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AN INVESTIGATION OF SUBSCRIBER ATTITUDES  
TOWARD THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER

BY

DUANE ANTHONY DOLNEY

A thesis submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree Master of Science, Major in  
Journalism, South Dakota  
State University

1971



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reasons for Undertaking the Study

Although the editor of a weekly newspaper can use the size of his subscription list and the letters to the editor to determine how area residents feel about his newspaper, the amount of information acquired and the accuracy of such information are limited. Another determinant which the editor could use is feedback the employees of the newspaper receive from the subscribers and the other residents of the community. It was through this feedback that some dissatisfaction with The Clark County Courier was noticed.

The author of this paper began working for The Clark County Courier as advertising manager in June, 1970. The previous advertising manager stated that certain people in the surrounding communities believed that The Clark County Courier was not doing a very good job as a weekly county newspaper. As one of the newspaper's representatives to the surrounding communities, the author noticed that many residents in these communities did seem dissatisfied with the newspaper's performance concerning their area. Most complaints dealt with the adequacy and accuracy of news coverage of the several communities and with the newspaper's

representativeness concerning political parties. Advertisers also complained about mistakes in their advertisements.

Observation by the author suggested that complaints were more prevalent in the surrounding communities than they were in Clark, where the newspaper was published. The Willow Lake area, where the complaints seemed most prevalent, also included the only other public high school in the county outside of the town of Clark. This school rivalry seemed to add to the complaints. This pattern of complaints also seems to be typical of most South Dakota newspapers according to the secretary-manager of the South Dakota Press Association, W. E. McDermott. "The farther out the subscriber lives from where the newspaper is published, the less enchanted he seems with the newspaper," McDermott said. "I would say that this is typical of newspapers in South Dakota, although I thought that Bert's paper (The Clark County Courier) rated quite well in this category compared to some other newspapers."<sup>1</sup>

In discussions with the editor and the other employees of the newspaper, it was found that they had heard the above complaints and many more. Although neither the editor nor the employees felt that these complaints were very serious,

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1 W. E. McDermott (telephone conversation with the author, April 30, 1971.)

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it was decided to try to discover subscriber attitudes toward the newspaper. Of particular interest were possible variations in attitudes toward the newspaper among the various communities it served.

### Similar Studies

In 1968, a study was made of the attitudes of readers toward The Sioux Valley News, a weekly newspaper in Canton, South Dakota. According to the author of that study,

The object of the investigation was to measure reader attitudes toward The Sioux Valley News at two separate time periods and to see if a change had occurred in these attitudes during the one-year period between the checks. In addition, the author hoped to give the editor an idea of what readers thought of the newspaper.<sup>2</sup>

In 1966, a similar study was made by Donald P. Miller of the attitudes and opinions of the subscribers toward another South Dakota weekly, The Sisseton Courier.<sup>3</sup> In 1963, a study of reader attitudes was done on the Independence, Iowa, weekly newspapers.<sup>4</sup> All these studies used a revised

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2 Nancy Sundling Prince, "An Investigation of Attitudes and Opinions of Readers Toward The Sioux Valley News," Unpublished M.S. thesis, South Dakota State University, 1968, p. 5.

3 Donald P. Miller, "A Study of Attitudes and Opinions of Subscribers Toward The Sisseton Courier," Unpublished M.S. thesis, South Dakota State University, 1966.

4 Thomas James Holbein, "A Study of Reader Attitudes Toward the Independence, Iowa, Weekly Newspapers," Unpublished M.A. thesis, State University of Iowa, 1963.



form of a test devised by James E. Brinton, Chilton R. Bush, and Thomas M. Newell to determine the attitudes of readers toward a daily newspaper.<sup>5</sup>

Results compiled from these studies enabled the authors to determine subscriber attitudes toward the newspapers. The authors also measured how the subscribers rated the newspaper in different areas such as responsibility for advertising content, and representativeness. How specific groups within their sample of subscribers rated the newspaper in the various areas also was determined.

The author of this paper believed that by using the Brinton, Bush, and Newell test as it had been used in these previous studies, results could be compiled from which the attitudes of the subscribers toward The Clark County Courier could be determined. Once this was done, it would also be possible to find the answers to the questions for which this study had been undertaken.

#### Historical Data

The Clark County Courier, the product of the combination of many area newspapers, is a weekly newspaper published

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<sup>5</sup> James E. Brinton, Chilton R. Bush, and Thomas M. Newell, The Newspaper and Its Public (Stanford University: Institute for Communications Research, Department of Communications and Journalism, Stanford University, 1957) pp. 1-5.

in the town of Clark, South Dakota. Clark has a population of 1,400, and is located in east-central South Dakota. Clark is the county seat of an agricultural county which produces potatoes, corn, and small grains.

The first newspaper in Clark County was The Clark Pilot. This paper was started during the fall of 1881 by General E. F. Conklin. Within a year, The Clark Review appeared, edited by a Mr. Johnson, and a Mr. Haskin. Eventually, The Clark Pilot combined with The Clark Review, and became The Clark Pilot Review.

In 1925, The Clark Pilot Review disappeared in a merger with The Clark County Courier, which became the sole weekly newspaper in Clark. The first editor and publisher of the new combination newspaper was E. A. Silfies, who had been editor of The Clark County Courier before the combination. B. W. "Jeff" Condit bought The Clark County Courier in 1945 and in 1947 Bert Moritz became a partner. In 1957 Moritz became the sole owner of the newspaper and has been its editor and publisher since then.

### Objectives of the Study

The author hypothesized that a difference in attitudes toward the paper existed between the Courier's subscribers in Clark, the newspaper's home town, and subscribers in the other surrounding smaller communities. The author also hypothesized that Willow Lake area subscribers would be the

most critical of any of the subscriber groups studied.

The Brinton, Bush, and Newell test was used to measure the subscribers' attitudes toward The Clark County Courier. It was necessary to test first the attitudinal dimensions which make up a person's general attitude toward the newspaper. According to Brinton, Bush, and Newell,

An attitudinal dimension is a component of a person's total attitude toward something. Although the reader will have a general attitude of favorableness or unfavorableness toward the newspaper, he will also have specific attitudes, some of which will be more favorable than others. For example, he may be highly favorable to the newspaper so far as adequacy of news content is concerned, but less favorable toward it on the grounds of political and economic fairness.<sup>6</sup>

The dimensions used under this measure of attitudes were: responsibility for accuracy, fairness and representativeness (this dimension included political and economic fairness, racial and religious fairness, and representativeness), independence from pressure, check upon government, authoritarianism, confidence in leadership on political issues and candidates, responsibility for advertising content and human worth and dignity. The author hoped that through an investigation of these attitudinal dimensions of the subscribers of The Clark County Courier, it would be possible to determine the attitudes of readers in different

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<sup>6</sup> Brinton, Bush and Newell, p. 10.

communities toward this newspaper. If a difference did exist and could be measured, one could determine where problems with subscribers existed and what steps could be taken to correct them. Possible differences among other specific groups were also hypothesized. Therefore, demographic questions were added to identify the subscribers according to sex, age, and several other categories.

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

The object of the investigation was to determine if a difference existed between the attitudes of the subscribers of the different communities within the trade area. The author also hoped to provide the editor with data on attitudes toward The Clark County Courier by various categories of subscribers.

The Brinton, Bush, and Newell test consists of 56 multiple-choice short-answer questions. Twenty-nine questions from the test were used, while twenty-seven were omitted. The omitted questions dealt with subjects unlikely to be relevant to The Clark County Courier. An example of an omitted question follows: "Which, if either, has the better chance of getting his side of a story about a local strike into The Clark County Courier: the head of the business or a labor union official?" This question was not used because there has never been a strike in Clark County.

A sample was randomly selected from The Clark County Courier mail subscription list. These names were picked from the alphabetical list of subscribers living in The Clark County Courier trade area. This area was defined by the editor of the newspaper and the author of this paper as

including all subscribers living in Clark County, who presumably did a sizable portion of their trading in Clark. There were 1,362 subscribers in the trade area, representing about 50 per cent of the mail subscription list.

These trade area subscribers of The Clark County Courier were divided into three groups according to area of residence. The first area was the Clark area, consisting of the city of Clark, and all subscribers whose postal address was Clark. The second area consisted of Willow Lake, Carpenter, and Bryant. This area included the only other public high school district in Clark County. The third area included all other surrounding communities and addresses in the trade area other than those in the first two groups. Subscribers in this area lived in Bradley, Conde, Crandall, Crocker, Doland, Garden City, Henry, Lily, Naples, Raymond, and Vienna. The communities in this group were too small to test separately and were therefore tested as a group. All questionnaires were coded so that, upon return, they could be identified as coming from one of these three areas.

A sample of 345 names was selected, or about 25 per cent of the trade area subscriber list of 1,362 names. To insure that a random sample was selected, the numbers one, two, three, and four were placed in a hat. Number one was drawn; therefore, the first name of the list became part of the sample, as did number five, and every fourth name thereafter.

