you to tell me how these statements reflect your feelings about the Louisville newspapers by telling me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each statement.
(READ EACH STATEMENT: CIRCLE RESPONSE)

	SA	A	D	SD	DK	
a. Newspapers ignore controversial issues.	1	2	4	5	3	13
b. Newspapers will not take a stand on some issues because of fear of offending people.	1	2	4	5	3	14
c. Newspapers should have a full-time employee to whom readers could complain about the paper.	5	4	2	1	3	15
d. Newspapers should have a full-time employee who listens to reader complaints and acts on them.	5	4	2	1	3	16
e. Newspapers do not give all sides of a story.	1	2	4	5	3	17
f. I don't believe many stories in the newspaper.	1	2	4	5	3	18
g. Newspapers do not provide in-depth coverage on important issues.	1	2	4	5	3	19
h. Newspapers are influenced by special interest groups.	1	2	4	5	3	20
i. Newspapers are influenced by advertisers.	1	2	4	5	3	21
j. I am skeptical of newspapers in monopoly positions.	1	2	4	5	3	22
k. Newspapers print only what they want to print.	1	2	4	5	3	23

Now some questions about recent events in the news...

11. In an attempt to strengthen their contract negotiating power, Jefferson County police have:

(1) Threatened to go on strike (4) Called in sick
(2) Participated in a ticket-writing slowdown (5) None of these
(3) Taken part-time jobs (6) DK

24

12. The largest single reduction in the state budget announced by Governor Brown was in spending for:

(1) Transportation (4) Environmental protection
(2) Energy (5) None of these
(3) Education (6) DK

25

13. The number of utility workers on strike at Louisville Gas and Electric Company was:

(1) 1,000 (4) 4,000
(2) 1,400 (5) None of these
(3) 2,700 (6) DK

26

14. What did the Bullitt County Board of Education vote to remove from county classrooms?

(1) newspapers (4) the Ten Commandments
(2) encyclopedias (5) the First Amendment
(3) graduation diplomas (6) DK

27

Now just a few more questions...

15. How much education have you completed?

(1) UP TO 8TH (5) COLLEGE DEGREE
(2) 9TH - 12TH (6) GRADUATE WORK
(3) HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE (7) GRADUATE DEGREE
(4) SOME COLLEGE (9) REFUSED

28

16. What is your age?

() (ROUNDED TO NEAREST YEAR) (99) REFUSED

29-30

17. Is your total annual household income more than \$15,000?

() YES (GO TO 17a)
(1) NO (GO TO CLOSING)

- 17a. Is it more than \$25,000?

() YES (GO TO 17b)
(2) NO (GO TO CLOSING)

- 17b. And finally, is it more than \$35,000?

(3) NO
(4) YES

31

(5) DK

(6) REFUSED

Thank you very much for your help.

18. RECORD SEX: (1) MALE (2) FEMALE

32

APPENDIX B

Topics Discussed In Focus Group Interview Sessions

APPENDIX B

Topics Discussed In Focus Group Interview Sessions

1. Ways newspapers read by each panel member are responsible to the reader.
2. Ways newspapers respond to reader complaints and problems.
3. The necessity of newspapers to respond to reader complaints and problems.
4. Ways newspapers should respond to their readers; ways they could be accountable.
5. The idea of having a newspaper employee handle reader complaints.
6. The effectiveness of printing corrections as a way of being accountable to readers.
7. The effectiveness of "letters to the editor" as a way of being accountable to readers.
8. Bias in newspapers toward special interest groups and advertisers.
9. The idea of press councils at the local level.
10. The idea of news criticism in the newspaper.

APPENDIX C

Standing Column Listing Editors and Ombudsmen

APPENDIX C

Standing Column Listing Editors and Ombudsmen

The Courier-Journal

(USPS 135-560)

For Information

Latest sports scores: 582-4871.
 Want to know your congressman's address or the winner of the 21st Kentucky Derby? Our Reader's Service Department will answer your questions. It's open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 582-4545. For more extensive research on a fee basis, call the library, 582-4603.

Managing Editor

David Hawpe (in charge of The Courier-Journal news operation), 582-4613.

To report a news item or story idea**City News:**

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Regional News:

For news about Kentucky and Southern Indiana, call Stephen Ford, 582-4657.

Pictures:

Michael T. Martinez, 582-4680

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Include a copy of the article and copies of any correspondence with the newspaper. Address: 1 Lincoln Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10023. Phone: (212) 595-9411.

