PERCEIVED CREDIBILITY OF THREE NEWS MEDIA:

TELEVISION, RADIO AND NEWSPAPERS

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PREFACE

This study is concerned with the judgments of people toward news in three media: Television, Radio, and Newspapers. The primary objectives were to determine the overall credibility of the news media and the relative credibility of each medium. The author suggests public attitudes toward the media are vital to press freedom.

The author wishes to express his appreciation to his major adviser, Dr. Walter Ward. His guidance and expertise were essential. His assistance and constructive criticism were important throughout my time in the Master's program. Appreciation is also expressed to the other committee members, Dr. William R. Steng and Dr. James Rhea. Without their invaluable assistance this study would not have been possible.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Press Freedom and Credibility

> Freedom of the press is essential to political liberty.
> Where man cannot freely convert their thoughts to one another,
> no freedom is secure. Where freedom of expression exists, the
> beginnings of a free society and a mean for every extension of
> liberty are already present. Free expression is therefore
> unique among liberties: it promotes and protects all the
> rest. It is appropriate that freedom of speech and freedom of
> the press are contained in the first of those constitutional
> enactments which are the American Bill of Rights.[1]

The mass media in the United States spend a great deal of time and

energy in an ongoing battle against those who would reduce their

freedoms. Most people of reason would agree a free press is desirable.

Just exactly how free has always been the area of disagreement. No

doubt the debate on the subject is ongoing and has no final conclusion.

When news people think of threats to press freedom, they usually do

so in singular fashion. Government and the courts are seen as the chief

danger. Indeed, a good many members of the media think that the Supreme

Court in recent years has declared war on the media.[2] They argue that a

majority of recent court decisions have undermined press freedom.

But perhaps the real threat to these freedoms originates from the

news media themselves. The Commission on Freedom of the Press warned in

1947 that the media must provide what society requires of a free press

or risk losing the freedoms. Suggested the Commission:

1

> Today our society needs, first, a truthful, comprehensive,
> and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which
> gives them meaning; second, a forum for the exchange of comment
> and criticism; third, a means of projecting the opinions and
> attitudes of the groups in the society to one another; fourth,
> a method of presenting and clarifying the goals and values of
> the society; and, fifth, a way of reaching every member of the
> society by the current of information, thought, and feeling
> which the press supplies.[3]

The Commission concluded that the news media at that time were not

meeting the needs of society. "The Commission believes that this

failure of the press is the greatest danger to its freedom," its report

said. The contention was that the public's attitudes toward news media

freedoms would swing away from the interests of the media and influence

government to shackle media freedoms.[4] Wilbur Schramm, William L.

Rivers, and Clifford G. Christians presented a similar picture in

Responsibility in Mass Comm:

> The mass communication system is shaped and colored and
> flavored from the beginning by society. Each society controls
> its mass media in accordance with its policies and needs. The
> controls may be legal and political (through laws and censor-
> ship), economic (through ownership and support), or social
> (through criticism and the giving and withholding of patron-
> age).[5]

In other words, it is the people, not the U.S. Constitution, that

grant news media freedoms. The premise is that if the news media are

properly performing their functions in society, then they will have

society's protection. But an inaccurate, reckless, and irresponsible

media will be controlled. Schramm et al., warned that media insensi-

tivity concerning viewpoints of those outside the media "could lead to

strong controls."[6]

Given this dependency of the media on society for their freedom to

function, it seems paramount for the media to be aware of how society

rates their performance.

Purpose of the Study

A good portion of the news media does seem concerned with its image and performance with the public. Keith P. Sanders, professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, reported in 1975 that a sample of daily newspapers indicated most were doing something to be accountable to their readers. Reported Sanders:

> Seventy newspapers, or about 52 percent of those studied, have a fairly formal system developed. Another 34 have fairly informal procedures of dealing with the matter of account- ability. Only 31 (23 percent) of the 135 editors responding said they had no system of accountability.

Mailing out of accuracy forms to persons mentioned in news stories, printing corrections under a standing head, employment of an ombudsman to serve as the representative of the readers, and use of local citizen advisory boards were a few of these accountability measures. These methods allow only a limited amount of information concerning what the public thinks of the media. There is no attempt at a systematic meas- urement of an audience's attitude toward a particular medium or media in general.

During the past 50 years, various research organizations, such as The Gallup Poll and The Roper Organization, have questioned Americans in national samples concerning their attitude toward the media. But these polls almost exclusively ask respondents only to agree or disagree with a single attitude statement. Only frequencies or percentages are report- ed, thus little can be said about the strength or depth of the attitude expressed or the reasons behind it.

Beginning in the 1960s, social scientists began exploring the use of sophisticated measuring instruments to determine better the public attitudes toward the image or credibility of mass media. However, in a

review of the literature the author found few studies in which such measuring instruments were utilized to gather information concerning the media. These few studies have made contributions to answering a question posed by Bradley S. Greenberg and Michael E. Roloff: "Which media have what kind of credibility, how much of it do they have, and among whom do they have it."[8]

The author intends this study to contribute further toward answering those questions. The overall image or credibility of the media will be addressed, as well as the relative credibility of various media. Another objective will be to identify factors that "cause" people to prefer or give higher credibility to a particular medium. By examining appropriate attribute variables, such as sex and age, the study may add to the existing data concerning what kind of people prefer each of the various media.

The literature concerning demographics and media credibility is mixed and often contradictory. Some studies have attempted to find a relationship between the credibility question and variables such as sex, age, education, income, party affiliation, occupation, social class, religion, and place of residence. One of the more consistent early findings was that men assign first rank for accuracy and truthfulness to print media while women assign higher rank to television. But recent studies indicate no sex relationship.

Recognizing these contradictions, the author included as part of the research question whether certain attribute variables can help predict a person's judgment of a medium's image. Sex, age, education, and income were chosen as variables for this study because they have been most often used in previous studies.

Some researchers have suggested differences in the basic nature of television, radio, and newspapers cloud the credibility question. It has been suggested that television and radio news are more closely linked to an entertainment mode than newspapers. The assertion is that newspapers are associated by most people with an information function rather than an entertainment function. Some researchers believe this is why television has been judged higher in credibility than newspapers. In this study, the author attempted to design an instrument that would separate the entertainment evaluation from the over-all image of a medium. Mean scores on this dimension were then tested to see if this factor contributed significantly to any difference in the over-all means of each medium.

Cumulative research in this area could lead to development of a model made up of factors of media image or credibility. Such a model would seem useful in attitude research concerning news media.

The news media need more than the single-item "believabilty" surveys reported by research organizations during the past five decades. Such data do not provide the news media with enough information to determine if deficiencies exist, where they exist and how the best way might be to approach them.

The author hopes this study will help identify the "why" behind the public's attitudes.

Media Criticism and the Polls

Criticism of the news media certainly is not a unique activity of the past couple of decades. The very nature of newspapers --purporting to be giving readers facts in the news columns and then expressing some-

times unpopular opinions -- has left it open to critics from the ear-
liest times. But a real concern for the very institution of the press
and the way it conducted itself did not really begin until the beginning
of the twentieth century.

Schramm marked the beginning of a wave of press criticism with the
appearance of 15 articles on "The American Newspaper," by Will Irwin in
Collier's from January 21 to July 29 of 1911.

> Upton Sinclair's savage Brass Check followed in 1919. George
> Seldes bitterly attacked in Freedom of the Press in 1935, then
> in a newsletter, In Fact, which was published during the 1940s.
> During the 1930s, newspapers were targets in the general
> attacks on business, especially in such books as America's
> House of Lords by Harold Ickes and Ferdinand Lundberg's
> Imperial Hearst.[9]

In 1947 after a four-year study by The Commission on Freedom of the
Press, a private group of distinguished Americans who looked at the
state of freedom of the press and its future, Chairman Robert Hutchins
wrote:

> The Commission knows that one dreadful curse of contemporary
> life is the terrifying flood of words with which the agencies
> of mass comunication threaten to inundate the citizen. Any-
> body with nothing to say can say it by mass communication if
> he has a knowing press agent, or a considerable reputation, or
> an active pressure group behind him, whereas, even with such
> advantages, anybody with something to say has a hard time
> getting it said by mass communication if it runs counter to
> the ideas of owners, editors, opposing pressure groups, or
> popular prejudice.[10]

The Commission went on to discuss sensationalism, inaccuracies, bias by
owners, and other general failings of the news media.

Pollster George Gallup in 1969 told the International Press Insti-
tute at a meeting in Ottawa, Canada: "Never in my time has journa
of all types -- book publishing, television, radio, newspaper
movies -- been held in such low esteem."[11]

Tom Johnson, publisher of the <u>Los Angeles Times</u>, perhaps stated the

situation best in a speech December 8, 1981 at the 4th Annual Frank E.

Gannett Lecture, sponsored by the Washington Journalism Center, Washing-

ton, D.C.:

> The Fourth Estate is held in low esteem by much of the
> American public. Poll after poll reveals declining confidence
> in our ethics and practices and, inevitably, stimultes media
> critics to ever bolder attempts to restrict the constitutional
> guarantees of a free press.
>
> <u>Los Angeles Times</u> did a national poll on the public's
> perception of us. The results did us little credit. Nearly
> 40 percent of the respondents said they think that the mass
> communications industry misuses its great power by acting
> irresponsibly. Nearly 20 percent said the abuses of the media
> should be dealt with more sternly by government regulators.
>
> Only one in four thought the media are essentially ethi-
> cal. Only one in three said we are fair on our handling of
> the news.
>
> We ought to admit it; there are too many violations of
> journalistic ethics.
>
> . . . the fact is that many in our profession have been
> guilty of conflicts of interest; have been guilty of pre-
> senting outright fiction as fact; have been guilty of irre-
> sponsible and prejudicial reporting.[12]

And Jean Otto, immediate past president of the Society of Pro-

fessional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, said this past fall:

> With remarkably few exceptions, members of the media have
> done little to address their problem directly . . . We run the
> gamut of carelessness, from the small obit that misspells the
> name of the deceased to assassination coverage that reports
> the death of one who is not dead and the non-injury of one who
> was seriously injured.[13]

Donald S. MacNaughton, chairman of the Prudential Insurance Company

of America, in a discussion of an alleged anti-business bias among

newspeople said:

> With freedom comes responsibility, and in the opinion of many,
> that sense of responsibility has been lacking. Most of us are
> fed up with glib, shallow, inaccurate reporting and editing --

tired of journalistic tastes which prefer sensationalism above the fundamentals -- which allow a thespian to pose as a news-man.[14]

Norman F. Isaccs, a former editor who now runs an "official" watch-dog group called the National News Council, reflected on the impact on the 1981 Pulitzer Prize for feature writing being returned because it was discovered Washington Post reporter Janet Cooke fabricated the story. "It's a punch to the solar plexus of journalism. It gives all opposed to freedom of the press the chance to say, 'See, you can't believe everything you read.'"[15] Commented a Newsweek article about the same incident:

> That sort of thing hurts. There is nothing more impor-tant to journalists and journalism than credibility -- and even before 'Jimmy's World' was exposed as a hoax, the public had reservations about how much the news media could be trusted. The Cooke affair undoubtedly deepened those reservations.[16]

Schramm saw one key difference between this criticism and the criticism before this century:

> In mid-twentieth-century America, both the number of critics and the bitter vehemence of their attacks set this period apart. In fact, it sometimes appears to those who produce the mass media that everyone is an acid critic. Surely this is a reflection of an important fact about modern life: We have become aware of the importance of mass communication. Nearly everyone is convinced that the mass media, good or bad, are central to modern society.[17]

Popular research organizations apparently began to realize this interest in media performance in the 1930s when they began to conduct a number of polls on the subject. As early as 1939, some polling organi-zations began to ask whether one news medium was more credible than others.