About 50 per cent of the questionnaires were mailed out on December 7, 1970, and the other half was mailed on January 15, 1971. It was decided to make two separate mailings of the questionnaires so that, if an error was discovered, it could be corrected before the second mailing. The December mailing consisted of 172 questionnaires, and went to about 50 per cent of the sample. Also, 50 questionnaires were randomly placed in the papers that were bought in the drug stores or were delivered by the carrier boys to subscribers not on the mailing list. This made a total of 222 distributed questionnaires. Of these, 110 questionnaires were answered and returned for a 49.5 per cent return. The second mailing, which was made in January, consisted of 173 questionnaires. Of these, 102 answered questionnaires were returned, for a 59.6 per cent return. In all, a total of 395 questionnaires were distributed and 212 answered questionnaires were returned for a 53.7 per cent return.

Demographic questions were added to the questionnaire to identify respondents according to sex, age, political party, annual income, and education. Other questions identified the respondents as to length of time spent reading the newspaper, number of years as subscribers to the newspaper, and number of years resident in the area.

The chi square test was used to determine if a significant difference existed between the attitudes in the various

categories of analysis. The following formula was used for testing the agreement between observed and expected frequencies:  $\chi^2 = \frac{\sum(O-e)^2}{e}$  in which O is the observed or obtained frequencies in the various categories, and e is the corresponding frequencies expected.

### Categories of Responses

In developing this test, Brinton, Bush, and Newell established an attitudinal scale for measuring each single dimension. With the use of this scale, it was then possible to group people from favorable to unfavorable, or vice versa, on any particular dimension. This scaling procedure is based on the fact that a person has not only a direction in attitude, but also a certainty or intensity.<sup>7</sup>

To measure the intensity of the specific attitude of a subscriber toward the newspaper, the Brinton, Bush, and Newell test included a highly favorable, a favorable, an unfavorable, and a highly unfavorable response for each question. This graphic arrangement of the response data was based on the Cornell technique developed by Guttman.<sup>8</sup> Most questions also included a "Don't Know" response. The author of this paper used the same favorable-unfavorable response

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7 Brinton, Bush, and Newell, p. 104.

8 Brinton, Bush, and Newell, p. 89.



breakdown as determined by Brinton, Bush, and Newell in their test.<sup>9</sup>

To determine the total favorable response to any question, the highly favorable and the favorable responses were totaled, while the total unfavorable response for a question was determined by totaling the unfavorable and the highly unfavorable responses.

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9 Brinton, Bush, and Newell, pp. 41-64.

## CHAPTER III

## FINDINGS

The author hypothesized that a difference existed between the attitudes of the subscribers of Clark, the newspaper's home town, and the attitudes of the subscribers of the other surrounding smaller communities. Also hypothesized was that the Willow Lake area subscribers would be the most critical of any of the subscribers studied toward the newspaper. These hypotheses were not supported by the findings.

On only two of the thirty-three questions on the questionnaire did a significant difference exist among the attitudes of the three study groups. The first was question 11: "Does the amount of money a man has make a difference in the treatment he gets in The Clark County Courier?" Although the difference was significant at the .05 level, it was just the reverse of the difference that had been hypothesized. Instead of the Willow Lake area subscribers being the most critical, they gave the newspaper the most favorable rating of the three study groups. On this question, the Willow Lake area had the largest percentage of highly favorable answers and unlike the other groups had no highly unfavorable answers (Table 1).

TABLE 1

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 11: "DOES THE AMOUNT OF MONEY A MAN HAS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE TREATMENT HE GETS IN THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER?"

Answer	Willow Lake (N=41) %	Clark (N=98) %	Small Community Subscriber (N=73) %
No, not at all (Highly Favorable)	63.4	38.8	49.3
No, very little (Favorable)	9.8	31.6	17.8
Yes, some difference (Unfavorable)	9.8	14.3	17.8
Yes, a lot of difference (Highly Unfavorable)	0.0	3.1	2.8
"Don't Know" or not answered	17.0	12.2	12.3

Note:  $p < .05$

A difference significant at the .05 level was also found in the answers to question 20: "When someone in this area does something that helps the community, does The Clark County Courier usually give him credit for it?" The only highly unfavorable responses recorded came from the Willow Lake subscribers. Of the thirty-three questions on the questionnaire, this was the only question where the results would lend support to the original hypotheses (Table 2).

TABLE 2

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 20: "WHEN SOMEONE IN THIS AREA DOES SOMETHING THAT HELPS THE COMMUNITY, DOES THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER USUALLY GIVE HIM CREDIT FOR IT?"

Answer	Willow Lake (N=41) %	Clark (N=98) %	Small Community Subscriber (N=73) %
No, it never does (Highly Unfavorable)	4.9	0.0	0.0
No, it hardly ever does (Unfavorable)	0.0	3.1	0.0
Yes, it usually does (Favorable)	61.0	66.3	52.1
Yes, it always does (Highly Favorable)	34.1	30.6	43.8
"Don't Know" or not answered	0.0	0.0	4.1

Note:  $p < .05$

#### Differences by Political Party

When the respondents were divided into groups according to their political preference, a difference significant at the .01 level existed in their attitudes toward The Clark County Courier on questions 4, 19, and 24. Question 4 asks: "Does The Clark County Courier usually present both sides of important political issues?" Although all three groups answered this question favorably, the responses from the Republicans were significantly more favorable than the responses of the other groups (Table 3).

TABLE 3

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 4: "DOES THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER  
USUALLY PRESENT BOTH SIDES OF IMPORTANT  
POLITICAL ISSUES?"

Answers	Republicans (N=138) %	Democrats (N=76) %	Independents (N=28) %
Yes, always (Highly Favorable)	38.4	15.8	21.4
Yes, most of the time (Favorable)	45.6	54.0	53.6
No, not very often (Unfavorable)	6.5	18.4	7.1
No, almost never (Highly Unfavorable)	2.2	7.9	3.6
"Don't Know" or not answered	7.2	3.9	14.3

Note:  $p < .01$

Question 19 tests the attitudinal dimension of "Authoritarianism": "If the people who run The Clark County Courier had to choose between their own personal interests and the best interests of the whole area, which would they choose?" On this question, the Republicans were the most favorable toward the newspaper of the three political groups. One should also notice that more than 25 per cent of each political party checked the "Don't Know" response. Totaling the unfavorable responses, the "Don't Know", and the not answered, one finds that only half of the Democrats and Independents gave the newspaper a favorable response. The

Republicans were more favorable to the newspaper, with 59.4 per cent giving the favorable response (Table 4).

TABLE 4

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 19: "IF THE PEOPLE WHO RUN THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THEIR OWN PERSONAL INTERESTS AND THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE WHOLE AREA, WHICH WOULD THEY CHOCSE?"

Answers	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
	(N=138) %	(N=76) %	(N=28) %
The area's interests, always (Highly Favorable)	24.0	7.9	10.7
The area's interests, usually (Favorable)	35.5	42.1	39.3
Their own interests, usually (Unfavorable)	13.7	18.4	10.7
Their own interests, always (Highly Unfavorable)	0.0	0.0	10.7
"Don't Know" or not answered	26.8	31.6	28.6

Note:  $p < .01$

Question 24 deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Responsibility for Advertising Content": "How much of the advertising in The Clark County Courier do you feel you can believe?" Although all Democrats answered this question favorably, less than 20 per cent marked the most favorable response as compared to over 46 per cent for the other two groups (Table 5).

TABLE 5

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 24: "HOW MUCH OF THE ADVERTISING IN  
THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN BELIEVE?"

Answers	Republicans	Democrats	Independents
	(N=138) %	(N=76) %	(N=28) %
None of it (Highly Unfavorable)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not much of it (Unfavorable)	0.0	0.0	0.0
Most of it (Favorable)	50.7	80.3	46.4
All of it (Highly Favorable)	46.4	19.7	46.4
"Don't Know" or not answered	2.9	0.0	7.2

Note:  $p < .01$

#### Differences by Sex

When the respondents were divided according to sex, a difference significant at the .05 level existed between their attitudes toward The Clark County Courier on questions 12, 13, 29, and 31. Questions 12 and 13 deal with the attitudinal dimension of "Independence from Pressure." Question 12 asks: "If a big local advertiser called up the publisher of The Clark County Courier and asked him not to print a certain story, would The Clark County Courier print the story anyway or leave it out?"

More female subscribers marked unfavorable responses for this question than marked favorable responses, while

slightly more male subscribers marked favorable responses than marked unfavorable responses. One should notice, however, that nearly 50 per cent of the respondents marked the "Don't Know" response, or did not answer. Of the total female subscribers, less than 15 per cent marked favorable responses for this question, while about one out of every four male subscribers gave the newspaper a favorable rating (Table 6).