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APPENDIX D

Editors' Columns

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Editors' Columns

Policies that guard — against the stretching of truth in news stories

Oh, no, not again.

Only a month after we were told that The Washington Post's Pulitzer Prize-winning profile of an 8-year-old drug addict was fictitious, two more examples of journalistic truth-stretching have come to light.

One case involves a vivid — seemingly first-hand — account in the New York Daily News of a Belfast street battle between British soldiers and Irish teenagers.

The story, by columnist Michael Daly, describes how the soldiers shot a 15-year-old lad in the leg, using real bullets instead of the rubber ones issued for crowd dispersal.

The central character in Daly's column is a soldier identified as Guster Christopher Spell, a young recruit from the grimy industrial city of Birmingham who saw one of his comrades killed on an earlier patrol.

The other case — less serious but still distressing — involves a story by Terens Carpenter in New York's Village Voice about Dennis Sweeney, charged with murdering his one-time boss, former U.S. Rep. Allard Lowenstein.

Passages in the story — including one that says Lowenstein had made a sexual pass at Sweeney — seem to be based on a prison interview of the accused by Miss Carpenter.

It turns out that there is no such person as Christopher Spell in the entire British Army and that Miss Carpenter has never met Dennis Sweeney.

Good grief.

The Daily News story was shot down by the London Daily Mail, which investigated the account because the editors thought a number of details didn't ring true.



Terens Carpenter, awarded the Pulitzer Prize that was given up by The Washington Post, says she doesn't "feel compelled to attribute each and every piece of information to his source."

Labeling the Daly column "a pack of lies" and "viciously anti-British," the Daily Mail said it found 14 fabrications and errors.

Summoned back to New York, Daly insisted that the story was "essentially correct" but acknowledged that he hadn't gone out on the patrol and that Christopher Spell was a false name. He was asked to resign when he couldn't substantiate the story.

The Village Voice story was challenged by a friend and a brother of Lowenstein. They denied that Lowenstein, a divorced father of three, had been a homosexual.

Miss Carpenter conceded that she hadn't actually interviewed Sweeney in his cell but based her story on what he had told "any number of people." She said she couldn't name them because she had promised to keep their identities confidential.

Ironically, Miss Carpenter was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing after it was discovered that The Washington Post story was a hoax. One of the stories in the Carpenter entry was the one about Dennis Sweeney.

Neither Daly nor Miss Sweeney seems very repentant.

Daly was quoted in the Daily News as saying: "The question of reconstruction and using a pseudonym — I've done a lot of it. No one has ever said anything."

Miss Sweeney told The New York Times: "I do not feel compelled to attribute each and every piece of information to its source. I don't mean to sound arrogant, but I do mean to sound confident."

I'd say you sound arrogant, Miss Carpenter, and so do you, Michael Daly, and I'd like to emphasize to readers of The Courier-Journal and The Louisville Times that we have policies against the techniques used by these two writers and apparently countenanced by their editors.

We prefer to identify sources and central characters in our news stories. If there is a good reason not to name a source, we say what it is. If there is a good reason to use a pseudonym — in a story about rape victims, for example — we make it clear what we're doing.

We don't "reconstruct" events without telling the readers. If reporters weren't on the scene, the story says where they got their information.

We don't pretend we heard somebody say something, when actually the comments came from a third party.

Miss Carpenter complained that it's "cumbersome" to attribute each and every statement in a story to a specific source. She said she doesn't want to be a "clunky writer."

The journalistic ideal is, of course, factual reporting and graceful writing. If it comes down to a choice, a newspaper must choose the former over the latter.

But the real press doesn't find the two incompatible.

INSIGHT PAGE

A PAGE OF
COMMENT
AND ANALYSIS

LT
7-8

No complaints

Bob Crumpler, new ombudsman,
is loyal friend, defender of readers



**LEONARD
PARDUE**
Times Managing
Editor

Bob Crumpler starts work July 20 as the ombudsman of the news departments of The Louisville Times and The Courier-Journal.

He succeeds Frank Hartley, who retired.

In that job, Crump will try to answer readers' questions and resolve their complaints.

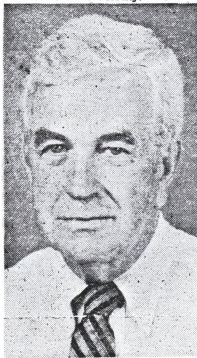
No brag, just fact — Crump will be an effective ally of the readers. I base that prediction on 18 years of observing and working with him.