Polling data on the subject of the mass media over the years must be considered carefully. First, polls attempt to measure and report on an attitude based on one question, such as this question Roper and

Associates asked in 1937: "Is the press fair?"[18] Second, as Hazel

Erskine pointed out in a review of the media and polls for The Public

Opinion Quarterly:

> . . . no firm evidence of opinion trends is available which is
> based on identically worded questions. Great heterogeneity in
> wording of questions over the decades makes any conclusions
> extremely tentative.[19]

A review of polls by national research organizations since the

1930s indicates an edge to the broadcast media over the print media in

the area of fairness, accuracy, and believability. A number of polls

showed radio outstripping newspapers in believability during World War

II. Beginning in the 1960s, popular polls began to indicate television

news was more believeable than newspapers or radio news.[20]

A 1937 poll by The Gallup Poll, Princeton, N.J., asked: "Are the

newspapers you read fair in their treatment of political news?" Forty-

seven percent said newspapers were fair and 38 percent said they were

unfair. But two years later the same question by Gallup resulted in

only 29 percent rating newspapers as fair and 61 percent indicating

newspapers were unfair. In 1939, Gallup also asked: "Do you listen to

any radio news commentators? If yes: Do you think they report the news

truthfully?" Seventy percent said yes, 10 percent no, and 20 percent

reported no opinion.[21]

A 1939 Roper poll asked if people felt that news stories in news-

papers were accurate. Slightly more than two-thirds (68.4 percent) said

newspapers were always accurate or usually accurate, compared to 24.7

percent indicating newspapers were not accurate. Another Roper poll in

1939 asked: "Which of the two -- radio or newspaper -- gets news to you

freer from prejudice." Radio outdistanced newspapers 49.7 percent to

17.1 percent, with 18.3 percent saying they were the same and 14.9 percent expressing no opinion.[22]

The National Opinion Research Center in 1945 asked: "As a whole, which do you think gives you the most accurate news -- radio or the newspapers?" Forty-six percent chose radio; 29 percent chose newspapers, and 25 percent had no opinion.[23] The Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, in 1944 asked: "Where did you think you got the most accurate news about this presidential campaign -- from the radio, newspapers, or magazines?" Fifty-seven percent chose radio, 26 percent chose newspapers, 6 percent picked magazines and the remainder chose none of the three.[24]

A 1975 Gallup Poll asked people to respond to the statement: "Newspapers are not careful about getting their facts straight." Sixty-seven percent either definitely agreed or partly agreed and 30 percent either partly disagreed or definitely disagreed.[25]

A 1975 Harris Poll asked Americans a number of questions concerning their views toward news in newspapers and news magazines and on radio and television. Harris concluded Americans depend more on television for their news than any of the other media. The results on a number of comparative items put newspaper in a most unfavorable light: television was rated as providing the most complete news by 44 percent of the respondents, compared to 34 percent picking newspapers and 11 percent radio; 48 percent said TV news was the most accurate news while 26 percent chose newspapers and 12 percent radio; 42 percent chose newspapers as being "most unfair" in its news coverage, compared to 25 percent for TV and 12 percent for radio. Fifty-three percent of the respondents said they depended on TV news most to keep them well

informed, compared to 25 percent choosing newspapers, 14 percent choosing radio, and eight percent picking news magazines.[26]

A variety of professions and occupations were rated on honesty and ethical standards in a 1976 Gallup Poll. Journalists ranked fourth among 11 occupations with 33 percent giving them a high or very high rating; 49 percent rating them about "average", and 16 percent giving a low rating. Physicians, engineers, and college teachers ranked ahead of journalists. Lawyers, senators, and congressmen were among those rated behind journalists.[27]

A 1977 poll by Harris reported that 66 percent of Americans thought television reporters were high on the ethics scale, while 63 percent thought print journalists were high on ethics.[28]

A May 1979 Gallup Poll indicated Americans expressed a greater confidence in newspapers than in television. Fifty-one percent of Americans said they had a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in newspapers, while 38 percent expressed a comparable degree of confidence in television. Six years earlier a Gallup Poll showed a narrow gap between the two media: 39 percent having a high degree of confidence in newspapers and 37 percent in television.[29]

A January 1980 Gallup Poll asked: "What has been your experience: in the things you have known about personally, has your newspaper got the facts straight, or has it been inaccurate?" Thirty-four percent indicated their newspapers had been inaccurate, 47 percent indicated accuracy and 19 percent couldn't say.[30]

A January 1980 Gallup Poll showed less than half of those persons who had an opinion on the subject thought that their newspapers got the facts straight. About a third of the respondents labeled their newspapers as inaccurate.[31]

An April 1981 Gallup Poll for Newsweek asked: "How good a job do different media do in providing accurate, unbiased news accounts?" Seventy-one percent rated network television as excellent or good as opposed to 29 percent rating it as fair or poor. Other results: local television, 69 percent excellent/good, 31 percent fair/poor; news magazines, 66 percent excellent/good, 34 percent fair/poor; daily newspapers, 57 percent excellent/good, 43 percent fair/poor. The same poll asked: "How much of what you hear and read in the news media can you believe?" Five percent said "almost all," 33 percent said "most," 52 percent "only some," and 9 percent "very little."[32]

Probably the best known and most controversial of all the polls on media credibility was done by The Roper Organization, Inc., and deserves special mention.

The Roper Studies

In 1959, the Television Information Office wanted to find out how damaging the quiz scandals had been to the image of television. Elmo Roper and Associates of New York, now The Roper Organization, Inc., was chosen to do a study of the public's attitudes toward television. The firm decided to approach the problem by comparing television to other media. The results of the nationwide survey were "on the whole, rather favorable to television," noted Burns W. Roper, then a managing partner of the firm. As for comparisons with other media, three questions were asked:

> 1) Where do you usually get most of your news about what's going on in the world today -- from the newspapers or radio or television or magazines or talking to people or where? 2) If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines, and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined

to believe -- the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers? 3) Suppose you could continue to have only one of the following --radio, television, newspapers, or magazines -- which one of the four would you most want to keep?[33]

In response to the question on where people get their news, 57 percent said newspapers; 51 percent said television; 34 percent chose radio; 8 percent magazines; 4 percent chose talking to people and 1 percent responded that they didn't know. On the question of conflicting reports and which medium people would most likely believe, newspapers headed the list at 32 percent, followed by television at 29 percent, radio at 12 percent, magazines at 10 percent, and 17 percent saying they didn't know. The final question concerning desirability of media had these results: television, 42 percent; newspapers, 32 percent; radio, 19 percent; magazines, 4 percent; and 3 percent said they didn't know or didn't answer.

In 1961, the study was repeated with the same media comparison questions. The question concerning where people got their news had essentially the same results. But television jumped 10 points on the believability question to 39 percent, while newspapers dropped 8 percent to 24 percent. Roper suggested that television's believability rating had been hurt in 1959, and that the 1961 answers represented a "bouncing back to normal."[34]

When the study was repeated in 1963, its results attracted a great deal of controversy. This survey indicated more people looked to television for their news than any other medium. Television was chosen by 55 percent of the respondents while newspapers were picked by 53 percent when they were asked where they got most of their news. Radio followed at 29 percent and magazines at 6 percent.

Newspaper editors and publishers vigorously disputed the findings, some even suggesting the study was "rigged." Burns Roper responded in a talk delivered in December 1965:

> A number of quite logical questions can be raised about our results. Perhaps 'believability,' for example, is connected with 'seeing it for oneself.' Yet 25 years earlier radio, the completely invisible medium had had the same edge over newspaper reports that television does now. I myself don't know all the reasons why our figures came out as they did, but I can suggest some not even raised by our critics. Perhaps, in their own minds, people were comparing the more standard quality of network television with the more varying quality of local newspapers. This could make a difference.

> Or perhaps, they were affected by the newspapers' greater tendency to editorialize, for we have found that interpretation and bias are very closely connected in the public's mind. Legitimate expressions of editorial opinion are, for many people, tarred with the same brush as slanted reporting of the news, and newspapers may suffer as a result. And this may be compounded because some newspapers are not averse to letting their editorial comment 'wander' off the editorial page.[35]

The Roper studies continued every two to three years throughout the 1960s and 1970s. By 1974, Roper reported 65 percent of the respondents saying television was their main source for news. That same year, television was rated the most believable news medium by 51 percent of the respondents, compared to 20 percent for newspapers, 8 percent for radio, and 8 percent for magazines.[36] The 1980 poll showed 64 percent of respondents stated that they usually get most of their news from television, compared to 44 percent from newspapers and 18 percent from radio. Fifty-one percent of the respondents said television news was the most believeable, with 22 percent picking newspapers.[37] On the desirability of media question television's advantage rose from 42 percent in 1959 to 59 percent in 1974. Newspapers dropped during the 15-year period from 32 percent to 19 percent while radio dropped from 19 percent to 17 percent, and magazines stayed at 4 percent.

The Roper Polls also have asked questions about time spent viewing television, sources of information during election years, about desirability of government control of television, and about attitudes towards programs and commercials.

