Impersonal Source and Channel Credibility: A Descriptive Study of Television News Performance

1974

Elliott Alan Pood
University of Central Florida

Find similar works at: https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rtd

University of Central Florida Libraries http://library.ucf.edu

Part of the Communication Commons

STARS Citation

Retrospective Theses and Dissertations. 123.
https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rtd/123

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact lee.dotson@ucf.edu.
IMPERSONAL SOURCE AND CHANNEL CREDIBILITY: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF TELEVISION NEWS PERFORMANCE

BY

ELLIOTT ALAN POOD
B.A., West Georgia College, 1973

THESIS
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Communication in the Graduate Studies Program of Florida Technological University, 1974

Orlando, Florida
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful completion of any undertaking as large as this requires the assistance of a great many people other than the author. Space limitations, unfortunately, prevent me from recognizing them all; however, I would like to thank several individuals without whom this thesis would not have been completed.

First, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Robert Arnold, Dr. David Dees, Mr. Kenneth Sheinkopf, and especially my Chairman, Dr. Raymond W. Buchanan, who at times was condescending and at other times adamant, but at all times of great help.

Secondly, I thank my grandfather, without whose guidance and assistance I would have never been in either the financial position or the proper frame of mind for this undertaking.

Finally, I would especially like to thank my wife, Bonnie. During the course of this research she has functioned in the roles of typist, wife, confidante, editor, critic, and crying-towel. It is to her that I dedicate this study.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter                                              Page

I. INTRODUCTION ................................................. 1

Contributory Studies
Impact of Source Credibility
Non-personal Sources
Television's Impact on Society
Television Credibility
The Roper Surveys
Summary of Previous Research
Statement of the Problem
Significance of the Study

II. PROCEDURE ..................................................... 42

Research Questions
Development of the Research Questions
Application of the Questionnaire
Questionnaire Distribution
Pilot Studies

III. RESULTS ...................................................... 52

Demographic Characteristics
Research Question Number 1
Research Question Number 2
Research Question Number 3

IV. DISCUSSION ................................................... 79

Level of Television News Credibility
Differentiation on the Basis of Methodology
The Possession of Source Credibility by Channels
Implications for Future Research
Summary
APPENDIX

A. NAB TELEVISION CODE ................................................. 90
B. JAMES C. HAGARTY'S CREED FOR TELEVISION NEWSMEN ....................... 105
C. FIFTEEN POINT MCGUIRE ATTITUDE SCALE ......................... 109
D. RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ........................................... 110
E. PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE .............................................. 114

BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................. 117
LIST OF TABLES

Table | Page
--- | ---
1. ROPER STUDY--SOURCE OF MOST NEWS | 35
2. ROPER STUDY--RELATIVE CREDIBILITY OF THE MEDIA | 36
3. ROPER STUDY--RELATIVE DESIRABILITY OF THE MEDIA | 37
4. SEX OF THE RESPONDENTS | 53
5. AGE LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS | 53
6. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL | 54
7. POLITICAL PREFERENCE | 55
8. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 1 | 57
9. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 2 | 58
10. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 3 | 59
11. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 4 | 60
12. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 5 | 61
13. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 6 | 62
14. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 7 | 63
15. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 8 | 64
16. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 9 | 65
17. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 10 | 66
18. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 11 | 67
19. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 12 | 68
20. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 13 | 69
21. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 14 | 70
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 15.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. CATEGORICAL RESPONSE RANGE FOR QUESTION 16.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. TABLE OF RESPONSES FOR RESEARCH QUESTION NUMBER 1.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. PERFORMANCE RESPONSES REPORTED IN THE ROPER SURVEY OF 1972.</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. PERFORMANCE RESPONSES REPORTED IN THIS RESEARCH</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. RELATIVE COMPARISON TABLE OF BOTH STUDIES</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. SIGNIFICANCE OF DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TELEVISION AND TELEVISION NEWSMEN</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, behavioral scientists have given considerable attention to the variable of source credibility as it relates to the organizational communication situation. According to McCrosky,

An extensive body of literature has developed over the past two decades which indicates that source credibility may be the single most important variable in determining the persuasive effects of communication.¹

Considerable research has been devoted to the impact of messages delivered by credible sources as opposed to non-credible sources in the personal source situation. More recently, communicators have recognized the existence of non-personal sources in communication situations. Zimbardo and Ebbesen conclude that

The question of how to produce a large amount of opinion change in the attitudes of an audience has been studied quite extensively ... It seems likely that a trustworthy source ... would produce more attitude change than an untrustworthy source. ... we can still ask how much more change a trustworthy source produces than an untrustworthy source.²


In relation to this question, the answer may not be
generalizable to the entire strata of disciplines within the field
of communication. For example, in the area of television news, many
attempts have been made to answer the question of impact and, as yet,
no definitive conclusions can be drawn. The research does indicate
that the impact of television is great. Neil Hickey concludes that,

Many Americans are now thinking and voting their
prejudices—and even shaping their lives—based upon
television's skeletal version of what's really going on
in an increasingly complex and incomprehensible world."³

William Paley, who has directed CBS since 1928, contends that
"At no point in our history has the function of news and public
affairs broadcasting been so critical and important to our national
life."⁴ Fred Friendly, CBS news president until 1966, states that
"Every day there is more for people to know and every day what we
don't know can kill us."⁵

It becomes obvious at this point that television may be
having a profound impact upon society. This impact will be more
thoroughly explored later in this research. However, given the
conclusions drawn to this point about the impact of a credible
source versus a non-credible source, it would be natural to assume
that the principles of source credibility would apply to tele-
vision news. This, however, may not be the case.

³Neil Hickey, "How Well Does Television Keep America
Informed?", Television, Barry Cole, ed., (New York: The Free Press,
⁴Ibid, p. 3. ⁵Ibid.
Studies conducted in the area of media credibility to this point have attempted to define the credibility of one medium in relation to the others. A more recent study, conducted by William Gene Mathews, indicates that the viewers' opinions of the media's credibility change significantly when individual media are considered separately. An answer to this discrepancy between source credibility research and television impact and credibility research may be found in a review of the literature on the impact of non-personal sources. This literature will be reviewed in the section of this paper dealing with previous research.

This research attempts to explore the question of credibility and impact of television. As with any field of research, a small beginning must first be made before more careful and intricate consideration can be formulated and executed. The areas of credibility, television impact, and television credibility will be discussed in the section on previous research. However, the investigation will attempt to measure only the credibility level of television, leaving the question of impact for later research.

The studies which have attempted to define the media, such as the Roper Surveys and the Harris Polls, have asked questions which require the respondents to rank the various media in relation to the others. Using this method, they have concluded that television is the most credible.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined operationally.

1) Credibility . . . The terms credibility and believability will be considered to mean the same thing and are defined as the measure of performance the television news industry rates when compared to a set of standards developed for the broadcast industry.

The standards used in this study will be those of the National Association of Broadcasters (Appendix A) as well as those developed by James Hagerty in his "Creed for Television Newsmen" (Appendix B).8

It is important to remember that neither of these codes are mandatory, but rather are suggestions to the industry as to what should be done and how to accomplish these goals.

2) Attitude . . . Attitude and opinion will be defined as having the same meaning and are operationalized as the respondent's answers to the scales provided in the survey.9

3) Degree of Credibility . . . The degree of credibility is operationalized as the mean scores of all the responses to each individual scale on the fifteen point attitude scale used in this research (Appendix C).

---


CONTRIBUTORY STUDIES

Source credibility has been one of the focal points of much of the communication research done to this point and comprises a vast body of literature. Much of this research either does not relate specifically to this study or relates only in the function of clarifying some possible explanations for the trends demonstrated by this research. It is still important, however, to consider some of these studies.

For the purposes of this study, the previous research will be divided into three areas. The three areas are: 1) the impact of source credibility on persuasion and attitude change, 2) the impact of television in society, and 3) the credibility and believability of the media as a whole.

THE IMPACT OF SOURCE CREDIBILITY

For many years, communicators have assumed that a more credible source will persuade more than a less credible source when given the same message. Recently, attempts at experimenting with the effects of source credibility to determine the specific degree to which it affects the persuasive situation have been made.

It has been traditionally assumed that credibility played an important role in the communication situation. Wayne Minnick concludes that

Men are strongly inclined to accept as probably true, statements made by persons whom they admire or respect. If
the character and respect of the speaker elicit admiration from the audience, the likelihood that he will win belief is increased.10

L. Doob suggests that a stimulus with prestige is more likely to overcome counter-argument than is a stimulus without prestige.11

While the field of communication has been assuming this to be true, very little was actually known about the true effects of source credibility on persuasion. To supplant the knowledge in this field, communicators turned again to generalization to explain the nature of credibility. As Minnick explains

The nature of ethos is not clearly understood but it may be considered as arising from three sources: (1) the tangible attainments or reputation of the speaker which the audience knows about before the delivery of the speech, (2) the character and personality of the speaker revealed as he utters the speech, and (3) the congruence of the speaker's proposals with the beliefs and attitudes of the audience.12

While this type of explanation may be very useful in aiding our understanding of the communication process, it does very little to explain the cognitive effects of the source to persuasion and attitude change. For this reason, studies were undertaken to aid our knowledge of the degree to which the variable of source credibility affects the communicative processes. One fact is important to remember at this point; credibility is a function that is determined by the audience and its perception of the communicator,


12Minnick, p. 162.
and not by any extraneous factors.\textsuperscript{13}

Several experimental studies testing the effects of credible sources versus non-credible sources have been conducted in recent years. One study, conducted by Zagona and Harter in 1966, exposed subjects to identical persuasive messages relating to the hazards of smoking. The subjects were divided into three groups, the first of which received a message attributed to the Surgeon General's Report on Smoking (High Credibility), the second group's message was attributed to \textit{Life Magazine} (Moderate Credibility), and the third group's message was attributed to the American Tobacco Company (Low Credibility). The findings suggested that (1) the communication was better remembered when it was attributed to either a high credible source or a low credible source as opposed to a moderate credible source, and (2) as the credibility of the source increased, the percentage of subjects who agreed with the information and perceived it a credible and trustworthy also increased.\textsuperscript{14}

Hovland and Weiss conducted a study in 1951, in which they used two groups of subjects and exposed them to identical messages. In one group, the message was attributed to a highly credible source,


and in the other group it was attributed to a low credible source. This research indicated that, in most instances, opinion change in the direction advocated by the speaker was much greater when the persuader was perceived as having high credibility than when the speaker was perceived as having low credibility.15

The results of these two experiments have been replicated and substantiated by others such as Weiss in 1967,16 and Kelman and Hovland in 1953.17 In all of these experiments, it was determined that the speaker whose credibility was perceived by the audience as being very high had a significantly greater amount of opinion change in the desired direction than did the speaker whose credibility was perceived by the audience as being low or moderate. We can conclude from this research that source credibility does, in fact, play a significant role in achieving attitude or opinion change. Although this conclusion seems to be the logical one, there is one other consideration which must be made at this point. The question now becomes, how long does the impact of source exist?

While the credibility of the source does seem to affect


the way the audience accepts a speaker and his message, later research indicates that over a period of time the effects of source on the message wear off and the message content becomes the focal point. In two of the experiments previously mentioned, the experimenters manipulated a second variable, that being the time elapsed between the message and the opinion questionnaire. Hovland and Weiss in 1951,\(^{18}\) and Kelman and Hovland in 1953,\(^{19}\) both manipulated this time variable and concluded that the effects of source and credibility therein tend to wear off with time. This has been labeled as the **Sleeper Effect** by a group of experimenters testing the effects of elapsed time on the communication situation.\(^{20}\)

It would appear thus far that the credibility of the speaker does affect the acceptability of the message in the short run. It would also seem logical to conclude that these effects wear off over time. However, while this might first appear to be the case, it must be remembered that these conclusions apply to a personal source such as the persuader in the one to one or the one to many speech situation. Careful consideration must now be given to the effect of credibility as it applies to the impersonal or non-personal source, such as television.

\(^{18}\)Hovland and Weiss, loc. cit.

\(^{19}\)Kelman and Hovland, loc. cit.

Non-personal Sources

Researchers in the area of source credibility have found it necessary to differentiate between two types of sources, personal and impersonal (also referred to as non-personal sources.) The reason this duality of sources is necessary is given by Berlo, Lamert, and Mertz in a study on the dimensions of source credibility.

Because of the restrictive and ambiguous meanings attached to the label, "source credibility," and the tendency for such labels to suggest that the variable is the property of the source rather than the receiver response to the source, we have chosen to refer to the construct, rather unimaginatively, as dimensions for evaluating message sources.21

Two segments of this quotation provide important thrust for the purposes of this study. First, the authors realize that source credibility is not actually limited to a person, but may be applied to any source of messages or information. Second, in realizing this principle, the authors also recognize that the effects of source credibility do not originate with the source, but are in the perceptions of the audience or listeners.