Among his assets are common sense and good judgment, an unbending allegiance to clear, grammatical writing and to accurate, fair reporting, a loathing for cant and pomposity, and a kind and gentle disposition. He is both bulldog and St. Bernard.

For the past eight years he has been assistant managing editor of The Times, and for much of that time he's written an internal news-letter, "behind the Times." A sampling reveals his prejudices:

On anonymous sources: "We believe that our readers are entitled to know the source of the information we print and that only in rare instances can there be valid reason for not telling them."

On accuracy: "We should take care to check information we receive from sources. It pays to be skeptical. The reward is accuracy and increased credibility."



Staff Photo by Dan Dry
BOB CRUMPLER

(Continued)

"Many mistakes are avoidable. They can be avoided by asking questions, by not assuming, by not thinking we know more than we do, by checking, by being determined not to be wrong."

On writing: "We want stories written with style and grace and transitions that carry readers smoothly through to the end.

"We favor writing that is concise, clear and vivid. Writing that is specific. Writing that avoids abstractions, jargon, officialese, cliches.

"We should always try to make it easy for the reader."

And: "We often pick at what seem to be little things [in 'behind the Times'] because we believe they often make us look bad, turn readers off or stop them in midstream."

Those excerpts suggest Crump's qualities as an editor, but reveal little of him as a person.

He likes poetry, bakes bread, loves children, grows vegetables and plays tennis with determination and enthusiasm. The son of a Methodist minister, he sings snatches of hymns at odd moments with what I would call a fair country tenor.

He grew up in small towns in West Virginia. He went to Marshall University, served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, and worked for newspapers in West Virginia before joining The Courier-Journal as a reporter in 1950. Three years later he took a job in the General Electric Co.'s public-relations office, but returned to newspaper work as a Times reporter in 1954.

He was an assistant city editor from about 1957 to 1964, when he became city editor, a job he held for

nine years before being promoted to assistant managing editor.

For all those years on The Times, he's risen early. When he was assistant city editor, he came to work at 5 a.m. He says people used to ask him what he did when he got up at 4 a.m.

"Wonder why I didn't have a job with better hours," he recalls.

As ombudsman, he'll have such a job. He'll do it well.

•

A departure — Dick Fenlon is leaving The Times. He'll begin work soon as a sports columnist for The Columbus Dispatch in Columbus, Ohio, his hometown. He's been Times sports editor since 1973 and a sports staffer here since 1962. He's a graceful and insightful writer, and we wish him the best in his new job.

Leonard Pardue's column appears on Wednesday.

APPENDIX E

News Criticism Column Examples

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News Criticism Column Examples

An old press dilemma: when to expose, when to shield?

THE NEWS MEDIA'S job in an open society is giving information, not keeping secrets. Especially secrets in government. Public opinion polls show that most Americans want the press to abstain from prying out government secrets only when national security is at stake.

But when one Kentucky newspaper recently blew the cover on a state government secret that several other papers had decided to respect, it raised anew a pesky question. When is it good for the press to tell less than it knows?

The *Louisville Times* published a front-page report that Gov. John Y. Brown Jr., seeking a developer of tourism and industry, was trying to lure the Georgia official touted by some as the nation's hottest player in his field.

When the newspaper identified W. Milton Folds as the quarry, Brown and his top aides groaned. In a reaction that must be respected by anyone who has ever engaged in confidential hiring negotiations, they as much as said, "Hell, because of the publicity we may lose this guy."

Mr. Schulman's column on media performance appears regularly in *The Louisville Times* and monthly in the Sunday or holiday *Courier-Journal*.

That hasn't happened yet and reportedly may not. But the issue remains.

As one anonymity-seeking aide of the governor says, "Yeah, a story is a story. But what public need was served that couldn't have been met without using the name, without complicating negotiations and endangering a gain for Kentucky?"

I'll take my stand with those Kentucky editors, including *The Courier-Journal's*, who support that view.

This was one case of the sort Warren Bennis had in mind when, while president of the University of Cincinnati, he warned against trying to make every stage of every public act "take place, as it were, in Macy's window."

"The mere fact of discussions becoming known at the wrong stage can prevent a desirable decision from ultimately being carried out," Bennis wrote.