TABLE 6

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 12: "IF A BIG LOCAL ADVERTISER CALLED UP THE PUBLISHER OF THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER AND ASKED HIM NOT TO PRINT A CERTAIN STORY, WOULD THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER PRINT THE STORY ANYWAY OR LEAVE IT OUT?"

Answers	Female Subscribers	Male Subscribers
	(N=121) %	(N=127) %
Would print it anyway, certainly (Highly Favorable)	4.1	9.5
Would print it anyway, probably (Favorable)	10.7	17.3
Would leave it out, probably (Unfavorable)	24.8	16.5
Would leave it out, certainly (Highly Unfavorable)	14.1	8.7
"Don't Know" or not answered	46.3	48.0

Note:  $p < .05$

Question 13 asks: "Some people say that most newspapers won't print anything that might make them lose



advertising. Do you think this is true of The Clark County Courier? Slightly over 50 per cent of the female subscribers marked the favorable responses for this question, while about 40 per cent of the male subscribers marked a favorable response. Also, about a fourth of the respondents marked the "Don't Know" response or refused to answer this question (Table 7).

TABLE 7

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 13: "SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT MOST NEWSPAPERS WON'T PRINT ANYTHING THAT MIGHT MAKE THEM LOSE ADVERTISING. DO YOU THINK THIS IS TRUE OF THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER?"

Answers	Female Subscribers (N=121) %	Male Subscribers (N=127) %
No, certainly not (Highly Favorable)	22.3	11.0
No, probably not (Favorable)	28.9	31.5
Yes, probably (Unfavorable)	16.5	26.0
Yes, certainly (Highly Unfavorable)	2.5	7.1
"Don't Know" or not answered	29.8	24.4

Note:  $p < .05$

Questions 29 and 31, where differences by sex were also significant at the .05 level, do not deal with an attitudinal dimension, but rather test the general satisfaction of the subscribers toward the newspaper. Question 29

asks: "If the presses at The Clark County Courier broke down and the paper couldn't be printed again for two or three weeks, how much would you miss the paper?" The female subscribers marked more highly favorable responses than the male subscribers on this question. More than 90 per cent of the female respondents were favorable to the newspaper. Nearly 20 per cent of the males marked responses unfavorable to the newspaper (Table 8).

TABLE 8

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 29: "IF THE PRESSES AT THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER BROKE DOWN AND THE PAPER COULDN'T BE PRINTED AGAIN FOR TWO OR THREE WEEKS, HOW MUCH WOULD YOU MISS THE PAPER?"

Answers	Female Subscribers (N=121) %	Male Subscribers (N=127) %
A very great deal (Highly Favorable)	47.9	34.6
Quite a lot (Favorable)	42.2	45.7
A little (Unfavorable)	9.1	17.3
Not at all (Highly Unfavorable)	0.0	2.4
"Don't Know" or not answered	.8	0.0

Note:  $p < .05$

Question 31 asks: "In your work, business, or daily living, do you find that The Clark County Courier is helpful?"

As in question 29 dealing with the general satisfaction of the newspaper, the female subscribers were also more favorable to the newspaper on this question, giving more highly favorable responses and fewer unfavorable responses than the male subscribers (Table 9).

TABLE 9

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 31: "IN YOUR WORK, BUSINESS, OR DAILY LIVING, DO YOU FIND THAT THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER IS HELPFUL?"

Answers	Female Subscribers (N=121) %	Male Subscribers (N=127) %
Yes, it helps quite a lot (Highly Favorable)	44.6	37.0
Yes, it helps some (Favorable)	47.1	44.9
No, not much (Unfavorable)	6.6	17.3
No, not at all (Highly Unfavorable)	0.0	0.0
"Don't Know" or not answered	1.7	0.8

Note:  $p < .05$

#### Differences by Education

When the respondents were divided according to education level, a difference significant at the .01 level existed in their attitudes toward The Clark County Courier on question 1, which deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Responsibility for Accuracy." "How accurate is The Clark

County Courier in its local news stories?" However, on this question, no real trend developed. The subscribers in the two highest education levels gave the newspaper the only unfavorable responses to this question, but the subscribers in the highest education level gave the newspaper the highest percentage of highly favorable responses of any of the groups (Table 10).

TABLE 10

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 1: "HOW ACCURATE IS THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER IN ITS LOCAL NEWS STORIES?"

Answers	Grammar School (N=71) %	High School (N=115) %	Some College (N=37) %	College Degree (N=24) %
Very accurate (Highly Favorable)	42.3	38.3	32.4	45.8
Fairly accurate (Favorable)	57.7	61.7	59.5	45.8
Not so accurate (Unfavorable)	0.0	0.0	8.1	8.4
Not at all accurate (Highly Unfavorable)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
"Don't Know" or not answered	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note:  $p < .01$

A difference significant at the .05 level existed in the attitudes of these respondents on questions 26 and 31. Question 26 deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Human Worth and Dignity": "How often have you read something in

The Clark County Courier that gave you a "lift"--something that made you feel that goodness rules the world more than greed?"

As education level increased, the percentage of unfavorable responses also increased. From a low of 36.6 per cent total unfavorable responses at the "grammar school" level, the unfavorable responses increased to 41.7 per cent at the "high school" level, to 48.7 per cent at the "some college" level, and finally to a high of 70.8 per cent at the "college degree" level. The number of total favorable responses decreased as the level of education increased. From a high of 63.4 per cent at the "grammar school" level, the total favorable responses decreased to 58.3 per cent at the "high school" level, to 51.3 per cent to the "some college" level, and finally to a low of 29.2 per cent at the "college degree" level (Table 11).

Question 31 deals with the general satisfaction of the newspaper: "In your work, business, or daily living, do you find that The Clark County Courier is helpful?" Again, as in question 29, as education level increased so did the percentage of unfavorable responses. In the lowest education level, the "grammar school" level, over 90 per cent answered this question favorably. In the highest education level, the "college degree" level, over a fourth of the respondents gave an unfavorable response (Table 12).

TABLE 11

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 26: "HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU READ SOMETHING  
IN THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER THAT GAVE YOU A "LIFT"--  
SOMETHING THAT MADE YOU FEEL THAT GOODNESS  
RULES THE WORLD MORE THAN GREED?"

Answers	Grammar School (N=71) %	High School (N=115) %	Some College (N=37) %	College Degree (N=24) %
Never (Highly Unfavorable)	1.4	6.1	0.0	0.0
A few times (Unfavorable)	35.2	35.6	48.7	70.8
Often (Favorable)	40.9	43.5	45.9	25.0
Very often (Highly Favorable)	22.5	14.8	5.4	4.2
"Don't Know" or not answered	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Note:  $p < .05$

### Attitudinal Dimensions

The questions in the questionnaire were divided along eight different attitudinal dimensions. As defined in Chapter One, attitudinal dimensions are a component of a person's total attitude toward something. To test each attitudinal dimension, several questions were asked.

The questions testing each attitudinal dimension were grouped, and the number of highly favorable responses was totaled and divided by the total number of responses to the questions in the group. This gave the average percentage

TABLE 12

ANSWERS TO QUESTION 31: "IN YOUR WORK, BUSINESS,  
OR DAILY LIVING, DO YOU FIND THAT THE CLARK  
COUNTY COURIER IS HELPFUL?"

Answers	Grammar School (N=71) %	High School (N=115) %	Some College (N=37) %	College Degree (N=24) %
Yes, it helps quite a lot (Highly Favorable)	52.1	38.3	43.3	29.2
Yes, it helps some (Favorable)	38.0	53.9	35.1	41.6
No, not much (Unfavorable)	8.5	7.8	16.2	29.2
No, not at all (Highly Unfavorable)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
"Don't Know" or not answered	1.4	0.0	5.4	0.0

Note:  $p < .05$

of highly favorable responses received by questions on that attitudinal dimension. This was also done for each of the other types of responses: the favorable, the unfavorable, the highly unfavorable, and the "Don't Know" responses to determine how the respondents rated The Clark County Courier in each particular area.

#### Responsibility for Accuracy

This dimension deals with the performance of the newspaper in carrying out its responsibility to the reader of presenting the news truthfully and accurately, and not sensationally. The following questions test this dimension:

- 21
1. How accurate is The Clark County Courier in its local news stories?
  2. If you heard a news item over the radio and then read a conflicting version of the same story in The Clark County Courier, which one would you believe?
  3. How often does The Clark County Courier, in its news columns and headlines, try to make a happening sound more exciting than it really is?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 21.9 per cent of the respondents answered with the highly favorable response, and 47.8 per cent answered with the favorable response for a total average favorable response of 69.7 per cent. The unfavorable responses averaged 17.6 per cent, while highly unfavorable responses averaged 3.4 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 21.0 per cent. The responses in the neutral or "Don't Know" area averaged 9.3 per cent.

