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WHO TRUSTS THE MEDIA:
PERSONAL BIAS AND MEDIA CREDIBILITY

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy
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To my father, who gave me love, and my daughter, who teaches me love.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines concepts and research on media credibility from an audience-oriented perspective, and discusses how that approach helps to understand audience members' evaluation of media--especially their trust in the news. The basic idea is that, though media credibility is mostly theorized to depend upon media performance, there are other important factors that do not rely on the accomplishments of media organizations but on the attributes of individual audience members. This dissertation will analyze involvement in political position and perceived bias of the media as audience attributes that influence media credibility.

Nobody doubts that the present era is the media age. Several decades ago, even before television sets were widely distributed, many people were awed by the power of the mass media to define social reality. Theories of powerful media such as the bullet theory or the hypodermic theory may represent their wonder and fear about the power of mass media at that time.

By the technological development of television, recently with full color and surround sound, mass communications seem

to exert greater power. No other instance shows this trend more clearly than the opening ceremony of the 1984 summer Olympic games celebrated at Los Angeles. Some 80 million people watched that event simultaneously in the USA alone (Thompson, 1985). Imagine how many people watched the ceremony all around the world. The mass media make it possible for such a great number of people to watch the same thing at the same time. Further, "the same thing" means not only the same event but also the same scenes that were delivered by CBS which had the exclusive right to broadcast the event.

The ubiquity of mass communication makes media organizations look omnipotent. Yet, there is a problem which threatens the seemingly invincible power of mass communication. Because mass communication is mediated by mass media, any received truth in mass communication is dependent upon the credibility of the mediators. Thus, the power of mass media to define social reality is vulnerable to arguments against their credibility.

For a number of years, there has been serious debate in academic and professional societies of the mass communication field about a crisis in media credibility (e.g., Werner, 1985; Radolf, 1985; Lehrman, 1988; Clark, 1986; Gaziano, 1988). In 1985 alone, four major surveys of audiences' attitudes and perceptions of media credibility were done

motivated by concerns about the public's distrust of the mass media.

The authors of the various studies did not agree about the degree to which media credibility was threatened; those associated with the American Society of Newspaper Editors (1985) and the Gannett Center for Media Studies (1985) insisted that media credibility was in jeopardy while those associated with the Los Angeles Times (1985) and Times Mirror (1985) thought the use of the word "crisis" was exaggerating the situation. But those researchers agreed that their survey results indicated the existence of audience members' deep skepticism about the accuracy of news reporting and journalists' impartiality, whether it was at a crisis stage or not.

They also observed wide gaps between audience's and journalists' opinions on social issues. Audience members felt alienated, perceiving that they were not properly represented by the press (Schneider and Lewis, 1985). Overall, audience members were not convinced that they could rely on journalists not to pursue their own interests or promote their own opinions.

Even news photos suffer from the credibility problem. The original intention of the credit line that names the photographer or other source of a photo was "to give photographers credit for their pictures, but lately credits

have become a way to maintain the public's trust in photojournalism" (Salgado, 1991, p. 20P). It is not a photo itself, as a captured reality, but the name of a photographer that guarantees that the photo is real and not fabricated. What provides this change in the meaning of a credit line is not the technology that makes manipulation of a photograph possible but the audience's disbelief in the commitment of journalists to deliver only the truth.

Journalists have recognized the deep significance of the subject. When he was elected the 1985 chairman of ANPA (the American Newspaper Publishers Association), Richard Johnson gave the improvement of media credibility a high priority on the ANPA agenda (Radolf, 1985). Increasing public distrust of media was considered not only a threat against various privileges that the media enjoyed, such as freedom of the press and the right to represent public opinion, but also against the financial ground of individual media companies. Speaking of the public's distrust of media, Louis D. Boccardi, the 1985 president of the Associated Press, warned his fellow journalists not to overlook this distrust:

> We need to be credible, we need to be respected. As businesses we need to develop and maintain our audiences or we shall fail financially as well as spiritually.... We want our audiences to trust in the accuracy of what we say ... we want them to find our work fair.... There is a danger for media in arrogantly pursuing our own agenda, an agenda set more by our peers than our readers. (Quoted in Stein, 1985, p. 12)

Boccardi's words justify this dissertation by making clear the practical importance of the subject of media credibility. As indicated, the decline in media credibility endangers a vital institution. A crisis in media credibility is also a threat to our democratic system because mass communication is a fundamental component of modern political systems. Moreover, a lot of necessary elements for our democratic society are related to the subject. For example, accurate information for policy judgments, informed citizens, free speech, and an adequate representation of social reality are at stake. When people disbelieve news media, they will not accept the media as a reliable source of social information and are more likely to disapprove the right of the press to report without governmental regulation.

The theoretical importance of the subject adds more to the justification of this dissertation. Media credibility is theoretically crucial in the debate between the limited and the powerful media effects models. Because skeptical audience members are not likely to be influenced by mass media, the fact that some people distrust media argues against the "return to the concept of the powerful mass media" (Noelle-Neumann, 1973). Audience members' suspicion of news delivered by mass media limits the media's power. Involvement, which is used in this dissertation to explain the phenomenon of audience members' distrust of media, has

been one of the important concepts for the limited effects model arguments. For example, Weaver, Graber, McCombs, and Eyal (1981) find that the agenda-setting effect, one of the predictions of a prominent powerful media model, is weak for issues in which audience members are personally involved or which are personally relevant to them (obtrusive issues).

Another theoretical implication of media credibility research is an explicit portrayal of the pluralistic nature of society. A pluralistic society is theorized to consist of "a complex of competing groups and interests, none of them predominant all of the time.... Audiences are seen as *capable of manipulating the media* in an infinite variety of ways according to their prior needs and *dispositions* and as having access to what Halloran (1977) calls 'the plural values of society' enabling them to 'conform, accommodate or reject' [italics added]" (Curran and Gurevitch, 1977, p. 4). Unfortunately, "American empirical communications research [leaves] ... theoretical models of society often unexamined and unstated" (Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott, 1982, p. 15) though it generally assumes the pluralistic nature of society in its theories.

On the other hand, the problematic of media credibility --audience's possible distrust of media and journalists' worry about that--indicates not only that the audience resists influence from mass media but also individual media

organizations are not independent from pressures coming from the audience. The political position of audience members, which will be examined here as a significant factor affecting perceptions of media credibility, will help to show an example of the resistance of a pluralistic society against prevailing media influences.

While work on media credibility is important to media institutions and in the discourse of mass communication theory, the audience-oriented approach of this dissertation grows out of a dissatisfaction with the current state of media credibility studies. The theoretical implications of the previous studies are often equivocal and unclear. In earlier research, there has rarely been sufficient concern with the diversity of phenomena related to the public's evaluation of media credibility. The underlying theoretical assumptions of the studies have remained largely unchanged for a long time. In order to expand the scope of the field and stimulate further theoretical discussion among researchers, a new approach is necessary.

On one hand, research on media credibility has been generally descriptive and unable to present theoretical explanations. Many studies of media credibility have been initiated by media organizations and their concerns were with the public's opinions about media credibility (e.g. those four surveys in 1985). Their focus was to figure out how

much they were trusted by the audience. This kind of approach ranges from mere polling of what percentage of people trust or distrust media to serious investigations of what attributes (e.g. accuracy or impartiality) of media or media products contribute to credibility.

Another typical descriptive study focuses on how competitive a particular medium is among its rivals. The Roper Organization, for example, which is one of the pioneers in media credibility studies, has surveyed credibility since the 1950s and one of its main purposes, if not its only one, is the comparison of credibility between television and rival media, especially the newspaper (Roper, 1985). The research has been descriptive in that there were few attempts to explain the phenomenon within a theoretical framework; their focus was on the extent to which the audience trusts mass media instead of the process that leads to belief or disbelief.

Even if these descriptive works had a theoretical basis, though, it was insufficiently defined and argued. The existing works largely presume that media credibility is a function of media performance. That limited assumption must be challenged and expanded.

For example, some researchers have said that there might be an optimum level of media credibility between blind trust and radical disbelief in media. That is a misleading

consequence of the assumption of credibility relying upon media performance. About the public's reservations about media credibility, Gaziano (1988) says "[the audience's] skepticism is not necessarily bad; there can be dangers in uncritical acceptance of media fare" (p. 278). Of course, it is not desirable for audience members to believe everything the mass media say. But Gaziano's claim presumes that media credibility is dependent upon media performance which can never be perfect. What would we say if the public's distrust in media is not due to the latter's bad performance but to the audience's biased perceptions of social reality or to society's lack of consensus? In that case, the low level of media credibility is not only a dangerous sign for the media institution but also a warning about a high level of disharmony in the society. This dissertation differs from most media credibility studies in that it examines bias in individual audience members rather than in the media.

The basic idea in the approach of this dissertation gets inspiration from the well-known phenomenon that both conservatives and liberals criticize the credibility of mass media. Conservatives think that Ivy League liberals and leftists control the media. Liberals suspect that the (rich) owners of media companies and conglomerates, as well as big corporations which spend huge amounts of money for expensive advertising, manipulate the public by mass communication.

Bozell (1988), in the conservative journal, National Review, for instance, asked readers "Can you believe them," complaining about the media's bias in favor of the Democratic party. He said "a convincing case [of media bias] emerges from our study of network coverage of the Democratic and Republican conventions.... The double standard applied by the networks in their coverage ... clearly demonstrates the biases of the media elite" (pp. 26, 78). On the other hand, Cockburn (1988), in the liberal New Statesman, refuted the charge that journalists are biased in a liberal direction. Under the title of "Lying in the corporate press," he declared that the real status of mass media "is light years from conservative fantasies about 'ultra-liberal' Watergate crusaders" (Cockburn, 1988, p. 30). Both conservatives and liberals distrust media so much that they established media watch organizations. First, conservatives organized AIM (Accuracy in Media), and then liberals created FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) in order to counteract the operation of AIM (Cockburn, 1988).

The seeming paradox that both conservatives and liberals think the mass media are skewed against them does not stand only for ideological extremists. Many average Americans feel that way, too. A survey by the Roper Organization in November, 1988, said 46% of the respondents thought media coverage of the election campaign was politically biased

(Lipton, 1988). And 48% of those perceiving bias in media believed it was skewed toward the Democratic Party, while 33% of them thought media coverage was favorable to the Republican Party.

It is not the purpose of this dissertation to figure out the different positions of liberals and conservatives or Democrats and Republicans. Rather, attention is given to the fact that both groups are deeply skeptical of the mass media. The analytical focus is on their commonness: their involvement in their political positions, their perceptions of bias in media, and the intensity of their distrust of the media. This dissertation will investigate the relationship among those three elements in order to illumine the process by which media credibility is developed or diminished.

CHAPTER II

MEDIA CREDIBILITY RESEARCH

This chapter will review previous media credibility studies and discuss relevant theoretical and conceptual issues in the field. The purpose of this chapter is to provide understanding of the current state of credibility research and bring up some points which are necessary for further unfolding of the theoretical argument of this dissertation.

The Structure and Level of Media Credibility

It is natural that researchers have been interested in the structure of the concept of credibility and the level of public trust in media. The investigation of the structure has been done mainly by factor analysis, but there has been little progress made with this approach. Concerns with the level of media credibility have been stimulated by the belief that people will support press freedom and read or watch mass media to the extent to which they have confidence in them. Because of the belief that the commercial success of a media organization is dependent upon its credibility, most studies

of the level of credibility compare the credibility of rival media, especially, television and the newspaper.

Decomposition of the Concept of Credibility

In a journalists' seminar on media credibility, David Broder, columnist for the Washington Post, defined credibility as "an 'uncomfortable hybrid of a word' meaning truthfulness, responsibility, and accountability" (Lehrman, 1988, p. 25). Since the seminal experiments in the early 1950s by Carl Hovland and his colleagues, credibility has been considered not as a unidimensional concept but as a complex one which consists of several dimensions. As a result, a large portion of media credibility studies consists of the decomposition of the concept. Many researchers have viewed such research as an essential way to understand this puzzling concept.

The Hovland group found that main factors, "trustworthiness" and "expertise," underlie the concept (Hovland, Janis, & Kelly, 1953). Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz (1969) discovered "safety," "qualification," and "dynamism" to be the main factors composing credibility. Jacobson (1969) found "authenticity," "objectivity," "dynamism," and "respite" in his study. Tuppen (1974) pointed out "articulation" and "charisma." Vandenbergh (1981) added "friendly," "prestige," and "competitive."

Despite the relatively large number of studies, this approach has not generated a significant theory about media credibility. I would argue that there are several reasons for the failure, some which come from limitations of the methodology and some from the lack of theoretical grounding.

First, most researchers in this group have utilized factor analysis for their studies. But characteristics of that method may cause a problem here. As the number of items used in factor analysis increases, the number of extracted factors underlying the phenomenon being studied increases simultaneously. A study using open-ended questions shows this clearly. Singletary (1976) let subjects imagine an individual who was a credible news source in mass communications and write "all the words they could imagine that 'made' the news person, for them, credible" (p. 317). From those words written by the subjects, he found six major factors--"knowledgeability," "attraction," "trustworthiness," "articulation," "hostility" (to the government), and "stability"--and nine minor factors--"frankness," "sensitivity," "effectiveness," "dynamism," "professional demeanor," "perceptiveness," "awareness," "purposefulness," and "confidence." Those fifteen factors explained a mere 48% of the total variance.

Second, it is difficult, or even impossible, to draw conclusions from those studies because of the lack of

comparability among them. For instance, operationalizations of high and low source credibility vary from a method in which respondents name their own sources (e.g., Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz, 1969) to one where researchers give well-known news sources to respondents (e.g., Hovland and Weiss, 1951), to one where researchers give hypothetical descriptions of sources to respondents (e.g., Tuppen, 1974).

Moreover, sources given to respondents for comparison are often quite different in their attributes, such as individuals and mass media (e.g., Hovland and Weiss, 1951) or newspapers and television (e.g., Gaziano and McGrath, 1986; Robin and Kohut, 1988). As Delia (1976) indicates, factor structures of source credibility vary due to differences in message sources, communication situations, and time, and concludes that factor analysis does not help in theorizing the credibility concept.