With this construct in mind, one is now able to deal with the variable of channel. Using the concept of message source as opposed to individual source, it is possible to define a relationship between source and channel so that both are construed as having the same meaning and effect. The justification for this definition is found in Mortensen's book on communication theory.

The study of communication channels until quite recently, has been approached in the manner of a telephone repairman assigned to correct a faulty phone line. His goal is to restore efficiency, to locate and repair the fault, to minimize distortion and noise. Conceived in such mechanistic terms, a channel merely makes communication possible without altering it. Even more misleading is the tendency to regard the influence of channels in passive or neutral terms.22

Using Mortensen's assumption, it becomes clear that channels may affect the credibility of the message in that they themselves are sources of information as defined by Berlo, Lamert, and Mertz. The question now becomes, do these sources assume a passive role in the communication process or are they, in fact, sources of information with their own levels of credibility? The answer to this question must be affirmative. As Marshall McLuhan suggests, "the message meaning or content cannot be understood apart from the impact of the medium itself."23

Considerably more pragmatic is the logical conclusion which can be drawn from the structure of the media. In the world of television, there appears to be no such phrase as open-endedness of the message. There is also no means by which all messages may be transmitted. The television industry is rigidly structured within the constraints of time. The time factors make it necessary to eliminate, exclude, shorten, or change many of the informational and news stories that are received daily. In this manner, the


channel is acting as an impact on the message in the same functional way that the person delivering the message does.

It is a result of this impact that leads communicators to consider channels as sources of information. As Mortensen suggests,

Underlying the many uses of the term credibility are a number of common elements. The term corresponds roughly to impressions or images people hold toward a message source—whether a person, a medium, or an institution. . . It is tempting to think of credibility as something one possesses, much like sex or weight. However, the scientific term and meaning thereof is closely tied to what persons perceive to be the characteristics of a source. Ordinarily, there is no one to one relationship between the actual source and the perceived characteristics. Technically . . it (credibility) is conceived in terms of the inherent attributes of the source. 24

This theory is what is meant by the term "impersonal sources." It is a modern application of the definition of a channel which suggests that channels should be considered to play an active role in the communication process as opposed to the traditional view of passive participation. Mortensen suggests above that sources of information need not necessarily be construed as being human or possessing a specific personality, but rather, they are anything in the communication process which possesses characteristics that may influence the acceptance of the message due to its source or origin.

The logical conclusion of the studies cited to this point indicates that sources of information may be construed in many

different contexts. Nevertheless, these sources or channels, depending upon which label is applied, do have an impact on the acceptance of the message. It would also appear logical to conclude that the credibility of these sources will significantly affect the message content and receivers' perceptions of truth and acceptance of the message. Using these conclusions as a basis, it now becomes important to consider the degree of impact that one of these impersonal sources has on attitude and opinion change.

Television's Impact on Society

In attempting to define and understand the television industry's impact on society, it becomes essential to understand the function of television. To understand this function, it is necessary to understand the gatekeeper theory. First postulated by Lewin\textsuperscript{25} and later applied to mass communications by White,\textsuperscript{26} this theory suggests that as society became increasingly more complex, we established, out of necessity, a series of gatekeepers to sort, edit, and condense the information with which we are confronted each day. Furthermore, most of the sorting and condensing is done on the basis of purposive and non-purposive messages,


as postulated by a more recent study conducted by Westly and MacLean.27

This theory has been linked directly to the mass media by Robert Cirino. He suggests that modern man is merely an observer of the media which serve the function of reporting only those messages which they perceive as important and relevant. Cirino also claims that in using the media to perform this gatekeeping function, man has handed over his decision-making process to those who run the media.28

While it might appear to be logical that man has handed over his power of information gathering, sorting, and editing, it does not necessarily follow that we have given away the power to make our own decisions. It would be much more logical to conclude that we have given away the power to determine the information upon which we will base our decisions. If this is the case, we have given the media the key to our persuasive and cognitive processes. What impact does television exert over our lives? The answer to this question will provide us with the key to determining whether or not we have handed over the inherent means of persuasion to the media.


Several studies have concluded that television is becoming a social
necessity to the younger generation and, as a result, these
generations have become virtually programmed as a result of their
exposure to television news.\(^{29}\) In a study of the relative effective-
ness of advertising in the different media, Someral found that
information must be believable. Those responding to the experiment
concluded that television presented this information in the most
believable manner.

Dr. Herbert Krugman recently conducted neurological research
on the effects of television versus the printed media on an indi-
vidual's brain. The study concludes that the basic electrical
response of the brain is clearly to the medium and not the content
differences.\(^{30}\) Dr. Krugman used brain waves as opposed to other
physical functions such as pupil dialation, heart beat, or respir-
ation because of the sensitivity of the brain waves to change and
their easily measured patterns.

The study used two types of waves, Beta and Delta. Slow
Delta waves signified drowsiness and relaxation, whereas the Beta
waves signified arousal and alertness.

\(^{29}\)James B. Someral, "The Tube is King", Media Scope

\(^{30}\)Herbert Krugman, "Television versus Print", Newsweek,
Volume 76, (November 2, 1970), pp. 122-123.
Dr. Krugman found that while the subjects were reading the advertisement, five seconds of Delta waves and twenty-eight seconds of Beta waves were recorded. Conversely, when the subjects were viewing the commercial on television they registered a drop in Beta waves from twenty-eight to fifteen seconds, and at the same time an increase in Delta waves from five to twenty-one seconds.

The conclusions of this study seem to indicate that the subjects were much more attentive and critical of the information being presented in the printed form, whereas they were more or less passively accepting the information presented in the electronic form. This would tend to indicate, as do previous studies by Weinberger,31 that we are more likely to passively accept information presented on television than we are to accept information which is presented in the printed form.

There are several studies which have demonstrated the impact of the different media on the credibility of the message. Dr. R. Weisenborn, Professor of Communication at Michigan State University, investigated the effects of four communication media, printed, oral, visual, and combination, on the terminal source credibility of the speaker and the content of the message.32 A speech, pretested for


attitude neutrality, was given by a speaker unknown to the subjects. It was given four different oral-physical delivery variations to test the credibility impact of each communication medium.

The results of the study indicate that there were perceived differences in credibility which can be attributed to the various media through which the message was presented. It also indicated that the character impact and dimension of source has neither an additive nor an interactive effect on source credibility of the speaker. This would tend to indicate that in some cases the different media may not affect the credibility of the person delivering the message while substantially affecting the content of the message and credence which the listener gives to that message.

Research done by Robert Cirino concludes that, in certain situations, the media coverage of the individual may also affect the credibility of the person as well as the message. Mr. Cirino suggests that in the elections of 1968, the television coverage was so slanted as to give the viewing public the wrong impression of certain political candidates. This conclusion was supported by Neil Hickey in a review made in the coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, conducted independently of Mr. Cirino. This research indicates that the network coverage of the convention was biased against the Humphrey-Johnson administration and Mayor Daly of Chicago. There was too much editorializing, and floor reporters

---

33 Robert Cirino, loc. cit.
spent a disproportionate amount of time interviewing anti-
administration delegates.34

It may, therefore, be concluded that the medium through
which the message is presented will have a substantial impact on
the acceptance of both the message and the speaker. As Mr. Hickey
concludes, "It may well have been the coverage of the campaign,
more than anything else, which led to the outcome of the election."35

Assuming, then, that television will have a substantial
impact on the credibility of the source or the credibility of the
message, let us now turn our attention to the impact that it has in
changing attitudes and opinions in the viewers. Several empirical
studies have been conducted in the area of television impact on
viewers' attitudes and opinions, and these cover a great many areas
of communication and television. Among the more recent issues of
television impact is the controversy concerning the election day
broadcast of results from the East to the viewing public in the
West. One study in this area, conducted by Harold Mendelsohn,
attempted to answer the question of the effect on voting behavior
on the West coast of television announcements of a Johnson-
Humphrey victory on election day, 1964.36 The design of the

34Neil Hickey, "How Well Does Television Keep America

35Ibid.

36Harold Mendelsohn, "Western Voting and Broadcast of
Results", Public Opinion Quarterly, Volume 30, (Issue 1, Spring,
experiment was a pre-test—post-test, survey, and interview design. It was necessary to determine the intent of the subjects to vote and the preferred candidates for which they were going to vote at the very latest possible moment prior to election day. It was also necessary to conduct followup interviews to determine the actual vote of the individuals and whether or not they had been exposed to election day broadcasts prior to their voting. Designing the experiment in this manner, the experimenters randomly selected voters from the fourteen election districts of California.

There are two overriding conclusions of this study. The data indicated that election day broadcasts did not have any significant effect on changing the prior commitment of the voters to vote for their candidates. The data also indicated that the election day broadcasts did influence the listeners to engage in persuasive attempts aimed at getting the voters to go out and vote, although not necessarily for any particular candidate.

The significance of this conclusion is supported by other studies on the impact of television in the voting behavior of the public and voter turnout. Specifically, the conclusion that television has a significant impact on the voter turnout and the "get out and vote" campaigns is found in a study by William Glaser.37

---

There are several important conclusions drawn by this study which are relevant to this discussion.

Dr. Glaser concludes that television has a much greater impact on the ability of the listeners to recall information and reminders to vote than do any of the other media. As Mr. Glaser concludes,

Television acquaints many people with political information that they might have missed or underemphasized in the newspapers and over the radio. Several studies have documented the immense public exposure to politics that has resulted from television, an exposure that is far greater than that achieved by previous media, particularly during presidential elections.38

This conclusion is supported by research conducted, according to Dr. Glaser, by the University of Wisconsin Television Laboratory in 1959 on the effects of learning and retention from exposure to the mass media.39

The second conclusion of the Glaser research is that television has a significant impact on the long term effectiveness of the message. The results indicate that "Being reminded by any of the media--including television--may lead to higher voting rates than not receiving such messages."40

It would appear, at this point, that the impact of television in the area of voting behavior and last minute opinion change persuasion is unclear. In some instances, television does have a far more significant impact than do the other media. At the same

38Ibid. 39Ibid. 40Ibid.
time, there are instances in which television does not have that significant impact. It, thus, becomes imperative to turn our attention to some other areas of television impact in the hope of clarifying the relationship between television and the social behavior of the public.

One of the best areas of evaluation for the impact of television is in the area of television advertising and its effects on the public buying attitudes. According to Dr. Herbert Krugman,

We now believe that the powers of the mass media are limited . . . It has been acknowledged, however, that this more carefully de-limited view of mass media influence is based upon analysis of largely non-commercial cases and data. We have all wondered how many of these limitations apply also to the world of commerce, specifically advertising."41

Dr. Krugman suggests that the obvious conclusion which many people tend to draw from the previous research is that these limitations do also apply to the commercial end of television.42 He claims that this is not substantially true, due in large part to the lack of documentation on the specific effects of television advertising.

The economic impact of TV advertising is substantial and documented. Its messages have been learned by the public. Only the lack of specific case histories relating advertising to attitudes to sales keeps researchers from concluding that the commercial use of the medium is a success."43


42 Ibid., pp. 349-356. 43 Ibid.
Using a review of the literature concerning "frame of reference" and "selective perception and retention," Dr. Krugman suggests that while the specific case histories are lacking, enough of the psychological processes are known for us to conclude that television advertising is quite successful.

I have tried to say that the public lets down its guard to the repetitive commercial use of the television medium and that it easily changes its ways of perceiving products and brands and its purchasing behavior without thinking very much about it at the time of television exposure or at any time prior to purchase, and without up to then changing verbalized attitudes. This adds up, I think, to an understandable success story for advertising's use of the television medium. Furthermore, this success story seems to be based on a left-handed kind of public trust that sees no great importance in the matter."44

It might be useful to our understanding of the impact of television to remember that there is a significant effect from the variable of time. Krugman uses this as the basis for his reasoning in the impact of television advertising. Whereas in the previous studies the messages were "one shot", short span of influence messages, the effects of advertising on television and its impact on society are based on repeated exposure to the message and the persuasive attempt.

I wonder about those so called "limits of effectiveness" of the non-commercial use of the mass media. I wonder if we were not overusing attitudes and attitude changes as our primary criterion of effectiveness? In looking for behavioral changes, did we sometimes despair too soon simply because we did not find earlier attitude changes? . . . I

44Ibid., p. 354.
would like to suggest, therefore, that the distinction between the commercial and the non-commercial use of the media . . . has blinded us to the existence of two entirely different ways of experiencing and being influenced by mass media. 45

Dr. Krugman concludes that a difference in the level of involvement in the message will produce a difference in the amount of time required for the opinion change in the desired direction to take effect.