#### Fairness and Representativeness

This is really a general heading for what might be several different dimensions, and since these dimensions are so closely related, they have been combined. This dimension deals with representative and impartial treatment in the news and editorial columns of all issues, especially those involving politics, business, religion, race, and social status. The following questions test



this dimension:

4. Does The Clark County Courier usually present both sides of important political issues?
5. If The Clark County Courier was against a man who was running for public office, would it be fair to him or not?
6. If an Indian got in a serious fight with a white man in this area, how fair would The Clark County Courier be toward the Indian?
7. Does The Clark County Courier seem fair to all religious groups?
8. Do you think The Clark County Courier really cares about the poor people in your town?
9. How true is this statement: The names of some local people are in The Clark County Courier very often, while interesting news about many other local people hardly ever gets in the paper.
10. Would it be easier for a personal friend of the owner of The Clark County Courier to get a story in the paper than for a person who didn't know the owner at all?
11. Does the amount of money a man has make a difference in the treatment he gets in The Clark County Courier?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 39.2 per cent of the respondents answered with the highly favorable response, and 29.4 per cent answered with the favorable response for a total average favorable response of

68.6 per cent. Unfavorable responses averaged 13.2 per cent and unfavorable responses averaged 6.1 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 19.3 per cent. Responses in the neutral area averaged 11.5 per cent on this dimension.

#### Independence from Pressure

This attitudinal dimension deals with resistance to pressure for favorable treatment in the news columns of advertisers, certain religious sects, persons atop the pyramid of the power structure, and other interests. This is favoritism due to fear of sanctions and is, therefore, distinguished from the dimension of fairness and representativeness, which is favoritism due to preference and prejudice. This dimension was tested by the following questions:

12. If a big local advertiser called up the publisher of The Clark County Courier and asked him not to print a certain story, would The Clark County Courier print the story anyway or leave it out?

13. Some people say that most newspapers will not print anything that might make them lose advertising. Do you think this is true of The Clark County Courier?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 12.0 per cent of the respondents gave a highly favorable response, and 22.6 per cent gave a favorable response for a

total average favorable response of 34.6 per cent. Unfavorable responses averaged 20.7 per cent, and highly unfavorable responses averaged 8.5 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 29.2 per cent. Responses in the neutral area averaged 35.4 per cent on this dimension.

#### Check upon Government

This dimension refers to the newspaper's performance in reporting on the activities of the elected and appointed government officials. Historically, the newspaper has always claimed to be a check upon government. The following questions were used to test this dimension:

15. Do you think The Clark County Courier pays enough attention to what goes on in the state government at Pierre?
16. If the contractor did a bad paving job for this city (the one you live in, or the one which is your postal address), do you think The Clark County Courier would try to find out about it and print the facts?
17. Do you think The Clark County Courier keeps its readers well informed about the way the local government conducts its business?
18. Does The Clark County Courier help to see that laws are enforced in this area?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 15.4 per cent of the respondents gave the highly favorable response, and 44.5 per cent the favorable response for a total average favorable response of 59.9 per cent. Unfavorable responses averaged 21.0 per cent and highly unfavorable responses averaged 4.7 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 25.7 per cent. Responses in the neutral area averaged 13.8 per cent on this dimension.

### Authoritarianism

This dimension deals with the tolerance or intolerance of the newspaper for the objectives and points of view of others as shown by its viewpoint on community decisions. This dimension is distinguished from the dimension of fairness and representativeness because it involves the newspaper's self-interest or ego, not just its preference or prejudice. The following questions were used to test this dimension:

19. If the people who run The Clark County Courier had to choose between their own personal interests and the best interests of the whole area, which would they choose?

20. When someone in this area does something that helps the community, does The Clark County Courier usually give him credit for it?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 26.2 per cent of the respondents gave the highly favorable response, and 49.1 per cent the favorable response for a

total average favorable response of 75.3 per cent. Unfavorable responses averaged 8.5 per cent and highly unfavorable responses averaged 0.9 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 9.4 per cent. Responses in the neutral area averaged 14.9 per cent on this dimension.

#### Confidence in Leadership on Political Issues and Candidates

This dimension deals with the readers' confidence in the newspaper's capability and sincerity in its recommendations concerning candidates and political issues or measures. The following questions were used to test this dimension:

21. If you were not sure about how to vote on a local bond issue, would you be influenced by The Clark County Courier on how to vote?

22. If you did not understand one of the measures on a state election ballot, would you be influenced by The Clark County Courier on how to vote?

23. When The Clark County Courier prints an editorial, do you usually feel it has made a complete study of the subject being discussed?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 12.6 per cent of the respondents gave the highly favorable response, and 43.5 per cent the favorable response for a total average favorable response of 56.1 per cent. Unfavorable responses averaged 21.2 per cent and highly

unfavorable responses averaged 15.6 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 36.8 per cent. Responses in the neutral area averaged 6.8 per cent on this dimension.

#### Responsibility for Advertising Content

This dimension deals with the responsibility of the newspaper to protect its readers from exploitation by commercial interests who buy advertising space. The following questions were used to test this dimension:

24. How much of the advertising in The Clark County Courier do you feel you can believe?

25. Some people say some newspapers don't care what kind of ads they print so long as they make money. Do you think this is true of The Clark County Courier?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 43.8 per cent of the respondents gave the highly favorable response, and 46.2 per cent the favorable response for a total average favorable response of 90.0 per cent. Unfavorable responses averaged 3.5 per cent, and highly unfavorable responses averaged 0.7 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 4.2 per cent. Responses in the neutral area averaged 5.7 per cent on this dimension.

#### Human Worth and Dignity

This dimension deals with the performance of the newspaper in reminding man that society is made up of other

people like himself. The following questions test this dimension:

26. How often have you read something in The Clark County Courier that gave you a "lift"--something that made you feel that goodness rules the world more than greed?

27. Does it seem to you that The Clark County Courier would rather print bad things about people than good things?

For this attitudinal dimension, an average of 47.1 per cent of the respondents gave the highly favorable response and 28.0 per cent the favorable response for a total average favorable response of 75.1 per cent. Unfavorable responses averaged 21.5 per cent and highly unfavorable responses averaged 1.9 per cent for a total average unfavorable response of 23.4 per cent. Responses in the neutral area averaged 0.9 per cent on this dimension.

#### Questions Answered Unfavorably

Of the thirty-three questions on the questionnaire, four questions received a larger percentage of unfavorable responses than favorable responses from each of the three major study groups (Clark, Willow Lake, and the other small communities). These were questions 9, 12, 21, and 22. Question 9 deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Fairness and Representativeness" (Table 13).

TABLE 13

GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTION 9: "HOW TRUE IS THIS STATEMENT: THE NAMES OF SOME LOCAL PEOPLE ARE IN THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER VERY OFTEN, WHILE INTERESTING NEWS ABOUT MANY OTHER LOCAL PEOPLE HARDLY EVER GETS IN THE PAPER."

Group	"Is Not True" or Favorable %	"Is True" or Unfavorable %	"Don't Know" or Not Answered %
Willow Lake (N=41)	34.1	56.1	9.8
Clark (N=98)	32.6	63.3	4.1
Small Community Subscribers (N=73)	32.9	63.0	4.1
Total Subscribers (N=212)	33.0	61.8	5.2

A possible reason for the generally unfavorable response is that in a small community such as Clark a few citizens have many important functions within that community. An example would be one businessman who was very instrumental in bringing a new industry to the community, was a state representative, a large farmer, and owner of another business within the community. Consequently, this man's name appeared in the newspaper more often than the names of most other citizens. In the 1968 study of The Sioux Valley News, another small town weekly newspaper,



a majority of the responses to this question were also unfavorable to the newspaper.<sup>10</sup>

Another question answered unfavorably was question 12. This question deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Independence from Pressure" (Table 14).

TABLE 14

GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTION 12: "IF A BIG LOCAL ADVERTISER CALLED UP THE PUBLISHER OF THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER AND ASKED HIM NOT TO PRINT A CERTAIN STORY, WOULD THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER PRINT THE STORY ANYWAY OR LEAVE IT OUT?"

Group	"Print Anyway" or Favorable %	"Leave Out" or Unfavorable %	"Don't Know" or Not Answered %
Willow Lake (N=41)	17.1	31.7	51.2
Clark (N=98)	20.4	30.6	49.0
Small Community Subscribers (N=73)	28.8	32.9	38.3
Total Subscribers (N=212)	22.6	31.6	45.8

On this question, one should notice the high percentage who gave "Don't Know" responses or did not answer (nearly 50 per cent). While 22.6 per cent of the

10 Prince, pp. 9, 10.

subscribers thought The Clark County Courier would not yield to pressure from a big local advertiser, 77.4 per cent of the subscribers either felt that The Clark County Courier would yield to such pressure, did not know if it would, or did not answer. A significant difference existed between the responses of the male and female subscribers (Table 6).

Questions 21 and 22 deal with the attitudinal dimension of "Confidence in Leadership on Political Issues and Candidates." Question 21 deals with local issues (Table 15).