Third, it is not clear whether the dimensions produced in the various studies indicate the same concept or not. Those dimensions can be either "predictors of perceived credibility or ... dimensions of credibility itself" (Newhagen and Nass, 1989, p. 278). Dimensions derived by methods using news sources, either by clustering various message sources (e.g., Hovland and Weiss, 1951) or by classifying images of the sources (e.g., Singletary, 1976), seem to belong to the "predictors" group. Those stemming

from methods where respondents were given attributes of sources (like accuracy, bias, or unselfishness) (e.g. Jacobson, 1969; Newhagen and Nass, 1989) seem to be close to elements of credibility itself.

Finally, in most cases, the items used for the decomposition of credibility, whether they are attributes of sources or sources themselves, are selected empirically or by "common sense," without background theoretical rationales. When those items fail to reasonably distinguish the factors underlying credibility, that lack of theoretical framework becomes fatal because the result leads researchers nowhere.

For example, Gaziano and McGrath (1986) attempted to produce distinct factors from 14 seemingly different items but the result was discouraging. Except for two items related to sensationalism, all of the items (like fairness, accuracy, trustfulness, concern about community's well-being, and journalist training) had to go under one factor which the researchers labeled "credibility." Factor analysis could not find enough difference among these 12 items to separate them. The result was a replica of the earlier study by Jacobson (1969) in which most items were categorized under "authenticity," including such seemingly different items as trustworthiness, accuracy, and expertise.

This last weakness of decomposition studies, as shown in Gaziano and McGrath's (1986) failure, is crucial because it

indicates audience members' inability, or disinterest in, differentiating seemingly divergent aspects of media performance. Whatever the reason is, factor analyses of media credibility appear to have made little theoretical contribution. The following statement by Meyer (1988) describes the current state of studies of the decomposition of media credibility:

> Readers do have a generalized feeling about the newspaper, and when different dimensions are found, the power of the statistical tools that find them may mask the fact that they are fragile, poorly differentiated, or artificial. (p. 574)

Even if factor analysis does not help decompose the dimensions of credibility (that is, does not find clear-cut patterns in correlations among items), audience members' scores of individual items help us understand what they think of the media's credibility. It goes too far to say the research of the decomposition of media credibility has not been beneficial to understanding the concept.

Comparison of Credibility among Various Media (Newspapers vs. Television)

Concern with the level of media credibility has been stimulated by the commercial interests of media institutions. People in the media industry generally believe that audience members are more likely to read or watch a medium that they think is credible than one that they think is not. Thus, it

is natural that the rivalry among different media encourages this type of study.

Although comparison of credibility among different media is frequently applied to the four major news media (newspaper, television, radio, and magazines), most studies of this type focus on differences between newspaper and television (e.g., Newhagen & Nass, 1989; Reagan & Zenaty, 1979: Abel & Wirth, 1977; Carter & Greenberg, 1965; Gantz, 1981). The theoretical interests of these studies vary from the examination of mere differences in the degree of credibility perceived by audience members to the analysis of which attributes of each medium make the difference.

Since 1959, the Roper Organization has surveyed the relative believability of television and the newspaper in a situation of conflicting information by asking audience members which one they trust more when the two media tell different stories. Their results show television has enjoyed higher credibility than the newspaper since as early as 1961 (Roper, 1985).

Although television has many technological advantages over the newspaper and seems naturally to be superior, even the radio, as a broadcasting news medium, was found to have more credibility than print media before television took its place. In a 1939 Roper poll, "radio press bulletin" and "radio commentator" were more believed than "editorial" and

"news item in newspaper" were (Erskine, 1971). In 1940, 1942, and 1944 Gallup polls, slightly more (1-3%) people answered they would believe the radio more than the newspaper when news from the two media contradicted each other (Erskine, 1971).

The debate over the report that television is more credible than the newspaper is still going on; simple comparisons of these studies can not be justified. It is obvious that the characteristics of television and newspapers are radically different. A first concern is the difference in coverage areas; for example, Stempel (1973) found that the newspaper was almost as believable as television for the local news. But Abel and Wirth (1977), comparing credibility of local TV news and newspaper news to test Stempel's conclusion, found television is still perceived as a more "believable," "trustful," and "important" source for local news than the newspapers. Following Greenberg and Roloff's (1974) suggestion, Mulder (1980) investigated the relationship between gratifications sought from news consumption and media credibility. Finding the newspaper had higher credibility among rational "active news seekers," Mulder argued that the credibility of television is inferior to that of the newspaper because television's high credibility ratings are caused by its entertaining characteristics.

Carter & Greenberg (1965) attribute the credibility gap to the difference in styles of presentation--the extent to which the (news) source and the reporter (or anchor person) are separate. According to them, television is less likely to be responsible for biased views of news sources than the newspaper is.

Newhagen and Nass (1989) ascribe the disparity in the credibility of television and newspapers to the difference between trust in individuals and organizations. For newspaper news, there are gaps in time and space between sending and receiving. Thus, newspapers are more likely to be perceived as "an organizational unit rather than as a set of individuals" (p. 278). As a result, when audience members compare credibility, while the judgment of television news relies on newscasters more, the newspaper is evaluated as an "organization" as a whole. According to their analysis, the familiar newscasters contribute more credibility than the impersonal organization does.

The difference in credibility between the newspaper and television is somewhat exaggerated by the commercial rivalry of the two media. Although the credibility gap exists, factor analysis studies have not been successful in distinguishing the newspaper and television (e.g. Gaziano and McGrath, 1986). That indicates that "none of these [derived] dimensions of believability suggests a clear differentiation

between print sources and broadcast sources" (Robinson and Kohut, 1988, p. 184). Thus, the audience does not seem to discriminate between the two media as much as the news organizations do. Johnson, the 1985 ANPA (American Newspaper Publishers Association) Chairman, described the situation when he said "the two media must... start working together [to improve credibility with the public]" because "the public thinks of the press as a whole" (Radolf, 1985, p. 18).

Media Credibility as a Cause

Persuasion is very important in communication. It is natural that many communication researchers have been interested in what causes persuasion. The credibility of a message source, of a person or a medium, obviously affects processing of a message. Thus, there are studies treating credibility as an independent variable which influences the audience's interpretation of messages.

Hovland and Weiss (1951) tested the effect of source credibility on the reception and processing of messages. In their experiment, well-known mass media such as Fortune and Pravda were used as high or low credibility sources. Individuals participating in the study showed more favorable opinion of messages that were attributed to high credibility sources. Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1953) indicate that there are two processes in the effects of source credibility. First, the level of credibility influences an evaluation of

messages. Second, it also influences the degree to which audience member's opinion is changed toward the direction implied in a message.

Recently, the theoretical focus on the concept moved from direct effects to situational factors. That is, in what situation does the credibility of a message source influence the processing of a message? For example, the ELM (Elaboration Likelihood Model) of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schumann, 1983) explains that, in the "peripheral route" of information processing (less use of logical thinking), source credibility has a relatively stronger effect on attitude change than in the "central route" (intensive use of logical thinking). In the latter case, attributes of the message (such as quality of an argument) have more significant effects on a receiver's attitude change. For mass communication, Dworkin (1987) finds credibility has an interactive effect with social factors, such as education or union membership, on the acceptance of the "reality" provided by media.

Media Credibility as a Result

Studies treating source credibility as a result investigate factors that influence source credibility. For example, Cozzens and Contractor (1987) investigated an experimental situation where people were given a message and asked to evaluate the credibility of its source while they

were also given information which conflicted with the message. According to them, conflicting information clearly increased respondent's skepticism toward the source.

Outside experimental laboratory, mass media functions in society cannot be manipulated. The degree to which an individual audience member trusts mass media is determined by his or her long experience; it can not be as easily controlled as it is in an experimental situation. Therefore, the study of credibility in mass communication research largely focuses on images in the minds of audience members.

Moreover, journalists and researchers recognize the importance and advantage of high credibility. They are interested in what factors influence credibility (that is, how they can improve their credibility) rather than in what credibility can do. Thus, they pay attention to the two important components influencing media credibility, media performance and the process by which the audience perceives that performance. The following two sections will discuss studies on these components in more detail.

Credibility as a Result of Media Performance

The majority of media credibility studies assume that credibility is dependent upon the media--their performance or characteristics. Research based on that assumption focuses on attributes of the mass media as variables upon which

credibility is dependent. In fact, items used in factor analyses, such as accuracy, fairness, or impartiality, can be conceptualized as performance elements upon which general credibility relies. Most studies comparing newspaper and television credibility also analyze distinct attributes of each medium. To avoid repetition of the descriptive studies discussed before (the decomposition and comparison of media studies), only studies that inspect characteristics of media per se are discussed on this section.

Journalists are often criticized in that their perceptions of the audience do not represent the "real audience" and, as a consequence, what the audience wants (Pool and Shulman, 1959; Gieber, 1964). One typical approach to study credibility as a dependent variable relying on media per se is investigation of the opinion gap between audience members and journalists because the gap is assumed to reflect the credibility gap between them. The characteristics compared range from their demographic background (differences of which may cause differences in opinions) (Gaziano & McGrath, 1987; Johnson, 1984; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1986), to attitudes toward various social issues or political positions (Shaw, 1985, August 11; Schneider & Lewis, 1985), to their attachment to the communities they serve (Gaziano & McGrath, 1987).

The attributes of journalists are discussed in terms of either their closeness to those of the audience or their distance from other social interest groups. An exact match is neither observed nor welcomed in those studies; the question of desirable distance seems to be considered beyond empirical research. Gaziano and McGrath (1987) note that:

> Too many similarities might lead to decreased reporter objectivity.... It is vital to maintain distance between themselves and their topics, news sources, and audiences. The issue which the press may wish to address is what constitutes the optimal distance. Credibility issues cannot be eradicated, but some portion of credibility problems can be reduced. (p. 328)

There is one condition for the assumption that the measured gap reflects the credibility gap; the difference of journalists from their audience should appear in news reporting. A study by the Los Angeles Times (Shaw, 1985, August 11) had an interesting result. The Times surveyed and compared characteristics and opinions of journalists perceived by the audience and perceived by journalists as well as opinions of audience. According to its result, there are demographic (economic, educational, sex and religious) disparities between journalists and their audience. There are also considerable gaps between journalists' and audience member's opinions about various social issues.

Despite the considerable opinion gaps, the audience members participating in the poll did not recognize the gap; they did not perceive the relatively liberal opinions held by

the journalists of their newspapers. Most of them were wrong in guessing journalists' views on issues questioned in the poll such as prayer in public schools, abortion, and the death penalty. Though it does not prove there is no bias in newspaper reporting (Schneider and Lewis, 1985), the assumption that journalists' opinions are reflected in the biases of news reporting, at least when measured by audience members' perceptions, is threatened.

Audience members' perceptions of journalists' political ideology have a tendency to be different from those about journalists' positions on practical issues. Audience members thought that the majority of journalists were liberal. And, indeed, the majority of them are liberal. But when asked about political bias in news coverage, about half of the respondents said there was no bias, one third of them said there was a bias toward liberals and the rest said there was a bias toward conservatives. When we think about audience members' failure to detect journalists' liberal positions on issues, it is hardly thinkable that their perceptions come from their judgments of news coverage which only one out of three people thought to be skewed toward liberals. It may rather come from other information, such as conservatives' long attack on liberalism in the press (e.g., Spiro Agnew's address, 1969).

Another approach tests the product of mass media instead of looking at its makers. Content analysis is a popular way to measure bias in news (e.g., Graber, 1987; Robinson, 1987). As an example, Stempel (1969) examined the coverage of three presidential elections in the 1960s and found little evidence to support political bias in it.

Yet, whether there is bias in news from mass media or not, some researchers suggest that the relationship between the bias in coverage and the bias perceived by audience members is complex, so it is clearly not a linear relationship. The reason for this is that the interests of news sources and of the audience are often conflicting. For example, in a seminal study on news accuracy, Charnley (1936) warned against assuming a linear relationship. By asking people who were mentioned in news articles if the news coverage of them was correct, Charnley tried to find how accurate news stories were. The types of news articles (simple factual news vs. long explanatory news) and the sources of news (news provided by outsiders vs. news written by news reporters) had significant influences on the perceived accuracy. The implication of this result is that, the more of a news story reporters wrote, the less accurate the people mentioned in the news story thought it was.

Based on that result, Charnley suggested that factual accuracy should not be identified with the credibility of media. He said:

> News furnished directly to the papers by interested persons and declared accurate by them is precisely what they want the public to know, whereas news presented by reporters is much more likely to be what the reporters believe to be for the best interest of the public. That reporters must be more accurate is another problem. (Charnley, 1936, p. 401)

It is of no use to say that evaluation of media's accuracy and bias in news reporting is vital and necessary to understand mass communication. Yet there are practical and conceptual problems in measuring how much we should trust media, and a gap exists between the "real" media credibility, if it is available for measurement at all, and credibility as perceived by individual audience members. In his transactional view of communication, Bauer (1964) indicates that what is sent by the media is not necessarily what is received by audience members. Moreover, there is a lot of information available about mass media, either praise or criticism, which audience members may use to evaluate media credibility. After all, it is not the media but an individual audience member who makes the final decision on how much she or he trusts messages from the mass media.

Credibility as a Result of Audience Attributes

Though details vary, almost all media credibility studies measure media credibility by asking audience members. Hence the center of the concept may seem to be already skewed toward the audience. Delia (1976), for example, in his discussion of source credibility, indicates that the subject presumably concerns the receiver's evaluation process. But studies discussed in this section are distinguished from other studies in that they consider media credibility not only as audience members' perceptions but also as a function of audience members' attributes.

Though there are not many studies, analysis of individual differences in media credibility is not a recent development. Investigating effects of source credibility on message evaluation, Hovland and Weiss (1951), for example, found that respondents' "evaluations were also affected by their personal opinions on the topic before the communication was ever presented" (p. 641). Studies associating media credibility with audience member's demographic variables instead of media-related ones date back to Westley and Severin's 1964 research (Jacobson, 1969).