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[27] George Gallup, "Doctors Rate at Top of Honest and Ethics Scale," _The Gallup Opinion Index_ (Princeton, September, 1976), p. 17.

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[29] George Gallup, "Public Now Has Greater Confidence In Newspapers Than In Television," _The Gallup Opinion Index_ (May, 1979), pp. 6 and 8.

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[33] Burns W. Roper, "The Growing Importance of Television News and the Medium's Emerging Role in Corporate Public Relations," unpublished speech distributed by The Television Information Office (New York, 1965), pp. 1-2.

[34] Ibid., p. 2.

[35] Ibid, p. 4.

[36] The Roper Organization, Inc., "Trends in Public Attitudes Toward Television and Other Mass Media 1959-1974," report distributed by The Television Information Office (New York, 1975), pp. 4-5.

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CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Credibility Question

> The media must play a role as watchdog critic in a free
> society, but they scarcely can do so effectively if they lack
> credibility. If separated from the masses and disbelieved by
> them, the media are constantly vunerable to political attack,
> which could ultimately result in a shrinking of freedom.[1]

The preceding comment by Robert D. Novak, a syndicated columnist,

underscores the importance of a news medium being credible. But exactly

what is credibility? Roper's studies apparently are based on the assump-

tion that "believability" equates with credibility.

Aristotle's <u>Rhetoric</u> probably was among the first discussions of

source credibility. Aristotle said "good sense, good moral character,

and goodwill" were the components of ethos. Carl I. Hovland, who headed

up a series of communication studies at Yale, discussed credibility in

<u>Communication and Persuasion</u>:

> An individual's tendency to accept a conclusion advocated
> by a given communicator will depend in part upon how well
> informed and intelligent he believes the communicator to be.
> However, a recipient may believe that a communicator is cap-
> able of transmitting valid statements, but still be inclined
> to reject the communication if he suspects the communicator is
> motivated to make nonvalid assertions. It seems necessary,
> therefore, to make a distinction between (1) the extent to
> which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid asser-
> tions (his 'expertness') and (2) the degree of confidence in
> the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he con-
> siders most valid (his 'trustworthiness'). In any given case,
> the weight given a communicator's assertions by his audience
> will depend upon both of these factors, and this resultant val-
> ue can be referred to as the 'credibility' of the communicator.[2]

Kim Giffin, who directed a series of studies on credibility and trust at the University of Kansas in 1967-68, suggested trust is an attitude that involves potential for action. Asserted Giffin: ". . . (trust is) reliance upon the characteristics of an object, or the occurrence of an event, or the behavior of a person in order to achieve a desired but uncertain objective in a risky situation."[3] Giffin and Susan Vance Williams concluded that intent and expertness are the major factors in the concept of trust.[4]

Giffin's investigation suggested five factors as influencing interpersonal trust in small group communication: (1) expertness, (2) reliability, (3) intentions, (4) activeness, and (5) personal attraction.[5] These findings suggest trust is not unidimensional but rather multidimensional.

An impressive array of studies point to the need also to consider source credibility, and specifically mass media credibility, as multidimensional. A number of different factors have been identified, although there has not always been agreement on the labels for factors or the existence of some factors.

David K. Berlo, James B. Lemert, and Robert J. Mertz extended the work of Hovland on source credibility by investigating the criteria used by receivers in evaluating messages sources. They isolated three dimensions: Safety, Qualification, and Dynamism.[6] By using the procedures followed by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum in constructing the Semantic Differential, a set of 83 bipolar pairs were constructed. Two studies, one of 91 Michigan State University students, and the other of 117 Lansing, Mich., residents, resulted in similar findings. Berlo concluded: "It seems clear that there are three, and only three, stable and meaningful dimensions of source evaluations."[7]

The factor they labeled Safety included such scales as kind-cruel, fair-unfair, objective-subjective, and unselfish-selfish. In all, the Safety factor accounted for 34 percent of the total variance. The Qualification factor accounted for 16 percent of the total variance and included such scales as experienced-inexperienced, informed-uninformed, intelligent-unintelligent, and able-inept. These first two factors were suggested by Berlo et al., to be very similar to Hovland's Trustworthiness and Expertise factors. A third factor found by the Berlo team was Dynamism. It accounted for 10 percent of the total variation and included such scales as fast-slow, aggressive-meek, forceful-forceless, active-passive, and bold-timid.[8]

A fourth factor labeled Sociability was discounted by Berlo. It contributed only 2 percent to the explained variance and only two of the 83 scales had their highest loadings on that factor (sociable-unsociable and cheerful-gloomy) in the college sample. When additional scales hypothesized to load on the Sociability factor were added for the Lansing sample the results favored a three-dimensional conclusion. Many of the scales loaded higher on the Safety factor.

Studies by James C. McCroskey in 1966 attempted to determine scales for measuring ethos and discussed factors identified by analysis. Two significant factors emerged: Authoritativeness and Character. He suggested they corresponded with the Competence and Trustworthiness factors found by Berlo and his associates. Dynamism did not appear but McCroskey pointed out the Likert scale used in the study did not have items directed toward the factor.[9]

Sixty-five bi-polar Semantic Differential scales, many the same as used in the two aforementioned studies, were selected by Jack L. Whitehead,

Jr. in his attempt to identify factors of source credibility in 1968. His results indicated four factors which he labeled Trustworthiness, Professionalism, Dynamism, and Objectivity.[10]

These and other studies relating to ethos or source credibility all point to the view that ethos cannot be considered unidimensional. Observed Raymond K. Tucker in a 1971 discussion of factor analysis and ethos:

> One of the contributions McCroskey made to ethos measurement was in fact its breakdown into the two factors, or components, of authoritativeness and character. This constitutes strong evidence to support the view that the ethos concept cannot be considered unidimensional. In noting this, McCroskey joins an impressive listing of theorists who maintain that attitudes, in general, may consist of a number of dimensions, or components.[11]

A number of researchers have treated media credibility as a single dimension concept. Included are the Roper studies for the Television Information Office. In effect, they asked respondents if they believe or trust one medium over another. These efforts are fine as far as they go but they don't address why certain credibility choices are made and what criteria are used in making those choices.

The first attempt at measuring the credibility of media with something other than single-question attitude statements apparently came in 1956 by Percy Tannenbaum. He conducted a study for Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. designed to examine the images of several radio stations on a set of bi-polar objective scales, including good-bad, biased-unbiased, dull-interesting. The respondents were asked to judge the best radio station they could imagine on each scale. Tannenbaum found from statistical analyses three criteria on which people tended to base their judgements on radio stations: (1) Evaluation (good-bad), (2) Potency (strong-weak), and (3) Activity (calm-agitated).[12] Bradley S. Greenberg

and Michael E. Roloff, in a review of media credibility research, observed:

> These three components were independent of each other. In other words, when a person evaluated a radio station, each of the three criteria was used separately. However, the first criterion, evaluation, appeared to be composed of at least two sub-criteria.[13]

In 1957 and 1958, the School of Journalism at the University of Minnesota conducted similar studies on newspaper images. Five factors accounted for more than 60 percent of the variance in ratings of several newspapers. The components of judgment were identified as: (1) A General Evaluation factor (good-bad, pleasing-annoying); (2) Potency (strong-weak, bold-timid); (3) Activity (calm-agitated); (4) Ethical Evaluation (responsible-irresponsible, fair-unfair); and (5) Stylistic (well written-poorly written).[14] These same five factors emerged in a national survey by Tannenbaum and McLeod in which four media (the ideal magazine, the ideal newspaper, the ideal radio station, and the ideal television station) were rated. Each concept was rated on a 20-item, bi-polar adjective scale.[15]

Using Semantic Differential, Jack Lyle in 1960 used 57 scales to arrive at five factors involving reader attitudes toward newspapers. The factors he found, and the scales that he selected as most purely loaded on the respective factors were: (1) Newsworthiness (fast-slow, sharp-dull, fresh-stale, complete-incomplete, strong-weak, balanced-unbalanced, and interesting-uninteresting); (2) Bias (unbiased-biased, impartial-partial); (3) Accuracy (careful-carelessness, accurate-inaccurate, bad-good, interesting-uninteresting, and fair-unfair); (4) General Quality (superior-inferior, attractive-unattractive, good-bad, fair-unfair, strong-weak, right-wrong, and active-passive; (5) factor

not named (superior-inferior, fresh-stale, clean-dirty, and balanced-unbalanced).[16]

Leslie W. Sargent used 11 Semantic Differential scales that were selected to represent all five of the factors which Tannenbaum and McLeod found relevant to evaluation of media. Sargent's 1965 study centered on personal and non-personal news sources rather than factors of credibility. Sargent presented 340 undergraduate students at Ohio University with personal media and impersonal media treatments. Using the factors identified, Sargent was able to look at differences on every factor when the two treatments were introduced. Among the findings were that personal sources show higher ratings than non-personal sources for scales loading on the Ethical factor. It was also concluded that television shows the most marked difference between personal and impersonal presentation.[17] It is easy to see the depth and other advantages available when a credibility problem is considered as multidimensional.

Fifty-five adjective pairs taken from previous Semantic Differential research were used by David Markham in 1968 in an effort to describe a series of judgments by 598 college students at Northern Illinois University concerning the image of three television newscasters presented on film. Three major factors emerged. The author called the first factor a reliable-logical factor, the second a showmanship factor that he said seemed to correspond to the well-known Dynamism factor, and the third he called a trustworthiness dimension. These three factors accounted for 47.77 percent of the total variance. Five sub-factors accounted for another 14.68 percent. Markham labeled these as: Morality, Bodily Skill, Data Evaluation, Speed, and Extroversion.[18] Remarked Markham:

The reader should be cautioned not to interpret the above remarks to mean that this study differs significantly from previous Semantic Differential studies of source credibility. Rather, this analysis shows the major factors to be primarily the same as in platform speaking studies. The subfactors could be considered as overlaying or as additions to the major three factors.[19]

A year later, Harvey K. Jacobson employed 20 scales adapted from the Tannenbaum and McLeod work to isolate basic receiver gratifications supplied by three media sources: radio, television, and newspapers. He reported a factor analysis of data produced two credibility dimensions -- Authenticity and Objectivity --and two non-credibility dimensions -- Dynamism and Respite.[20]

James C. McCroskey and Thomas A. Jenson set out to develop a measure concerned with the image of media sources that would be reliable and valid across varying subject populations. Fifty-three Semantic Differential scales representing dimensions of source credibility reported in the earlier studies. A number of media sources were presented to three samples ranging in size from 204 persons to 707 persons in three communities. A comparison of results suggested the presence of five dimensions of response which were labeled Competence, Extroversion, Composure, Character, and Sociability.[21] Among their conclusions: "Our results suggest that all five (factors) are important, but that 'Competence,' 'Character,' and 'Sociability,' are probably most important."[22]

Raymond S.H. Lee, in a Semantic Differential-type study in 1978, used four concepts: (1) Newspaper National/International News, (2) TV National/International News, (3) Newspaper Local/State News, (4) TV Local/State News. Analysis indicated different factors for the various concepts. Both newspaper concepts had four major factors emerge while TV had three major factors.[23]

Research had consistently found source image to be a multidimensional perception, whether it is an interpersonal source or a mass media news source. Thus, it would appear the most rewarding method of attempting to measure attitude toward media image would be with an instrument designed to regard media image as multidimensional.