The significance of conditions of low or high involvement is not that one is better than the other, but that the processes of communication impact are different. That is, there is a difference in the change processes that are at work. Thus, with low involvement one might look for gradual shifts in perceptual structure, aided by repetition, activated by behavioral choice situations, and followed at some time by attitude change. With high involvement one would look for the classic, more dramatic, and more familiar conflict of ideas at the level of conscious opinion and attitude that precedes changes in overt behavior. 46

It might, therefore, be reasonable to assume that television does have a significant impact on the attitudes and opinions of the viewing public, given the use of time and repetition of the message. It appears that "the impact of television comes in the low perceptual stages of the cognitive processes as in subliminal persuasion," as explained by DeFleur and Petranoff. 47

There is one other area of impact which leads us to an understanding of the effects of television on the population. In

a study of the effects of television use on the use of library materials and books, Edwin B. Parker hypothesized that "public library circulation is less after the widespread adoption of television than it would have been in the absence of television," and, "The relative decline in circulation attributable to the influence of television is greater for fiction than for non-fiction."48

This study used thirty-six matched pairs of communities in Illinois in which the television saturation rate went from between 100% and 70% in one member of the pair, to below 10% in the other member of the pair. The conclusions of the study suggest that despite the overall increase in the total circulation of library books, the data still indicated that the hypothesis was confirmed. Television did have a significant impact on the circulation of library books in that the circulation decreased in the areas with a high saturation of television.49 In this particular empirical study, the probability that these results were the occurrence of chance was at less than the .05 level. The data obtained in Parker's research is mentioned here only to demonstrate the impact of television in society and does not necessarily have any relevancy to current circulation trends.

Several conclusions may thus be drawn from the research on the impact of television. While the specific impact is not as yet


49Ibid., pp. 585-589.
known, it appears to be safe to conclude that, depending upon time factors, involvement levels, and area of message impact, television does indeed have a substantial impact on the lives of the American people.

Given this conclusion, it becomes increasingly important to recognize the impact of sources on information. In the area of television, which is considered an impersonal source, it would appear that the medium does indeed affect the message and the acceptance thereof.

**Television Credibility**

In the past, there has been a tendency among the researchers of the mass media to link all the various forms of the media together, conduct research, and criticize them comparatively. In light of the current trends in the media, it has become essential to differentiate among the various media. To this point, the impact of television has been studied and found to be significant. However, in the area of credibility research, most of the research has been grouping the media together.

The use of survey techniques to determine the performance of the media was undertaken on a large scale beginning in 1936 with the Gallup Poll. This research was aimed at public opinion on the press in matters concerning fairness, bias, and freedom of the press.
As other forms of the media developed, so did other research organizations.\textsuperscript{50}

While these research organizations have served the purpose of informing social scientists of the effects and consequences of the media, the studies they have conducted are far from sufficient.

During the period of time from 1935-1946, survey questions were grouped essentially under five categories: bias in the media, media credibility, fairness in specific instances, criticisms of the press, and control of the media. The Roper organization elaborated on many of the earlier categories of questions, adding the following: media trends, trends in viewer attitude toward television, media in election years, media in a period of social change, and attitudes toward commercials.\textsuperscript{51}

Perhaps as a result of the nature of the organization, or perhaps out of some perceived social responsibility, as the electronic media and television in general began to grow and develop, more attention was centered on the performance aspects of the media. Many of the complex and oligopolistic television organizations developed their own internal research departments, seeking more public input in an era when the public demanded to know more about the media. In 1970, the Gallup organization was

\textsuperscript{50}The findings of the earlier years of polling are summarized and reported in Hadly Cantril's "Public Opinion 1935-1946".

commissioned to make an in-depth survey of public attitudes toward the media. During the time that the Vice President of the United States, Spiro Agnew, was making pointed remarks about the failure of the media to live up to their social responsibility, Gallup sampled 1,560 Americans and asked what they thought of the performance of the media.\textsuperscript{52}

There were several key findings of the Gallup study. The most significant finding was that most Americans believed that the media were performing adequately. Other results showed that most people (45\%) felt the news coming out of Washington was slanted, with a split between those seeing it slanted against the administration and those seeing it slanted for the administration.\textsuperscript{53}

Recently, several of these research organizations determined that there was a need to understand the feelings of the people toward the different forms of the media. The most recent survey efforts by the Roper Organization revealed and confirmed that television is the major source of information and news for the average citizen. It also led as the most believable.\textsuperscript{54}

These findings were among many being investigated by the Roper Organization. The Roper Surveys began fourteen years ago and have been specifically aimed at providing the media industry with a comprehensive view of the public's opinions in regard to the media's performance. Since its inception, the Roper organization


\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54}Roper, loc. cit.
has determined that the only medium which has not substantially increased in size is the newspaper industry. Roper concludes that

20 or more percent of the American homes can receive 10 or more television signals while less than 2 percent receive three or less. At the same time, the fierce competition that once existed in the newspaper industry is now limited to 37 cities in which separately owned dailies compete economically.55

The same trends that have been occurring in the newspaper industry may also be found in the magazine industry. As Roper concludes, "Recently, the last of the general interest magazines dissolved, leaving no weekly or bi-weekly general interest magazine."56 It has been demonstrated that instead of the fierce competition that once existed in the magazine industry as well as in the newspaper industry, the public is now faced with a multiplicity of special interest magazines.57

Roper suggests that while the printed media have been declining in use, competition, and believability, the electronic media have been increasing in these same areas. In 1958, most of the people received their news from newspapers as opposed to television. Every two years since that study was conducted, the figures indicate that television and the electronic media in general, have been increasing in popularity as a source of information and news until in 1972; television maintained a 14% advantage over newspapers as the most used source of information. At the same time, magazine use has declined from 9% to 6%.58

55Ibid. 56Ibid. 57Ibid. 58Ibid.
One of the possible explanations for these trends may be found in a survey of the research in the area of media believability and credibility. Scholarly and academic research into the performance of the media has tended to focus predominantly on this area. One of the foremost studies was conducted by Carter and Greenberg in 1955. Utilizing questions similar to those employed by the Roper and Gallup organizations, the study contradicted the findings of Westley and Severin (1964) that newspapers were preferred to television for the purpose of obtaining information.

An earlier study by Rogers in 1955 developed substantial data to support the hypothesis that political preference is associated with attitudes toward newspapers and toward the freedom of information. The Westley and Severin study, like the Carter and Greenberg investigation, examined media credibility on a comparison basis and hence, the political preference of the public played an important role in determining attitudes toward the various media.

Although the electronic media have been increasing in their relative believability over the printed media, perhaps as a result of the credibility of the face to face form, in recent years


all forms of media have come under attack for being low in credibility. There have been charges that the media distorted the Black Revolution. Newsweek magazine reports that one television cameraman during the Watts riot shouted "Hey kid! Throw a rock! Throw one! I haven't seen you do anything yet." According to a report of the Justice Department published in Newsweek magazine, "In the opinion of some field observers, the media was the single most important factor helping to build the tensions in some communities."  

Some of this criticism originates within the industry itself. Thomas Hayden of the Detroit News claimed that "Everyone in Detroit, indeed the nation, sat before their television sets and watched the rioting and looting in Newark and thought "Wouldn't it be nice fun to be there!"  

This is an instance in which the constraints of time act to produce a slanted view of the television tube. Remembering that television impact is affected by the variable of time, it is interesting to note that the main reason studies have shown television to present a slanted view of the news is because of the lack of in-depth coverage. It would appear intuitively obvious that much of this is due to time limitations on the media itself.

63Ibid.  
64Thomas Hayden, Newsweek, (October, 1967), pp. 60-65.
As William Raspberry of the Washington Post claims,

A good part of the problem with the press' getto
coverage is not news, but simply the inflammatory picture
that results from the absence of the total ghetto story.
Without the background, whites have no way of putting the
situation into perspective. Negroes know a lot more about
whites than the whites know about the Negroes.65

Many of the authorities on media performance tend to agree
with this position. Executives of the industry as well as the
industry critics agree that the time has passed when the media
can go in for sensationalism. Dr. Kenneth Clark, a Negro psy-
chologist, supports this conclusion when he states that

The role of journalism . . . now requires more affirmative
approaches. It must be seen in terms of public education goals
and not just titillating news. I don't think that the press by
itself could change the powerful image of the Negro that now
exists, but it could exert a powerful educational influence.66

The research to date has concentrated on a comparison of
the media to each other. Studies have continually demonstrated
the credibility and believability of the electronic media when
compared with the printed media. In a survey underwritten by the
Television Information Office and conducted by an independent
research organization, a test audience was assembled to test the
degree of confidence in the electronic media.

The test audience was composed of 2,544 individuals ranging
in age from 18 years up. The survey was conducted in the respondents'

65 William Raspberry, in "Crisis Coverage", Newsweek, (October

66 Kenneth Clark, in "Crisis Coverage", Newsweek, (October 30,
homes and they were asked two questions which were pertinent to the data which the researchers were trying to accumulate. The results indicated that 72% of the people interviewed believed that most or all of the information they received from television was accurate. The research also indicated that television was the most widely used and believable form of media for news information.67

The results of these trends are substantiated by other studies, two of which will be dealt with at this time. In the first study of the content of the Harris Polls, William Kerby found that most of the American population distrusted their local daily newspapers.68 The second study indicated that at the same time that the population was losing their trust in the newspapers, the broadcast media gained in perceived credibility. This study, conducted by the Leiberman Research Organization for ABC and reported on ABC news, suggests that in 1973, 59% of the American population did not feel that television news was biased against the administration of President Richard Nixon, as opposed to 30% who felt it was, and 11% who were undecided.69

It may be fairly well concluded at this point that among


the different sources of news and information, television is not only held to be the most widely used source of information, but it is also felt that television is the most believable. One must remember, however, that these studies are only a relative basis at best, and make no significant attempt to delineate any one medium by itself to test the believability or credibility of that one medium. The best example of these types of research may be found in the Roper studies. The Roper organization has compiled a pamphlet of their surveys on the media for the past fourteen years and these surveys give a fairly clear indication of the trends in mass media research in the past.70

The Roper Surveys

The Roper surveys have made an attempt to define the relationship of television to the other news media and the other media in general. The first such study was conducted in December of 1959, and the results reported here are for every two year period for which the data is currently available.

The methodology of these surveys is questionable from the outset. The compilers state "As in the previous studies, to make bias less likely, all questions comparing media have been asked before the questions which focus specifically on television."71 This method means that when the respondents are finally confronted with questions dealing pointedly with possible faults of the

70 Roper, loc. cit. 71 Ibid., p. 2.
television media, they have already committed themselves in the comparison questions to the position that television is the most believable medium. It appears extremely unlikely that the respondents would cite faults of the television media in particular when they have already committed themselves publicly to a position of belief in the credibility of television. The justification for this criticism lies in the dissonance theories postulated by Festinger\textsuperscript{72} and the research on public versus private commitment done by Gerard\textsuperscript{73} and by Hobart and Hovland.\textsuperscript{74}

Keeping in mind the built-in bias of these surveys, let us turn our attention to the results. The first important area deals with the source of information; Table 1 demonstrates the trends in this area since 1959.

It is clearly indicated that television has increased in use until it reached a stable position as the most believable medium and has remained at that position ever since. The other data are not quite as clear but do indicate that the use of newspapers has declined at the same time the use of television increased, and even though there is no substantial correlation,


the statistical trend is evident. It is also helpful to mention that in relative use of the media among the college educated population, newspapers ranked just about the same as did television. 75

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages exceed 100% due to the Roper organization's acceptance of multiple responses.

The second and perhaps most important area of research listed in the Roper surveys is that which deals with the relative belief levels of the media (Table 2). The data here indicate that television is far more believable than the other media. In fact, since 1961, television has consistently led as the most believable

75 Roper, loc. cit.
news medium. "After reaching a two to one advantage over newspapers in 1968, it has enjoyed a seven to three lead in the last two studies."76

Table 2

| THE RELATIVE CREDIBILITY OF THE MEDIA |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                 | 12/59 %         | 11/61 %         | 12/63 %         | 12/66 %         | 1/71 %         |
| Most Believable |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 |
| Television      | 29              | 39              | 36              | 41              | 49              |
| Newspapers      | 32              | 24              | 24              | 24              | 20              |
| Radio           | 12              | 12              | 12              | 7               | 10              |
| Magazines       | 10              | 10              | 10              | 8               | 9               |

*These figures do not add up to 100% because the non-media sources were dropped from the table.