Westley and Severin (1964) utilize more than 20 demographic, socioeconomic, and political variables to compare believers of three media. Some researchers have

followed them comparing the degree of credibility of different media and its relationship to audience member's social characteristics. Greenberg (1966) examines three demographic variables in his study contrasting newspaper and television credibility. Abel and Wirth (1977) and Reagan and Zenaty (1979) use five typical demographic variables--age, education, income, sex, and marital status--to compare what social strata prefer the newspaper to television when information from the two channels conflict. The underlying assumption of this group is that an individual's trust in mass media is a function of his or her demographic (and other) characteristics.

Like the last studies, one popular audience-centered approach is grouping individuals by the degree to which they trust a particular medium or the media institution and making comparisons among the groups. This presumes that some underlying traits of an individual influence both credibility evaluation and other variables and, thus, lead to correlations between them.

Jacobson (1969), for example, categorizes respondents into 4 groups by the medium they select as most believable when information from various media is inconsistent--radio believers, television believers, newspaper believers, and non-believers--and compares average scores of various credibility items among the groups. Gaziano and McGrath

(1986) sort respondents into those with high, middle and low credibility evaluations and analyze the relationship of those groups and other variables, "implying that the important variance in determining credibility is between persons" (Gunther, 1987, p. 22). As a typical example, Times Mirror (1986) divides respondents into six groups--the "reflexive," the "empathetic," and the "ambivalent" supporters and the "main street," the "embittered," and the "vociferous" critics --on the basis of their responses to questions about media performance, regulation of the press, and press freedom.

Another kind of audience-oriented approach analyzes the relationships between individual differences and media credibility. In his extensive discussion of the audience-oriented approach, Gunther (1987) even recommends the term "credulity" instead of "credibility" in order to emphasize that media credibility is a function of an audience member's attributes. According to him, credulity connotes an individual's personality, like "I am credulous" while credibility indicates attributes of media, like "that source is not credible." As "it refers to a lack of skepticism or disbelief, either as a trait in individuals, or as a response to a particular message" (Gunther, 1987, p. 27), credulity may be a better term to describe audience members' evaluation of media credibility in an audience-oriented approach.

Gunther (1987) further divides the credulity trait into two types: dispositional and situational. According to his definition, dispositional properties exist in an individual independent of other things and do not need to be explained in the context. Situational properties exist only in a context. For instance, when an individual is skeptical, that skepticism is dispositional. If the individual is skeptical only about media, that skepticism is situational. Though Gunther's dichotomy is interesting, it is not an easy task to determine how much one's skepticism on the media is based on his or her basic disposition and how much on attitude on the media. The extent to which a variable is situational is practically impossible to determine in general. (For example, I am skeptical about media, about ABC, about the coverage of international affairs, about the coverage of Latin America, etc.)

However, the dichotomy strongly implies that a key element of credibility is skepticism: whether it is dispositional or situational. Existing literature indicates several important factors which arouse skepticism in individual audience members such as personal experiences (Ismach, 1975; Cozzens and Contractor, 1987), perceived issue importance (Gunther and Lasorsa, 1986), and extremity of attitude (Gunther, 1987, 1988).

Gunther's (1987) study is a typical but interesting example of this approach. According to him, the relationship of issue involvement and trust in media is not linear but curvilinear (reversed V-shape). He found that those with extreme attitudes on an issue and those with little concern about the issue were likely to have relatively lower trust in media coverage of the issue than were those with moderate attitudes.

Emphasis on Bias in Media Credibility

There has been a serious debate over the question whether there is a crisis in the public's trust in media. The widespread concern about it reflects not only the significance of media credibility but also the deadlock brought about by conflicting research information. Surprising contradictions among research findings are clearly shown in the following reports from two major surveys on media credibility.

The report by the ASNE (American Society of Newspaper Editors) (1985) said:

> Three-fourths of all adults have some problem with the credibility of the media.... Results from the national survey indicate that one-fifth of all adults deeply distrust their news media. (p. 13)

The Times Mirror (1986) contended:

> There is no credibility crisis for the nation's news media. If credibility is defined as believability, then credibility is, in fact, one of the media's strongest suits. (p. 4)

Responses to those apparently conflicting reports range from blaming one party (Clark, 1986) to accusations of different interpretations of similar results (Gaziano, 1988). Careful reading of the research findings seems to confirm the argument that the findings are actually congruent but simply interpreted differently. Then, another question emerges; why were such different conclusions drawn from similar results?

The answer may come from a research report, too. Explaining the Los Angeles Times poll result, Shaw (1985, August 12) stated, "Clearly, the public view of the media is a blend of confidence and skepticism, faith and hostility" (p. A8). While audience members think the press is doing a good job, they suspect that the press abuses its constitutional right to freedom of speech (e.g., sensationalism, seeking its own interest). For example, they appreciate the watch dog role of the press in government coverage but they are afraid of the intrusion of privacy by the press.

Immerwahr and Doble's (1982) research on public attitudes toward freedom of the press shows what's behind the public's ambiguous attitudes about mass media. Surprised with the fact that "public thinking about freedom of the press appears to be dominated by a principle of fairness" (p. 177), Immerwahr and Doble see the major conceptual gap

between the journalists' view of press freedom and the audience's:

> Virtually all of the communications professionals we interviewed defined freedom of the press from the perspective of a speaker. ... [H]owever ... most Americans defined freedom of the press from a listener's perspective. According to this view, freedom of expression is maximized when the receivers of information get what they feel they need.... An even larger number (98 percent) said that freedom of expression includes 'the right of a citizen to hear both sides of an issue.' (pp. 185-186)

Respondents in Immerwahr and Doble's survey support the "right of the listener" so strongly that they even favor "fairness-enhancing laws" while they reject other proposals for censorship.

Compared to other items, high scores on bias in news were recognized as a conspicuous phenomenon in media credibility research even in earlier studies (e.g., Jacobson, 1969). In her comparison of major surveys on media credibility, Gaziano (1988) indicates that "one of the strongest findings in many studies is that perceived media bias is among the public's greatest concerns" (pp. 269-270).

Considering the great concern with bias and fairness of media coverage, the public does not appear to have much confidence in the media. Most respondents give answers unfavorable to media, when they are asked if media choose the public good in situations where their interests conflict with it (ASNE, 1985). Because audiences feel that they and the

media have different interests and opinions and act on their own will, the audience's confidence in the media has its limit. Feeling distance from mass media, respondents surveyed are likely to answer that average persons, who they may identify themselves with, do not receive fair coverage compared to the coverage of the wealthy and powerful (ASNE, 1985; Gannett Center, 1985).

One of the possible consequences of the perceived distance between audience members and the media is the application of intentional attributions to media coverage. According to attribution theory, people are inclined to attribute intention (an internal cue) to other's behaviors rather than blaming it on the situation (external cue) when they think the other is different from them (Heider, 1958). Hovland and Weiss (1953) found that the perception of intention is an important factor in credibility, especially in judgments of trustworthiness. They argued that expertise, capability to transmit valid information, is a nonmotivational factor, trustworthiness is a motivational factor, the source's intent to deliver objective and truthful information.

Walster, Aronson, and Abrahams (1966) found that perceived motive has significant effects on message credibility. Their experiment discovered that even a high credibility source, when it supports a position seemingly

favorable to its own interest, loses considerable persuasive power. The conflicting opinions about the press held by the public imply that, while the public is generally confident of the media institution watching closely other social institutions, because it may be beneficial to audience members as powerless citizens, it is doubtful of the media's intention to give priority to audience members' interests, rather than their own interests, when these interests of the two parties are in conflict.

One possible explanation for perceived bias is that actual bias in news reporting exists. This dissertation does not attempt to prove or disprove the validity of that explanation. Instead, it postulates that perceptions of bias are caused, at least in part, by personal bias by audiences. Studies (Vallone, Ross and Lepper, 1985; Gunther, 1991) have indicated that the stronger an individual's attitudes on an issue are the more he or she perceives bias in mass communication.

At the same time, surveys on media credibility that cluster respondents according to their level of criticism of media credibility disclose the fact that vigorous critics are likely to hold extreme positions on issues (e.g., Times Mirror, 1986). Taking those two facts together, this study will explore the relationship among involvement in political

position, perceived bias in news coverage, and media credibility.

Summary and Conclusions

The brief review of previous media credibility studies in this chapter leads to the following generalizations. First, the results of factor analyses reveal that the dimensions which seem to be distinct from one another are actually not distinguished much in audience's responses. This suggests that audience members comprehend media credibility in a broad sense.

Second, the concept of media credibility is generally studied as a result rather than a cause. A media-oriented approach assumes that media credibility is dependent upon media performance. An audience-oriented approach proposes that media credibility is a function of attributes of individual audience members.

Third, audience members have great concern about bias in the media. Perceptions of bias may be stimulated by the distance from journalists experienced by audience members.

Studies examining dimensions of credibility or comparing television and the newspaper explore static aspects of media credibility. They do not tell us how media credibility is formulated. A media-oriented approach investigates the process by which the performance of media organizations is related to credibility. Yet, it is problematic to assume a

direct relationship between media attributes and credibility, theoretically or practically.

An audience-oriented approach appears to have some theoretical merits for the study of media credibility. Its assumption is appropriate for the measurement of media credibility. Because the credibility of the media is generally measured by audience members' trust in media, the assumption that credibility is a function of audience members' attributes makes sense. Additionally, the approach is more likely than other approaches to explain the mechanism by which an individual is inclined to disbelieve media.

This dissertation attempts to explain media credibility as an outcome of individuals' political ideologies and partisanship. It is an audience-oriented approach because political attitude is obviously an attribute of individual audience members. The preceding section shows that bias is one of the most vulnerable factors in media credibility. This study will suggest that political positions of audience members affect perceived bias in news media and media credibility. The next chapter will discuss perceived bias and credibility in a more detailed way at the micro level and propose hypotheses deriving from the audience-oriented approach.

CHAPTER III

BIASED PERCEPTIONS AND MEDIA CREDIBILITY

The extent to which we trust news and news media is mostly, though not totally, dependent upon how much we believe the news is not distorted. The degree to which we believe the news is not distorted is, in turn, based on how much the news is consistent with realities described in other information sources. The following statement by Newhagen and Nass (1989) describes that assumption well.

> If credibility is defined from a receiver-oriented perspective, credibility is the degree to which an individual judges his or her perceptions to be a valid reflection of reality. Yet another dimension is added to the concept when information is mediated by matching technology ... as is the case with modern mass media's reporting of the news. Mass media news credibility, then, is the perception of news messages as a plausible reflection of the events they depict. (p. 278)

Without doubt, the pre-existing images of reality in our minds are what we have most access to to compare with those delivered by the news. In this sense, media credibility judgments are different among individual audience members.

Yet another dimension has to be accounted for; perceived media reality can not be assumed to be the same for all audience members. The mass communication research literature indicates that realities experienced by those who are deeply

involved in an issue or have extreme attitudes are influenced by their positions. That suggests that there might be two steps in evaluation of media credibility instead of one. Not only is media credibility evaluated by the gap between media "reality" and individual audience members' "reality" but also the perception of media reality is already affected by the individual's pre-existing reality before the evaluation of the gap ever happens.

This study proposes that political attitude is one of the major factors influencing individuals' perceptions of reality, including perceptions of bias in the news. The basic theoretical grounding is that the political attitude affects the processing of social information.

Media Credibility and the Polarization of Society

An anomaly exists in the studies of media credibility. Research indicates "confidence in institutions tends to follow the general economic and political health of the country more than judgments of any institution's specific performance" (Meyer, 1988, p. 574). Given that the media institution also functions in the social system, there should be many studies directly addressing the subject. Yet, despite the number and diversity of studies, few in the media credibility research field have directly addressed these

issues. Thus, for this subject, a wider literature review, including fields other than media credibility, may be needed.

This section will review studies that are not directly related to media credibility research but, nonetheless, deal with media credibility functioning in the social system at large. The review of those studies will cover media credibility in the situation of social polarization. Because a polarized society reflects the situation where most individuals are biased toward extremes on an issue, though not addressing the concept of credibility directly, this issue will provide some theoretical grounds for the arguments of this study.

Since the 1960s when a number of surveys on media credibility started, research has shown constant declines in media credibility. Declines in public confidence in mass media are seen as a sign of decline in support for freedom of the press and the principles of the First Amendment by some communication scholars and journalists (American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1985; Stein, 1985; Werner, 1985). This fear makes some journalist leaders place the improvement of credibility among their top priorities (Stein, 1985; Radolf, 1985). At the same time, high credibility is also seen as a sign of audience members' gullibility to the power of media (Gunther, 1987). The following statement shows the typical attitude about the dilemma.

> The problem seems to be one of finding a level of trust somewhere between the two understandable extremes--blind faith vs. no faith. But to set a benchmark measure as an appropriate or desirable amount of trust in media, however the measure is taken, is to take a value-oriented approach to the question. Whether more positive perceptions of media credibility are necessarily better, for people, for media, or for a democratic state, is not a question empirical research can directly answer. (Gunther, 1987, p. 14)

But research often shows that reduced credibility is not a sign of increased intelligence but of a struggle over authority and trustworthiness. For example, in many cases, the government and media are rivals in claiming authority to define reality (Alexander, 1981), because many governmental branches also function to analyze the social environment and the mass media are no substitute for them (Roshco, 1975). About the effects of the rival relationship, Robinson and Kohut (1988) contend that confidence in the government and the press decrease simultaneously in a situation where an issue is controversial (e.g. Iran-Contra affair). Lipset and Schneider (1983) indicate that confidence in the press increased when confidence in the presidency decreased. Alexander (1981) observed those two phenomena during the Watergate scandal. During the scandal, when the truth was still undiscovered and controversial, confidence in the government and the press decreased, but, as soon as Nixon began to look responsible, confidence in the press rose and that in the government went down further.

Several other studies indicate that there is a non-linear relationship between media performance and media credibility. Often, the presence of social conflicts has been blamed as the major reason for the decline in credibility. Schudson (1978), for example, states about the decline in the public's trust in media objectivity that "a growing 'adversary culture' in the universities, in journalism, in the government itself, and in the population at large ... produced a radical questioning of objectivity" (p. 10).