Results of Attempts to Measure
News Media Credibility

When the Roper studies first began to show television as edging ahead of newspapers on its credibility question, a number of researchers became interested in the phenomenon of news media credibility. The majority of the studies involving the question have used unidimensional measuring tools rather than the more sophisticated means just discussed. The researchers have been interested primarily in the following questions: "Who uses which media as their prime news source?" "Who believes which news media?" "Why do people believe one news source over another?"

Bruce H. Westley and Warner J. Severin produced the first thorough attempt to identify correlates of media credibility and media use. They used their results to construct profiles of those individuals who believe television is the most credible news medium and those naming newspapers as most credible. Data were collected from 927 adults in Wisconsin during late 1961 and early 1962. They concluded the newspaper-most-credible type was composed of more males than females, better educated, earned more money, held a higher status occupation, resided in an urban area, was an independent in politics, and belonged to more organized groups. The television-most-credible type was described by the authors as:

> A farm wife of low income and education whose status is now
> equal to or lower than that of her father and who regards
> herself as 'working class.' She either has no interest in
> politics or is a strong partisan of one party or the other.[24]

When considering these data today, several limitations should be remembered. The data were not from a national sample and the profiles are likely outdated since television news is quite different today than in 1961-62. Also, credibility was treated as unidimensional.

Carter and Greenberg's 1964 study used the Roper question on credibility but also included additional questions in an attempt to reveal reasons why respondents picked one medium over another. They concluded that, in the sample of 501 adults in the San Jose, Calif. area, television was selected because it was perceived as having a visual advantage. Respondents also rated television as having better personnel. Television and radio were seen as more immediate. Newspapers scored high because of a perceived advantage in completeness and accuracy, but were also perceived as being more biased than radio and TV. They also reported a general feeling of over-all confidence was indicated for radio and newspapers but not for TV.[25]

Timothy J. Meyer, in a review of media credibility research, cautions that the Carter and Greenberg data are also limited:

> . . . in the sense that it treats media source credibility as
> essentially an unidimensional concept and it, too, may well be
> dated because of changes in the news operations of television,
> both network and local.[26]

In a survey of persons in San Jose, Calif. and Lansing, Mich., Greenberg found sex significantly related to media usage and media credibility questions. He reported 78 percent of the women, but only 61 percent of the men would believe a television news report more than their newspaper. Fifty-six percent of the women and 40 percent of the men chose television over newspapers on the usage question.[27]

Greenberg and Kumata reported sex was a moderate predictor for hours of TV viewing, with women viewing TV 46 minutes more a day than men.[28] But they concluded that, overall, the variables sex, age, income, and education contributed very little as predictors of media use. Multiple correlation of variables in their study resulted in an accounting of 3 percent of the variance in television viewing, 5 percent of the variance in radio listening, and 27 percent of the variability in newspaper readership scores.[29] Commented the authors:

> Our study also points out the danger of single-variable explanations in the realm of media usage. The importance of the zero-order correlations between any one of the independent variables and media usage diminishes when we introduce additional predictor variables in a multivariate analysis scheme.[30]

Robert L. Stevenson and Kathryn P. White examined the audience of network television news. Using the national sample of 5,621 respondents gathered by the commercial research firm of W.R. Simmons & Associates (respondents keep viewing diaries), they concluded viewing is unrelated to sex or race but that it is significantly related to age, education, and occupation. "People who watch network news on television tend to be elderly -- this is the factor which most clearly identifies the network news viewer -- less educated and not working."[31]

The elderly were also linked to over-all television use in a study by Alan M. and Rebecca B. Rubin. But they suggested this is not due to the sedentary nature of aging but the fact that most elderly persons are in a confined context due to social considerations. They pointed out that less mobile, older persons rely less on social activity and other media sources than they do on television. Their study involved observing young and old persons in a confined context, a hospital environment. The younger patients increased their viewing time over their home

environment while the elderly patients held consistent.[32] Suggested the authors: "It may be that within a confined environment such as a hospital, television provides all viewers, regardless of age, with a means of combating loneliness and with a 'window to the world.'"[33]

News programs were among the highest viewed in the hospital situation by all patients, suggesting a need by the confined to keep in touch with the outside environment.[34]

A 1971 Bureau of Advertising study in some 200 localities related age to both newspaper reading and television viewing. Seventy-seven percent of those 18 or older read a daily newspaper. Eighty percent of persons over 34 read a newspaper daily, compared to 66 percent for persons 18-24. The average weekday audience for all local and network TV news programs was 48 percent for persons above age 18. Sixty-two percent of persons over 34 viewed TV news daily, compared to 42 percent of persons aged 18-24.[35]

Harvey Jacobson in his survey of 627 Wisconsin residents found newspaper readers rate newspapers as more reliable or authentic than TV but rate TV and radio as more objective. In addition, he concluded:

> Both Television Believers and Radio Believers regard newspapers to be significantly less objective than their most believable medium, yet both Television and Radio Believers find no difference in the Objectivity of television and radio.[36]

Greenberg and Roloff examined Roper data concerning the credibility of media and age from 1963 to 1972. Their conclusions:

1. Young people rely more on the broadcast media than newspapers and find them more useful. They are most negative in attitude toward newspapers and most positive to TV news.
2. All age categories tend to rank television highest in terms of credibility.
3. Older and younger people have tended to use radio more than middle-aged.[37]

Westley and Severin found that the higher the education level, the greater the credibility of newspapers and the greater the distrust of television.[38] They also concluded that the trust people assign to the media is not unrelated to the media people use.[39] In other words, a person who uses television news as his or her main news source will likely assign television news the most credibility. It is not possible to conclude whether people think a news medium is credible because they use it or that they use it because they perceive it as credible.

Carter and Greenberg found in their study using a unidimensional attitude question that television was the most believed source for all levels of education.[40] In a review of credibility research, Greenberg and Roloff summarized the age variable: "A reasonable generalization from these studies would be that college educated individuals tend to use more sources of information overall and find print most useful for news."[41]

Meyer suggests that one medium's credibility edge over another is only true "for certain types of people with certain types of stories under certain types of conditions."[42] Much of the literature on demographic variables is mixed, with contradictions common. This could be due to spurious relationships or to changes in the population or from sampling only specific geographic areas that are not representative of a national sample.

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Reasons Behind Differences

In Media Credibility

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A number of researchers have pointed out fundamental differences between media, particularly television, and newspapers. They suggest

these differences should be taken into account in any consideration of

relative media credibility. Asserted Greenberg and Roloff:

> To begin, one must recognize a fundamentally different
> orientation by the public toward television and toward the
> newspaper. The public's orientation toward television is not
> toward its news function but is a more macro-orientation
> toward the anticipated entertainment that will be received.
> The fact that part of what is received is news should not
> detract from the point that the viewer typically goes to the
> television set to be entertained rather than to be informed.
> The information derived may well be a secondary effect to the
> medium or at least a secondary consideration to the viewer in
> approaching the medium. This contrasts for us with what
> appears to be the principal orientation to the newspaper. One
> goes to the newspaper to find out something. What is likely
> to be sought is information which may have some utility in
> either personal or social forms. Therefore, what we are
> arguing conceptually is that if questions are asked about the
> newspaper, the predominant frame of reference for the respond-
> ent is a news orientation. When one asks about the credibil-
> ity of television in general, it is more likely that the
> respondent thinks first of television and the entertainment
> received and second of television for the news and public
> affairs received.[43]

They go on to suggest that it is likely much of the response one

gets about television news and its credibility may result from its

larger role in the life of the individual and the newspaper's smaller,

perhaps better defined, role.[44] David K. Berlo in his book, The Process

of Communication, contended one cannot distinguish clearly between

functions of communication.

> The inform-persuade-entertain distinction has led to
> confusion . . . There has been a tendency to interpret these
> purposes as exclusive; one is not giving information when he
> is entertaining, one is not entertaining when he is persuad-
> ing, and so on. Clearly, this is not so. Yet the distinction
> is frequently made.
>
> For example, it is popular today to distinguish between
> education (inform), propaganda (persuade), and entertainment
> (entertain). In the public media, we try to distinguish
> between educational programs and entertainment programs --
> without providing any reasonable basis for such distinction.
> Some professional communicators in the press and in education
> state that they are not trying to persuade people, they 'merely

give them information.' Others view the entertainment industry as something independent of persuasion and ignore the effects their messages might be having on the levels of knowledge, through processes, and attitudes of their audiences.[45]

Wilbur Schramm also struck this chord:

. . . news media can successfully go only so far beyond their basic nature, in seeking either credibility or popularity. A horse cannot roar very well, and a lion is unlikely to become a useful beast of burden. Television has a quality of entertainment that audiences do not want it to lose. Newspapers have a power of careful documentation that audiences do not want them to lose, only in exchange for becoming faster and more sprightly.[46]

In Markham's study of credibility of television newscasters, he found three major factors, one of which he labeled as "showmanship." Markham suggested:

This theatrical feature may be the function of the predisposition that the American public has in regard to television: i.e., that if the program is not more or less entertaining, the newscast is bad.[47]

Ronald Mulder agreed that the difference in orientation between television and newspapers will always favor television when comparing relative credibility. Said Mulder:

People approach television for entertainment and newspapers for information. When viewers are in the entertainment processing mode, they are less likely to search and discover news errors than if the respondents were operating in the information-processing mode. Thus respondents faced with a credibility assessment question would tend to favor television news over newspapers.[48]

Walter Gantz raised some other cautions in attempting to measure differences in media credibility. He said public perceptions of news media may be functionally related to the availability and professionalism associated with the local news product. He also suggested some viewers may evaluate media in terms of usefulness of content and accessibility rather than credibility.[49]

Gantz's assertions and the previous comments about the entertainment function of media suggest any measurement tool designed to measure credibility should take a form as to separate and identify various judgments by respondents. It appears any judgment concerning a medium will involve an over-all image that includes a variety of factors. The usual components identified with credibility --accuracy, objectivity, and trustworthiness -- are only a part of any credibility assessment or attitude.