There is one other area of study in these surveys which is relevant to this study, the relative desirability of the media (Table 3). As indicated by the results, the people who responded

76Ibid., p. 3.
Here again, there is no significant conclusion that may be drawn from the figures on magazines and radio other than that they have held their position at a relatively constant point when compared with the figures on television as opposed to newspapers. It is fairly apparent that television has increased in desirability to the question "Which one of the media would you like to keep if you could only keep one?".77 pretty well correlated their answers with those on the relative believability of the various media.  

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Most Preferred</th>
<th>12/59 %*</th>
<th>11/61 %*</th>
<th>11/63 %*</th>
<th>12/67 %*</th>
<th>1/71 %*</th>
<th>1/72 %*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Answers do not add up to 100% because the "Don't Know" and "No Answer" figures were dropped from the table.

77Edited wording of the specific question that was asked of the respondents in the Roper survey as reported in "Trends in Attitude Toward Television and Other Media", Burns M. Roper, (May, 1973).
steadily over the years until in 1971 and 1972, when it appears to have achieved a fairly stable position as the most desirable medium by a margin of more than two to one over the next closest medium, newspapers. Even among the college educated, television, although its lead narrowed some, still maintained a good lead over newspapers, well above the even position they maintained in the 1968 survey.78

The studies by Roper tend at this point to get specific in the area of television. Most of the rest of the information deals with the number of viewing hours, specific instances of political bias, and the question of governmental control. It is, however, important to note that in terms of the role of the various media in disseminating information about local, state, and national elections, television ranks second only in the area of local elections. In the area of local elections, 41% of the people received their information from newspapers as opposed to 31% from television. However, in both the state and national elections, television was by far the largest source of information. In the state elections category, television brought people most of their information in 49% of the cases, as opposed to newspapers, which ranked in 39% of the cases. In the area of national election information, television was a three to one favorite as the most used source of information with 66% of the people having gotten their information from television, 26% from newspapers, 5% from

78Ibid., p. 4.
radio, 5% from magazines, and the rest of the people by other means. 79 The data also tend to indicate that in national elections television gave the clearest understanding of the issues in the election when compared against the other three media. 80

Summary of Previous Research

The previous research in the three general areas isolated for the purposes of this study indicates that television does have a significant impact on the populous and that even though it is considered, in the strictest sense of the term, a channel, research indicates that channels may not be separated from the source. This has lead to the development of impersonal sources as a significant part of the communication cycle.

In the area of television credibility as an impersonal source, the research indicates a deficiency in method in that it compares the media in relative terms as opposed to an individual basis. This research will contribute positively to our knowledge in the area of source credibility.

Statement of the Problem

Previous research has derived conclusions about the credibility level of television by drawing comparisons with the other forms of the media. The most recent conclusions of this research demonstrate that television is the most believable or credible

79Ibid., p. 8. 80Ibid., pp. 8-9.
medium, but researchers have failed to determine a level of credibility for television news.

The primary purpose of this study is to determine the level of credibility of television news (as perceived by the respondents) when measured independently of other media. The secondary purpose of this research is to determine if the channel of television has an impact on credibility apart from the primary source of information using the channel.

Significance of the Study

This research contributes to our knowledge of source credibility in the following areas.

First, it updates the research on television credibility. The framework of the media is constantly changing, and studies of this type are necessarily conducted on a continuing basis.

Second, deficiencies exist in the early studies of media credibility. No previous research has attempted to measure the credibility of television on an individual basis and across a wide spectrum. The research to date has either compared television to the other media and concluded that television is the best but not necessarily good, or they have isolated television and looked at its performance in relation to specific events that occurred, thus ignoring the basic question of the medium itself as a credible or non-credible source of information.

81 This deficiency is explained in the section dealing with the Roper studies, pp. 33-38.
Finally, previous research has tended to look upon television as a channel and not necessarily as a source of information in itself. This study views the medium of television as having a direct impact on the acceptance or rejection of the message content and, hence, as a source of information with its own level of credibility apart from that of the commentators. 82

---

82 Justification for this viewpoint is found on pages 10-13 of this research.
CHAPTER II

PROCEDURES

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

During the past ten years, several organizations have been concerned with judging the various forms of the media to determine how the public responds to them. This study attempts to eliminate the bias of using comparisons among the differing forms of the media and then determine whether or not television is still perceived as a credible source. Specifically, this research is designed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. Is television perceived as a credible source of news and information when compared against the criteria established by James Hagarty and the National Association of Broadcasters?

2. What is the public opinion of television news (in regard to the percentage of people who rank it as doing a good job) when it is considered separately from the other media?

3. Do people differentiate to a significant degree between the medium of television news and the personalities or reporters appearing thereon?

Development of the Research Questions

The questions posed in this study represent an attempt to update and extend earlier research in the area of television news credibility. The first question attempts to measure the degree to
which people perceive television as being a credible source of news and information. Although there has been a multitude of studies in this area, the issue of television's level of credibility has not been sufficiently answered.\textsuperscript{1} Several studies of an ongoing nature have traced the development of television through the past 15 years and, until recently, shown a substantial increase in television's use and the public's preference for this medium.\textsuperscript{2} At the same time use of television increased, so did the relative believability level of this medium.\textsuperscript{3} These studies demonstrated that when television was compared with other forms of communication media, television was held to be the most believable. An examination of these studies demonstrates a significant deficiency in the methodology therein. Although there is no specific bias in the questions asked the respondents, the very nature of the questionnaires used limits the knowledge that may be obtained in reference to the performance of the media. In all cases, respondents were asked to determine which of the media given was the most credible. Although this question does arrive at a valid conclusion that television is the

\textsuperscript{1}Burns W. Roper, (Television Information Office, May, 1973) and William Gene Mathews, "Media Preference and Performance", (unpublished research conducted at Florida Technological University, Orlando, Florida, March, 1974).

\textsuperscript{2}This conclusion is demonstrated with the tables presented on pages 35-37 of this study.

\textsuperscript{3}Ibid.
most believable, it ignores the basic question of credibility in that something may be considered the best available and still not be very good. For this reason, this study ignores the other forms of media and concentrates on the performance of television.

This concentration is founded in a credibility criteria established by several organizations. The Hagarty Creed and the Code of the National Association of Broadcasters make an attempt to define the term credibility as it applies to the medium of television. The present study differs from previous research in that it attempts to answer the basic question of television's level of credibility when television is isolated from the other media and then compared against a set of criteria. Previous research compared television to the other media and not to a set of criteria.

Question number 2 is an attempt to determine the degree to which people hold the belief that television is believable when they are presented with a chance to answer questions of a specific nature as opposed to questions which limit their opinion to comparisons among different media. Whereas question number 1 attempts to determine the degree of credibility of television news, this question attempts to measure the difference in the credibility levels obtained in this study and those obtained in previous research on the subject. Given the failure of previous research to establish some criteria for measuring credibility, this question attempts to determine if there is a shortcoming in the validity of

4See Appendices A and B of this study for the complete text of these two codes.
the previous research which might render it susceptible to criticism with regard to the conclusions the previous research draws.

Question number 3 is an attempt to measure the existence of, and impact from, non-personal sources. Although television is considered a channel of information in the communication process, research suggests that channels may not be differentiated from sources of information in that channels are in essence a source and project a level of credibility of their own. Researchers such as McLuhan, Berlo, Lamert, and Mertz, and Mortensen conclude that the channel of the information possesses a level of credibility much the same as a source. The credibility level has a direct impact on the acceptance of the message and, hence, renders the channel with the properties of a source of information. This research question is an attempt to empirically demonstrate the process and determine if the channel is differentiated from the personality appearing on that channel. It is also an attempt to determine if channels are in fact considered to be sources of information with a level of credibility apart from any source using that channel.

---

5See pages 10-13 of this study.


Application of the Questionnaire

A survey type questionnaire was used to provide answers to the research questions. Only one version of the questionnaire was used (see Appendix C) to gather the data.

Answers to research question number 1 were provided by questions 1 through 16 on the questionnaire. These items sought information about the performance of television news when compared to the established criteria. The criteria used in this study was translated into statement form and attached to a fifteen point semantic differential scale. The scales used in this study were developed by William J. McGuire in his research on the Inoculation Theory of Persuasion. These scales were used for two reasons; first, they have proven their ability to measure slight differences in opinions and to measure these differences accurately; second, this scale allows the subjects to record their level of agreement or disagreement with the statement in a uniform manner and with a uniform understanding of the meaning of all points on the scale. In this manner, problems of interpretation and uniformity of meaning associated with many semantic differential scales have been virtually eliminated in this study.

The subjects were instructed to read the statements one at a time and answer by indicating their opinions as to the truth or falsity of the statements by marking the point on the scales which

---

most agrees with their reactions to the statements. To insure against a polar locating bias, the poles of the questions were randomly manipulated by changing the wording of the questions from positive performance to negative performance. In this manner, any bias from the wording of the questions was limited as much as possible.

The answer to research question number 1 was obtained by converting all the questions back into positive form, adding up the total score on the fifteen point scale for each individual question and then dividing this product by the total number of respondents answering that particular question. In addition, the scales were divided into their five basic answer categories and percentage of responses were obtained for each category on each question. In this manner, two different views of the responses were obtained so that, in addition to a mean score on each question, a more accurate picture of the range of responses was obtainable.

Answers to research question number 2 were obtained by comparing the overall results obtained in questions 1 through 16 to the conclusions drawn in previous research by the Roper Organization. The question considered in this comparison was "Does television news sufficiently meet the criteria for credible news reporting used in this study to justify the claim that because a majority of people feel television is the most believable, it is in fact believable?" The definition of sufficient in this comparison is a ranking of 10 or higher on the 15 point scale.
The answers to the third research questions were obtained by using questions number 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14, and 16 and comparing them to the answers obtained in questions 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, and 15. The first set of questions is aimed at the medium of television itself, whereas the second set of questions deal with the members of the television press and cameramen. By comparing the overall score of one category of questions to the other category of questions, several conclusions may be drawn. In addition, a statistical test (t-test) was applied to determine the significance of difference between these scores in the two categories.

**Questionnaire Distribution**

The data for this study were obtained through the use of a questionnaire which was distributed to students enrolled in the basic communication courses at Florida Technological University in Orlando, Florida.

The questionnaires were distributed in class situations during the month of May, 1974. All students in these classes were asked to participate in this research regardless of age, sex, academic standing and classification, income level, or political affiliation. The experimenter was introduced as a member of the faculty at Florida Technological University who was conducting research for the Communication Department. The surveys were labeled as being from the National Institute for Broadcast Research, which is a fictional organization used for the purpose of this study.
The instructions were printed on the top of the surveys and no verbal instructions were given during the completion of the questionnaires. No purpose was given for the research until after all the questionnaires were completed and at that time all of the subjects were debriefed.

The courses used in this study were 8 sections of Speech 101, randomly selected during the Spring quarter at Florida Technological University and 1 section of Communication 100. The Speech 101 course was selected because it is a general University requirement and, thus, offered an opportunity to survey students of all classifications and from all the academic disciplines. Communication 100 is one of the University electives in the Basic Environmental Studies program and is also composed of students from various disciplines. In all, 300 students completed questionnaires and none were discarded for any reason.

Pilot Study

Two separate pilot studies were conducted during the course of this research. The first, conducted during the Fall quarter of 1973 utilized the same criteria as did this study; however, the criteria in the first study were attached to a simple semantic differential scale containing seven points and five different semantic differentials for each of the criteria. While the data obtained in this manner was indeed interesting and somewhat enlightening, it was impossible to accurately interpret due to the failure of
the scales to define a meaning for each of the seven points. This resulted in a change in the type of scale used, with a five point semantic differential scale and a seven point semantic differential scale (both with explanations of the points on the scale) being substituted for the original scale, and another pilot study was conducted. The second pilot study yielded better results; however, the deficiency in this study was the limitation of the scales to accurately measure the respondents' beliefs because of the limitation of responses. This study resulted in the present version of the questionnaire (Appendix D) and a third pilot study.

The third and final pilot study used in preparing this research was conducted during the Winter quarter at Florida Technological University. The data obtained in this pilot study was better suited to analysis and interpretation by the researcher. However, this study resulted in a slight change in the statements used for the criteria. At first, all statements used the term "television news." An analysis of the data obtained resulted in the addition of the term "television newsmen" to several of the questions to facilitate the answers to research question number 2. The reason for this slight change in wording is due to the necessity to determine whether or not the subjects differentiated between the medium of television and television newsmen in terms of their level of credibility. This determination could only be made if there was a clear difference in wording of the questions and not by comparisons with previous research.
Aside from the changes made in the wording of questions 4, 6, 7, 10, 13, and 15, the questionnaire remained essentially the same.