Alexander (1988) theorizes that the process of social conflict follows states of "specification," "refraction," and "columnization." In his theory, specification is a situation where social groups share beliefs and values, and conflicts are solved based on a group's commitment to shared beliefs. Columnization means the state where each social group has its own beliefs and values (e.g., civil war) which "serve to merely reinforce the different faiths and interests of already polarized groups" during conflict (p. 159). Refraction refers to the middle of those two situations. According to Alexander, each group in a columnization type situation sees different truths from the "same" reality because the reference systems (beliefs) in their minds are different.

Though not directly mentioned in Alexander's work, Park's (1972) work anticipates it. He differentiates the crowd and the public by the degree to which "a separation exists between the subjective and the objective standpoints from which objects in the world can be viewed" (p. 58). According to him, individuals in the public separate the objective (facts or the theoretical) from the subjective (values or the practical) standpoints, but, what is subjective to one group is sometimes the convincing objective fact for those in another group. Thus, specification may be a state where interest groups in the public discuss subjective standpoints (divergent interests) based on common objective standpoints (similar recognition of reality). Columnization may mean that more than one group seeks no compromise because each of them thinks its perceived reality is the only true fact.

Assuming that the media institution is a group constituting the public in Park's terms, it is relatively easy for it to find an objective viewpoint. If the media are involved in the situation of a highly polarized conflict (columnization), it is hard to report "objective news" because there is no consensus of reality. They would be forced to take one party's perspective in order to "report" rather than just to quote.

Park (1955) says "if ... different individuals draw different and even contradictory conclusions from the same story, well, that is what news is....The fact that a news story provoked violent approval and violent disapproval from different members of the same public at the same time is at least evidence that the events were reported objectively" (p. 108). His statement may be valid. But the question here is not whether news reporting is objective or not in a polarized situation, discussed before. The point here is that, in conflict situations, disapproval from audience members is likely to increase and, as a result, media credibility would be reduced.

According to McCormack (1981), being objective in a harsh social conflict means not being meaningful in communication--that is, losing credibility and persuasive power. Media can report what reporters think is objective reality. But the reality reported is not accepted as anything close to reality by either side engaging in severe conflict. McCormack argues:

> if they [the media] define themselves as scribes reporting, if they [the media] regard themselves as neutral brokers giving the public a balanced, fair presentation of all sides of the controversy.... they are performing with a high degree of professional skill, but they are not communicating except in the most superficial mechanistic sense. (p. 184).

When American society requires the media to provide "fair presentation of all sides of a controversy" (that is, a

listener's version of the right of free speech), it is almost impossible to be "meaningful" to those holding extremist positions in a situation where people disagree about an issue or political position. "Objective" news is not a valid representation of reality to those who hold attitudes strongly skewed toward one or another polarized position. For example, during the initial period of the Watergate scandal, according to Alexander (1989), news presentations of the scandal were highly distrusted by audience members. The press gained its credibility after the presidential election when the political battle for the presidency was over.

From those studies, we can see that, in a social conflict or polarized situation, it is difficult for the media to look objective to extremist groups. For a polarized issue, there is conflicting information against each side, and each extremist group accepts information consistent with its view as valid fact. Therefore, whether news about a controversial issue is neutral or skewed to one party, media credibility, defined as the sum of individual audience member's trust in media, decreases. If the phenomenon occurs at the level of society, a matching phenomenon must exist at the level of an individual. In the following sections, relevant theories and supporting empirical findings about the decline of media credibility in a polarized situation are discussed at the individual level.

Personal Relevance and Mediated Reality

In their comment about recent trends in social cognition research at the Ontario Symposium on Personality and Social Psychology, Higgins, Kuiper, and Olson (1981) said that the personal aspect became more important in recent studies. They argued that individual difference such as affect, personal experience, and personal relevance "are deeply involved in *social information* processing" (p. 396 [italics in original]). The term "social information" here refers to information about the social environment that is received by an individual. Social information processing can not be the same for any two persons because social information almost always comes from more than one source and its meanings vary according to the context in which it is transmitted (Ostrom, Pryor and Simpson, 1981). Pointing at the complexity, Higgins et al. (1981) emphasize that "the degree of personal relevance of social stimuli may have an important bearing on the manner in which social information is interpreted, organized, and stored in memory" (p. 413).

Newhagen and Nass (1989) say news credibility is dependent upon the degree to which perceived audience realities are consistent with the ones that the media describe. Although that conceptualization of news credibility is audience-oriented, it still presumes that the reality depicted by mass media is independent from the

audience. Higgins et al.'s (1981) statement argues that presumption is inaccurate; not only does there exist a gap between the reality perceived by audience members and the one provided by the media but that gap affects the perceived media reality. Thus, media realities are different for different audience members.

The field of cultural studies has also been also interested in the discrepancy between mass communication messages and audience's interpretations. Although cultural studies has traditionally focused on the effects of class structure (e.g., Hall, 1973), recent cultural studies have focused more on the diversity of the audience (Curran, 1990). In his well known study, The Nationwide Audience, Morley (1980), for example, indicates that "basic socio-demographic factors" and "involvement in various forms of ... identification" (p. 26), as well as "class structure," have strong effects on audience members' interpretations of a television news program. For example, a union factory worker and an employee of a bank who have similar class backgrounds utilize radically distinct points of view to interpret a news program (like "oppositional" and "dominant" decoding respectively). According to Morley, an audience member's acceptance of the reality presented is dependent not upon the class he or she belongs to but the reference group such as the family or colleagues at work. As Cohen (1991) states,

"the concept of relevancy is valuable to competing research traditions that address the balance of power between texts and audiences in socially situated interpretations of mass media" (p. 443). The concept of relevancy in this context means the arousal of personal resources for the interpretation of mass communication messages. To the extent that personal resources are determined by an individual's experiences, knowledge and attitudes, the processing of messages is limited and affected by individual differences.

Personal Bias and Biased Perception of Messages

The concept of personal relevancy means that the handling of messages is influenced by personal factors. Psychological studies have recognized that this influence works to distort messages in favor of existing personal views or attitudes (e.g., Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Ross, Lepper, & Hubbard, 1975). In mass communication research, the phenomenon has been known since Lippmann's (1922) discussion of stereotype. The fact that an individual's attitude is usually stable, little changed by mass communication, has been long observed (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1948; Klapper, 1960).

Lord, Ross, and Lepper (1979) suggest that not only does an individual's exposure to messages opposite to his or her attitude on a controversial issue seldom cause attitudinal

changes but also that exposure increases the polarity of attitude. They argue that "judgments about the validity, reliability, relevance, and sometimes even the meaning of proffered evidence are biased by the apparent consistency of that evidence with the perceiver's theories and expectations" (p. 2099).

In their experiment, Lord et al. classified subjects into proponents and opponents of the death penalty and exposed them to two messages about the issue; one seemingly supporting and one seemingly opposing the deterrent efficacy of capital punishment. Subjects reading a message confirming their beliefs found supporting evidence in it. Those reading a message disconfirming their beliefs thought that arguments and evidence in the message were insufficient and faulty, and even "discovered" that some evidence was actually favorable to their side. The extremity of their attitudes on the issue increased in both cases. The result stood for both the proponents and opponents of the death penalty. Looking at that apparently biased perception of messages, Lord et al. suggest that there are two steps for subjects to reinforce their beliefs:

> Willingness to interpret new evidence in the light of past knowledge and experience is essential for any organism to make sense of ... its environment. ... their sin lay in their readiness to use evidence already processed in a biased manner to bolster the very theory of belief that initially 'justified' the processing bias. (p. 2107)

If this is true, the process suggested in that study can be applied to the audience's evaluation of media credibility. The already biased position of an audience member causes biased perception of news delivered by media. This perceived bias in turn leads to distrust of the news so that the reality presented in the news can be rejected as false when that news reality is not consistent with the reality in his or her mind.

Biased Perceptions of News and Perceptions of Bias in Media

In further development of Lord, Ross and Lepper's (1979) hypothesis, Vallone, Ross and Lepper (1985) investigated a situation where messages come from mass communication rather than individuals. They classified subjects into pro-Israel, pro-Arab, and neutral groups and exposed them to a television news story on the "Beirut Massacre." What they found was that subjects in the pro-Israel and pro-Arab groups were more likely to experience discrepancies between media truths and their truths than those of the neutral group. Because each of the extreme groups thought the media truths were skewed in favor of the other side (hostile media effects), it is clear that their perceptions were biased by their initial position.

The "discrepancy between the mediated account [message] and the unmediated truth" perceived by both extreme groups led them to perceive bias in the media source (Vallone, Ross,

& Lepper, 1985, p. 584). The extremist groups thought that journalists behind the coverage were personally biased against their sides. For example, pro-Israel subjects believed that "the 'personal views' of the editorial staffs of the news programs were opposite to their own" and "in the light of the potential information available on both sides of the issue, the editors of the news programs had succeeded in making a stronger negative case against Israel than a positive case for Israel" (p. 581). This perception of the intentional bias of the news coverage made Vallone et al. conclude that each of the pro-Israel and pro-Arab groups got a different picture from the same material.

Vallone et al. suggest that the perception of bias in media might be the result of extremist subjects' fear that the media coverage makes "neutral viewers become more negative" to their sides. Recognizing that the fact is consistent with the "third person effect" (Davison, 1983), some studies combine investigation of the "hostile media effect" and the "third person effect" (e.g., Perloff, 1989; Gunther, 1991). For example, Perloff (1989), in his experiment, found that subjects who are highly involved in an issue were likely to perceive that the news coverage was influenced by journalists' bias against them and that the news coverage inclines a neutral audience to be in favor of the opposite side.

Related to the intentions of journalists, media credibility seems to work behind the third person effect in those studies. Perloff (1989), explaining perceptions of bias in the news coverage by partisans, says "in their view, while third persons naively regard the news as information that is fair and objective, they alone are sufficiently sophisticated to recognize that the news is actually akin to propaganda" (p. 242). Gunther (1991) indicates that a similar tendency is observed even for cases that do not deal with a polarized issue. Subjects in his experiment attributed bad intention to a low credibility source (e.g., National Inquirer) but good intention to a high credibility source (e.g., New York Times) for the same behavior (defamatory coverage) while they thought other people (third persons) would not notice the differences in intention.

Unfortunately, those studies, though they imply the relationship of personal bias with media credibility, fall short of asking the question directly. For example, Perloff (1989) asks if "perceptions of hostile media bias underlie extreme distrust of the media" (p, 258), but leaves the task of answering the question to a future study.

Social Judgment Theory

Munch (1986) suggests that human action is guided by expectations that correspond roughly to information processing. He divides expectations into two categories, the

factual and the normative. Normative expectations are distinct from factual ones in that they are linked with social values with which an individual is deeply involved. In the factual domain, an individual changes his or her expectation when it is not satisfied. In the normative domain, an individual wouldn't give up his or her expectation even if received information conflicts with it. The extent to which an individual is willing to change his or her expectation depends on how much he or she is involved in the relevant social values.

In Social Judgment: Assimilation and Contrast Effects in Communication and Attitude Change, Sherif and Hovland (1961) proposed the social judgment theory. Their theory, coming from experimental psychology, was then much closer to empirical extrapolation than to a theory. Later, Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall (1965) elaborated it theoretically. Many explicit theoretical statements of social judgment theory owe a debt to the work of Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall although there is not much fundamental difference between the initial presentation of the theory and the elaborated one (Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969).

The theoretical argument of social judgment theory is simple. According to the theory, the judgment of intensity of stimuli coming from outside is affected by the existence of a benchmark which can be used to compare the stimuli. If

they are close, they are perceived to be closer than they actually are; if they are distant, they look more distant than they really are. Sherif and his colleague think this phenomenon also exists for communication messages as stimuli. In communication situations, a benchmark is one's own attitude on an issue.

Sherif et al. (1965) argue that there are three theoretical regions along an attitude dimension of an individual -- the latitude of acceptance, the latitude of rejection, and the latitude of non-commitment. Any messages from outside fall into one of those latitudes. Acceptable messages that are close to one's own opinion are included in the latitude of acceptance. Intolerable or unacceptable messages go into the latitude of rejection. Messages that are neither acceptable nor intolerable fall into the latitude of non-commitment.

When people have few opinions on an issue, their judgment of position along an attitude dimension of messages about an issue is relatively objective so the boundaries of latitude are reasonable. But when people have a strong opinion about an issue, the latitude of acceptance becomes narrow while the latitude of rejection gets wide. Thus, when one's attitude about an issue is strong and functions as an anchor, only a small number of messages that are very close to one's own attitude are included in the latitude of

acceptance while a large portion of messages fall into the latitude of rejection.

The process which Sherif et al. (1985) call assimilation/contrast effects makes that already predisposed judgment further biased. If one's attitude about an issue is extreme compared with most messages, the extremity of the anchor exaggerates differences between the anchor and other messages toward each direction. An assimilation effect results in messages that fall into the latitude of acceptance looking closer to the position of one's anchor than they actually are; a contrast effect results in messages in the latitude of rejection looking more different from the anchor than they really are.

For example, a group that supports abortion rights very strongly would have a strong anchor for the abortion issue. Only a small number of messages that are extremely pro-choice are acceptable to them (narrow latitude of acceptance) and these messages appear closer to their position than others would judge them to be. Most messages covering the abortion issue are intolerable to these pro-choicers (wide latitude of rejection). Moreover, they are likely to estimate messages in the latitude of rejection to be much closer to the position of the pro-life group than they actually are or than those with middle-of-the-road opinions would judge them to be. As a result, messages that are actually neutral or

middle-of-the-road are judged to be located near the anti-choice end of the issue.

Involvement and Biased Perception in Social Judgment Theory

In social judgment theory, the function of an anchor is significant. The existence and location of an anchor on an attitude dimension is central in predicting the judgments of messages. Sherif and Hovland (1961) think that the concept of "involvement" explains the function of an anchor.