TABLE 15

GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTION 21: "IF YOU WERE NOT SURE ABOUT HOW TO VOTE ON A LOCAL BOND ISSUE, WOULD YOU BE INFLUENCED BY THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER ON HOW TO VOTE?"

Group	"Would be Influenced" or Favorable %	"Would not be Influenced" or Unfavorable %	"Don't Know" or Not Answered %
Willow Lake (N=41)	39.0	53.7	7.3
Clark (N=98)	45.9	45.9	8.2
Small Community Subscribers (N=73)	35.6	56.2	8.2
Total Subscribers (N=212)	41.1	50.9	8.0

Although questions 21 and 22 were answered unfavorably, more than 40 per cent of the subscribers did state they would be influenced by the newspaper on how to vote. Slightly more female respondents would be influenced by the newspaper than male respondents. Of the 121 female respondents, 46.3 per cent would be influenced compared to only 35.4 per cent of the 127 male respondents. The responses to question 22 are given in Table 16.

TABLE 16

GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTION 22: "IF YOU DID NOT UNDERSTAND ONE OF THE MEASURES ON A STATE ELECTION BALLOT, WOULD YOU BE INFLUENCED BY THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER ON HOW TO VOTE?"

Group	"Would be Influenced" or Favorable %	"Would not be Influenced" or Unfavorable %	"Don't Know" or Not Answered %
Willow Lake (N=41)	34.1	48.8	17.1
Clark (N=98)	42.8	54.1	3.1
Small Community Subscribers (N=73)	41.1	53.4	5.5
Total Subscribers (N=212)	40.6	52.8	6.6

As on question 21, more female respondents than male respondents would be influenced by the newspaper on how to

vote. Some 45.5 per cent of the 121 female respondents would be influenced, compared to only 37.8 per cent of the 127 male respondents. This was not a significant difference, however.

Another question was closely related to this subject. This was the final question on the questionnaire which asked, "Should The Clark County Courier offer advice on how its readers should vote on political candidates?" In answering this question, 86.3 per cent of the respondents answered that the newspaper should not offer this type of advice while only 7.1 per cent believed it should.

Besides the four questions which all of the study groups answered unfavorably, the Willow Lake subscribers also answered question 3 unfavorably. This question deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Responsibility for Accuracy" (Table 17). On this question, the Clark subscribers were the only group to give The Clark County Courier a majority of favorable responses. When all the subscribers were combined, 48.1 per cent answered this question favorably, while a majority either thought that The Clark County Courier would make a happening sound more exciting than it really was, did not know, or did not answer.

The subscribers of the small communities also answered two other questions unfavorably. These were questions 16 and 26. Question 16 deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Check upon Government" (Table 18).

TABLE 17

GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTION 3: "HOW OFTEN DOES THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER, IN ITS NEWS COLUMNS AND HEADLINES, TRY TO MAKE A HAPPENING SOUND MORE EXCITING THAN IT REALLY IS?"

Group	"Seldom" or Favorable %	"Often" or Unfavorable %	"Don't Know" or Not Answered %
Willow Lake (N=41)	36.6	43.9	19.5
Clark (N=98)	53.1	44.8	2.1
Small Community Subscribers (N=73)	47.9	47.9	4.2
Total Subscribers (N=212)	48.1	45.8	6.1

Only a third of the total subscribers gave this question a favorable response. A total of 66.5 per cent gave unfavorable or "Don't Know" responses or did not answer this question. Some 42.4 per cent of the respondents thought that The Clark County Courier would not find out about a poor paving job and print the facts.

Those respondents with the lowest education level, the "grammar school" respondents (N=71), gave this question a 35.2 per cent favorable response and a 32.4 per cent unfavorable response. All the higher educational

TABLE 18

GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTION 16: "IF THE CONTRACTOR DID A BAD PAVING JOB FOR THIS CITY (THE ONE YOU LIVE IN, OR THE ONE WHICH IS YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS), DO YOU THINK THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER WOULD TRY TO FIND OUT ABOUT IT AND PRINT THE FACTS?"

Group	"Would Print"	"Would Not Print"	"Don't Know"
	or Favorable %	or Unfavorable %	or Not Answered %
Willow Lake (N=41)	48.8	24.4	26.8
Clark (N=98)	40.8	35.7	23.5
Small Community Subscribers (N=73)	28.8	47.9	23.3
Total Subscribers (N=212)	33.5	42.4	24.1

level groups (N=176) answered this question unfavorably. This difference was not significant, however.

Also, more respondents who marked "Republican" as their political preference answered this question favorably than unfavorably, while of those respondents who marked "Democrat" or "Independent" the reverse was true. Of 138 Republican respondents, 38.4 per cent gave a favorable answer and 32.6 per cent an unfavorable response. The 76 Democrats gave this question an unfavorable response of 47.4 per cent and a favorable response of 35.5

per cent. The 28 Independents gave this question an unfavorable response of 53.6 per cent and a favorable response of 21.4 per cent. These differences were not significant, however.

Question 26 deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Human Worth and Dignity" (Table 19). A significant

TABLE 19

GROUP RESPONSES TO QUESTION 26: "HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU READ SOMETHING IN THE CLARK COUNTY COURIER THAT GAVE YOU A "LIFT"--SOMETHING THAT MADE YOU FEEL THAT GOODNESS RULES THE WORLD MORE THAN GREED?"

Group	"Given 'Lift'" or Favorable %	"No 'Lift'" or Unfavorable %	"Don't Know" or Not Answered %
Willow Lake (N=41)	65.9	34.1	0.0
Clark (N=98)	53.1	46.9	0.0
Small Community Subscribers (N=73)	47.9	52.1	0.0
Total Subscribers (N=212)	53.8	46.2	0.0

difference existed between responses of the different education level subscribers (Table 11) on this question. Although not to a significant degree, female respondents answered this question more favorably than the male respondents. Of the 121 female respondents, 59.5 per cent

answered this question favorably and 40.5 per cent answered it unfavorably. The 127 male respondents answered 51.2 per cent favorably and 48.8 per cent unfavorably.

Of the other questions, only question 13 did not receive a majority of favorable responses, although it was answered favorably by a plurality of all the different groups. This question deals with the attitudinal dimension of "Independence from Pressure" and reads: "Some people say that most newspapers won't print anything that might make them lose advertising. Do you think this is true of The Clark County Courier?" While 46.7 per cent of the total subscribers answered this question in favor of The Clark County Courier, 26.9 per cent answered it unfavorably, and 26.4 per cent marked the "Don't Know" or did not answer. Therefore, a majority of the responses were either unfavorable or in the "Don't Know" or not answered column.

In all, seven questions did not receive a majority of favorable answers. These were: question 3 dealing with responsibility for accuracy, question 9 dealing with fairness and representativeness, questions 12 and 13 dealing with independence from pressure, question 16 dealing with check upon government, and questions 21 and 22 dealing with confidence in leadership on political issues and candidates. The other twenty-six questions received



more favorable answers than the combined total of unfavorable responses, and "Don't Know" responses, and not answered questionnaires.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The author had hypothesized that a difference existed between the attitudes of the subscribers of Clark, the newspaper's home town, and the attitudes of those subscribers who lived in the other communities surrounding Clark. It was also hypothesized that the subscribers who lived in the Willow Lake area would be the most critical of the newspaper. When the answers to the questions were subjected to the chi square test, only one of the thirty-three questions on the questionnaire tended to affirm this hypothesis. It was therefore concluded that a significant difference does not exist between the attitudes of the subscribers of the different communities within the trade area.

However, differences significant at the .01 level were determined to exist when the respondents were divided into groups according to political preference. On question 4, which deals with presenting both sides of political issues, the Democrats gave the newspaper a far higher percentage of unfavorable and highly unfavorable responses than did the Republicans. The Independents also gave a

higher percentage of unfavorable and highly unfavorable responses than did the Republicans.

A difference significant at the .01 level also existed among the attitudes of the respondents of the different political groups on question 19, which tested the attitudinal dimension of "Authoritarianism." As previously explained, this deals with the tolerance or intolerance of the newspaper for others' objectives and points of view.

The difference found in the responses to these questions are similar to those found in a Brinton, Bush, and Newell study of one community. They suggested that their findings showed that Democrats were much more likely than Republicans to think that the paper--which was Republican in policy--was trying to impose its own political will on the community.<sup>11</sup>

A significant difference also existed among the responses of the different party members on a question dealing with responsibility for advertising. On this question, less than 20 per cent of the Democrats indicated that they could believe all the advertising in The Clark County Courier, while 46.4 per cent of the Republicans and Independents felt they could believe all the advertising.

It was concluded, therefore, that significant differences do exist between the attitudes of the subscribers

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11 Brinton, Bush, and Newell, p. 52.

with differing political preferences. The Clark County Courier, generally Republican in policy, received more favorable responses from Republican respondents than from Democrats or Independents, especially in the area of political candidates and issues.