In summary, data for this study were obtained first through the use of a series of pilot studies resulting in two changes to the questionnaire. The first change was in moving from a seven point semantic differential scale to eventually the 15 point attitude scale used in the McGuire research. The second change dealt with deleting the words "television news" from several questions and substituting the words "television newsmen" in these same questions.

Data for this study were gathered by the use of a survey type questionnaire designed to measure the respondents' attitudes toward television news against a specified set of criteria. The survey was distributed to 300 college students at Florida Technological University and none of these surveys were discarded. None of the students in the actual survey had previously participated in any of the pilot studies.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

When the surveys were completed, the data obtained therein were tabulated by hand with the assistance of an adding machine and a Programma 101 computer. This process, in addition to providing answers to the research questions, enabled several generalizations to be made about the demographic characteristics of those subjects surveyed.

Demographic Characteristics

Sex of the Subjects

The subjects utilized in this research were selected randomly and, in this manner, sex was not manipulated. However, even though control over the selection of male versus female subjects was not exercised, the data (Table 4) show a very reasonable distribution with 49% of the subjects being males and 51% being females.
Sex of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age of the Subjects

The questionnaire provided the subjects with four different possible selections for age. Analysis of the data (Table 5) shows that 4.7% of the subjects were under 18 years of age, 79.5% of the subjects were between the ages of 18 and 21 years of age, 12.6% of the subjects were over 21 but under 25 years of age, and 3.2% of the subjects were over 25 years of age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 21</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 - 25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 25</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational Level

The educational level of the subjects closely parallels the age levels discussed in the previous section. As might be expected from the enrollment in a course that is a part of the basic requirements for the University, the majority of the subjects were freshmen (Table 6). The specific breakdown on subjects' educational level is 52.3% freshmen, 31.7% sophomores, 11.1% juniors, and 4.9% seniors.

Table 6
Educational Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political Preference

In the area of political preference or political affiliation (Table 7), the largest single group of the subjects listed their preference as Independent (46.8%). Beyond this, 29.1% of the subjects listed their political affiliation as being Democrats, 21.6% said they were Republicans, and 2.5% chose to select the option of "Other."
Table 7
Political Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Preference</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In light of the data reported, it is possible to derive some general conclusions about the average subjects responding to this questionnaire. The male to female ratio is almost evenly distributed. These individuals are approximately 18 to 21 years of age and somewhere in the freshman or sophomore year in college. In addition, these persons are fairly evenly divided with regard to those who claimed to be Independent and those who identified themselves with a particular party.

Research Question Results
Research Question Number 1

After the demographic data were assembled to determine the profile of the average person responding to this survey, the questions on credibility were tabulated to provide answers to the research questions.
The first question attempted to determine the degree or level of credibility for television news. Data answering the question were contained in all sixteen of the information questions on the survey. These data were gathered by adding up the total score for each question individually and arriving at a mean for each individual question. For statistical purposes, these answers were also divided into five major categories, definitely true, probably true, uncertain, probably false, and definitely false. The three degrees of freedom within these five major categories were then used to demonstrate trends or leanings within these categories. Data is reported for all individual questions as well as a composite score for the sum of all questions together. In this manner, an overall ranking is possible while also highlighting specific areas for discussion in the discussion section of this study.

Using first the sum total for all the questions and applying it to the fifteen point scale after all questions were converted to positive form, several interesting results are derived. The first question dealt with the factuality of television news reporting. The average of all responses to this question was a rating of 9.6 which would tend to indicate that the respondents believe television news reporting is probably factual. Although this average does not clearly indicate this conclusion, a categorical breakdown of response range favorably bears out this conclusion (Table 8). The majority of the responses to this question fall in the category of "Probably
True," with the second largest percentage being in the category of "Definitely True." The total number of responses, in percentage form, which fall into these two categories is 74%. This figure suggests that a majority of the respondents feel that television news is factual.

Table 8
Categorical Response Range for Question 1
"Television News Reporting is Factual"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 2 deals with the respondents' rating of television news in terms of its impartiality. When the poles of this question are put in positive form, the average rank of all responses is 4.7, which indicates that the respondents felt that television news reporting was probably not impartial. In this case, the categorical response breakdown supports this conclusion. As Table 9 indicates, the greatest percentage of respondents, 52%,
believe that television news reporting is probably partial while another 36% believe that it is definitely partial.

Table 9
Categorical Response Range for Question 2
"Television News Reporting is Impartial"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 3 asks if television reporters confuse facts with editorialization. The average score for all responses is a 6.6, which indicates that the respondents believe that television news reporters do confuse facts with editorialization to some degree. Again, the categorical breakdown clearly indicates that this conclusion is drawn validly. Table 10 indicates the largest percentage of the respondents believe that this conclusion is probably true, with an equal number being uncertain as to the truth of this statement.
Question number 4 deals with whether or not the subjects believe television news commentators interject their own opinions into the news. The respondents scored this question with an average of 5.5, which indicates that they believe television news commentators do interject opinion when reporting the news. Again, the categorical responses tend to indicate the validity of this conclusion. As evident in Table 11, 46% of the respondents believed that television news commentators probably did interject personal opinion, while 31% of the respondents believed that television news commentators definitely interjected personal opinion. These data reveal that 78% of the respondents believe that news commentators report opinion in place of news.
Table 11
Categorical Response Range for Question 4
"Television News Commentators Do Not Interject Personal Opinion"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>46.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 5 required the respondents to indicate whether or not they believe equal attention is given to local, state, and national news. The results for this question provide no clear indication of whether or not television is doing an adequate job in this area. Even considering the categorical response breakdown (Table 12) for this question, no clear picture develops due to the fact that opinion in this area seems to be polarized. Almost an equal amount of people felt that television did not provide adequate coverage of all levels of news (48%) as did those people who felt that television did provide adequate coverage of all levels of the news (42%).
Table 12
Categorical Response Range for Question 5
"There is Equal Attention Given to State, Local, and National News"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number ofResponses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 6 deals with television's ability to look ahead to the trouble spots. The average of all responses (9.0) is again unclear as to what conclusions may be drawn about television's performance in this area. This time, however, the categorical response table does indicate data which are not indicated by the average. In Table 13 the data indicate that television news reporting probably does look ahead to the trouble spots and keep us informed. The majority felt that this conclusion was probably valid (55.7%), while only 20% were actually uncertain, as opposed to what the average of all scores tends to indicate.
Table 13
Categorical Response Range for Question 6
"Television News Reporting Tries to Look Ahead to the Trouble Spots and Keep Us Informed of Developments Which May Affect Us"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>55.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 7 attempted to deal with the rights of the television press and cameramen to cover news wherever it occurs. The average of all scores for this question was 7.9, which does not demonstrate any solid conclusion. As was the case with question number 5, the data in the categorical response range (Table 14) fails to indicate any clear trend due to the fact that there is the same type of polarization that was present in question number 5.
Table 14
Categorical Response Range for Question 7
"Television Cameras Must Be Allowed to Cover News Wherever It Occurs"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 8 required the respondents to express their attitude about television's view of the facts. It asked the respondents to react to the statement "Television presents only a partial or slanted view of the facts." Although the 9.7 average score does indicate some agreement with the statement, it is still somewhat misleading. Table 15 indicates that the preponderance of the subjects surveyed believed this statement to probably be true. Most of the respondents (50.3%) felt that television probably did present a slanted or partial view of the facts. Add to this the 13.7% of the subjects who felt that this was definitely the case, which brings the total to 64% of the subjects who felt that television presented facts in a slanted manner.
Question number 9 attempts to determine the respondents' feelings on the effects of television in the judicial system. If television is viewed as preventing an accused person from getting a fair trial, then it may be inferred that there is some form of prejudicial reporting occurring. The average of all responses for this question is a 9.1, indicating that the respondents lean slightly toward the belief that television does prevent the accused from obtaining a fair trial. The categorical response table for this question (Table 16) indicates even more clearly that this conclusion is true. The largest percentage of the population sampled believed that television probably prohibited the accused person from getting a fair trial, while the total number of subjects falling into the positive range on this question is 52.6%, as compared to 31.7%
falling into the negative response range on this question.

Table 16
Categorical Response Range for Question 9
"Television Reporting of Crimes and Arrests Prevents the Accused From Getting a Fair Trial"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 10 deals with newsmen and whether or not they fake or exaggerate stories. In this case, both the average score and the categorical response table (Table 17) fail to clearly indicate any decisive position. The average response of 9.2, which indicates some leanings toward a positive answer on this question, is short of showing any significant answer either way. The categorical breakdown suffers the same lack of definition but does, however, demonstrate that many of the subjects felt they were unqualified to ascertain the truth in this case.
Table 17
Categorical Response Range for Question 10
"Newsmen Fake or Exaggerate Stories to Keep Them in the News"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 11 pertains to the Watergate Scandal and television news coverage of it. It attempts to determine the response toward whether or not television news in reporting is presenting all the facts concerning the Watergate story. The 7.0 average response score for this question demonstrates that although the respondents are leaning toward the feeling that television is failing in this respect, the data are inconclusive. However, when the data are viewed in the categorical response range (Table 18), the percentages suggest that most of the respondents believe that television is not giving us all of the facts surrounding Watergate.
Table 18
Categorical Response Range for Question 11
"Television News is Giving Us All the Possible Facts Surrounding Watergate"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 12 attempts to determine the respondents' feelings about television coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention. The respondents were asked if television coverage was biased against the Johnson-Humphrey Administration. Again, the data appear to be inconclusive with the average response score being 8.6. Even when the results are viewed in a categorical breakdown (Table 19), the largest percentage of responses fall right in the middle, failing to indicate belief one way or the other.
Table 19
Categorical Response Range for Question 12
"Television Coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention was Biased Against the Johnson-Humphrey Administration"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 13 serves two purposes. One, it attempts to determine if television newsmen and cameramen have deliberately stirred up trouble to make a news story and, two, to act as a cross-check with question number 10, "Newsmen fake or exaggerate stories to keep them in the news." Again, the 7.9 average of all responses fails to indicate any clear opinion on the part of the subjects. The case is the same for the categorical response range, with the majority of the answers falling into the middle of the scale (Table 20) and being fairly well distributed. Again, it is possible that the respondents felt unqualified to answer this question with any definitive opinion one way or the other.
Table 20
Categorical Response Range for Question 13
"Television Newsmen and Cameramen Have Deliberately Stirred Up Trouble to Make News Stories"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 14 drew the most definite response to this point. It attempted to determine the respondents' belief in the statement that television news is fair to President Nixon. The average of all responses was a very low 5.7, which indicates positively that the respondents feel television news is probably not fair to the President. Table 21 supports this conclusion with a breakdown of the categorical responses.
Table 21
Categorical Range of Responses for Question 14
"Television News is Fair to President Nixon and his Administration"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is very little difference in the actual percentages between "Definitely False" and "Probably False" answers, but the sum total of the two categories demonstrates that 61.7% of the respondents did not believe that television news is fair to the President and his administration.

Question number 15 attempted to determine if the respondents believed that film stories had been edited to provide a biased or slanted view of the news. Again, it appears that the respondents believed they were unqualified to answer this question, with the average score being an 8.8 for all responses. The categorical response breakdown fails to indicate any further information or conclusions (Table 22).
Table 22
Categorical Response Range for Question 15
"Television News Film Stories Have Been Edited to Provide a Biased or Slanted View of the Facts"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question number 16 attempted to determine if the respondents believed that television news engaged in sensationalism. The responses to this question were the most telling, with the average of all responses being a 4.4 on the fifteen point scale. This indicates that the respondents definitely believe that television engages in some form of sensationalism, and the categorical breakdown of responses (Table 23) bears out this conclusion.
Table 23
Categorical Range of Responses for Question 16
"Television News Does Not Engage in Some Form of Sensationalism"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely False</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably False</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably True</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely True</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking the average responses for all sixteen of the questions after the appropriate ones were reversed so that all the questions were stated in a positive form and the averages adjusted for this reversal, data were derived for the general answer to research question number 1 (Table 24). Taking the total of all responses, which is 109.8, and then dividing by the total number of questions, which is 16, the overall score for television news was a 6.8 on the fifteen point scale. This indicates that in terms of the criteria established for this study, and considered as a whole, the medium of television rates a score of 6.8 on the fifteen point scale.
Table 24
Table of Responses for Research Question 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>6.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question Number 2

Research question number 2 attempts to determine if "the public opinion of television (in regard to the percentage of the people who rank it as doing a good job) is similar when television is considered separately from other media as when it is measured against other media." To accomplish this comparison, the results of this study were separated into three categories similar in nature to the categories used in the Roper research previously cited. The results of both these studies were compared to each other using the Roper research as the study which measured television against other media.