Involvement has been conceptualized in various words such as salience (Mulder, 1979), attention or personal interest (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984; Petty, Cacioppo, & Schuman, 1983). Sherif and Hovland conceive of involvement in social judgment theory as the intensity with which an attitude is held. In the manipulation of involvement, Sherif and his colleagues assume that intensity of attitude can be measured by extremity of attitude "because of the well-known correlation between extremity and involvement" (Kiesler, Collins, & Miller, 1969, p. 290) though they are conceptually different. Therefore, high involvement means one has an extreme attitude on an issue; low involvement means one is neutral on an issue. Extremity of attitude here refers to the polarity of the attitude. In other words, high involvement of an individual means his or her attitude on an issue is located at one of the extreme ends among various

attitudes on the issue; low involvement of an individual means he or she has a middle-of-the-road position on the issue.

It is important to note that "involvement" in social judgment theory is the same as "ego-involvement." The acceptance or rejection of positions or arguments in messages is a commitment to the social value expressed in one's own attitude. One's ego is at stake in the process because an individual strongly identifies with the social value associated with his or her attitude (Sherif and Cantril, 1947). Messages from mass communication are not always ego-involving. Audience members often simply use information from mass communication for utilitarian purposes. Likewise, many attitudes are instrumental, used as practical guides rather than as expressions of one's ego (Katz, 1960). Therefore, in many cases, news about an issue is accepted as just information and audience members adjust relevant attitudes on the issue. Ego-involvement is activated when an individual's commitment to a social value is aroused and distorts the perception of media messages, including news. In such instances, ego-involvement is a critical factor in biased perceptions of the news.

Sherif, Sherif, and Nebergall (1965) argue that ego-involvement is rooted in identification with a social group. In other words, an attitude that causes a social judgment is

usually related to a social value held and supported by a social group. This is why Sherif and his colleagues do not distinguish extremity of attitude and intensity of involvement and why they operationalize involvement by categorizing participants according to their association with extreme groups.

Sherif et al.'s conceptualization of involvement corresponds to the conceptualization found in other bias perception studies that operationalize involvement as identification with a social group (e.g., Vallone, Ross, and Lepper, 1985; Perloff, 1989). Perloff (1989) says "ego-involved attitudes are ... linked to the person's central values and constructs and ordinarily consist of strongly held commitments to family, politics, or religion" (p. 241).

In this context, this study hypothesizes that political ideology and partisanship are related to biased perception of news media. Political ideology and partisanship are major determinants in various social issues and generally represent a set of social values and the identification with political groups and parties that support those values. An individual who is deeply involved in a political position is more likely to have skewed views through which he or she will encounter incoming messages.

Political Involvement and Media Credibility

Social judgment theory does not deal with credibility directly. The main concern of the theory is attitude change. The theory does, though, involve the judgment of messages and, therefore, necessarily involves judgments of credibility. It is natural that the judgment of messages affects the evaluation of sources. Long ago, Lippmann (1922) said that reality is "the pictures in our heads." Distorted images of reality, such as prejudices or stereotypes, are practical realities as long as people believe they are real. Likewise, the judged images of messages are real to an individual as long as he or she believes they are true.

In the high involvement situation, social judgment theory predicts a large latitude of rejection and strong assimilation/contrast effects. A neutral message, which falls into the latitude of non-commitment in the low involvement situation, is assimilated into the latitude of rejection in the high involvement situation. In the latter case, due to the contrast effect, the neutral message is evaluated as being much closer to the opposite extreme than actually it is. From that process, we can infer that an individual with strong political partisanship evaluates seemingly neutral news as unfair and close to the opinions of the opposite party.

It is a long tradition that mass media present their reports as "objective." An individual who rejects news from the mass media may experience psychological tension because of his or her rejection of news items that are socially assumed to be impartial. Moreover, those messages from media often are perceived as majority opinion and an individual may feel social pressure to follow majority opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1981). It is unthinkable for a highly involved individual to accept news as factual because, for him or her, the reality described by the news source is similar to the reality that the opposite party may depict, because of the contrast effect.

According to dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957; Brehm and Cohen, 1962; Aronson, 1968), a psychological tension caused by inconsistency motivates an individual to reduce the tension by changing conflicting elements (information). Aronson, Turner, and Carlsmith (1963) find that derogation of a communicator is an alternative to attitude change as a method for dissonance reduction when an individual does not agree with the opinions of the communicator. For a highly involved partisan, it is easier to accuse mass media of biased reporting than to accept disagreeable news as fact. It is easy to judge the source of news to be unfair when the news is already evaluated to be near the other extreme position (because of the contrast effect) and thus to reduce

psychological tension because it is quite natural to reject messages from unfair sources.

Hypotheses

If judgments of incoming messages are biased by pre-existing attitudes, then judgments of news messages should be affected by the pre-existing attitudes of audience members when an issue that the news addresses is related to attitudes strongly held by those audience members. Those judgments, in turn, are likely to amplify the perceived differences between audience members and media's positions and push audience members' perceptions of the views in the news closer to the opposite end on the issue. Thus, audience members perceive bias in the news. As a result, as if to justify the rejection of the view that the news is a balanced portrayal of reality, individuals may conclude that the news source is not credible.

Political ideology is superordinate to other attitudes in that it influences opinions on many social issues. Being conservative or liberal dictates, not necessarily but usually, which side individuals take on issues like abortion, welfare, health insurance, or government spending. People who hold an extreme political ideology are likely to perceive bias in the news on more issues and more often than those who are less involved. Therefore, those highly involved in

political ideology are more likely than others to distrust media.

Partisanship is closely related to political ideology and thus a major determinant of position on many social issues. Besides, partisanship has a direct relevance to politics and the political parties that are frequently covered by the news media. Partisanship is practical as well in that people participate in the Republican and Democratic parties and vote for candidates from the parties.

On these bases, the following relationships among political position, perceived bias in news media, and media credibility are hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1: Audience members' political position will influence their perceived bias in the media's political coverage. Those whose political positions are extreme will be more likely to perceive media coverage as being biased than those who hold middle-of-the-road position. The direction of the perceived bias will be opposite to the political position of the audience member perceiving the bias. Because there are two dimensions of political position, political ideology and partisanship, two working hypotheses will be tested.

1a) Involvement in political ideology is defined in this study as commitment to either one of two ideologies, conservative or liberal. Thus, people who think they are conservative or liberal will be more likely to perceive media's bias against them than those who think they are middle-of-the-road or moderate.

1b) Political partisanship here is defined as party affiliation. People who affiliate themselves with the Republican or Democratic party will be more likely to perceive the media as being biased than those who do not and the perceived bias will be against their party.

Hypothesis 2: Audience members' perceived bias of the media's political position will lower media credibility. Like Hypothesis 1, two working hypotheses will be tested.

2a) People who perceive the media as being biased ideologically will be more likely to distrust the media than those who do not.

2b) People who perceive that the media are favorable to one party will be more likely to distrust the media than those who do not.

Hypothesis 3: From Hypotheses 1 and 2, a third hypothesis can be deduced: audience members'

political involvement will negatively influence perceived media credibility. Those who hold an extreme political position will be more likely to distrust media than those who hold a middle-of-the-road position.

3a) People who identify themselves as conservative or liberal will be more likely to distrust media than those who are middle-of-the-road or moderate.

3b) People who associate themselves with the Republican or Democratic party will be more likely to distrust media than those who do not.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

This dissertation uses a data tape deposited at the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut. The tape contains the results of a survey which was sponsored by the ASNE (American Society of Newspaper Editors) and conducted by MORI Research, Inc. The survey devoted most of its questionnaire to questions related to the credibility of news and news media.

This chapter will briefly explain some important advantages of secondary analysis, which is utilized in this research. Then it will describe the sampling and interviewing method of the ASNE survey and explain the measurement of variables.

Secondary Data Analysis

Hymen (1972) defines the secondary analysis of survey data as "the extraction of knowledge on topics other than those which were the focus of the original surveys" (p. 1). Hakim (1982) also classifies secondary analysis as "any further analysis of an existing dataset which presents interpretations, conclusions or knowledge additional to, or

different from, those presented in the first report on the inquiry as a whole and its main result" (p. 1).

Dale, Arber, and Procter (1988) are unsatisfied with Hymen's and Hakim's limited definitions which make secondary analysis look like a "secondary" method which is "unlikely [to reveal] new and exciting findings" (p.3). They focus on "re-use" of a dataset, instead of "re-analysis," and describe it simply as "an empirical exercise carried out on data that have already been gathered or compiled in some way" (p. 3). Dale et al.'s definition reflects the recent change in the image of secondary analysis. Since the Roper Public Opinion Research Center was established as a general archive for survey data in 1957, secondary analysis has become one of the major methods in social science (Hyman, 1972).

Secondary analysis is not new at all. Using existing data has been major method of analysis for social scientists since the mid-twentieth century (e.g., Durkheim's (1951) Suicide). The rise of governmental census surveys gave new momentum to secondary analyses (Dale et al, 1988). Old secondary analyses must be done with "aggregate datasets" which consist of the results of processed data, such as tables or statistics, often provided in the form of publication. New secondary analyses have not only "aggregate datasets" but also a huge number of "microdatasets,"

containing information on individual cases, to which researchers can apply sophisticated statistics.

The development of computer technology has further helped secondary analysis become popular among social scientists by making it easy not only to do statistical analyses but also to transport a dataset from one place to another in a machine-readable form (Dale et al, 1988). As an example of the trend, the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), established in 1962 at the University of Michigan, now stores more than 17,000 files of ready-to-use survey datasets, the largest archive in the world, from almost all countries (Kiecolt & Nathan, 1985).

The rationale for secondary analyses depends not only on archives of datasets but also the multi-purpose surveys which have become increasingly popular in recent years (Dale et al., 1988). Both the archives and the multi-purpose survey are helpful for media credibility studies. Many surveys on media credibility are done by public organizations (including television stations and newspaper companies) which often make survey results available for public use. Although the original surveys generally gather data on a large number of variables, many of the initial analyses include only a limited number of the variables and use simple descriptive statistics without much theoretical consideration. Therefore, there are many variables untouched and left for

further analysis. Such situations make media credibility studies using secondary analysis especially worthwhile.

Theoretical Rationale for Secondary Analysis

Besides the methodological advantages, secondary analysis brings two theoretically important advantages. First, secondary analysis, as compared with purely theoretical or empirical work based on new data, can yield benefits for the subject. Secondary analysis allows for greater interaction between theory and empirical data because the transition from theory development to theory testing is more immediate. It may prompt great emphasis on the inductive model of research instead of deductive theory constructed in isolation from any knowledge of the real world (Hakim, 1982, p. 170).

The other advantage is its resistance to the 'entity problem' (Dunn, 1974), i.e., to the inflexibility of a concept in research. Small differences in operationalization of variables often make comparisons among surveys difficult and prevents theoretical development. The dispute over whether there is a crisis in media credibility may be a good example. Hakim (1982) states that secondary analyses may be a solution to the entity problem:

> The entity problem pervades all social research; if a conceptual framework becomes too ingrained, we lose the ability to perceive changing social

> realities and to reconceptualise observed phenomena. In one sense, data only become out of data [sic] when our conceptualisation of an issue or topic has changed.... The secondary analyst often confronts the problem of entity concepts embedded in the way data were collected and coded that do not meet precisely his conceptual framework; part of his contribution will be to develop broader entity concepts that allow some variation in the operational definition of his concepts in relation to given datasets. (Hakim, 1982, p. 22)

Description of Data

The ASNE survey had two phases. The initial phase was done by telephone and the second by mailed questionnaires. The sample for the telephone survey was selected by random digit dialing, so unlisted numbers were included. A telephone number was called up to four times to contact an eligible person who was selected within households by a random method with a quota for sex. A typical interview took about twenty minutes. 1,600 individuals, or fifty-eight percent of eligible persons who were contacted, completed interviews during the period from December 7, 1984 to January 19, 1985.

Persons contacted in the initial telephone interview were asked to give their name and address in order to receive a 12-page questionnaire. Those who agreed were mailed a cover letter and an one-dollar incentive as well as the questionnaire. After about a week, respondents were called and asked to read back numbers corresponding to their answers on the second questionnaire.

1,002 people, or sixty three percent of those who had completed the first phase, successfully finished the second contact between December 14 and January 30. The sample of the second phase slightly overrepresented people aged 25 to 44, those with high education, those with high income, and women, while slightly underrepresenting those aged 18 to 24 and 65 or older, those with low education and income, blacks, and men, compared to national figures of 1985 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987).

Variables that represent underlying concepts were included in either the questionnaire used in Phase One or Two. Thus, the sample of this study is respondents who completed both the first and the second contact. Because the main concern of the study is to investigate the relationship among variables, rather than to make point estimates for the general population, this study does not use weighting in order to compensate for the demographic differences between the sample and the population. The overall size of the sample is 1002, although a number of the cases used in each statistical analysis may vary because of missing values.

Besides the advantage that it provides variables that can be used to build indices for relevant concepts, the ASNE data set has two more advantages for this study. First, the survey period is excellent. In a survey that was done just three days before the 1980 presidential election, Vallone,

Lepper, and Ross (1981) found that partisans were more likely to feel bias in media coverage but, in a series of post-election pilot studies, they did not find enough evidence that partisans perceived hostile bias in newspaper and magazine articles. They concluded that "the campaign and election were dead issues for most of our subjects" when the post-election studies were done (Vallone, Ross, & Lepper, 1985). The fact that the ASNE survey was done during the period just after the 1984 presidential election is a great advantage for this dissertation.

The other advantage of this data set for the present study is the large size of the ASNE survey sample. Answers from people have a tendency to converge on a few categories around a median when they are asked about news coverage even during an election period (e.g., Vallone, Lepper, & Ross, 1981; Lipton, 1988). This lack of variance often leads to misinterpretations of survey results. The usual consequence is Type II Error in that the false null hypothesis is erroneously retained. In other words, research based on a small number of cases is more likely to conclude that there is no significant relationship between political position and media credibility, even if there is a relationship in the American population. A large number of cases increases the power of statistics and, therefore, reduces the risk of Type II error.