Greenberg and Roloff emphasized one other point: that when a respondent is asked about different media in general, he probably is responding internally to television as national network news rather than a local channel and to newspapers as his local newspaper rather than a national newspaper.[50]

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CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Formation of Attitudes

An attitude cannot be directly observed and studied in the same manner that a doctor can observe and study a person's anatomy. Attitudes are part of a complicated web of internal states within every person.

Milton Rokeach defined attitudes within the framework of a belief system. His theory of organizational change refers to beliefs as "inferences made by an observer about underlying states of expectancy."[1]

> A belief system may be defined as having represented within it, in some organized psychological but not necessarily logical form, each and every person's countless beliefs about physical and social reality.[2]

Rokeach suggests not all beliefs are equally important; they vary along a central-peripheral dimension. Therefore, he concludes that more central beliefs will resist change more than less-central beliefs and that the more central the belief changed, the more widespread the repercussions in the remainder of the belief system.[3] Given this, Rokeach defined attitude: "An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner."[4]

He suggests an attitude represents a cluster or syndrome of two or more interrelated elements and that attitudes are learned.[5]

Values, the final link in his theory, are defined by Rokeach as:

> . . . a type of belief, centrally located within one's total
> belief system, about how one ought not to behave, or about
> some end-state of existence worth or not worth attaining.
> Values are thus abstract ideals, positive or negative, not
> tied to any specific attitude object or situation, represent-
> ing a person's beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal
> terminal goals . . .[6]

He suggests that the average adult probably has tens or hundreds of

thousands of beliefs, thousands of attitudes, but only dozens of values.[7]

He suggests behavior is a function of the interaction between the two

attitudes -- attitude-toward-object and attitude-toward-situation.[8]

> The recognition that the two kinds of attitudes will
> cognitively interact with one another implies that they will
> have differing degrees of importance with respect to one
> another, thereby resulting in behavior that will be different-
> ially influenced by the two kinds of attitudes. In one case,
> an attitude object may activate relatively more powerful
> beliefs than those activated by the situation, thereby account-
> ing for the generality of behavior with respect to an attitude
> object; on the other hand, the situation may activate the more
> powerful beliefs, thereby accounting for the specificity of
> behavior with respect to an attitude object.[9]

Rokeach contends it is not possible for a person to act contrary to

his attitudes. If he acts contrary to one attitude, then it can be

assumed he acted in accord with a second or third or fourth attitude

that overrode the first attitude in importance.

But he asserts it is not enough to say social behavior is a func-

tion of two attitudes. To predict behavioral outcome requires a model

about the manner in which two attitudes will cognitively interact with

one another. He suggested the two attitudes are assumed to affect

behavior in direct proportion to their perceived importance with respect

to one another.[10] Rokeach puts forward a two-attitude theory of behavior:

"Behavior with respect to an object is always a function of at least two

attitudes -- attitude toward object and attitude toward the situation

within which the object is encountered."[11] L.L. Thurstone defined attitude as: ". . . the sum total of a man's inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, fears, threats, and convictions about any specified topic."[12]

Charles E. Osgood et al., identified "attitude" as one of the major dimensions of meaning-in-general and offered the following definition of attitude:

> Most authorities are agreed that attitudes are learned and implicit -- they are inferred states of the organism that are presumably acquired in much the same manner that other such internal learned activity is acquired. Further, they are predispositions to respond, but are distinguished from other such states of readiness in that they predispose toward an evaluation response.[13]

The Semantic Differential

A number of methods are used by the social scientist in an attempt to measure the attitudes of people. One of the most significant of these methods came about as a by-product of work in experimental semantics by Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum.

> It has been feasible to identify 'attitude' as one of the major dimensions of meaning-in-general and thus to extend the measurement procedures of the semantic differential to an important area of social psychology.[14]

Osgood et al., suggest that attitudes can be ascribed to a basic bipolar continuum with a neutral or zero reference point. Attitudes have both a direction and intensity, providing a basis for quantitative indexing of attitudes, they contend.

Semantic Differential measures people's reactions to stimulus words and concepts in terms of ratings on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives at each end.[15] The unfavorable pole of the scale is

assigned the score "1" and the favorable pole assigned a score of "7."
A typical scale is presented in Figure 1.

Good ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ Bad

Figure 1. A Semantic Differential Scale

A person is presented with a concept and a number of such scales
and asked to rate the concept. The ratings are then analyzed in various
ways to determine the person's attitude toward the concept. Explained
Osgood:

> The major properties of attitude that any measurement
> technique is expected to index are readily accommodated by
> this procedure. Direction of attitude, favorable or unfavor-
> able, is simply indicated by the selection of polar terms by
> the subject; if the score falls more toward the favorable
> poles, then the attitude is taken to be favorable, and vice
> versa. A score that falls at the origin, defined by '4' on
> the scales, is taken as an index of neutrality of attitude.[16]

Repeated research has identified three dimensions that appear in
analysis of Semantic Differential data. Osgood and his colleagues have
labeled these dimensions as "Evaluation," "Potency," and "Activity."
Fred N. Kerlinger perhaps explained these dimensions most simply:

> Through research, Osgood has found that, when analyzed,
> adjective pairs like good-bad, bitter-sweet, large-small, and
> clean-dirty fall into clusters. The most important cluster
> seems to consist of adjectives that are Evaluative, such as
> good-bad and pleasant-unpleasant. A second cluster has adjec-
> tives that seem to share strength or Potency ideas. Strong-
> weak and rugged-delicate are examples. A third important
> factor is called Activity because its adjectives seem to
> express motion and action. Fast-slow and hot-cold are exam-
> ples.[17]

David R. Heise, in his review of the Semantic Differential, sug-
gested it is sometimes convenient to think of the EPA dimensions

(evaluation, potency, activity) as forming a three-dimensional space, as
has Osgood and others. Said Heise:

> Treating EPA measurements of a stimulus as coordinates allows
> the stimulus to be positioned as a point in the space, and
> this point graphically represents the affective response to
> the stimulus.[18]

Kerlinger and Heise point out that the primary question in con-
structing a Semantic Differential instrument is what scales should be
used. Kerlinger emphasizes that the scales must represent necessary
factors and be relevant to the concepts to be used.[19] Heise reports the
most common procedure is to select scales on the basis of published
factor analyses:

> The only objective way to select factorially pure scales is on
> the basis of actual factor analyses. Researchers experienced
> with the SD are aware that intuition is an unreliable guide in
> selecting factorially pure scales.[20]

More than one scale for each dimension is desirable in order to
improve the reliability of factor scores. Heise suggests four scales
per dimension "can give adequate sensitivity for most purposes."[21]

The reliability and validity of Semantic Differential have been
demonstrated on numerous occasions. Tannenbaum compiled test-retest
reliability data by having 135 subjects on two occasions five weeks
apart rate six concepts on six evaluative scales. The test-retest
coefficients ranged from .87 to .93.[22] Osgood et al., compared Semantic
Differential measures with two other attitude instruments, one using
Thurstone scales and the second using Guttman-type scales. Regarding
the comparison with the Thurstone scale scores, they commented:

> The correlation between the semantic differential scores and
> the corresponding Thurstone scores is significantly greater
> than chance ($p < .01$) in each case, and in no case is the
> across-techniques correlation significantly lower than the
> reliability coefficient for the Thurstone test . . . It is
> apparent that, that whatever the Thurstone scales measures,

the evaluative factor of the semantic differential measures just about as well.[23]

The rank order correlation between the Semantic Differential and the Guttman scale was .78 (p < .01). Osgood et al., concluded that the two instruments were measuring the same thing to a high degree.[24]

Osgood et al., in their early work indicated that only the evaluative dimension should be used with attitude measurement:

> It seems reasonable to identify attitude, as it is ordinarily conceived in both lay and scientific language, with the evaluative dimension of the total semantic space, as this is isolated in the factorialization of meaningful judgments.[25]

Heise suggests, however, that Potency and Activity do get involved in attitude measurements. He reports that multiple correlations of EPA ratings with traditional scales often are higher than the correlations of only Evaluation ratings with the scales.

> In the future it would be advisable to obtain ratings on all three dimensions when one is interested in attitudes. Almost certainly the full EPA information will increase the power of analyses.[26]

A number of analyses are possible with SD data. The scores are simply the numbers 1 through 7, the lower number assigned to the negative end-point and the higher number assigned to the positive end-point of each scale. Usually two or more concepts are used in a SD study and the most obvious method of analysis is to compare the mean scores of the concepts. Osgood stressed another kind of analysis called distance-cluster analysis, which is a measure of the distance between any two concepts. Kerlinger described the premise behind the so-called D statistic:

> If two concepts are close together in semantic space, they are alike in meaning for the individual or group making the judgments. Conversely, if they are separated in semantic space, they differ in meaning.[27]

Factor scores are also used in the SD analysis. Kerlinger defines

the term "factor score" in SD work as the sum or mean of two or more SD

adjective pairs on one of the EPA factors or other factors that have

been identified.[28] For example, a researcher might use 12 adjective

pairs, with four each coming from each of the EPA factors.

The Instrument

Despite a wealth of literature promoting the advantages of employ-

ing multidimensional measurement for source credibility, the majority of

research in the area of the news media has involved single-question

instruments. Remarked James C. McCroskey and Thomas A. Jenson:

> A plausible explanation for the popularity of this unsophi-
> sticated approach, beyond the fact that it is convenient, is
> that little attention has been paid to isolation of dimensions
> of the image of media sources or the development of specific
> measures of those dimensions.[29]

Most of the attempts to develop such a measure have involved the

Semantic Differential technique. McCroskey and Jenson concluded from

their work that scales developed for source credibility should not be

assumed to be universally applicable.[30] Thus, they and others have

worked toward developing scales especially applicable to the image of

news media.