The following three tables (25, 26, and 27) provide data helpful in answering this research question. As Table 25 indicates, a majority of the respondents in the Roper study rated television's performance as being excellent or good, as compared to only 36% of the respondents who found television's performance to be only fair or poor. This indicates that almost twice as many respondents found television's performance to be good than those who found it to be poor.
Table 25

Table of Performance Responses Reported in the Roper Study of 1972

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent or Good</td>
<td>1,189</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair or Poor</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know or Uncertain</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In direct contradiction to these results, Table 26 shows the results of this study reported in similar categories to those used by Roper. These data indicate that when television is considered apart from the other media and judged on specific performance criteria, the implications of the Roper research may not be borne out.1

Table 26

Table of Performance Responses Reported in This Survey Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent or Good</td>
<td>1,387</td>
<td>28.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair or Poor</td>
<td>2,448</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know or Uncertain</td>
<td>965</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1Justification for comparing the population used in this research with that used in the Roper research may be found in Chapter 4 of this study.
As the data gathered in the current research indicate, a majority of the respondents rate television as being only fair or poor when its performance is considered individually.

Table 27 draws the results of these two studies into direct comparison with each other. The data indicate a direct contradiction of conclusions between the two studies. While only 36% of the Roper respondents rated television as poor, 51% of the respondents in this study rated it as being poor. This represents a change of 15% for these responses. However, the largest percentage of change occurs in the category for good or excellent responses. While 60% of the respondents in the Roper study rated television as good, only 28.9% of the respondents in this study gave it a similar rating. This represents a change of 31.1% with most of these responses shifting to the "Don't Know" category.

Table 27
Relative Comparison Table of Both Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>1972 Roper Study</th>
<th>This Research</th>
<th>% Point Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent or Good</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair or Poor</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know or Uncertain</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Question Number 3

Research question number 3 attempts to determine if there is a difference in the credibility attributed to the medium of television as opposed to the credibility attributed to television newsmen. Questions 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 11, 12, 14, and 16 deal specifically with the credibility level of the medium of television. The results indicate that 24.4% of the respondents believed that the credibility level for the medium of television was good or excellent, 49.3% felt that it was fair or poor, and 22.2% were uncertain. In contrast to this, 34.3% of the respondents found the level of credibility for television newsmen to be good or excellent, 36.6% found it to be fair or poor, and 18.6% were uncertain. These data indicate that there is a significant difference (.05 level) in the credibility level of television when compared to that of television newsmen. As Table 28 indicates, a significantly greater percentage of the respondents found television newsmen to be credible than did the respondents who found the medium of television to be credible. This conclusion is also borne out by the data on the number of respondents who found the two (television and television newsmen) to have a low level of credibility. A significantly greater percentage of the respondents (49.3%) found the level of television news credibility to be fair or poor than did those who found the level of credibility for television newsmen to be fair or poor (36.6%).
Table 28
Significance of Difference Between Television and Television Newsmen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>%* of Respondents Television Medium</th>
<th>%* of Respondents Television Newsmen</th>
<th>Significance of Difference At the . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excellent or Good</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>.05 Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair or Poor</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>.05 Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know or Uncertain</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>NSD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to the fact that several questions were not included in this response comparison.
The purpose of this study is to determine the level of credibility of television news (as perceived by the respondents) when this level is measured independently of other media. Within the context of this purpose there is a secondary goal. This secondary goal is to attempt to determine if the medium of television has an impact (in terms of credibility) apart from that of the primary sources who use this medium. Therefore, the two main goals of this study are to arrive at a level of credibility for television news and then determine if this level of credibility has an impact on the respondents.

Three issues arise from these two goals: is television a credible source of news; have previous studies failed to adequately determine the level of credibility for television news; and, do channels possess a level of credibility apart from that of the sources who use them? It is these three issues which comprise the research questions for this study and with which this chapter will deal.

**Level of Television News Credibility**

In terms of the level of credibility of television news, data obtained for research question number 1 provides insight in this area. The data obtained from the observations to all sixteen survey questions yield two interesting results.
First, when television news is compared and rated against a specific criteria for performance, it appears that television has a low level of credibility in terms of the respondents' perception. For analytical purposes, the results for research question number 1 will here be developed into six general criteria categories.

1) Television news reporting must be factual and impartial.

To measure television news' level of credibility against this criterion, questions number 1, 2, 8, 9, 11, and 16 of this survey were used. The average response for all of these questions indicates that the subjects perceived television news reporting as not being factual and impartial. Although the respondents in question number 1 (Table 8) believed that to some degree television news reporting is factual, in the rest of the questions (2, 8, 9, 11, and 16) they indicate that television news reporting is highly partial and non-factual. The data indicate that the respondents believed television news reporting to be partial (Table 9), slanted (Table 15), incomplete in its facts (Table 18), and engage in sensationalism (Table 23). Using the 15 point scale to measure television's performance against this criterion, television rates a 6.5 average. This is well below the acceptable level of ten (10.0) on the 15 point scale.

2) Equal attention should be given to state, local, and national news.

Survey question number 5 was used to determine television's
performance level against this criterion. The data presented in Table 12 indicate that the subjects in this study perceive that television is failing in this respect, although less demonstrably than in the first criterion. The data suggest that television rates a 7.1 on the 15 point scale. Again using a 10.0 as the level of adequacy, it would appear that television news may not be doing an adequate job in this area.

3) Television news looks ahead to trouble spots and keeps us informed of all possible developments.

Survey question number 6 was used in determining television's performance in this respect. The data presented in Table 13 demonstrate that the respondents believed television to be performing adequately in this area. A majority of the respondents (55%) believed that television did look ahead to possible trouble spots, as compared to only 20% of the respondents who felt that television failed to look ahead to the trouble spots.

4) The television camera is like the pencil and must be treated as such.

Survey questions number 7, 13, and 15 were used to obtain the data in response to this criterion. In question number 7 (Table 14), the respondents indicated that television cameras must be allowed to cover the news wherever it occurs. Although there appears to be some degree of polarization in this respect, 51% of the respondents believed that television cameras should be allowed to cover all the news as opposed to 38.1% who believed that this
was not essential. However, when the respondents were asked in questions number 13 and 15 if television news cameras were performing their function adequately, the data (Tables 20 and 22) indicate that the respondents were uncertain of the performance level. The trends demonstrated by these data appear to show that the respondents believe television cameras should be covering the news wherever it happens but they were uncertain about whether or not this criterion was being met adequately.

5) Television news reporters should not interject personal opinion or editorialization in place of the facts.

From the data obtained in questions number 3, 4, and 10, it is possible to draw the conclusion that television news reporters are failing to meet this criterion. A significant number of the respondents (50%) believed that television news reporters confuse facts with editorialization, as compared to 20% who disagreed (Table 10). In question number 4, 77% of the respondents believed television newsmen interject personal opinion, compared to 16% who believed this to be the wrong conclusion (Table 11).

6) Television newsmen must act as impartial observers and never involve themselves in the news stories they are covering.

The same three questions (3, 4, and 10) were used to assess the performance level of television against this criterion as were used in criterion number five. The data for questions number 3 and 4 indicate that television newsmen are indirectly involved in the stories by faking or exaggerating them to keep them in the news.
Table 17 indicates that the respondents were uncertain of the degree of newsmen's involvement in this area. The 9.2 average response score for this question does, however, indicate leanings on the part of the respondents to believe that newsmen were involved in these practices.

In reviewing the overall picture of television news credibility in relation to these six criteria areas, it may be concluded that television news has a low level of credibility. In four of the six criteria categories (1, 2, 5, and 6), the respondents believed the level of performance for television news to be inadequate, and in only one criteria category, number 3, did the respondents believe television to be performing adequately. In the other criteria category, number 4, the respondents were uncertain as to the adequacy of television's performance.

The second conclusion which may be drawn from the data for research question number 1 is that overall, television news averages well below the credible level on the 15 point scale. In Table 24, the average scores for all sixteen questions were totaled and then averaged to arrive at the overall score for television news in relation to all sixteen of the survey questions. After all the poles on the scales were adjusted for similar polarity, the average overall rating for television news was a 6.8 on the 15 point scale. In absolute terms, this translates to the respondents suggesting that television news is "probably not credible."
Differentiation on the Basis of Methodology

The purpose of research question number 2 is to determine if television news is, in fact, credible and believable. The previous research in this area indicates that television news is the most believable source of information. Inherent in this conclusion is the implication that television news is credible and/or believable. This, of course, is an inductive leap, the basis for which is found within the methodology of the previous research. These studies have measured television's performance against the performance of the other media. The flaw in this measurements lies in the lack of these studies to determine any specific level of credibility for any of the media against which all the others may be compared. Research question number 2 is an attempt to determine if there is a significant difference between the implied conclusions of the previous research and the credibility level derived in this study.

Table 27 indicates that there is a significant difference in the conclusions using the two different methodologies. In the Roper studies which used the comparison methodology, 60% of the respondents believed that television was doing an excellent or good job whereas in this study, using the criteria methodology, only 28.9% of the respondents believed that television news was doing an excellent or good job. This represents a change of more than 31 percentage points which may be directly attributed to the
difference in the methodologies of the two studies.¹

It is also interesting to note that a great percentage of the change occurred in the "Don't Know or Uncertain" category (Table 27). One possible explanation for this change is that when the respondents are confronted with specifics about the performance of television news, many are incapable of determining whether or not television is performing adequately. An alternate explanation for this phenomenon is that the respondents were not interested in properly completing the survey. If this were the case, it is reasonable to assume that the same respondents would be repeatedly marking the "Uncertain" category. This was not the case. There were no questionnaires that had more than five of the statements answered in the uncertain range on the 15 point scale. In addition, the greatest percentage of change was from the "Excellent or Good" category and these changes are almost equally distributed between the remaining two categories. This tends to eliminate the possibility

¹The Roper Organization conducted statistical tests to determine the effects of age, educational level, and income on the results of this type of research. The conclusions were that "... where differences in attitude exist among the various economic and education levels, trend results could be affected. To test the extent of this, the current study was weighted to match it with the economic and/or educational distribution of the 1971 sample and answers to trend questions were retabulated ... a scattering of answers changed by one percentage point-- but none by more than one percentage point.

Second, because of the lowering of voting ages this sample included 18-21 year olds. To test the possible effects of this, the trend questions in the current study were weighted to match the age distributions of the 1968 study and the answers retabulated. In no instance was there more than a one percentage point difference in any answer to any of the questions. This means that the trend differences are significant".
that the respondents were not differentiating among the questions and filling in the middle point indifferently.

The Possession of Source Credibility by Channels

Research question number 3 is involved with determining whether or not channels are perceived as sources of information apart from the sources which use these channels to transmit the message.

In determining whether or not channels possess a separate level of credibility, it was necessary to isolate the primary (personal) sources from the secondary (impersonal) sources or channels. When this was accomplished, the results of the two categories or groups were compared using a t-test. Table 28 presents the results of that statistical evaluation.

The results indicate that in the category of "Excellent or Good" the significance of difference was at the .05 level, which suggests that the respondents did significantly differentiate between the channel and the source, attributing a separate level of credibility to both. The same is true in the "Fair or Poor" category, with the level of significance again being at the .05 level. In both instances, the respondents perceived the medium of television as having a level of credibility independent of the sources using that medium. The only category in which there was no significant difference was the "Don't Know or Uncertain" category. This result is not at all inconsistent with the above
results. The fact that there is no significant difference in the number of uncertain responses between the medium and the source is attributed to the balance of questions in both these areas requiring specific knowledge or knowledge of a technical nature.

Implications for Future Research

The conclusions drawn from the data gathered in this research suggest that although television may be the most believable medium in terms of its relative credibility, it may not be perceived as a credible medium in absolute terms. This study, however, was conducted on a limited basis and future research might attempt to replicate this survey, using the exact same population as did the Roper Organization. Although their results suggest that the variables of age, income, and education are not significant, there is always the possibility that the population selected for this study was radically different from that used in the Roper research. This difference may be attributable to the geographical limitations within which this study was confined.

Secondly, it is quite possible that the criteria selected for this study are inappropriate for real world situation. These criteria were selected on the basis that they were the only criteria established for the rating or controlling the television news medium. Even so, it is impossible to determine the efficacy of these criteria without a factor analysis. Future research may attempt to more appropriately determine the criteria for performance using this method.
Finally, the data obtained in this study indicate that channels possess a level of credibility apart from that possessed by the primary sources using these channels. There are two major areas of research suggested by this conclusion. First, this conclusion is limited by the fact that the current study is applied only to the medium of television news. It might be of use to determine if the conclusion applies to all channels. Replication of this studies' results with other channels of information are essential to our understanding of source credibility in the communication cycle. Secondly, the present research only vaguely touched on the issue of impact on the message from these non-personal sources. Future research might concentrate on this variable.