Measurement

The questionnaire used in the initial telephone interview consisted of eighty seven questions. The questionnaire sent by mail in Phrase Two contained 225 questions. Appendices display the original questions used in this study as well as their distributions. Appendix A shows those that were included in Phase One of the survey. Appendix B shows those in Phase Two. For convenience, the question(s) for each variable are explained here only briefly. To examine the questions in detail, refer to Appendix A and B.

Independent and Intervening Variables

Two types of variables are explained here: political position and perceived bias in media. All questions of political position were asked in the last part of Phase One. Questions of perceived bias in news media (newspaper and television) were included in the Phase Two survey.

Political Position

Political involvement is measured by commitment to political groups. Conceptually, involvement is not directional. For example, a conservative can be involved in conservative ideology to the same degree as a liberal is in liberal ideology. The intensity of involvement in the two cases can be exactly the same.

But, the bias is directional. For conservatives, bias toward a conservative position has meanings different from that for liberals. Besides, the ASNE questionnaire asked about perceived bias in coverage of political parties for each of Republicans and Democrats as if they were two different things.

Thus, whenever bias is included in the analysis, direction of involvement in political position is taken account of. For example, in testing the relationship between political ideology and perceived bias in the media's political ideology, not only should conservatives be more likely to perceive bias than moderates are but also the biases perceived should be more likely to be against them and toward liberals. For this purpose, the study measures political position rather than just involvement in political position which does not distinguish conservatives and liberals or Republicans and Democrats as the same high involvement category.

Political ideology: The interviewer asked: "Do you think of yourself as a liberal, a moderate, or a conservative, or don't you think of yourself in those terms" Respondents who answered they did not think of themselves in those ideological terms were scored as having missing values on that variable. The presumption is that people who do not use these categories for themselves are unlikely to use them coherently in judging the media's political

ideology. Thus, the categories of political ideology studied here are conservatives, moderates, and liberals.

Partisanship: Respondents were asked: "Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what would you say?" The original recorded categories were "other" and "no political preference" as well as "Republican," "Democrat," and "Independent." The "other" category is scored as a missing value in the study because only three respondents selected it. The "no political preference" response is also treated as a missing value. This is because low involvement in the study is defined as a middle-of-the-road position and Independents are considered to belong to that category. Thus, the categories of partisanship included in the study are Republican, Independents, and Democrats.

Perceived Bias in Media

Before explaining the variables, it is appropriate to explain the difference in questioning about newspapers and television. Respondents were asked about the daily newspaper they were the most familiar with, while, when asked about television, they were asked about "television news."

Perceived bias in newspaper's political ideology: The question for this variable was: "In general, do you think the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with is more conservative politically than you are, more liberal, about the same as you are--or is it hard to tell?" The question does not measure a

perception of the newspaper's "absolute" political ideology but its ideological position relative to the respondent's position. Those who answered "hard to tell" were excluded from the analyses because they did not know, or would not say, what the medium's ideological position was. Thus, categories included in the study are "more conservative," "about the same," and "more liberal.".

Perceived bias in television's political ideology: The question for this variable was: "In general, do you think television news is more conservative politically than you are, more liberal, about the same as you are--or is it hard to tell." The variable is not about "absolute" position of newspaper's political ideology but relative ideological position compared to respondent's position. "Hard to tell" responses were treated as missing values. Thus, categories included in the study are "more conservative," "about the same," and "more liberal."

Perceived bias in coverage of Republicans by newspaper: This variable uses an item which belongs to a general question asking whether newspaper coverage is favorable for each of twenty one people or organizations (See Appendix B for details of items). The original question was:

> Now here are some different kinds of people. For each, please give your opinion of how they are covered by the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with. Is the coverage too favorable, just about right, or not favorable enough?
>
> | too favorable | just about | not favorable |
> |---|---|---|

		right	enough
Republicans	1	2	3

Categories utilized in the study are "too favorable," "just about right" and "not favorable enough." "Don't Know" was recorded as a missing value in the initial ASNE dataset.

Perceived bias in coverage of Democrats by newspaper: This variable is the same as the above except that it asked about the coverage of Democrats.

Perceived bias in coverage of Republicans by television: This variable is the same as the above except that it asked about the coverage of Republicans by television news instead of by the daily newspaper a respondent was most familiar with.

Perceived bias in coverage of Democrats by television: This variable is the same as the above except that it asked about the coverage of Democrats.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables in this study are indices of media credibility. The data set includes sixteen items each for newspapers and television. All sixteen, I assumed, are related to media credibility. Because factor analyses were used to build credibility indices from those sixteen items, the indices for newspaper and television credibility are explained in Chapter V which deals with the results of the data analyses.

The following sixteen items were used for respondents to assess the daily newspaper and television news they were most familiar with:

> Here are some pairs of words and phrases with opposite meanings. Please circle the number in between each pair that best represents how you feel about the daily newspaper you have in mind [or television news]. For example, the first set of words is "fair" and "unfair." If you think the newspaper is extremely fair, you would circle "1." If you think the newspaper is extremely unfair, you would circle "5." Or, you can circle any number in between.

Fair	1	2	3	4	5	Unfair
Unbiased	1	2	3	4	5	Biased
Tells the whole story	1	2	3	4	5	Doesn't tell the whole story
Accurate	1	2	3	4	5	Inaccurate
Respects people's privacy	1	2	3	4	5	Invades people's privacy
Doesn't care what the reader thinks	1	2	3	4	5	Cares what the reader thinks
Watches out after your interests	1	2	3	4	5	Doesn't watch out after your interests
Concerned about the community's well-being	1	2	3	4	5	Not concerned about the community's well-being
Separates facts from opinions	1	2	3	4	5	Mixes together facts and opinions
Can be trusted	1	2	3	4	5	Can't be trusted
Sensationalizes	1	2	3	4	5	Doesn't sensationalize
Immoral	1	2	3	4	5	Moral
Patriotic	1	2	3	4	5	Unpatriotic

Concerned mainly about the public interest	1	2	3	4	5	Concerned mainly about making profits
Factual	1	2	3	4	5	Opinionated
Reporters are well trained	1	2	3	4	5	Reporters are poorly trained

Supplementary Variable

This variable is used to learn how much respondents trust media personnel.

Confidence in institution (10 items). Respondents were asked to express their confidence in the people running each of ten organizations. Three of the organizations were "the press," "television," and "newspaper in general." Categories are "great deal," "only some," and "hardly any." (See Table 1 and Appendix A for details of those institutions.)

CHAPTER V

RESULTS

Is there a Crisis in Media Credibility?

Before analyzing media credibility, it is appropriate to question if there is a crisis in media credibility. To answer this question, media credibility can be discussed in either absolute or relative terms. In other words, the news media can be credible to a certain degree or be more or less credible than other social institutions.

In order to answer the question in absolute terms, it is relevant to see how credible the news media are in people's minds. The ASNE survey asked respondents how much confidence they had in the people running three media organizations, "newspapers in general," "television," and "the press." The response categories are "a great deal," "only some," and "hardly any." Twenty five percent of respondents had a "great deal" of confidence in the people running newspapers in general while 16.1% had "hardly any" confidence. For television, the tendency is reversed. Thirty percent had "hardly any" confidence in the people running television and only 16.5% had a "great deal" of confidence. When asked about the press, 24.9% of the respondents had "hardly any" confidence in the press while only 20.4% of them had a "great

deal" of confidence. Because there were more negative responses than positive ones for television and the press, even though newspapers had more positive than negative responses, we cannot say the media have much credibility.

Before making relative comparisons of the media, it is appropriate to examine whether respondents discriminated the media as a group from other social institutions. If they did, a comparison of the media with other institutions is justified. If they did not, the comparison is not relevant because the media cannot be judged as a whole. Since the question about respondents' confidence in people running an institution was also asked for other social institutions, a comparison is possible.

As seen in Table 1, three factors appear in the factor analysis of confidence in ten social institutions. The first factor is related to the three media institutions. The second represents the three branches of the government. The third marks nonprofit social institutions. Banking institutions do not load on any of the three factors.

The factor analysis provides evidence that respondents distinguished media institutions as a group from other social institutions. On the basis of this result, a relative comparison of respondents' confidence in media institutions as a group can be discussed.

For this comparison, the three nonprofit social institutions were excluded because their institutional characteristics are quite disparate. Government institutions, made up of the three governmental branches, are compared to media institutions consisting of newspapers, television, and the press. A "great deal" of confidence is scored as 3, "only some" 2 and "hardly any" 1. For the comparison as a group, confidence scores of the three media institutions are summed. The mean of the respondents' confidence scores for the three media institutions is 5.81 (sd = 1.51) while that for the three governmental branches is 6.45 (sd = 1.43). The mean difference between them, 0.65, is statistically significant ($t(916) = 11.55$, $p < 0.01$), using the t for related measures. From the results, government institutions appear to be more credible in respondents' mind than media institutions are.

Means and standard deviations of individual institutions are also provided in Table 1. Considering the fact that the variable range is only 1 to 3, the differences in mean scores among institutions are notably clear. The fact that all three media institutions are at the bottom of the group, above only organized labor, suggests a crisis in media credibility.

Table 1. Factor Analysis of Respondents' Confidence in Social Institutions

Institution	Factors			Mean/SD
	Media	Govern't	Social	
Bank and financial institutions	0.12	0.46	0.31	1.33/.66
Organized religion	0.07	0.22	0.72	1.09/.72
Education	0.15	0.00	0.73	1.23/.67
The government (executive branch)	0.14	0.80	0.03	1.18/.75
Organized labor	0.29	0.06	0.43	0.74/.67
The press	0.79	0.12	0.08	**0.96**/.67
Congress	0.31	0.64	0.11	1.09/.62
Television	0.67	0.09	0.09	**0.86**/.67
The U.S. Supreme Court	0.22	0.63	0.10	1.31/.66
Newspapers in general	0.76	0.10	0.08	**1.08**/.63

*The method was principal components with a varimax rotation. The eigenvalues are 2.79, 1.33 and 1.03 for the first, second, and third factors.

Preliminary Results:

Construction of Credibility Indices

Respondents were given sixteen pairs of words and phrases with opposite meanings and asked to state the degree (1 to 5 scale) to which each of those words described the daily newspaper they were the most familiar with and television news. The sixteen pairs are "fair/unfair," "unbiased/biased," "tells the whole story/doesn't tell the whole story," "accurate/inaccurate," "respects people's

privacy/invades people's privacy," "does not care what the reader thinks/cares what the reader thinks," "watches out after your interests/does not watch out after your interests," "concerned about the community's well-being/ not concerned about the community's well-being," "separates facts from opinions/mixes together facts and opinions," "can be trusted/can't be trusted," "sensationalizes/does not sensationalize," "immoral/moral," "patriotic/unpatriotic," "concerned mainly about the public interest/concerned mainly about making profits," "factual/opinionated" and "reporters are well trained/reporters are poorly trained."

Table 2 shows the results from factor analyses of the credibility items for the newspaper and for television. Three factors emerge from the factor analysis for the newspaper while four appear for television.

Factor 1 for the newspaper represents ten items: "fair/unfair," "unbiased/biased," "tells the whole story/doesn't tell the whole story," "accurate/inaccurate," "respects people's privacy/invades people's privacy," "watches out after your interest/does not watch out after your interest," "separates facts from opinions/mixes facts/opinions," "can be trust/can't be trusted," "factual/opinionated," and "reporters are well trained/reporters are poorly trained." It explains the biggest part of the variance of the 16 items, 38%. Factor 2

Table 2. Factor Analysis for Credibility Items for the Newspaper and Television

	Newspaper			Television			
Item	Fac1	Fac2	Fac3	Fac1	Fac2	Fac3	Fac4
Fair	0.72	0.19	0.03	0.76	0.24	0.08	0.02
Unbiased	0.73	0.05	0.01	0.79	0.12	0.02	0.11
Tell the whole story	0.74	0.13	0.02	0.71	0.3	0.05	0.13
Accurate	0.70	0.19	0.04	0.74	0.31	0.08	0.05
Respect people's privacy	0.57	0.03	0.12	0.34	0.43	0.12	0.48
Care what the reader thinks	0.10	0.11	0.67	0.13	0.05	0.78	0.12
Watches out after your interests	0.53	0.32	0.05	0.21	0.67	0.05	0.21
Concerned about the community's well-being	0.43	0.61	0.04	0.29	0.69	0.05	0.07
Separates facts from opinions	0.68	0.17	0.00	0.51	0.48	0.02	0.13
Can be trusted	0.71	0.31	0.10	0.59	0.54	0.1	0.04
Sensationalizes	0.11	0.28	0.65	0.01	0.00	0.21	0.77
Moral	0.12	0.13	0.72	0.27	0.20	0.74	0.01
Patriotic	0.08	0.78	0.01	0.05	0.60	0.09	0.33
Concerned mainly about the public interest	0.48	0.56	0.02	0.29	0.72	0.02	0.12
Factual	0.70	0.38	0.07	0.51	0.62	0.08	0.06
Reporters are well trained	0.60	0.37	0.02	0.40	0.47	0.12	0.30
Eigenvalue	6.06	1.43	1.04	6.25	1.31	1.10	1.00
% of explained variance	38%	9%	7%	39%	8%	7%	6%

[a]The method was principal components with a varimax rotation.

for the newspaper is defined primarily by three items: "concerned about community's well-being/not concerned about community's well-being," "patriotic/unpatriotic," and "concerned mainly about the public interest/concerned mainly about making profits." This factor explains 9% of the total variance. The third factor for the newspaper includes three items: "does not care about what the reader thinks/cares what the reader thinks," "sensationalizes/does not sensationalize," and "immoral/moral." This factor explains 7% of the total variance.

Results from the factor analysis for television credibility is only slightly different from that for the newspaper. Factor 1 represents six items: "fair/unfair," "unbiased/biased," "tells the whole story/doesn't tell the whole story," "accurate/inaccurate," "separates facts from opinions/mixes facts/opinions," and "can be trusted/can't be trusted." It explains 39% of total variance among the 16 items. Factor 2 includes six items: "watches out after reader's interest/does not watch out reader's interest," "concerned about the community's well being/ not concerned about the community's well being," "patriotic/unpatriotic," "concerned mainly about the public interest/concerned mainly about making profits," "factual/opinionated," and "reporters are well trained/reporters are poorly trained." Factor 3 includes two items: "cares about what the reader thinks/does

not care about what the reader thinks."
"Sensationalizes/does not sensationalize" and "moral/immoral" represents Factor 4. Factor 2, Factor 3, and Factor 4 for television explain 21% of the total variance.