The factors and scales identified by McCroskey and Jenson were as

follows:[31] 1) Competence (qualified-unqualified, expert-inexpert,

reliable-unreliable, believable-unbelievable, competent-incompetent,

intellectual-narrow, valuable-worthless, informed-uninformed); 2) Character

(cruel-kind, unsympathetic-sympathetic, selfish-unselfish, sinful-virtuous);

3) Sociability (friendly-unfriendly, cheerful-gloomy, good natured-irrit-

able, sociable-unsociable); 4) Composure (composed-excitable, calm-anxious,

tense-relaxed, nervous-poised); 5) Extroversion (meek-aggressive, timid-bold, talkative-silent, extroverted-introverted, verbal-quiet).

These scales were arrived at from a pool of 53 scales chosen from a bigger pool drawn from studies by McCroskey, Markham, Whitehead, and Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz.[32] These scales had the highest loadings in the factor analyses. The factors accounted for 62 percent of the total variance. The authors concluded that, although all five factors were important, Competence, Character, and Sociability were probably most important.

Lyle used 57 scales to arrive at five factors involving readers' attitudes toward newspapers. The factors he found and the scales that loaded with them were:[33] 1) Newsworthiness (fast-slow, sharp-dull, fresh-stale, complete-incomplete, strong-weak, balanced-unbalanced, and interesting-uninteresting); 2) Bias (unbiased-biased, impartial-partial); 3) Accuracy (careful-careless, accurate-inaccurate, good-bad, fair-unfair, strong-weak, right-wrong, and active-passive); 5) factor not named (superior-inferior, fresh-stale, clean-dirty, and balanced-unbalanced).

The factors and scales found by Tannenbaum and McLeod in a national survey concerning media evaluation were:[34] 1) General Evaluation (pleasant-unpleasant, valuable-worthless, important-unimportant, interesting-boring); 2) Ethical Evaluation (fair-unfair, truthful-untruthful, accurate-inaccurate, unbiased-biased, responsible-irresponsible); 3) Stylistic (exciting-dull, fresh-stale, easy-difficult, neat-messy, colorful-colorless); 4) Potency (bold-timid, powerful-weak, loud-soft); and Activity (tense-relaxed, active-passive, modern-old fashioned).

Shaw identified five scales that presumably measure credibility: unreliability-trustworthy, selfish-public spirited, fragmentary-complete,

biased-impartial, and reckless-prudent.[35] Shaw gave this qualification
concerning these scales:

> The five scales available for the present study may not in
> fact tap the principal components of media credibility.
> Scales indexing perceived dynamism, expertise, and prestige
> would have to be included in a more comprehensive analysis.[36]

In the current study, the author drew scale items from the studies
by Lyle, McCroskey, Tannenbaum, and McLeod, and Shaw. The author sug-
gests that Lyle's General Quality factor matches closely to McCroskey's
Composure factor and Tannenbaum's General Evaluation factor. McCroskey's
Competence factor seems to match with Lyle's Accuracy and Tannenbaum's
Ethical Evaluation. Tannenbaum's Stylistic factor and McCroskey's
Sociability factor seem similar, as well as the fifth factor that Lyle
didn't name in his study. The author chose to use Lyle's Newsworthiness
factor intact as well as McCroskey's Character factor. Following are
the scales selected and arranged in hypothesized factors.

General Quality: good-bad, superior-inferior, strong-weak, attrac-
tive-unattractive, and valuable-worthless.

Accuracy/Competence: accurate-inaccurate, reliable-unreliable,
fair-unfair, believable-unbelievable.

Newsworthiness: fast-slow, complete-incomplete, interesting-unin-
teresting, balanced-unbalanced.

Character/Sociability: public-spirited-selfish, virtuous-sinful,
kind-cruel, and sympathetic-unsympathetic.

Stylistic/Entertainment: entertaining-dull, cheerful-gloomy,
fresh-stale.

The General Quality factor is made up of highly evaluative scales.
Some studies on source credibility, such as Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz,
have shown two evaluative factors. Thus the author included more scales

on the General Quality factor than on the other four hypothesized factors. The author changed Tannenbaum's exciting-dull scale to entertaining-dull. McCroskey's selfish-unselfish scale was replaced in favor of Shaw's selfish-public spirited scale. The latter seems more applicable to concepts of news media and was used successfully by Shaw.

Three concepts were used with 20 scale items: radio news, television news, and news in newspapers. Respondents also were asked to provide demographic data such as sex, age, education, and level of family income. Demographic levels correspond with those commonly used by The Gallup Poll.

The Sampling Procedure

The sample was selected from adults in the Stillwater, Oklahoma area by a systematic random method. Columns within the Stillwater telephone directory, then names within the columns, were selected randomly to obtain 400 names.

The questionnaire and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix) were mailed to the 400 persons selected. Within 10 days of the mailing, an attempt was made to contact by telephone the persons chosen for the sample to urge them to return the completed surveys. A total of 146 persons (36.5 percent) returned surveys. Of those, 145 were usable surveys (36.25 percent).

While the return rate was not high enough to enable the author to generalize to the Stillwater population, it was large enough to make observations concerning those persons who did respond.

The response rate was somewhat typical for mail surveys. Kerlinger reports returns of less than 40 or 50 percent are common.[37] Delbert C.

Miller reported response rates to mailed questionnaires typically are low, "usually not exceeding 50 percent."[38]

The author chose a mail questionnaire in the face of the likelihood of less than desirable returns because of time and financial limitations.

Analysis

Analysis of variance was used to analyze the main and interactive effects. According to Kerlinger:

> In factorial analysis of variance two or more independent variables vary independently or interact with each other to produce variation in a dependent variable . . . One of the most significant and revolutionary developments in a modern research design and statistics is the planning and analysis of the simultaneous operation and interaction of two or more variables. Scientists have long known that variables do not act independently. Rather, they often act in concert.[39]

In this research, the author used a Type III analysis of variance, also known as a multi-factor mixed design with repeated measures on one factor.

ENDNOTES

[1] Milton Rokeach, <u>Beliefs, Attitudes and Values</u> (San Francisco, 1968), p. 2.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 112.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 124.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., pp. 127-128.

[9] Ibid., p. 128.

[10] Ibid., pp. 136-137.

[11] Ibid, pp. 163-164.

[12] L.L. Thurstone, "Attitude Can Be Measured," <u>Attitude Measurement</u>, ed. Gene F. Summers (Chicago, 1970), p. 128.

[13] Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, <u>The Measurement of Meaning</u> (Urbana, Ill., 1957), p. 189.

[14] Ibid.

[15] David Heise, "The Semantic Differential and Attitude Research," <u>Attitude Measurement</u>, ed. Gene F. Summers (Chicago, 1970), p. 235.

[16] Osgood, et al., p. 190.

[17] Fred N. Kerlinger, <u>Foundations of Behavioral Research</u> (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta, Dallas, Montreal, Toronto, London, Sydney, 1973), p. 569.

[18] Heise, pp. 237-238.

[19] Kerlinger, pp. 570-571.

[20] Heise, pp. 238-239.

[21] Ibid., p. 239.

[22] Osgood et al., p. 190.

[23] Ibid., p. 191.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., pp. 189-190.

[26] Heise, pp. 250-251.

[27] Kerlinger, p. 574.

[28] Ibid., p. 576.

[29] McCroskey and Jenson, p. 169.

[30] Ibid., p. 170.

[31] Ibid., pp. 174-175.

[32] Ibid., p. 171.

[33] Lyle, p. 562.

[34] Greenburg and Roloff, p. 107.

[35] Shaw, p. 309.

[36] Ibid., p. 311.

[37] Kerlinger, p. 414.

[38] Delbert C. Miller, Handbook of Research Design and Social Meaurement (New York and London, 1977), p. 79.

[39] Kerlinger, p. 245.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

As described previously, three component variables -- television news, radio news, and news in newspapers -- were used, along with four demographic variables (Sex, Age, Income, and Education). The dependent variable was the mean scores derived for each type of news from 20 bi-polar adjective pairs.

A random sample of 400 persons was mailed the questionnaire. Of the 145 respondents, 72 were men and 69 were women. Four persons did not indicate their sex. The Age, Education, and Income breakdowns of respondents are provided in Tables I, II, and III, respectively. Levels in each of these variables were collapsed to provide statistically sound groups for variance analysis.

The Age Variable was divided into high (30 and over) and low (18-29) categories. Education levels were high (college degree) and low (less than college degree). Income levels were high ($25,000 and over) and low (under $25,000). These breakdowns indicate both a well-educated and affluent sample of respondents which might be expected in a university-dominated town.

The author used a Type III analysis of variance design to reveal the effects of two factors working in concert, as well as revealing differences in repeated measures on the three types of news. The demographic variables were rotated two at a time. An example of how the

49

TABLE I

AGE BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLE

Age	Number of Respondents	Percent
18-24	81	56.3
25-29	10	6.9
30-49	30	20.8
50 and over	23	16.0
Total	144	100.0

TABLE II

EDUCATIONAL BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLE

Education	Number of Respondents	Percent
Less Than High School Diploma	4	2.8
High School Diploma	7	4.9
Some College	79	54.8
College Degree	54	37.5
Total	144	100.0

levels of independent variables were juxtaposed for the analysis of variance is the 3 x 4 crossbreak in Figure 2.

TABLE III

INCOME BREAKDOWN OF SAMPLE

Family	Number of Respondents	Percent
Under $10,000	22	15.6
$10,000-$14,999	10	7.1
$15,000-$19,999	14	9.9
$20,000-$24,999	23	16.3
$25,000 & over	72	51.1
Total	141	100.0

CONCEPTS

SEX	EDUCATION	Television News	Radio News	News In Newspapers
	High			
Male	Low			
	High			
Female	Low			

Figure 2. Levels of Independent Variables Juxtaposed to Illustrate Analysis of Design

Of the sample respondents, one did not indicate age level, four did not indicate income level, and one did not indicate educational level.

The Research Questions

The first two research questions were related to the mean responses of all 145 respondents. The author wanted to know if the sample assigned different judgments to different news media. In other words, is the image of television news judged higher than other media, or vice versa? A related question was "What is the overall image of media news?" (in this case, TV news, radio news, and news in newspapers).

A third question involved the attribute variables and related mean responses. The author wanted to know if sex, age, education, or income were significantly related to the respondent's judgments of media news.

The last research question concerned the supposition by some media researchers that broadcast news, particularly television news, receives higher ratings than news in newspapers because of the influence of an entertainment mode. Specifically, the author asked if any differences in attitude existed toward the three media on scales selected to relate to a Stylistic/Entertainment factor.