Summary

This study had at its core two major goals. In terms of the first, the credibility level of television news, the data indicate that the level of credibility was perceived as being less than adequate. For example, the respondents in this study perceived television as being partial and engaging in sensationalism. In addition, the respondents perceived television newsmen as interjecting personal opinion and editorialization in the place of factual information. In many instances, the respondents indicated that they were not really certain as to the performance of television as it relates to specific functions. In all cases, the results
indicate that previous descriptive research in this area may have been inadequate in describing the performance of the television news medium.

The second goal of this research was to determine if subjects could perceive the existence of impersonal sources. The data indicated that channels do, in fact, possess a credibility level separate from that of the primary sources, yet similar in nature and function. It may be advantageous to redefine our thinking concerning the traditional view of the communication cycle which possesses both channels and sources, and move in the direction of a communication cycle that uses primary and secondary (impersonal) sources to describe the communication process.
APPENDIX A

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS
TELEVISION CODE

PREAMBLE

Television is seen and heard in every type of American home. These homes include children and adults of all ages, embrace all races and all varieties of religious faith, and reach those of every educational background. It is the responsibility of television to bear constantly in mind that the audience is primarily a home audience, and consequently that television's relationship to the viewers is that between guest and host.

The revenues from advertising support the free, competitive American system of telecasting, and make available to the eyes and ears of the American people the finest programs of information, education, culture and entertainment. By law the television broadcaster is responsible for the programming of his station. He, however, is obligated to bring his positive responsibility for excellence and good taste in programming to bear upon all who have a hand in the production of programs, including networks, sponsors, producers of film and of live programs, advertising agencies, and talent agencies.

The American businesses which utilize television for conveying their advertising messages to the home by pictures with sound, seen free-of-charge on the home screen, are reminded that their responsi-
bilities are not limited to the sale of goods and the creation of a favorable attitude toward the sponsor by the presentation of entertainment. They include, as well, responsibility for utilizing television to bring the best programs, regardless of kind, into American homes.

Television and all who participate in it are jointly accountable to the American public for respect for the special needs of children, for community responsibility, for the advancement of education and culture, for the acceptibility of the program materials chosen, for decency and decorum in production, and for propriety in advertising. This responsibility cannot be discharged by any given group of programs, but can be discharged only through the highest standards of respect for the American home, applied to every moment of every program presented by television.

In order that television programming may best serve the public interest, viewers should be encouraged to make their criticisms and positive suggestions known to the television broadcasters. Parents in particular should be urged to see to it that out of the richness of television fare, the best programs are brought to the attention of their children.

I. Advancement of education and culture

1. Commercial television provides a valuable means of augmenting the educational and cultural influence of schools, insti-
tutions of higher learning, the home, the church, museums, foundations, and other institutions devoted to education and culture.

2. It is the responsibility of a television broadcaster to call upon such institutions for counsel and cooperation and to work with them on the best methods of presenting educational and cultural materials by television. It is further the responsibility of stations, networks, advertising agencies and sponsors consciously to seek opportunities for introducing into telecasts factual materials which will aid in the enlightenment of the American public.

3. Education via television may be taken to mean that process by which the individual is brought toward informed adjustment to his society. Television is also responsible for the presentation of overtly instructional and cultural programs, scheduled so as to reach the viewers who are naturally drawn to such programs, and produced so as to attract the largest possible audience.

4. The television broadcaster should be thoroughly conversant with the educational and cultural needs and desires of the community served.

5. He should affirmatively seek out responsible and accountable educational and cultural institutions of the community with a view toward providing opportunities for the instruction and enlightenment of the viewers.

6. He should provide for reasonable experimentation in the development of programs specifically directed to the advancement of the community's culture and education.
7. It is in the interest of television as a vital medium to encourage and promote the broadcast of programs presenting genuine artistic or literary material, valid moral and social issues, significant controversial and challenging concepts and other subject matter involving adult themes. Accordingly, none of the provisions of this code, including those relating to the responsibility toward children, should be construed to prevent or impede their broadcast. All such programs, however, should be broadcast with due regard to the composition of the audience. The highest degree of care should be exercised to preserve the integrity of such programs and to ensure that the selection of themes, their treatment and presentation are made in good faith upon the basis of true instructional and entertainment values, and not for the purposes of sensationalism, to shock or exploit the audience or to appeal to prurient interests or morbid curiosity.

II. Responsibility toward children

1. The education of children involves giving them a sense of the world at large. It is not enough that only those programs which are intended for viewing by children shall be suitable to the young and immature. In addition, those programs which might be reasonably expected to hold the attention of children and which are broadcast during times of the day when children may be normally expected to constitute a substantial part of the audience should be presented with due regard for their effect on children.
2. Such subjects as violence and sex shall be presented without undue emphasis and only as required by plot development or character delineation. Crime should not be presented as attractive or as a solution to human problems, and the inevitable retribution should be made clear.

3. The broadcaster should afford opportunities for cultural growth as well as for wholesome entertainment.

4. He should develop programs to foster and promote the commonly accepted moral, social and ethical ideals characteristic of American life.

5. Programs should reflect respect for parents, for honorable behavior, and for the constituted authorities of the American community.

6. Exceptional care should be exercised with reference to kidnapping or threats of kidnapping of children in order to avoid terrorizing them.

7. Material which is excessively violent or would create morbid suspense, or other undesirable reactions in children, should be avoided.

8. Particular restraint and care in crime or mystery episodes involving children or minors, should be exercised.

III. Community responsibility

1. A television broadcaster and his staff occupy a position of responsibility in the community and should conscientiously endeavor to be acquainted fully with its needs and characteristics in order better to serve the welfare of its citizens.
2. Requests for time for the placement of public service announcements or programs should be carefully reviewed with respect to the character and reputation of the group, campaign or organization involved, the public interest content of the message, and the manner of its presentation.

IV. General program standards

1. Program materials should enlarge the horizons of the viewer, provide him with wholesome entertainment, afford helpful stimulation, and remind him of the responsibilities which the citizen has towards his society. The intimacy and confidence placed in television demand of the broadcaster, the network and other program sources that they be vigilant in protecting the audience from deceptive program practices.

2. Profanity, obscenity, smut and vulgarity are forbidden, even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience. From time to time, words which have been acceptable, acquire undesirable meanings, and telecasters should be alert to eliminate such words.

3. Words (especially slang) derisive of any race, color, creed, nationality or national derivation, except wherein such usage would be for the specific purpose of effective dramatization such as combating prejudice, are forbidden, even when likely to be understood only by part of the audience. From time to time, words which have been acceptable, acquire undesirable meanings, and telecasters should be alert to eliminate such words.
4. Racial or nationality types shall not be shown on television in such a manner as to ridicule the race or nationality.

5. Attacks on religion and religious faiths are not allowed. Reverence is to mark any mention of the name of God, His attributes and powers. When religious rites are included in other than religious programs the rites shall be accurately presented. The office of minister, priest, or rabbi shall not be presented in such a manner as to ridicule or impair dignity.

6. Respect is maintained for the sanctity of marriage and the value of the home. Divorce is not treated casually as a solution for marital problems.

7. In reference to physical or mental afflictions and deformities special precautions must be taken to avoid ridiculing sufferers from similar ailments and offending them or members of their families.

8. Excessive or unfair exploitation of others or of their physical or mental afflictions shall not be presented as praiseworthy. The presentation of cruelty, greed and selfishness as worthy motivations is to be avoided.

9. Law enforcement shall be upheld and, except where essential to the program plot, officers of the law portrayed with respect and dignity.

10. Legal, medical and other professional advice, diagnosis and treatment will be permitted only in conformity with law and recognized ethical and professional standards.
11. The use of animals both in the production of television programs and as part of television program content, shall at all times, be in conformity with accepted standards of humane treatment.

12. Care should be exercised so that cigarette smoking will not be depicted in a manner to impress the youth or our country as a desirable habit worthy of imitation.

13. Criminality shall be presented as undesirable and unsympathetic. The condoning of crime and the treatment of the commission of crime in a frivolous, cynical or callous manner is unacceptable.

14. The presentation of murder or revenge as a motive for murder shall not be presented as justifiable.

15. Suicide as an acceptable solution for human problems is prohibited.

16. Illicit sex relations are not treated as commendable. Sex crimes and abnormalities are generally unacceptable as program material. The use of locations closely associated with sexual life or with sexual sin must be governed by good taste and delicacy.

17. Drunkenness should never be presented as desirable or prevalent. The use of liquor in program content shall be de-emphasized. The consumption of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, shall not be shown.

18. Narcotic addiction shall not be presented except as a vicious habit. The administration of illegal drugs will not be displayed. The use of hallucinogenic drugs shall not be shown or encouraged as desirable or socially acceptable.
19. The use of gambling devices or scenes necessary to the development of plot or as appropriate background is acceptable only when presented with discretion and in moderation, and in a manner which would not excite interest in or foster betting nor be instructional in nature.

20. Telecasts of actual sport programs at which on-the-scene betting is permitted by law should be presented in a manner in keeping with Federal, state and local laws, and should concentrate on the subject as a public sporting event.

21. Program material pertaining to fortune-telling, occultism, astrology, phrenology, palm-reading, numerology, mind-reading, or character-reading, is unacceptable when presented for the purpose of fostering belief in these subjects.

22. Quiz and similar programs that are presented as contests of knowledge, information, skill or luck must, in fact, be genuine contests and the results must not be controlled by collusion with or between contestants, or any other action which will favor one contestant against any other.

23. No program shall be presented in a manner which through artifice or simulation would mislead the audience as to any material fact. Each broadcaster must exercise reasonable judgement to determine whether a particular method of presentation would constitute a material deception, or would be accepted by the audience as a normal theatrical illusion.
24. The appearances or dramatization of persons featured in actual crime news will be permitted only in such light as to aid law enforcement or to report the news event.

25. The use of horror for its own sake will be eliminated; the use of visual or aural effects which would shock or alarm the viewer, and the detailed presentation of brutality or physical agony by sight or by sound are not permissible.

26. Contests may not constitute a lottery.

27. The costuming of all performers shall be within the bounds of propriety and shall avoid such exposure or such emphasis on anatomical detail as would embarrass or offend home viewers.

28. The movements of dancers, actors, or other performers shall be kept within the bounds of decency, and lewdness and impropriety shall not be suggested in the positions assumed by performers.

29. Camera angles shall avoid such views of performers as to emphasize anatomical details indecently.

30. The use of the television medium to transmit information of any kind by the use of the process called "subliminal perception," or by the use or any similar technique whereby an attempt is made to convey information to the viewer by transmitting messages below the threshold of normal awareness, is not permitted.

31. The broadcaster shall be constantly alert to prevent activities that may lead to such practices as the use of scenic properties, the choice and identification of prizes, the selection of music and other creative program elements and inclusion of any identifica-
tion of commercial products or services, their trade names or advertising slogans, within a program dictated by factors other than the requirements of the program itself. The acceptance of cash payments or other considerations in return for including any of the above within the program is prohibited except in accordance with Sections 317 and 508 of the Communications Act.

32. A television broadcaster should not present fictional events or other non-news material as authentic news telecasts or announcements, nor should he permit dramatizations in any program which would give the false impression that the dramatized material constitutes news. Expletives (presented aurally or pictorially) such as "flash" or "bulletin" and statements such as "we interrupt this program to bring you . . ." should be reserved specifically for news room use. However, a television broadcaster may properly exercise discretion in the use in non-news programs of words or phrases which do not necessarily imply that the material following is a news release.

33. Program content should be confined to those elements which entertain or inform the viewer and to the extent that titles, teasers or credits do not meet these criteria, they should be restricted or eliminated.

34. The creation of a state of hypnosis by act or demonstration over the air is prohibited and hypnosis as an aspect of "parlor game" antics to create humorous situations within a comedy setting cannot be used.
V. Treatment of news and public events

1. A television station's news schedule should be adequate and well-balanced.

2. News reporting should be factual, fair and without bias.

3. A television broadcaster should exercise particular discrimination in the acceptance, placement and presentation of advertising in news programs so that such advertising should be clearly distinguishable from the news content.

4. At all times, pictorial and verbal material for both news and comment should conform to other sections of these standards, where such sections are reasonable applicable.

5. Good taste should prevail in the selection and handling of news. Morbid, sensational or alarming details not essential to the actual report, especially in connection with stories of crime or sex, should be avoided. News should be telecast in such a manner as to avoid panic and unnecessary alarm.