The percentages of explained variances, 56% and 60% respectively for newspaper and television, fall between high and moderate levels. Unexplained variances indicate the items have some unique variances which cannot be explained by the extracted principal components. A fair amount of unexplained variance may be normal because these items were selected on the basis of common sense and pre-survey interviews with a small group rather than from theoretical considerations that the items were conceptually related.

Overall, respondents' differentiation among the credibility components is not strong. Ten out of 16 items fall into one factor in the newspaper analysis. Several items are closely related to two or more factors, especially for television. This difference may be because television has various aspects besides being a news medium compared to the relatively unidimensional characteristic of the newspaper as a news medium. Or it may be because questions were asked about the specific newspaper that respondents were familiar with but about television news in general.

The primary concern in this section is how to build reasonable credibility indices for the newspaper and

television. A good index for credibility must explain as much variance among the 16 items as possible, be reasonable for both newspaper and television, and have common characteristics that can possibly distinguish it from other items. Factor 1 appears to be a good candidate because it includes most of the explained variance (70% for newspaper and 65% for television) and represents many common items for newspaper and television.

All six pairs of words or phrases which are included in Factor 1 for television are also included in Factor 1 for newspapers. The six items are "fair/unfair," "unbiased/biased," "tells the whole story/doesn't tell the whole story," "accurate/inaccurate," "separates facts from opinions/mixes facts/opinions," "can be trusted/can't be trusted." Four items are included in Factor 1 for newspaper but included in Factor 2 or Factor 4 for television. These pairs are "respects people's privacy/invades people's privacy," "watches out after reader's interest/does not watch out after reader's interest," "factual/opinionated" and "reporters are well trained/reporters are poorly trained." Except for the "factual/opinionated" pair, the other three items seem to be different from the six items which Factor 1 for newspapers and television share. The six items appear to be directly related to attributes of news while the three items address morals in news reporting. Thus, it may be

Table 3. Items Selected and Excluded for Credibility Indices

Selected items
fair/unfair
unbiased/biased
tells the whole story/doesn't tell the whole story
accurate/inaccurate
separates facts from opinions/mixes facts/opinions
factual/opinionated
can be trusted/can't be trusted
Excluded items
respects people's privacy/invades people's privacy
does not care what the reader thinks/cares what the reader thinks
watches out after reader's interest/does not watch out reader's interest
concerned about the community's well being/ not concerned about the community's well being
patriotic/unpatriotic
concerned mainly about the public interest/concerned mainly about making profits
reporters are well trained/reporters are poorly trained
cares about what the reader thinks/does not care about what the reader thinks
sensationalizes/does not sensationalize
moral/immoral

reasonable to choose those six items for a measure of news credibility for both newspaper and television.

Although it belongs to the "four item" group, the characteristics of the "factual/opinionated" pair seems to be closer to the "six item" group; its meaning is related to attributes of news. Besides that, in television, the factor loading of the item on Factor 1 is 0.51 which is close to the factor loading on Factor 2 of 0.62. Thus, it may be considered to belong to Factor 1 as well as Factor 2. Therefore, the "factual/opinionated" item is also included in building credibility indices.

The selected seven items appear to be a reasonable group compared to the other items excluded from the credibility indices. They are represented, for both newspaper and television, by one factor which contains most of the explained variance. Their characteristics seem to be distinguished from the other items. Thus, newspaper credibility is measured as the sum of the newspaper scores for those seven items. Television credibility is measured as the sum of scores for television on the seven items. In order to make the range of the indices start from one rather than seven, six is subtracted from index scores.

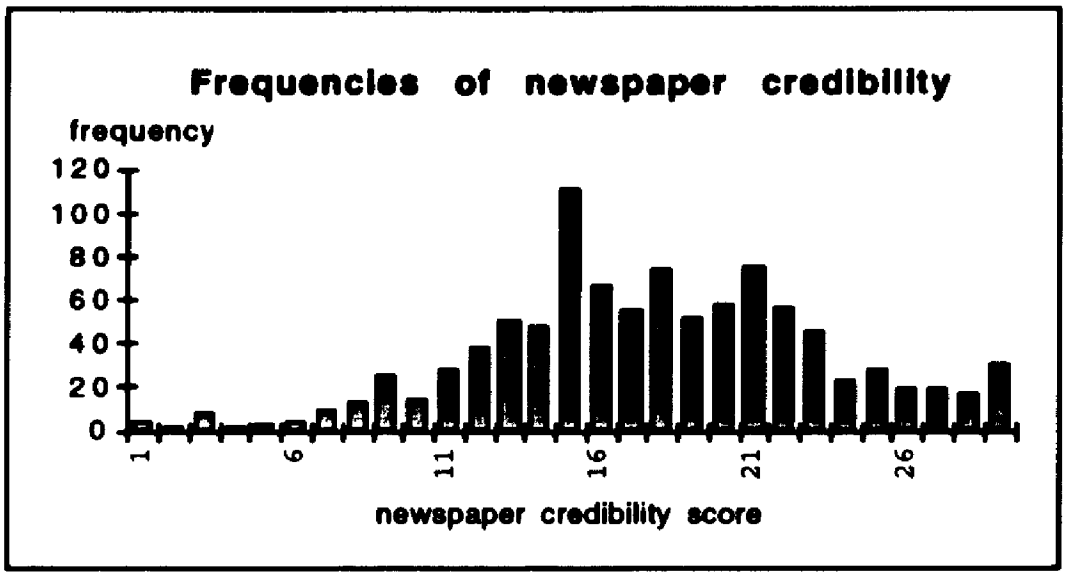
Although the rationale for using just these seven items in the index seems reasonable, there is not much practical difference between selection of the seven items, the ten

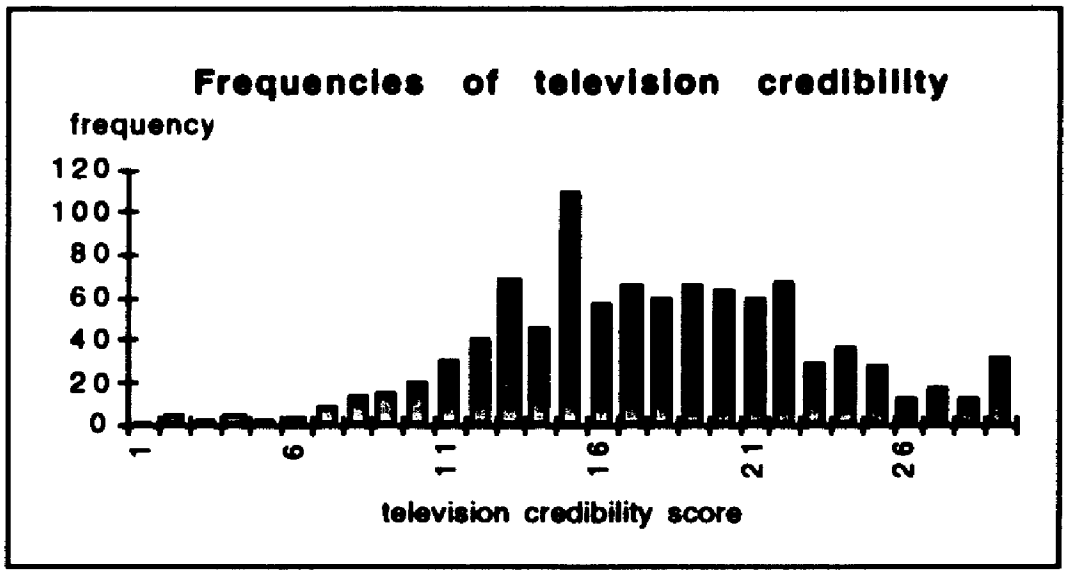
items, or even all sixteen items in building credibility indices. The correlation coefficient of the newspaper credibility index (the sum of scores of the seven selected items) with the sum of the ten items that are included in Factor 1 for newspapers is 0.97 and that with the sum of all sixteen items is 0.94. For the television credibility index, those correlation coefficients are 0.97 and 0.93 respectively.

Figure 1 shows distributions of newspaper and television credibility scores (for newspaper, skewness = -0.134, kurtosis = 0.009, mean = 17.71, sd = 5.52; for television, skewness = -0.039, kurtosis = -0.050, mean = 17.63, sd = 5.34). Although several cases are relatively far below the mean score, the percentage of them compared to the total cases is small (the percentage of cases whose score is less than or equal to six is 2.3% for newspaper, 1.9% for television).

There can be another question regarding the credibility indices. Although this study built separate credibility indices for newspaper and television, the two indices could be practically the same. In other words, respondents might not have discriminated between newspaper and television, giving the same responses for both sets of credibility items. In that case, it is useless to do separate analyses for these

Figure 1. Distributions of Credibility Scores





two indices. However, a correlation coefficient between newspaper and television credibility scores is not high ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that it was not the case.

Effects of Involvement in Political Position on Perceived Media Bias

This section will report the test of Hypothesis 1 which addresses the relationship between political position and perceived media bias. The next subsection will discuss the results of the data analysis for Hypothesis 1a. The subsection after that will do the same for Hypothesis 1b.

Effects of Political Ideology

The first step to check the relationship was to test whether there are meaningful relationships at all. In other words, are there differences in conservatives', liberals', and moderates' perceptions of the media's ideological bias?

The two variables relevant for each medium here each have three categories. The political ideology variable has "conservatives," "moderates," and "liberals." Perceived bias in political ideology for newspapers or television is "more conservative" and "more liberal" for those who thought media were more conservative or more liberal than they were themselves, and "about the same" for those who thought the media's ideological position was the same as theirs. Perceived newspaper or television bias in political ideology

is a relative bias, compared to the respondents' ideological positions. It should be kept in mind that, in the survey, the newspaper was referred to as the "daily newspaper you are most familiar with" but television was referred to simply as "television news."

In order to answer the initial question, chi-square tests were done rather than ANOVA because the dependent variable, perceived bias, is ordinal. The null hypothesis of the chi-square test is that political ideology and perceived media bias are independent.

Table 4 shows the results of the chi-square tests as well as frequencies and column percentages. A number in a cell is a frequency; a percentage in a parenthesis is a column percentage for the frequency. Results of the chi-square tests were statistically significant at the .01 level for both newspaper and television. The alternative hypothesis, that these two variables are associated, is accepted. It is reasonable to assume that political ideology affects perceived bias and not the other way around.

The next step to test Hypothesis 1a is to examine the direction of the perceived bias. On the basis of social judgment theory and previous research (such as research on hostile media effects), this study assumed that the direction of the perceived bias would be different for conservatives, moderates, and liberals. Hypothesis 1a suggests that the

direction of the perceived bias is against respondents' existing political ideology.

Table 4. Contingency Tables for Political Ideology and Perceived Media Bias in Ideology

	Political ideology		
Newspaper Bias	Conservatives	Moderates	Liberals
More conservative	17 (8.6%)	40 (20.9%)	57 (54.8%)
About the same	74 (37.4%)	97 (50.8%)	41 (39.4%)
More liberal	107 (54.0%)	54 (28.3%)	6 (5.8%)
Total	198 (100%)	191 (100%)	104 (100%)

(Chi-square = 117.89, df = 4, $p<0.01$)

	Political ideology		
Television Bias	Conservatives	Moderates	Liberals
More conservative	10 (4.9%)	13 (7.8%)	29 (30.9%)
About the same	54 (26.3%)	90 (53.9%)	44 (46.8%)
More liberal	141 (68.8%)	64 (38.3%)	21 (22.3%)
Total	205 (100%)	167 (100%)	94 (100%)

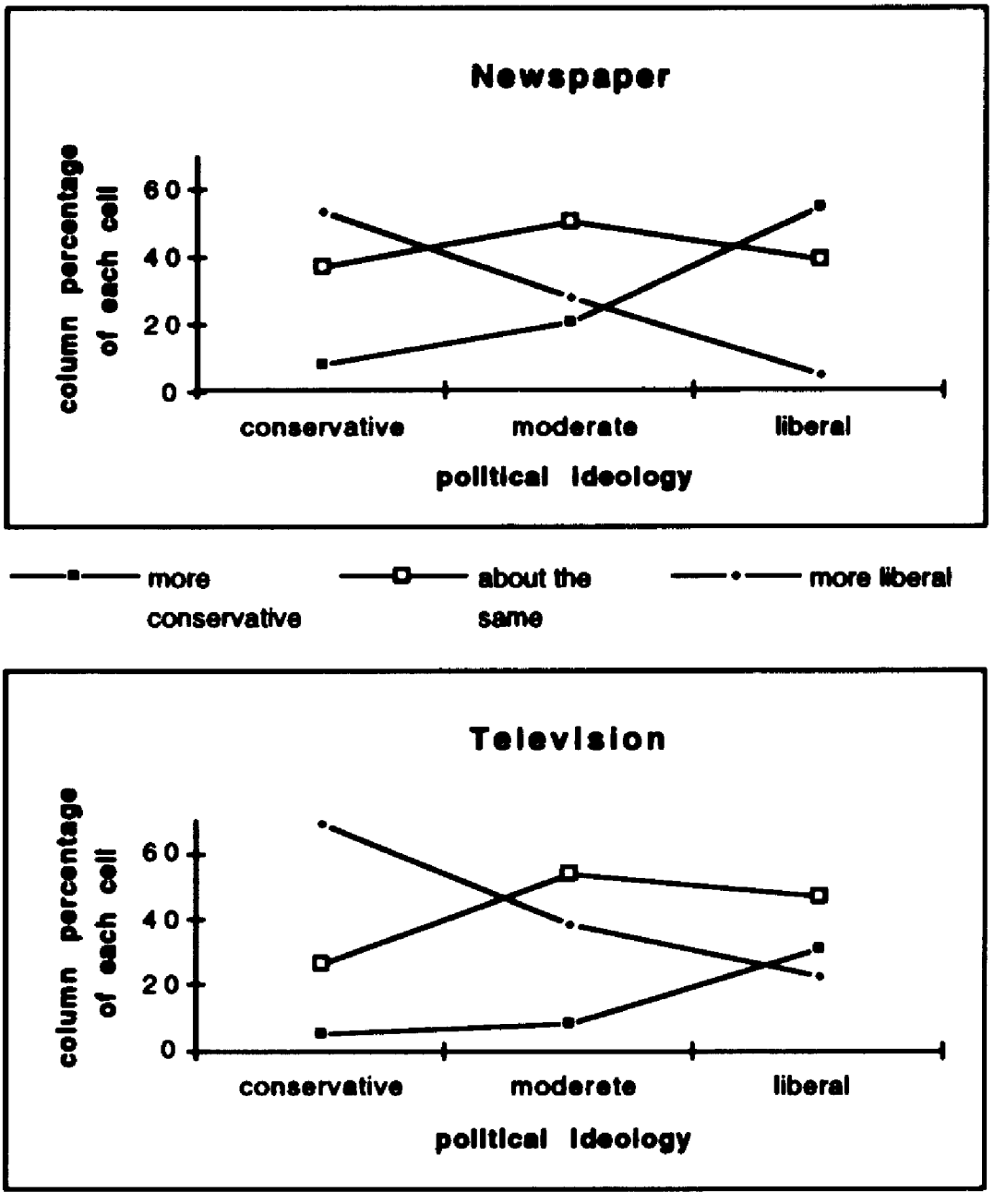
(Chi-square = 94.36, df = 4, $p<0.01$)