But it is risky to shift from a specific

case to a broad generalization. And there are arresting points in the arguments of those who side with *The Louisville Times* in the negotiations story — itself the occasion for a journalistic 007 scenario.

The *State Journal* of Frankfort, Covington's *Kentucky Post* and *The Associated Press* were among those whose editors or reporters knew of the negotiations with Georgia's Folds.

Some had the information under a pledge

not to run it prematurely, but others had obtained the facts free and clear.

Gov. Brown was anxious to maintain confidentiality, but had shared some or all of the information with about 60 state legislators to keep them posted on a deal that would require special salary arrangements.

George Graves, the thoughtful *Louisville Times* reporter in Frankfort, who broke the news, says, "If anybody's to blame for the story's getting out, it should be the governor

(Continued)



An editor's "window" is not unlike a store's: "How much do I expose?"

himself, because he told so many people."

Graves adds that he probably was among the last to find out. "With 50 legislators and two dozen administrators, plus most of the Frankfort press corps, in the know, my instinct was why should I help keep it a secret from the public?"

In the process of learning Folds' identity, and then confirming it, which was harder, Graves began with a report in *The Kentucky Post*. It told of Brown's negotiations to hire a nationally respected development official from a Southern state, but gave no further details.

The *Post's* account had its own novel genesis, says Editor Paul Knue. A Covington visit by Brown and aides had prompted reporter Bill Weathers to ask for more detail on the development-job search mentioned by Brown in his public comments.

While Weathers was thus getting the name under a pledge to keep it quiet, *Post* reporter Tom Loftis was independently unearthing the name of Folds from Frankfort sources. To avoid suspicion of a broken pledge, Brown was queried. When his reply was a plea that publicity might "quell the deal," Knue decided to withhold the name.

"Maybe it would have been different," says Knue, "had we learned that the prospect was a notorious swindler or a famous person. But under the circumstances I thought it more important to give the state its best crack than for us to be first with a name not known to our readers anyway."

Meantime, Graves' pursuit of the Georgian's identity for *The Louisville Times* was encouraged by his discovery that some lawmakers had reservations about special salary arrangements to be offered Folds.

Explains Graves' boss, Managing Editor Leonard Pardue: "We thought it was in the public interest to report on [the Georgian] and how he has done his job."

Earlier, Graves found some reassurance when, charity trying to talk with Folds, he was told by a secretary that the Georgian has regularly gotten out-of-state job offers. "That persuaded me that a story would not unnecessarily complicate the chance of Folds' coming to Kentucky," says Graves.

Endorsement of *The Times'* decision comes from Al Smith, the Western Kentucky publisher now on the government side as top federal executive with the Appalachian Regional Commission.

"I've discovered," says Smith, "that job negotiations in public office are generally a

bob
schulman
news critic
In all fairness

CJ 11-16

risk-area deal that you can't afford to let too many people in on. While the governor's to be commended, as a reporter I'd have gone right ahead with the name. Too much of the information that is the press's coinage was in circulation."

But why publish the name prematurely when nothing seriously detrimental to the public interest was learned? The hunt for a new state development chief had hardly become supermarket gossip, as was the case with plans for Louisville's Ford truck plant in the mid-60s, when newspapers properly pressed to publish whatever information they could hail.

Regional editor Steve Fink of *The Chart* or *Journal* made the decision there not to pursue the Georgian story.

"Sure, be careful about any case deals," he says. "But once in a while, on a case-by-case basis, you find there is no compelling reason to publish something, and no possible harm in holding back."

Delayed the Welch story

Having the information about Folds on a won't-publish basis was what stilled Editor Carl West of *The State Journal* until, as he says, "we got screwed." Still, West also believes in selective withholding.

His paper sat "for a week" on the news that FBI executive Neil Welch was to be named Brown's justice secretary. It finally broke the story (with approval of the source) only after another paper hinted what was coming.

By so much sharing of information on the effort to hire Folds, Gov. Brown made it tougher for uneasy editors to go against their "publish it" grain. But the *Louisville Times* decision to finger the Georgia prospect fell short. It's a tough call for responsible journalists, deciding what to print in their equivalent of what Warren Beatty calls "Macy's window." But when publishing a secret might hurt someone, an editor always must ask: "How many will be the worse off if I tell; how many the better?"

The funnies can get ticklish

LT 11-6

Dick Tracy is doing his slit-eyed duty there on the comics page of The Louisville Times, and the Wizard of Id is showing the pomposity of little men with power.