6. Commentary and analysis should be clearly identified as such.

7. Pictorial material should be chosen with care and not presented in a misleading manner.

8. All news interview programs should be governed by accepted standards of ethical journalism, under which the interviewer selects the questions to be asked. Where there is advance agreement materially restricting an important or newsworthy area of questioning, the interviewer will state on the program that such limitation has been agreed upon. Such disclosure should be made if the person being interviewed requires that questions be submitted in advance or if he
9. A television broadcaster should exercise due care in his supervision of content, format, and presentation of newscasts originated by his station, and in his selection of newscasters, commentators, and analysts.

Public events

1. A television broadcaster has an affirmative responsibility at all times to be informed of public events, and to prove coverage consonant with the ends of an informed and enlightened citizenry.

2. The treatment of such events by a television broadcaster should provide adequate and informed coverage.

VI. Controversial public issues

1. Television provides a valuable forum for the expression of responsible views on public issues of a controversial nature. The television broadcaster should seek out and develop with accountable individuals, groups and organizations, programs relating to controversial public issues of import to his fellow citizens; and to give fair representation to opposing sides of issues which materially affect the life or welfare of a substantial segment of the public.

2. Requests by individuals, groups or organizations for time to discuss their views on controversial public issues, should be considered on the basis of their individual merits, and in the light of the contribution which the use requested would make to the public interest, and to a well-balanced program structure.

3. Programs devoted to the discussion of controversial public issues should be identified as such. They should not be presented
in a manner which would mislead listeners or viewers to believe that
the program is mainly of an entertainment, news, or other character.

4. Broadcasts in which stations express their own opinions
about issues of general public interest should be clearly identified
as editorials. They should be unmistakably identified as statements
of station opinion and should be appropriately distinguished from
news and other program material.

VII. Political telecasts

1. Political telecasts should be clearly identified as such.
They should not be presented by a television broadcaster in a manner
which would mislead listeners or viewers to believe that the program
is of any other character.
(Ref.: Communications Act of 1934, as amended, Secs. 315 and 317,
and FCC Rules and Regulations, Secs. 3.654, 3.657, 3.663, as discus-
sed in NAB's "A Political Catechism."

VIII. Religious programs

1. It is the responsibility of a television broadcaster to make
available to the community appropriate opportunity for religious
presentations.

2. Telecasting which reaches men of all creeds simultaneously
should avoid attacks upon religion.

3. Religious programs should be presented respectfully and
accurately and without prejudice or ridicule.

4. Religious programs should be presented by responsible
individuals, groups and organizations.
5. Religious programs should place emphasis on broad religious truths, excluding the presentation of controversial or partisan views directly or necessarily related to religion or morality.

6. In the allocation of time for telecasts of religious programs the television station should use its best efforts to apportion such time fairly among the representative faith groups of its community.
APPENDIX B

A Creed for Television Newsmen

by James C. Hagerty

February 25, 1961

1. TV news reporting must be factual, impartial, free and fearless. It cannot permit itself to be dominated or even remotely to be associated with any group or faction of special interest, any political party or any government. It must expand further its world-wide staff of trained professional reporters so that they will be able to present news developments wherever they occur accurately and without bias or personal opinion. In reporting news, television must do just that -- report what is happening in the world, what is being done, what is being said. TV reporters must be trained in the use of the most modern TV tools. They must be able not only to write their news reports, but to speak them, with ease.

2. TV news reporting must also try to analyze news developments, explain the reason why an event occurred and what it might lead to. But, and this is a big but, it must not confuse news reporting with personal opinion of a commentator who, after all, is expressing only his own thoughts and analysis. News must be reported as news -- straight and to the point. Commentary is an important and integral part of TV news reporting, but it must be labeled as opinion, apart and aside from straight news reporting. The American public can -- and will -- then form its own opinion, based on factual reporting and the additional commentary.
3. Local regional and national news will always be of commanding interest and must never be neglected or overlooked. I firmly believe that TV news reporting has not taken full advantage of the tremendous potential that exists on the staffs of local affiliated stations. These reporters are experts in their own right and are completely familiar with the problems and events of their own localities. They should be used more on national networks.

4. Expanding communication systems will bring with that expansion inevitable emphasis on news reporting from all sections of the world. This, I think, is good. All too often reporting of some faraway trouble spot is ignored until it is catapulted into prominence when disaster finally occurs. TV news reporting must look ahead, try to anticipate these trouble spots and educate audiences to their potential danger. I have often wondered what would happen if the people of the United States, and of the world, had continuing reports before trouble, which was developing, exploded on the world scene. Such reporting, I am sure, could have been extremely helpful, for example, in making the people of the world more aware of the rise to power, and the threat to world peace, of an Adolf Hitler -- or any dictator who seeks to subvert and control human freedoms. Public opinion is a potent force for good in this world -- but it must be an informed public opinion. Responsible TV news reporting can contribute to that end by supplying visual evidence of the truth.
This, of course, will take a larger staff of trained reporters -- more than television has now. But that's part of television's growing-up process. And, incidentally, American television will have to start now to train reporters who speak languages other than their own. As world-wide television comes into being -- as it inevitably will -- knowledge of foreign languages will be an essential of that operation.

5. The television camera must have the right to cover the news wherever it happens, here at home or overseas. Right now television cameras are barred from many events that are open to reporters. In Congress, television can cover Senate hearings but not those of the House of Representatives. Across our country and abroad, some public officials refuse to permit camera coverage of their press conferences. And, of course, the judiciary has long declined to permit cameras, in many instances, to cover the courts of the land.

I believe that the camera must be recognized as the same kind of equipment as a pencil in the hand of a newspaper reporter. This will take some doing. There are many prejudices to overcome from those who will be reported by the camera lens, not the least of which is from the newspaper profession itself. But free coverage of the news and the basic principle of freedom of the press demand no less. Television must insist on equal treatment. It is entitled to the same standing and privileges accorded other free communication media.

6. The camera, like the pencil, is no better or no worse than the individuals who operate or direct it. A good reporter does not
seek to fake or exaggerate his story. He gets the news as it happens and reports the truth, the whole truth. That is his job.

There have been ugly instances where television reporters and cameramen have deliberately stirred up trouble or tried to keep a story going by interviewing or urging partisans to demonstrate just for the sake of "getting crowd shots on film" or to "keep a story going." This practice is not only unethical, it is betrayal of the responsibility that rests with a free press. By prearranging news stories, newsmen are deliberately becoming participants in a story which they were assigned to cover impartially. They are not reporting news as it happens; they are manufacturing it. It's bad business, and it must not be allowed to continue. If the television camera is to become accepted along with the reporter's pencil, the camera and individuals who operate or direct it must become trusted and responsible representatives of the free press.
APPENDIX C

15 Point McGuire Attitude Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 / 2 / 3</th>
<th>4 / 5 / 6</th>
<th>7 / 8 / 9</th>
<th>10 / 11 / 12</th>
<th>13 / 14 / 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Definitely</td>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>Definitely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>False</td>
<td>False</td>
<td></td>
<td>True</td>
<td>True</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We are conducting a survey of television news reporting and would appreciate your assistance. Please read each statement below carefully and indicate your opinion as to their truth by marking your responses on the attached scales. Mark each scale only once and make your decisions based upon the attached definitions. Circle only one number on each scale.

1. Television News Reporting is factual.

   1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15
   | Definitely / Probably / Uncertain / Probably / Definitely |
   | False       /         False       /         True       /       True       |

2. Television News Reporting is partial.

   1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15
   | Definitely / Probably / Uncertain / Probably / Definitely |
   | False       /         False       /         True       /       True       |

3. Television News Reporting does not confuse facts with editorialization.

   1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15
   | Definitely / Probably / Uncertain / Probably / Definitely |
   | False       /         False       /         True       /       True       |

4. Television News Commentators do not interject personal opinion.

   1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15
   | Definitely / Probably / Uncertain / Probably / Definitely |
   | False       /         False       /         True       /       True       |

5. There is equal attention given to State, Local, and National news on television.

   1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / 8 / 9 / 10 / 11 / 12 / 13 / 14 / 15
   | Definitely / Probably / Uncertain / Probably / Definitely |
   | False       /         False       /         True       /       True       |
6. Television News Reporting tries to look ahead to the trouble spots and keep us informed of developments which may affect us.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False / Probably False / Uncertain / Probably True / Definitely True

7. Television camera must be allowed to cover the news wherever it occurs.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False / Probably False / Uncertain / Probably True / Definitely True

8. Television presents only a partial or slanted explanation of facts.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False / Probably False / Uncertain / Probably True / Definitely True

9. Television reporting of crimes and arrests prevents the accused from getting a fair trial.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False / Probably False / Uncertain / Probably True / Definitely True

10. Newsmen fake or exaggerate stories to keep them in the news.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False / Probably False / Uncertain / Probably True / Definitely True

11. Television News is giving us all the possible facts about Watergate.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False / Probably False / Uncertain / Probably True / Definitely True
12. Television Coverage of the 1968 Democratic Convention was biased against the Johnson - Humphrey administration.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False  Probably False  Uncertain  Probably True  Definitely True

13. Television News and Cameramen have deliberately stirred up trouble to make news stories.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False  Probably False  Uncertain  Probably True  Definitely True

14. Television News is fair to President Nixon and his administration.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False  Probably False  Uncertain  Probably True  Definitely True

15. Television News film stories have been edited to provide a biased or slanted picture of the facts.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False  Probably False  Uncertain  Probably True  Definitely True

16. Television News does not engage in sensationalism.

1 / 2 / 3  4 / 5 / 6  7 / 8 / 9  10 / 11 / 12  13 / 14 / 15
Definitely False  Probably False  Uncertain  Probably True  Definitely True

We would appreciate a few facts about yourself to aid us in our study. Please circle the letter which best applies to you.

1. Age
   A) Under 18   B) 18 - 21   C) 22 - 25   D) 25 and older

2. Educational Level
   A) Freshman   B) Sophomore   C) Junior   D) Senior
   E) Graduate Student   F) Other

3. Sex
   A) Male   B) Female
4. Political Preference

A) Republican
B) Democratic
C) Independent
D) Other
APPENDIX E

Original Pilot Study Questionnaire

THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION AT FLORIDA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY IS CONDUCTING A RESEARCH PROJECT TO DETERMINE HOW PEOPLE PERCEIVE THE NEWS MEDIA AS A SOURCE FOR INFORMATION IN THE FALL OF 1973. Please answer each question with only one response.

1. ___Male ___Female

2. How interested are you in news about national politics?
   ___extremely interested ___not very interested
   ___somewhat interested ___very disinterested

3. Where do you get most of your news about national politics?
   ___radio ___magazines
   ___television ___other people
   ___newspapers

4. Do you think that the media keeps you adequately informed about what's going on in Washington?
   ___yes ___no

5. Which of the media do you think gives the best coverage of national political news?
   ___newspapers ___radio
   ___television ___magazines

6. The reason I think that one the best is:
   ___unbiased ___more news coverage
   ___national coverage ___convenience
7. My opinion of the national political news coverage, in relation to fair and impartial news media reporting is:

- High
- Influential
- Intelligent
- Dishonest
- Wrong
- Perfect
- Beneficial
- Complete
- Low
- Uninfluential
- Unintelligent
- Honest
- Right
- Imperfect
- Harmful
- Incomplete

8. The news media has a goal to keep news reporting factual and impartial without bias or personal opinion. If I were to rate the news media on this goal in the Fall of 1973 it would be as:

- Beneficial
- Dishonest
- Successful
- Wrong
- Pessimistic
- Kind
- Imperfect
- Harmful
- Honest
- Unsuccessful
- Right
- Optimistic
- Cruel
- Perfect

9. Other goals include: News reporting must analyze news developments; explain reason event occurred; and what might it lead to, without personal opinion and analysis. In my opinion the media is:

- Perfect
- Disreputable
- Meaningful
- Negative
- Good
- Foolish
- Educated
- Selfish
- Imperfect
- Reputable
- Meaningless
- Positive
- Bad
- Wise
- Ignorant
- Unselfish

10. As a self-imposed goal a member of the media has stated, "News media should not fake or exaggerate the news for the sake of sensationalism." Our news media in the Fall of 1973 has been:

- Imperfect
- Wise
- Unselfish
- Disreputable
- Successful
- Dishonest
- Right
- Fortunate
- Perfect
- Foolish
- Reputable
- Unsuccessful
- Honest
- Wrong
- Unfortunate
11. Which of the news media do you think gives the worst coverage of national political news?

___newspapers

___radio

___television

___magazines

12. The reason I think that one is the worst is: (Please state.)
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


Articles and Periodicals


"Crisis Coverage." Newsweek, (October 30, 1967), 60.


Unpublished Works