Significant differences also existed when the respondents were divided into groups according to sex. A significant difference existed between the responses of the male and female subscribers on two questions dealing with independence from pressure. These were question 12: "If a big local advertiser called up the publisher of The Clark County Courier and asked him not to print a certain story, would The Clark County Courier print the story anyway or leave it out?" and question 13: "Some people say that most newspapers won't print anything that might make them lose advertising. Do you think this is true of The Clark County Courier?"

Only 15 per cent of the female respondents indicated that The Clark County Courier would not yield to pressure from a big local advertiser in connection with the printing of a certain story, but over 50 per cent of these same respondents believed that The Clark County Courier would print a story even at the risk of losing advertising. Similarly, while under 25 per cent of the male respondents believed that The Clark County Courier would not yield to pressure from a big local advertiser in connection with

the printing of a certain story, over 40 per cent indicated that The Clark County Courier would print a story even at the risk of losing advertising.

Finding that 45.8 per cent of the respondents did not know or would not answer the question dealing with pressure from a big local advertiser, the author concluded that while the respondents (only 22.6 per cent were favorable) did not want to say what The Clark County Courier's policy might be toward big local advertisers (which are extremely important to weekly newspapers), when the question was made to include all advertising, many more (46.7 per cent) felt The Clark County Courier would print a story even at the risk of losing advertising. Still, over one-fourth of the respondents marked the "Don't Know" response or did not answer this question (Table 6 and 7).

Female subscribers marked favorable and highly favorable responses more often than the male respondents in questions dealing with missing the newspaper if it could not be printed. Female subscribers also were more favorable than males in judging the paper as helpful in one's work, business, or daily life (Tables 8 and 9). These differences were significant at the .05 level.

Although the difference was not significant, women gave more favorable responses than men to questions testing the attitudinal dimensions of responsibility for accuracy, fairness and representativeness, and confidence in

leadership on political issues and candidates. Women also gave more favorable responses to the questions testing the general satisfaction of the newspaper. This is consistent with what Brinton, Bush, and Newell found in their tests. Women consistently scored more favorably than men on most dimensions, they reported.<sup>12</sup>

Since women spent more time than men reading The Clark County Courier, (55.1 per cent of the female respondents read the paper for 30 minutes or more compared with 40 per cent of the male respondents), it was concluded that it would indeed play a bigger role in their daily life and would be missed more if it could not be printed.

Significant differences were also found to exist between the attitudes of respondents at the various education levels. Although a significant difference existed on question 1, dealing with the accuracy of local news stories, no trend was found to exist between level of education and percentage of favorable or unfavorable responses (Table 10). However, on the other two questions where significant differences occurred, the author found that as the level of education increased, so did the percentage of unfavorable responses. These differences occurred on question 26: "How often have you read something in The Clark County Courier that gave you a 'lift'--something that made

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12 Brinton, Bush, and Newell, p. 80.

you feel that goodness rules the world more than greed?" and question 31: "In your work, business, or daily living, do you find that The Clark County Courier is helpful?"

An inverse relationship also existed on these questions between favorable responses and level of education of respondents (Tables 11 and 12).

Other examples, although not providing significant differences, indicated the same trend--as level of education of the respondents rose, so did the percentage of unfavorable responses. One example was question 15: "Do you think The Clark County Courier pays enough attention to what goes on in the state government at Pierre?" Over 40 per cent of the college graduates thought that The Clark County Courier did not pay enough attention to state government matters, while only 11.3 per cent of the lowest education level respondents thought this. Over 80 per cent of the lowest education level respondents thought that The Clark County Courier did pay enough attention to state government matters, while less than 60 per cent of the college graduates thought so.

#### Summary of Attitudinal Dimensions

The Clark County Courier subscribers were most critical of their newspaper in the area of independence from pressure, which deals with the newspaper's resistance to pressure from advertisers, persons high in the power

structure, and other interests. Only one-third of the subscribers answered the questions testing this area in favor of the newspaper, while nearly another third answered the questions unfavorably, and the remainder did not know or did not answer.

The subscribers were most favorable to the newspaper on questions related to responsibility for advertising material. Here, 90 per cent of the subscribers marked responses that were favorable to the newspaper. In discussing this question with the editor of the newspaper before any of the survey results were in, the editor of The Clark County Courier commented, "If only the subscribers knew the amount of advertising we turn away." When comparing this study's results with that of the Brinton, Bush, and Newell test, where only 52 per cent were definitely favorable,<sup>13</sup> it appears that the editor's policy of "turning away advertising" has brought greater reader acceptance of the Courier's advertisements.

The study shows that the subscriber most likely to be favorable to The Clark County Courier would be Republican, female, and with a high school education or less. The subscriber most likely to be the most critical of The Clark County Courier would be Democratic or Independent, male, and with a college degree.

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13 Brinton, Bush, and Newell, p. 49.



The subscribers view The Clark County Courier favorably in most areas that were tested under the attitudinal dimensions. It was concluded that the newspaper does have a great influence on the lives of its subscribers as witnessed by the responses to questions listed under general satisfaction, and that the paper would indeed be missed if it were to cease publication.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

It would be helpful if this test were run on other weekly newspapers in South Dakota. This would enable an editor to compare attitudes of his subscribers with the subscribers of other weekly newspapers in the state. This would also help editors find how their colleagues keep subscribers satisfied.

Another possible study would be a comparative investigation of a weekly Democratic newspaper and a weekly Republican newspaper. This would be especially interesting since the eighteen-year-old may soon have the right to vote. Although many of this group may not be subscribers, they do constitute a considerable portion of the newspaper's reading public with attitudes that may differ considerably from those of the older readers. A questionnaire would have to be designed to determine the attitudes not only of the newspaper's subscribers, but of the newspaper's readers as well.

## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

## CLASSIFICATION OF DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

Category	Willow Lake (N=41) %	Clark (N=98) %	Small Community Subscriber (N=73) %	Total (N=212) %
<u>SEX</u>				
Female	51.2	49.0	45.2	48.1
Male	43.9	48.0	54.8	49.5
Not Answered	4.9	3.0	0.0	2.4
<u>AGE</u>				
Under 56	39.0	44.9	50.7	45.8
56 and older	61.0	53.1	49.3	53.3
Not Answered	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.9
<u>LIVED IN AREA</u>				
Less than 10 years	0.0	7.1	4.1	4.7
10 or more years	100.0	92.9	95.9	95.3
<u>SUBSCRIBED TO THE COURIER</u>				
Less than 10 years	4.9	7.1	13.7	9.9
10 or more years	95.1	92.9	86.3	91.0
<u>TIME SPENT READING COURIER</u>				
Less than 30 min.	39.0	36.7	39.7	38.2
30 min. or more	61.0	62.3	58.9	60.9
<u>POLITICAL PREFERENCE</u>				
Democrat	41.5	26.5	26.0	29.3
Republican	46.3	59.2	53.4	54.7
Independent	9.8	11.2	13.7	11.8
Not Answered	2.4	3.1	6.9	4.2

## APPENDIX A (CONTINUED)

## CLASSIFICATION OF DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

Category	Willow Lake (N=41) %	Clark (N=98) %	Small Community Subscriber (N=73) %	Total (N=212) %
<u>ANNUAL INCOME</u>				
Under \$3000	26.8	27.5	30.2	28.3
\$4000 to \$4999	19.5	17.4	12.3	16.0
\$5000 to \$6999	12.2	19.4	11.0	15.1
\$7000 and over	31.7	29.6	39.7	11.5
Not Answered	9.8	6.1	6.8	7.1
<u>EDUCATION</u>				
Grammar School or below	39.0	24.5	24.7	27.4
High School	41.5	44.9	43.8	43.9
Some College	12.2	16.3	17.8	16.0
College Degree	2.4	12.2	11.0	9.9
Not Answered	4.9	2.1	2.7	2.8

## APPENDIX B

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE ANSWERS  
AND THE QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED FROM THE CLARK SUBSCRIBERS

Questions	Favorable		Unfavorable		Not Answered	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	95	96.9	3	3.1	0	0.0
2.	67	68.3	17	17.4	14	14.3
3.	52	53.1	44	44.8	2	2.1
4.	71	72.3	18	18.5	9	9.2
5.	68	69.4	11	11.2	19	19.4
6.	69	70.4	6	6.1	23	23.5
7.	95	96.9	1	1.0	2	2.1
8.	74	75.5	9	9.2	15	15.3
9.	32	32.6	62	63.3	4	4.1
10.	48	49.0	37	37.7	13	13.3
11.	69	70.4	17	17.4	12	12.2
12.	20	20.4	30	30.6	48	49.0
13.	41	41.8	34	34.7	23	23.5
14.	93	94.9	5	5.1	0	0.0
15.	74	75.5	19	19.4	5	5.1
16.	40	40.8	35	35.7	23	23.5
17.	84	85.7	13	13.3	1	1.0
18.	48	49.0	31	31.6	19	19.4
19.	52	53.1	17	17.3	29	29.6
20.	95	96.9	3	3.1	0	0.0
21.	45	45.9	45	45.9	8	8.2
22.	42	42.8	53	54.1	3	3.1
23.	84	85.7	9	9.2	5	5.1
24.	96	97.9	0	0.0	2	2.1
25.	80	81.6	9	9.2	9	9.2
26.	52	53.1	46	46.9	0	0.0
27.	95	96.9	0	0.0	3	3.1
28.	93	94.8	3	3.1	2	2.1
29.	80	81.6	18	18.4	0	0.0
30.	96	98.0	1	1.0	1	1.0
31.	88	89.8	9	9.2	1	1.0
32.	97	99.0	0	0.0	1	1.0
33.	93	94.9	3	3.1	2	2.1