The answers to the first two questions could provide the media with a picture of their relative images by the respondents. This view is limited in this study to the judgments of the 145 respondents and cannot be generalized beyond that group.

An answer to the third question provided information concerning types of people preferring one medium's news over another. In other words, do men as a group have a more positive attitude toward one type of news media or media news on the whole than women as a group? Similar

questions concerning the other attribute variables in this study could be posed. Further understanding in this area could be useful to a medium in determining who its audience is and who it must attract to expand its audience.

Television and radio news are asserted by some researchers to have an entertainment mode advantage over news in newspapers.[1] This could be important to all three media in determining why attitudes differ toward news media.

Variations in Attitude

Mean attitudes of all respondents toward news in the three media were: TV news, 4.82; Radio news, 4.79; and newspapers, 4.68. The overall mean of 4.76 indicates respondents' attitudes toward the "slightly favorable" point on the seven-point scale used in this study.

Sex-by-Income

The first analysis, Sex-by-Income-by-News Media, involved 138 of the respondents. The author wanted to know if attitudes toward the news media differed overall, and if they differed by Sex and Income levels. Television and Radio News were rated higher than that in Newspapers (see Table IV). Differences as great as those among the attitudes toward Types of Media news would occur by chance less than five times in 100 such experiments ($F = 3.48$, df = 2/268, $p < .05$).

Television News and Radio News drew similar mean evaluations of 4.84 and 4.81, respectively, while newspapers earned a significantly lesser rating of 4.67. Even so, the differing attitudes toward the three media explained only 2.5 percent of the variance. Further, mean

attitudes toward each medium fell between neutral and slightly favorable, leaning toward the latter.

TABLE IV

MEAN ATTITUDES TOWARD NEWS IN THREE MEDIA

Media	Mean Attitude
Television News	4.84
Radio News	4.81
News in Newspapers	4.67
Mean Total	4.77

The mean attitudes toward the media in Table IV were not related to sex or family income of the respondents.

Regarding education, those respondents with college degrees (high) held a more positive attitude toward Radio and Television news than they did toward that in newspapers. Those without college education held similar mean attitudes toward news in all three media.

Sex-by-Education

This analysis included 138 of the respondents. Again, respondent attributes by themselves, or working in concert, had no significant bearing on attitudes toward news in the different media. Types of media, in this case were related to attitudes only as they interacted

with the respondents' Sex (F = 3.10, df = 2/292, p < .05) and Education (F = 4.10, df = 2/292, p < .05).

As shown in Table V, television news was the only type that distinguished males from females (4.66 vs. 5.05, respectively). The .39 mean difference in attitude showed females significantly more favorable (critical difference = .321, df = 2/292, p < .05).

TABLE V

MEAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THREE TYPES OF MEDIA NEWS:
BY SEX AND EDUCATION

Respondent Groups		Types of Media News			Mean Totals
		Radio	Television	Newspapers	
Sex	Male	4.76	4.66	4.63	4.68
	Female	4.84	5.05	4.78	4.89
Mean Totals		4.80	4.85	4.70	4.79
Education	High	4.87	4.78	4.53	4.73
	Low	4.76	4.88	4.81	4.82
Mean Totals		4.80	4.84	4.70	4.78

Age and Income

No combination of Age or Income with Sex or Education made any significant difference in attitudes toward various types of media news.

Furthermore, Age made no difference in mean attitudes of respondents with different Income levels.

The tendency of Sex to interact with types of news, however, rendered the variation of mean attitudes among the three types of news insignificant. But this held only when Age was considered along with Sex.

When Age and Income and Education and Income were considered jointly, differences in mean attitudes toward news among the three types of media were observed, regardless of Income or Age, or both. And again, Radio and TV news drew similar mean attitudes, both of which were significantly more positive than the evaluation of newspaper accounts of the day's events.

The analyses indicated little support for relationships between Age and Income and the respondents' image judgments toward the Types of Media news. Education and Sex variables did indicate some effects when interacting with the Types of Media news.

From the analysis of variance, the author concluded that the sample did rate News in Newspapers differently from TV News and Radio News but that TV News and Radio News were judged essentially the same.

The Scale Items

In looking at the overall ratings of all three media, seven scales showed mean attitudes of 5.0 or above. These scales indicated a "slightly favorable" attitude. They were: valuable-worthless, 5.37; fresh-stale, 5.19; fast-slow, 5.15; good-bad, 5.13; accurate-inaccurate, 5.12; interesting-uninteresting, 5.12; believable-unbelievable, 5.1.

None of the scales showed a mean attitude across all three media of less than 4.22. The scale means for each media and the total for all three media are shown in Table VI.

Table VI suggests a number of differences between the judgments of the 145 respondents on the three Types of Media concerning specific adjective qualifiers. The author used a treatments-by-subjects design to test for significance. The Types of Media were the treatments and the 20 scales were the subjects in the design.

An observed F-ratio for between subjects of 5.13 was significant (df = 19/38). Differences as great as those among the different scale mean scores across media would occur by chance less than one time in 100 such experiments.

A critical difference of .23 indicated where the true differences were on the scale items between the media.

In examining the differences, it is helpful to look at them in the context of the five factors that the author and literature suggested the scales represent.

Entertainment-Style

The scales in the Entertainment/Stylistic factor were entertaining-dull, cheerful-gloomy, and fresh-stale. Television news was seen as more entertaining than News in Newspapers and on Radio. There was no difference on that scale between News in Newspapers and Radio news. Newspaper news was seen as fresher than TV or Radio news and TV news was judged fresher than Radio news. Radio was rated as more cheerful than TV news or news in Newspapers. But, TV news was seen as more cheerful than news in Newspapers. There was no difference between Radio and Television news on cheerfulness.

TABLE VI

SCALE MEAN SCORES

Scales	TV	Radio	Newspapers	Total
Valuable	5.47	5.26	5.38	5.37
Fresh	5.19	4.82	5.56	5.19
Fast	5.74	5.58	4.14	5.15
Good	5.23	5.13	5.03	5.13
Accurate	5.27	5.10	4.99	5.12
Interesting	5.35	4.86	5.14	5.12
Believable	5.18	5.08	5.05	5.10
Public-Spirited	4.76	5.12	5.06	4.98
Reliable	4.98	4.99	4.87	4.95
Strong	5.06	4.67	4.89	4.87
Entertaining	5.02	4.79	4.72	4.84
Superior	4.63	4.58	4.63	4.61
Fair	4.40	4.86	4.48	4.58
Attractive	4.83	4.30	4.51	4.55
Complete	4.38	4.24	4.93	4.52
Virtuous	4.51	4.60	4.39	4.50
Balanced	4.03	4.31	4.63	4.32
Kind	4.10	4.50	4.12	4.24
Cheerful	4.17	4.61	3.91	4.23
Sympathetic	4.17	4.37	4.12	4.22

Although differences showed up on particular scales in the Enter-
tainment/Stylistic factor, when the three scale scores are combined, the
means for the three media are nearly equal (TV, 4.79; Radio, 4.74,
Newspapers, 4.73).

General Quality

The General Quality factor included the scales: good-bad, superior-
inferior, strong-weak, attractive-unattractive, valuable-worthless. All
three media were judged the same on the good-bad, superior-inferior, and
valuable-worthless scales. Television was seen as stronger than Radio
news but about the same as news in Newspapers. No significant difference
existed between Radio news and news in Newspapers on strength. Television
news was seen as more attractive than radio and newspapers. No difference
appeared between Radio and Newspapers on that scale.

Accuracy-Competence

The Accuracy/Competence factor included the following scales:
accurate-inaccurate, reliable-unreliable, fair-unfair, believable-
unbelievable. TV news was judged as more accurate than Newspapers but
no difference appeared between TV and Radio news and Radio news and news
in Newspapers. Radio news was rated more fair than both TV news and
news in Newspapers. The latter two were judged about the same on fair-
ness. The three media were judged the same on reliability and believ-
ability.

Newsworthiness

The Newsworthiness factor included the scales fast-slow, complete-

incomplete, interesting-uninteresting, and balanced-unbalanced. TV and Radio news both were judged faster than Newspapers. Newspapers were seen as more complete than TV or Radio. TV news was judged more interesting than Radio, but about the same as news in Newspapers. Newspapers were described as more balanced than TV or Radio and Radio news was seen as more balanced than TV.

Character-Sociability

The four scales on the Character/Sociability factor drew the lowest mean attitudes as a group than any other factors. Those scales were: public-spirited-selfish, virtuous-sinful, kind-cruel, and sympathetic-unsympathetic. Radio news and news in Newspapers were judged as more public-spirited than TV news. Radio news was seen as kinder than TV news or news in Newspapers. TV and Newspapers were judged about the same on kindness. Radio news also was seen as more sympathetic than news in Newspapers. No difference appeared on the sympathy scale between Radio and TV news and TV and Newspaper news. All three media were judged about the same on the virtuous-sinful scale.

Although differences did appear among the media on the scales, the author points out that all differences were relatively small. No one medium was seen in a particularly good light or bad light overall.

Summary of Findings

The respondents in this sample did place slightly different judgments on the Types of Media. Television and Radio news both appeared to be rated higher than that in Newspapers. But the difference in the image rating of the three media was small.

Overall, the media was seen as slightly positive in its image with the respondents.

Persons with a college degree held a more positive attitude toward Radio and TV than they did toward Newspapers. Those persons without a college degree held similar attitudes toward all three media.

Television new was the only Type of Media that distinguished males from females. Females were more favorable towards TV news.

Age and Income levels did not make a difference in this study.

Although television was seen as the most entertaining medium for news, and radio was rated as more cheerful, and newspapers as more fresh, the Entertainment/Stylistic scales as a unit did not indicate any one of the media as significantly different from the other two on this factor.

The area where the media in general seemed to be rated low was Character/Sociability. Even so, these ratings were not negative as they hovered around the neutral-attitude point.

ENDNOTE

[1] Greenburg and Roloff, p. 132; Schramm, "What Makes A News Media 'Credible'", p. 36; Mulder, p. 474.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The credibility of news media has been an area of great concern by communication researchers in recent years. The most often quoted of this research is a series of studies by The Roper Organization, Inc. Since 1961, Roper has shown television news to be perceived by the public as more believable and credible than news in newspapers, with radio news rated third. For example, a 1974 Roper study reported 51 percent of the respondents picked television news as most credible, 20 percent chose newspapers, and 8 percent selected radio (8 percent chose magazines and the remainder didn't answer or chose none of the media).[1] The results would indicate a very large gap in credibility between news on television and newspapers.