Over among The Courier-Journal comics, you have coach Gil Thorp about to square things for a griddle said to be a homosexual because he studies ballet, and there's Tank McNamara, unassuming the goodness of commercialized sport. All tightly tied into the real world.

So why shouldn't Doonesbury be there among the comics, too — even if Doonesbury does satirize real people, using their real names?

And if the purpose of some comics is to kid the jeans off life, what was wrong with the Doonesbury strip's featuring an imaginary TV-science trip through Ronald Reagan's brain?

These were some of the questions evoked after last week's segments of Garry Trudeau's Doonesbury, a silly version of an ABC-TV reporter taking people on that devilishly uncomplimentary voyage. Indeed, in some places there was minor hell to pay.

Editors at many of the 450 newspapers that run Doonesbury thought twice before letting the sequences appear. At eight newspapers, the sequences either were withheld until after the election, or switched (for last week only) from the comics to the commentary page opposite the editorial page.

One worry was the awkward timing. The final campaign week was a poor stage for merciless roasting of Reagan's intellectual gear in newspapers leery of showing any bias.

But editors' responses to what they saw as the problem of Doonesbury on Reagan unavoidably raised anew the question of where in a newspaper Doonesbury properly belongs — and

what the answer to that says about the nature of the funnies.

In Indianapolis, the solution at the pro-Reagan Star (after 1,000 calls protesting suppression of the Doonesbury strips) was to publish them all in a clump late last week — on the op-ed opinion page. Editor Eugene Pulliam had an accompanying note saying he didn't like these strips but was obliging the voice of the readers.

The Courier-Journal is among the very few newspapers (along with Pulliam's Muncie, Ind., paper) in which



Doonesbury was already running in the opinion section, where cartoonists, readers and writers pop off.

An admirable solution to worries about the timing of Doonesbury's Reagan caper came from CJ Managing Editor David Hawpe. Reagan's Kentucky chairman was invited to produce a rebuttal, and chairman Lawrence Forgy did so charmingly: He wrote slyly that he was forgetting the usual policy of not responding "to comic strips or Courier-Journal editorials," and he set forth a scenario for a Trudeau voyage through Jimmy Carter's brain.

But the editorial word from The Wall Street Journal is that Trudeau's work should not be on opinion pages.

Putting Doonesbury there, the paper said last week, "makes it into a kind of out-and-out serious issue" when it should be kept in its place as "a comic strip, a licensed exploration of the incongruous and the bizarre."

Trudeau wants Doonesbury run among other comics. His distributing syndicate says Trudeau wants his work to hit more young-adult readers. Here, 50 per cent of them "usually" read the comic pages, but only 11 per cent "usually" read the op-ed pages.

Considering Doonesbury for the comics pages raises, first, the challenge of whether social comment belongs there at all. The quick answer is that some kind of social comment has always been there.

A strip called Little Nemo offered views on man vs. society in 1911. It's been almost 50 years since Dick Tracy began spouting his philosophy.

Wall Kelly's Pogo once showed Lyndon Johnson as a loughorn steer and Spiro Agnew as a hyena. In L'il Abner, Al Capp used to needle away at conservative types like General Bullmoose until Capp turned conservative himself and began aiming at the Kennedy liberals of "Hydeosport." In 1955, a Rex Morgan run on the menace of non-doctor coroners inspired a big CJ investigative series.

But as a CJ comment noted upon Doonesbury's introduction here, people in Pogo and L'il Abner were cast as fanciful animals or humans with make-believe names "to protect the innocence" and to keep the real world from popping up too strongly.

Trudeau's unflinching approach to events and personalities is not found in

(Continued)



Should there be separate rules — and separate platforms — for 'Doonesbury' and 'Peanuts'?

any of the social-commentary comics used here. Trudeau's uniqueness is as a comic-stripper in the world of the editorial cartoonists, such as Hugh Haynie. As a Time cover story said in 1976, Trudeau "combines editorial-page gravity and funny-paper levity."

The funny-quotient in the Louisville dailies' comics has held up well since I last counted five years ago. Of 13 Times comics, only four are unfunny story-liners. In The C-J it's nine funny to three unfunny.

Trudeau is often funniest of all, but his humor is topical and unmistakably identifiable. I agree with The C-J's Hawpe that Trudeau is more a "vital columnist." His Doonesbury belongs on the alkaline side of the line dividing what people expect in the comics from what may delight them on an opinion page but jar them among the funnies.

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