## APPENDIX C

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE  
ANSWERS AND THE QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED  
FROM THE WILLOW LAKE SUBSCRIBERS

Questions	Favorable		Unfavorable		Not Answered	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	41	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
2.	25	60.9	4	9.8	12	29.3
3.	15	36.6	18	43.9	8	19.5
4.	36	87.8	4	9.8	1	2.4
5.	31	75.6	4	9.8	6	14.6
6.	32	78.1	1	2.4	8	18.5
7.	41	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
8.	30	73.2	2	4.9	9	21.9
9.	14	34.1	23	56.1	4	9.8
10.	27	65.9	8	19.5	6	14.6
11.	30	73.2	4	9.8	7	17.0
12.	7	17.1	13	31.7	21	51.2
13.	23	56.1	4	9.8	14	34.1
14.	38	92.7	2	4.9	1	2.4
15.	33	80.5	7	17.1	1	2.4
16.	20	48.8	10	24.4	11	26.8
17.	36	87.8	4	9.8	1	2.4
18.	20	48.8	5	12.2	16	39.0
19.	22	53.7	9	21.9	10	24.4
20.	39	95.1	2	4.9	0	0.0
21.	16	39.0	22	53.7	3	7.3
22.	14	34.1	20	48.8	7	17.1
23.	35	85.3	4	9.8	2	4.9
24.	40	97.6	0	0.0	1	2.4
25.	37	90.2	2	4.9	2	4.9
26.	27	65.9	14	34.1	0	0.0
27.	40	97.6	0	0.0	1	2.4
28.	40	97.6	1	2.4	0	0.0
29.	39	95.1	2	4.9	0	0.0
30.	41	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
31.	37	90.3	3	7.3	1	2.4
32.	41	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
33.	40	97.6	1	2.4	0	0.0

## APPENDIX D

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE  
ANSWERS AND THE QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED FROM  
THE SMALL COMMUNITY SUBSCRIBERS

Questions	Favorable		Unfavorable		Not Answered	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	71	97.3	2	2.7	0	0.0
2.	42	57.5	11	15.1	20	27.4
3.	35	47.9	35	47.9	3	4.2
4.	57	78.1	12	16.4	4	5.5
5.	51	69.8	11	15.1	11	15.1
6.	56	76.7	0	0.0	17	23.3
7.	72	98.6	0	0.0	1	1.4
8.	55	75.4	6	8.2	12	16.4
9.	24	32.9	46	63.0	3	4.1
10.	34	46.7	30	41.1	9	12.3
11.	49	67.1	15	20.6	9	12.3
12.	21	28.8	24	32.9	28	38.3
13.	35	48.0	19	26.0	19	26.0
14.	67	91.8	5	6.8	1	1.4
15.	47	64.4	21	28.8	5	6.8
16.	21	28.8	35	47.9	17	23.3
17.	56	76.7	14	19.2	3	4.1
18.	39	53.4	14	19.2	20	27.4
19.	41	56.2	9	12.3	23	31.5
20.	70	95.9	0	0.0	3	4.1
21.	26	35.6	41	56.2	6	8.2
22.	30	41.1	39	53.4	4	5.5
23.	64	87.7	1	1.4	8	10.9
24.	71	97.3	0	0.0	2	2.7
25.	58	79.5	7	9.6	8	10.9
26.	35	47.9	38	52.1	0	0.0
27.	72	98.6	1	1.4	0	0.0
28.	69	94.5	1	1.4	3	4.1
29.	63	86.3	9	12.3	1	1.4
30.	72	98.6	1	1.4	0	0.0
31.	63	86.3	10	13.7	0	0.0
32.	73	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
33.	71	97.3	2	2.7	0	0.0

APPENDIX E

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE ANSWERS AND THE QUESTIONS NOT ANSWERED FROM THE TOTAL SUBSCRIBERS

Questions	Favorable		Unfavorable		Not Answered	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	207	97.6	5	2.4	0	0.0
2.	134	63.2	32	15.1	46	21.7
3.	102	48.1	97	45.8	13	6.1
4.	164	77.4	34	16.0	14	6.6
5.	150	70.7	26	12.3	36	17.0
6.	157	74.1	7	3.3	48	22.6
7.	208	98.1	1	0.5	3	1.4
8.	159	75.0	17	8.0	36	17.0
9.	70	33.0	131	61.8	11	5.2
10.	109	51.4	75	35.4	28	13.2
11.	148	69.8	36	17.0	28	13.2
12.	48	22.6	67	31.6	97	45.8
13.	99	46.7	57	26.9	56	26.4
14.	198	93.4	12	5.7	2	0.9
15.	154	72.6	47	22.2	11	5.2
16.	71	33.5	90	42.4	51	24.1
17.	176	83.0	31	14.6	5	2.4
18.	107	50.5	50	23.6	55	25.9
19.	115	54.3	35	16.5	62	29.2
20.	204	96.2	5	2.4	3	1.4
21.	87	41.1	108	50.9	17	8.0
22.	86	40.6	112	52.8	14	6.6
23.	183	86.3	14	6.6	15	7.1
24.	207	97.6	0	0.0	5	2.4
25.	175	82.5	18	8.5	19	9.0
26.	114	53.8	98	46.2	0	0.0
27.	207	97.6	1	0.5	4	1.9
28.	202	95.2	5	2.4	5	2.4
29.	182	85.8	29	13.7	1	0.5
30.	209	98.6	2	0.9	1	0.5
31.	188	88.7	22	10.4	2	0.9
32.	211	99.5	0	0.0	1	0.5
33.	204	96.2	6	2.9	2	0.9



## APPENDIX F

QUESTIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL BRINTON, BUSH, AND NEWELL TEST  
THAT WERE ELIMINATED FROM THIS STUDY

1. In your experience, do headlines in the \_\_\_\_\_ give you an accurate idea of what really happened?
2. Do you think the \_\_\_\_\_ usually gives as much space to speeches by a candidate the paper is against as it does to speeches by a candidate it is for?
3. Which, if either, has the better chance of getting his side of a story about a local strike into the \_\_\_\_\_; the head of the business or a labor union official?
4. Does the \_\_\_\_\_ print both sides of issues that involve different races?
5. Does a wealthy man get better treatment in the \_\_\_\_\_ than a poor man?
6. If a good friend of the owners of the \_\_\_\_\_ got arrested for drunken driving, would the \_\_\_\_\_ print the story?
7. If an important wealthy man got into trouble with the law and asked the publisher of the \_\_\_\_\_ not to publish a news story about the matter, would the \_\_\_\_\_ print the story anyway or leave it out?
8. How well does the \_\_\_\_\_ keep its readers up to date on national and world affairs?
9. How much of the interesting local news do you feel the \_\_\_\_\_ gives?
10. What do you think of this statement: "The \_\_\_\_\_ keeps the people of this area well informed."
11. What about this statement: I can be as well informed by reading the \_\_\_\_\_ as by reading any other paper I can get.

## APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

QUESTIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL BRINTON, BUSH, AND NEWELL TEST  
THAT WERE ELIMINATED FROM THIS STUDY

12. What kind of a watch does the \_\_\_\_\_ keep for graft in the city and county government?
13. Do you think the \_\_\_\_\_ tries to run this area to suit itself?
14. What about this statement: The \_\_\_\_\_ not only advocates strongly the public improvements it itself wants, but campaigns just as hard for other improvements that are equally desirable.
15. How many people in this area pay attention to the \_\_\_\_\_'s advice on how to vote for President of the U. S.?
16. Do you think the people who run the \_\_\_\_\_ believe what is said in the advertisements the paper prints?
17. Does the \_\_\_\_\_ allow local stores to make false claims in their advertisements in the paper?
18. Do the news items in the \_\_\_\_\_ suggest that there are more people in the world with weak character than with strong character?
19. How often does the \_\_\_\_\_ print something that makes you feel there are a lot of good people in the world and not just a lot of bad people?
20. How often does the \_\_\_\_\_ report events in which the people involved show qualities of courage or sacrifice?
21. How often does the \_\_\_\_\_ print pictures that over-emphasize sex?
22. How often does the \_\_\_\_\_ print news about crimes committed in such communities as New York, Hollywood, and Chicago?
23. How often have you read something in the \_\_\_\_\_ that you think children or teen-agers should not read?