This study also indicated an edge for television. Radio news was also rated ahead of newspapers by this sample. But the differences in mean attitudes did not indicate a wide gap (Television News, 4.82; Radio News, 4.79; Newspapers, 4.68) between the image of any of the three media included in this study. One medium wasn't rated overwhelmingly higher than any other media, contrary to the Roper studies. This point shouldn't be overlooked even though this sample was very limited and the Roper sample was nationwide. These results support arguments that the Roper one-question method can provide somewhat misleading results.

63

The author suggests that, although a majority of the public may indeed select television news in a single-item Roper-type question, a more sophisticated approach using a number of items might show a truer picture of public attitudes toward the media.

The current study indicates that, in this sample at this time, none of the media is particularly high in credibility. The respondents held a neutral to a slightly positive image of each medium and the media in general (the mean across all three media was 4.76). If a national sample produced the same results, it could be an ominous sign for the media. A neutral attitude by the public toward media news would provide little support for their battle over press freedom with legislatures, the courts or any other adversaries. If the public thinks the news media can't be believed or is irresponsible, then press freedom is in jeopardy. Likewise, if the public does not care or does not know for sure about the adequate performance of the media, then press freedom could be as equally in peril.

Although much has been said and written about the entertainment advantage of television news over newspapers, the current study failed to offer any conclusive evidence to support such a proposition. Although one scale (entertaining-dull) gave television an edge (5.02 to 4.79 for radio and 4.72 for newspapers), two other scales suggested to measure that factor offset that result. Mean attitude across the three entertainment scales was very similar. Although subsequent studies will likely approach this entertainment question, it could be that the observation by Peter Clark, president of the Evening News Association, is more revealing concerning TV's advantage:

> Newspapers themselves helped to condition people to
> accept TV's credibility by following its news leads. Many
> people formed their first impression of a news event from TV.
> Then they later read a newspaper account of the same event
> which followed not only TV's selection of facts, but the TV
> mood, emphasis, and moral tone. (Worse still, newspapers made
> an occasional factual error and people could say 'I saw what
> really happened.') Why should people not conclude that TV was
> credible.[2]

Among the shortcomings of the current study was the broad approach
to news media (TV news, radio news, and news in newspapers in general
rather than a specific broadcast station or a specific newspaper) and
the failure to take into account the effects of different messages and
changing situations. Kenneth Anderson and Theodore Clevenger, Jr.
defined credibility as the image held of a communicator at a given time
by a receiver. They pointed out that ethos should be considered as
flexible, because during the act of communication, alterations in the
image of the source may be caused either by the sender's propositions or
by other situational factors.[3] In other words, although a news medium
may carry generally high credibility with a receiver, judgments about
individual messages are affected by many other factors. No attempt was
made in the current study to identify these factors or to study their
effects.

A comment by Schramm brings into focus the danger of the author's
approach of giving respondents only general media concepts to judge
rather than specific media:

> For one thing, when the interviewers talked about newspapers,
> it seemed that they most often were referring to their own
> local newspapers; when they talked about television, they
> seemed to be thinking most often of the networks. Thus, if
> they compared the credibility of newspapers and television, it
> was not really a comparison of two media, but rather of NBC or
> CBS news with, say, the Palo Alto _Times_ or the Cedar Rapids
> _Gazette_. This is perfectly legitimate except for the fact
> that a national network and a local newspaper have somewhat
> different news functions.[4]

Although aware of these problems, the author was unable to address them because of various limitations. For example, while the sample community, Stillwater, Oklahoma, has a newspaper and radio station, it does not have its own television station. Whatever the limitations of the present study, the results are worthy of attention by the media. The author suggests that the apparent apathy represented by this sample could be a danger signal the news media should heed.

Recommendations

The most significant finding of this study was the lack of a strong positive attitude toward the news media. What does this indicate? The author suggests that like the concept of ethos (being multi-dimensional), the answer to this question is many-sided. If similar results were found with a national sample, the problem could be pervasive for the news media. No single action could be undertaken to correct the apparent apathy about media performance represented in this study. Few scale items had mean scores of 5.0 or above on the 7-point scale. Only one scale had a mean score of less than 4.0, the neutral point on the scale (cheerful-gloomy for news in Newspapers, 3.91). Although some individuals in the sample were extremely positive or negative in their evaluations, the overall attitude appeared to be one of apathy.

If these findings were representative of a national sample, the author would suggest the news media need to develop a coordinated plan to educate and inform the public of the role of the press in society. People would need to be convinced of the importance of media functions. More effort would have to be exerted toward accuracy and other standards of journalistic excellence. Because the problem would be with overall

image, the solution should include a series of steps to improve that image.

Concerning further research, the author suggests a national survey using a similar type of instrument be conducted. It would be in the best interests of all media to know the national attitude toward them. Findings such as those by the Roper Organization using single-item research is misleading on this issue. By reporting that TV news has a 2 to 1 lead over other news media in credibility tends to provide TV news executives with a false impression of their performance. A truer picture is more likely that there is little difference in attitudes toward news media. And those attitudes very well could be negative or neutral as well as positive.

Regarding news media credibility, attention needs to be given to the role of effort vs. reward in judgments made about various media. It would seem to take less effort to hear and see the news than to read the news. Related to this, it would seem important for newspapers to know the impact of functional illiteracy on their readership rate. Many people may have a low image of newspapers and choose not to use them because of their own reading difficulties. If this is so, it would be in the best interests of newspapers to promote programs to improve people's reading levels.

Additional research could include message content and the situation in which the message is transmitted as variables. These apparently play important roles in judgments in real-life communication situations.

Most of the research on media credibility has originated in the academic community. The results do have practical use for the news media and are important as a tool in future press freedom fights. It

would be in the best interest of the news media to initiate ongoing studies in this area.

ENDNOTES

[1] The Roper Organization, Inc., pp. 4-5.

[2] Peter Clark, "The Opinion Machine," <u>The Mass Media and Modern Democracy</u>, ed. Harry M. Clor (Chicago, 1974), p. 48.

[3] Kenneth Anderson and Theodore Clevenger, Jr., "A Summary of Experimental Research in Ethos," <u>Speech Monographs</u>, 30 (June 1963), p. 59.

[4] Schramm, <u>The Asian Messenger</u>, p. 35.

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APPENDIX

Dear Citizen of Stillwater,

You have been selected to participate in an important study of community attitudes toward newspaper, radio and TV news.

We are asking you to take about 10 minutes to complete the attached survey. Your responses will be most valuable in an important project at Oklahoma State University. The results will be used to advise the mass media as to their performance in serving the public.

Your name was chosen at random from the Stillwater phone directory. Enclosed is a postage-free envelope for your prompt reply. It is not necessary for you to sign your name.

Your willingness to assist us in this project is greatly appreciated. May we expect your response within five days?

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Terry Horne
Bureau of Media Research
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078

INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this study is to measure the meanings of persons, things or events or various people by having them rate them on a series of descriptive scales. In taking this 'test,' please make your judgments on the basis of what these things mean to <u>you</u>.

On each of the following pages you will find a different concept to be judged and beneath it a set of scales. Please rate the concept on each of the scales.

If, for example, on a good-bad scale you felt that the concept being judged was <u>very</u> closely related to good, you should place your checkmark as follows:

        Good <u>X</u> :___:___:___:___:___:___ Bad

If you feel the concept is <u>quite</u> closely related to one or the other side of the scale, you should place your checkmark as follows, in the case of it being closely related to good:

        Good ___:<u>X</u> :___:___:___:___:___ Bad

If the concept seems <u>slightly</u> more related to good than to bad, you should check as follows:

        Good ___:___:<u>X</u> :___:___:___:___ Bad

If the concept was no more related to good than to bad, then mark the middle or neutral space.

The direction toward which one checks, of course, depends upon which of the two ends of the scale most characteristic of the thing you are judging.

<u>Special note</u>: If you consider the concept to be neutral on the scale (both sides of the scale equally associated with the concept) or if the scale is completely irrelevant, unrelated to the concept, then check the middle space

Do not look back and forth through the items. Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at fairly high speed. It is your first impression we want.

TELEVISION NEWS

accurate	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	inaccurate
good	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	bad
fast	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	slow
entertaining	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	dull
public-spirited	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	selfish
fair	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	unfair
superior	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	inferior
fresh	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	stale
cheerful	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	gloomy
virtuous	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	sinful
reliable	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	unreliable
valuable	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	worthless
complete	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	incomplete
interesting	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	uninteresting
kind	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	cruel
believable	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	unbelievable
strong	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	weak
balanced	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	unbalanced
attractive	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	unattractive
sympathetic	___:___:___:___:___:___:___	unsympathetic

RADIO NEWS

accurate ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ inaccurate

good ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ bad

fast ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ slow

entertaining ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ dull

public-spirited ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ selfish

fair ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ unfair

superior ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ inferior

fresh ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ stale

cheerful ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ gloomy

virtuous ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ sinful

reliable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ unreliable

valuable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ worthless

complete ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ incomplete

interesting ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ uninteresting

kind ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ cruel

believable ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ unbelievable

strong ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ weak

balanced ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ unbalanced

attractive ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ unattractive

sympathetic ___:___:___:___:___:___:___ unsympathetic

NEWS IN NEWSPAPERS

accurate   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ inaccurate

good   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ bad

fast   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ slow

entertaining   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ dull

public-spirited   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ selfish

fair   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ unfair

superior   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ inferior

fresh   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ stale

cheerful   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ gloomy

virtuous   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ sinful

reliable   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ unreliable

valuable   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ worthless

complete   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ incomplete

interesting   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ uninteresting

kind   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ cruel

believable   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ unbelievable

strong   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ weak

balanced   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ unbalanced

attractive   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ unattractive

sympathetic   ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ unsympathetic

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please mark the appropriate response for you.

AGE:

____ 18-24

____ 25-29

____ 30-49

____ 50 and older

SEX:

____ male

____ female

LEVEL OF EDUCATION:

____ less than high school diploma

____ high school diploma

____ some college

____ college degree

LEVEL OF
FAMILY
ANNUAL
INCOME:

____ under $10,000

____ $10,000 - $14,999

____ $15,000 - $19,999

____ $20,000 - $24,999

____ $25,000 & over

VITA\

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