APPENDIX F (CONTINUED)

QUESTIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL BRINTON, BUSH, AND NEWELL TEST  
THAT WERE ELIMINATED FROM THIS STUDY

24. If a friend of yours moved to this area, would you advise him to subscribe to the \_\_\_\_\_ ?
25. How much do you feel you really need the \_\_\_\_\_ ?
26. When the \_\_\_\_\_ arrives, how much do you usually want to read it?
27. Everything considered, what do you think of the \_\_\_\_\_ as a newspaper?

## APPENDIX G

## EXAMPLE OF LETTER THAT ACCOMPANIED THE MAIL QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is a questionnaire designed to get some opinions of the readers of the Clark County Courier.

The response to the questionnaire will be used in a project in journalism at South Dakota State University. Please be honest and frank in your answers. It is not necessary for you to sign the questionnaire, and all replies will be kept confidential. The editor of the Clark County Courier, Bert Moritz, is aware of this study, and is cooperating with us.

Although the questionnaire appears long, it will take but a few minutes of your time to complete. Please answer the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed envelope as soon as it is convenient. This information will be of great value to us. Your help is most appreciated. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Duane Dolney  
Graduate Student  
Journalism Department

## APPENDIX H

## EXAMPLE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO EACH INDIVIDUAL

Please check one response for each question--the response you think answers the question most accurately.

1. How accurate is The Clark County Courier in its local news stories?

- Very accurate.
- Fairly accurate.
- Not so accurate.
- Not at all accurate.

2. If you heard a news item over the radio and then read a conflicting version of the same story in The Clark County Courier, which one would you believe?

- The radio, certainly.
- The radio, probably.

3. How often does The Clark Courier, in its news columns and headlines, try to make a happening sound more exciting than it really is?

- Very often.
- Once in a while.
- Hardly ever.
- Never.
- Don't know.

4. Does The Clark Courier usually present both sides of important political issues?

- Yes, always.
- Yes, most of the time.
- No, not very often.
- No, almost never.
- Don't know.

5. If The Clark Courier was against a man who was running for public office, would it be fair to him or not?

- Not at all fair.
- Not so fair.
- Pretty fair.
- Very fair.
- Don't know.

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

6. If an Indian got in a serious fight with a white man in this area, how fair would The Clark Courier be toward the Indian?

- Not at all fair.
- Not very fair.
- Pretty fair.
- Very fair.
- Don't know.

7. Does The Clark Courier seem fair to all religious groups?

- Yes, very fair.
- Yes, pretty fair.
- No, not very fair.
- No, not at all fair.
- Don't know.

8. Do you think The Clark Courier really cares about the poor people in your town?

- Yes, very much.
- Yes, some.
- No, not very much.
- No, not at all.
- Don't know.

9. How true is this statement: The names of some local people are in The Clark Courier very often, while interesting news about many other local people hardly ever gets in the paper.

- There's a lot of truth in it.
- There's some truth in it.
- There is very little truth in it.
- It's not true at all.
- Don't know.

10. Would it be easier for a personal friend of the owner of The Clark Courier to get a story in the paper than for a person who didn't know the owner at all?

- No, certainly not.
- No, probably not.
- Yes, probably.
- Yes, certainly.
- Don't know.

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

11. Does the amount of money a man has make a difference in the treatment he gets in The Clark Courier?

- No, not at all.
- No, very little.
- Yes, some difference.
- Yes, a lot of difference.
- Don't know.

12. If a big local advertiser called up the publisher of The Clark Courier and asked him not to print a certain story, would The Clark Courier print the story anyway or leave it out?

- Would print it anyway, certainly.
- Would print it anyway, probably.
- Would leave it out, probably.
- Would leave it out, certainly.
- Don't know.

13. Some people say that most newspapers won't print anything that might make them lose advertising. Do you think this is true of The Clark Courier?

- No, certainly not.
- No, probably not.
- Yes, probably.
- Yes, certainly.
- Don't know.

14. When you finish reading The Clark Courier, do you feel it has given you a clear idea of what has happened during the week in Clark County?

- Yes, very clear.
- Yes, fairly clear.
- No, not very clear.
- No, not at all.
- Don't know.

15. Do you think The Clark Courier pays enough attention to what goes on in the state government at Pierre?

- No, it never does.
- No, sometimes it doesn't.
- Yes, it usually does.
- Yes, it always does.
- Don't know.

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

16. If the contractor did a bad paving job for this city (the one you live in, or the one which is your postal address), do you think The Clark Courier would try to find out about it and print the facts?

- Yes, certainly.
- Yes, probably.
- No, probably not.
- No, certainly not.
- Don't know.

17. Do you think The Clark Courier keeps its readers well informed about the way the local government conducts its business?

- Very poorly informed.
- Not so well informed.
- Fairly well informed.
- Very well informed.
- Don't know.

18. Does The Clark Courier help to see that laws are enforced in this area?

- Yes, it always does.
- Yes, it usually does.
- No, sometimes it doesn't.
- No, it never does.
- Don't know.

19. If the people who run The Clark Courier had to choose between their own personal interests and the best interests of the whole area, which would they choose?

- The area's interests, always.
- The area's interests, usually.
- Their own interests, usually.
- Their own interests, always.
- Don't know.

20. When someone in this area does something that helps the community, does The Clark Courier usually give him credit for it?

- No, it never does.
- No, it hardly ever does.
- Yes, it usually does.
- Yes, it always does.
- Don't know.



APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

21. If you were not sure about how to vote on a local bond issue, would you be influenced by The Clark Courier on how to vote?

- Yes, certainly.
- Yes, probably.
- No, probably not.
- No, certainly not.
- Don't know.

22. If you did not understand one of the measures on a state election ballot, would you be influenced by The Clark Courier on how to vote?

- Yes, certainly.
- Yes, probably.
- No, probably not.
- No, certainly not.
- Don't know.

23. When The Clark Courier prints an editorial, do you usually feel it has made a complete study of the subject being discussed?

- Yes, very complete.
- Yes, fairly complete.
- No, not very complete.
- No, not complete at all.
- Don't know.

24. How much of the advertising in The Clark Courier do you feel you can believe?

- None of it.
- Not much of it.
- Most of it.
- All of it.
- Don't know.

25. Some people say some newspapers don't care what kind of ads they print so long as they make money. Do you think this is true of The Clark Courier?

- Yes, certainly.
- Yes, probably.
- No, probably not.
- No, certainly not.
- Don't know

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

26. How often have you read something in The Clark Courier that gave you a "lift"--something that made you feel that goodness rules the world more than greed?

- Never.
- A few times.
- Often.
- Very often.

27. Does it seem to you that The Clark Courier would rather print bad things about people than good things?

- No, absolutely not.
- No, not entirely.
- Yes, pretty much so.
- Yes, to a great extent.
- Don't know.

28. On the whole, what sort of job do you think The Clark Courier is doing?

- A very good job.
- A good job.
- A poor job.
- A very poor job.
- Don't know.

29. If the presses at The Clark Courier broke down and the paper couldn't be printed again for two or three weeks, how much would you miss the paper?

- A very great deal.
- Quite a lot.
- A little.
- Not at all.
- Don't know.

30. Does the way The Clark Courier writes the news make it easy for you to understand what happened?

- Very easy.
- Fairly easy.
- Not very easy.
- Not at all easy.
- Don't know.

31. In your work, business, or daily living, do you find that The Clark Courier is helpful?

- Yes, it helps quite a lot.
- Yes, it helps some.
- No, not much.
- No, not at all.
- Don't know.

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

32. How satisfied are you with the delivery service of The Clark Courier?

- Very satisfied.
- Fairly satisfied.
- Not very satisfied.
- Not at all satisfied.

33. Are the things which you are interested in in The Clark Courier easy or hard to find?

- Very easy to find.
- Fairly easy to find.
- Fairly hard to find.
- Extremely hard to find.
- Don't know.

Could you please provide the following information? You need not put any signature or other identification anywhere on this material, and all replies will be kept confidential. Thank you.

1. Sex:  Female  Male
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years
3. How many years have you lived in this area:
  - Less than 5 years.
  - 5-9 years.
  - 10 or more years.
4. How many years have you read The Clark County Courier?
  - 1 to 5 years.
  - 6 to 9 years.
  - 10 or more years.
5. How much time do you spend reading The Clark Courier?
  - Less than 10 minutes.
  - 10 to 30 minutes.
  - 30 or more minutes.
6. What is your political preference?
  - Democrat
  - Republican
  - Independent
7. What is your annual income?
  - Under \$3000
  - \$3000 to \$4999
  - \$5000 to \$6999
  - \$7000 and over

APPENDIX H (CONTINUED)

8. Education:

- Grammar school or below
- High School (if attended or graduated)
- Some college
- College degree or beyond

9. Should The Clark County Courier offer advice on how its readers should vote on political candidates?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Thank you for this information.

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