As seen in Table 4, as respondents' political ideology goes from conservative to moderate to liberal, the percentage of respondents (within an ideological category) who reported that media were more conservative than they were increases (in order, for newspapers, percentages are 8.6%, 20.9% and 54.8%; for television, they are 4.9%, 7.8% and 30.9%); The percentage of respondents who reported that media were more

liberal decreases (for newspaper, percentages are 54.0%, 28.3% and 5.8%; for television, they are 68.8%, 38.3% and 22.3%). Thus, conservatives were more likely to think that media were biased toward liberals than moderates and liberals; liberals were more likely to think media were biased toward conservatives than moderates and conservatives. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 1a. Figure 2 shows a graphic representation of Table 4 for easier understanding of the trend. It is interesting that more respondents thought that television was more liberal than they were, regardless of their own ideology, than thought newspapers were.

One more thing must be discussed concerning Hypothesis 1a. Intensity of ideology, based on social judgment theory and other research, is defined as extremity of ideological position. Moderates, being in the middle-of-the-road position, and therefore less involved, should be less likely to perceive bias than conservatives and liberals whose ideological positions are extreme and thus who are more involved, according to the hypothesis. It is because people more involved are likely to have narrower latitudes of acceptance (which means media ideology appears to be more distant from their position than it actually is). Thus, moderates should be more likely to perceive the media's

Figure 2. Relationships between Ideology and Perceptions of Bias



ideological position as the same as theirs (less gap) than conservatives and liberals are.

As seen in Table 4, the percentage of moderates who thought the media's ideological position was about the same as theirs is higher than the percentage of either conservatives or liberals who thought that. (For newspaper, 50.8% vs. 37.4% and 39.4%. For television, 53.9% vs. 26.3% and 46.8%). To test the significance of that difference, cases can be folded into a 2 x 2 contingency table (2 levels of involvement (moderates vs. conservatives and liberals) and 2 levels of perception of bias ("about the same" vs. "more conservative" and "more liberal")). The chi-square tests for these contingency table were statistically significant (for newspapers, chi-square = 7.71, df = 1, $p < 0.01$, for television, chi-square = 19.85, df = 1, $p < 0.01$).

Based on these analyses, it can be said that the political ideology of respondents affects their perceptions of media ideology, that the media bias in political ideology is more likely to be perceived as favorable to an opposite ideology (negative relationship) and that moderates, or people less involved, are less likely to perceive an ideological gap between themselves and the media. Thus, the data appear to support Hypothesis 1a.

Effects of Partisanship

The procedures for testing Hypothesis 1b are the same as those for Hypothesis 1a but the variables are different. Partisanship has three nominal categories: "Republicans," "Independents," and "Democrats." There are two measures of perceived bias in partisanship for newspapers or television: perceived bias in coverage of Republicans and perceived bias in coverage of Democrats. Each of these measures of how Republicans and Democrats were covered by the media, have three categories: "too favorable" and "not favorable enough" for those who felt there was bias in the media coverage of the political parties and "just about right" for those who felt there was no bias in the media coverage of the political parties.

Table 5 shows the results of chi-square tests of independence of partisanship and perceived bias in newspaper and television coverage of political parties. The question tested is whether the relationships observed between partisanship and perceived bias in the media coverage of political parties could be caused by chance. All four relationships of partisanship with perceived bias are statistically significant ($p<0.01$).

The next question is the direction of influence of partisanship on perceived bias. According to Hypothesis 1b, the direction of perceived bias should be against the

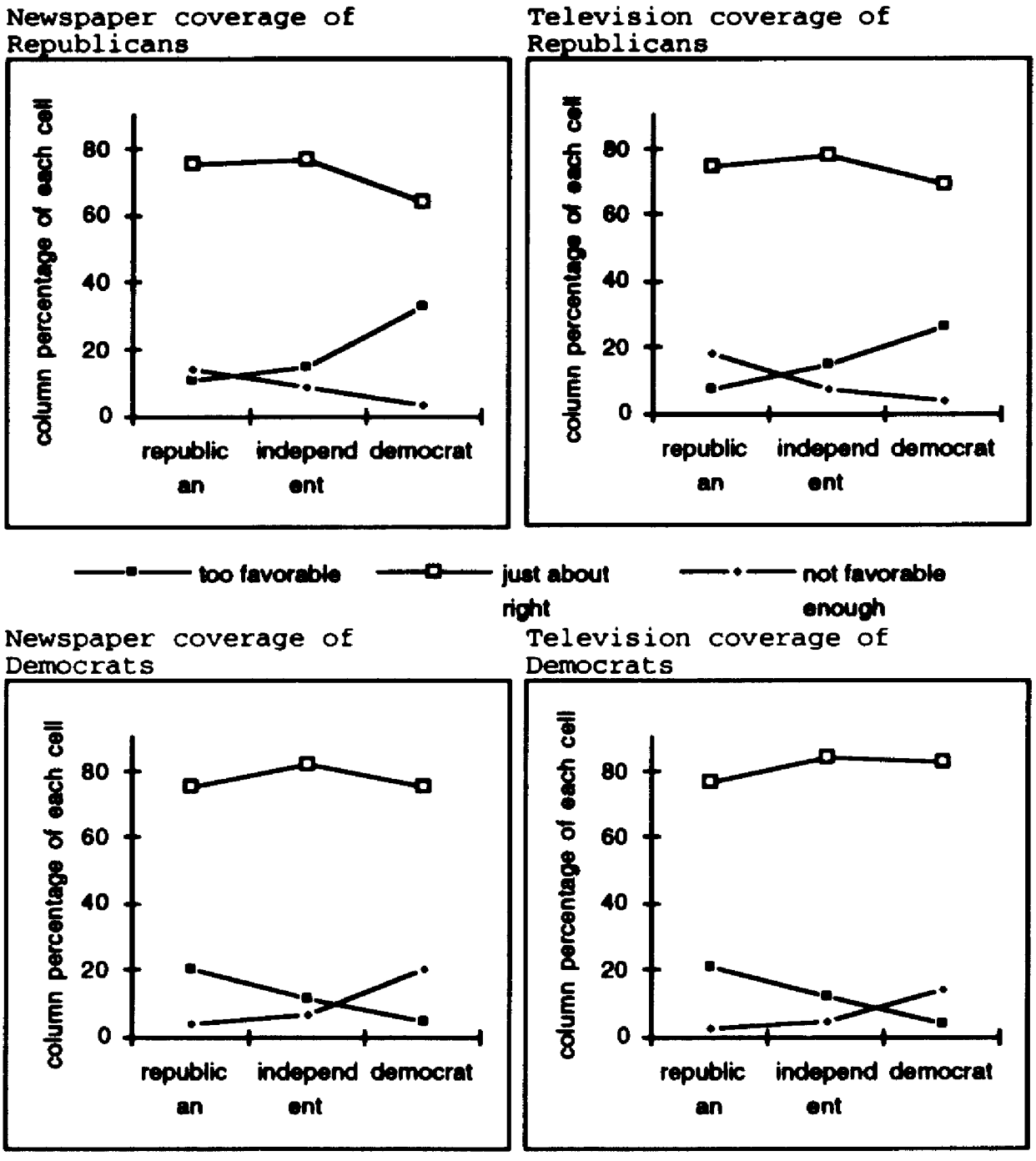
Table 5. Contingency Tables for Partisanship and Perceived Media Bias in Partisanship

	Partisanship		
Newspaper Bias	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
in Coverage of Republicans			
Too favorable	34 (10.4%)	35 (14.6%)	106 (32.7%)
Just about right	247 (75.5%)	183 (76.6%)	208 (64.2%)
Not favorable enough	46 (14.1%)	21 (8.8%)	10 (3.1%)
Total	327 (100%)	239 (100%)	324 (100%)
(Chi-square = 72.10, df = 4, p < 0.01)			
in Coverage of Democrats			
Too favorable	67 (20.5%)	27 (11.3%)	15 (4.6%)
Just about right	247 (75.5%)	197 (82.1%)	245 (75.5%)
Not favorable enough	13 (4.0%)	16 (6.7%)	65 (20.0%)
Total	327 (100%)	240 (100%)	325 (100%)
(Chi-square = 79.24, df = 4, p < 0.01)			
Television Bias	Republicans	Independents	Democrats
in Coverage of Republicans			
Too favorable	23 (7.1%)	35 (14.6%)	85 (26.5%)
Just about right	243 (74.8%)	187 (77.9%)	223 (69.5%)
Not favorable enough	59 (18.2%)	18 (7.5%)	13 (4.0%)
Total	325 (100%)	240 (100%)	321 (100%)
(Chi-square = 73.48, df = 4, p < 0.01)			
in Coverage of Democrats			
Too favorable	68 (20.9%)	28 (11.7%)	12 (3.7%)
Just about right	249 (76.6%)	202 (84.2%)	265 (82.6%)
Not favorable enough	8 (2.5%)	10 (4.2%)	44 (13.7%)
Total	325 (100%)	240 (100%)	321 (100%)
(Chi-square = 73.31, df = 4, p = 0.01)			

respondents' existing party affiliation. As seen in Table 5, when their partisanship goes from Republicans to Independents and to Democrats, the percentage of people who thought media coverage of Republicans was too favorable increases (for newspapers, percentages are 10.4%, 14.6% and 32.7%; for television, they are 7.1%, 14.6% and 26.5%) while the percentage of people who thought media coverage of Republicans was not favorable enough decreases (for newspapers, percentages are 14.1%, 8.8% and 3.1%; for television, they are 18.2%, 7.5% and 4.0%) .

For the media coverage of Democrats, the tendency is the same. When their partisanship goes from Republicans to Independents and to Democrats, the percentage of people who thought media coverage of Democrats was too favorable decreases (for newspapers, percentages are 20.5%, 11.3% and 4.6%; for television, they are 20.9%, 11.7% and 3.7%) while the percentage of people who thought media coverage of Democrats was not favorable enough increases (for newspapers, percentages are 4.0%, 6.7% and 20.0%; for television, they are 2.5%, 4.2% and 13.7%). Thus, the direction of perceived bias in the media coverage of political parties is associated with partisanship in a pattern consistent with Hypothesis 1b. Figure 3 is a graphic representation of Table 5 for easier understanding of this trend.

Figure 3. Relationships between Political Affiliation and Perceptions of Bias



The comparisons between those highly involved and those less involved appear to be similar to those for political ideology although the patterns are not strongly marked. As seen in Table 5, the percentage of Independents who thought the media coverage of political parties was just about right is higher than the percentage of Republicans or Democrats who thought that. (For the coverage of Republicans by the newspaper , 76.6% vs. 75.5% or 64.2%, for that by television, 77.9% vs. 74.8% or 69.5%; for the coverage of Democrats by the newspaper, 82.1% vs. 75.5% or 75.4%, for that by television, 84.2% vs. 76.6% or 82.6%;). Thus, it might be said that less involved people are more likely to perceive less bias than those more involved. But, the differences may be too small for safe generalization; perhaps because most people, those more involved and less involved alike, thought that media coverage of the political parties was fair.

To test its statistical significance, the cases can be folded into a 2x2 contingency table (two levels of partisanship (Independents vs. Republicans and Democrats) and two levels of perception of bias ("just about right" vs. "too favorable" and "not favorable enough")). The chi-square tests for the contingency table for newspaper coverage were statistically significant (for the coverage of Republicans, chi-square = 3.83, df = 1, $p < .05$, for coverage of Democrats, chi-square = 4.37, df = 1, $p < .05$). Those for

television were not (for the coverage of Republicans, chi-square = 3.01, df = 1, $p > .05$, for the coverage of Democrats, chi-square = 2.88, df = 1, $p > .05$). But, the difference in the chi-squares for newspaper and television analysis is small. The p values for television are .08 for the coverage of Republicans and .12 for the coverage of Democrats. Anyway, the relationship between involvement in partisanship and perceived media bias in coverage of political parties is meaningful only for newspapers. For television, respondents' partisanship and perceived media bias are statistically independent.

Effects of Perceived Media Bias on Media Credibility

This section will report the test of Hypothesis 2 which addresses the relationship between perceived media bias and evaluation of media credibility. The next subsection will discuss the results of data analyses for Hypothesis 2a; the subsection after that will do the same for Hypothesis 2b.

Effects of Perceived Ideological Media Bias

Hypothesis 2a says that people who perceive bias in the media are more likely to evaluate media credibility negatively than those who do not. In other words, people perceiving bias in the media are more likely to give lower

scores on media credibility than those not perceiving bias. Thus, to test Hypothesis 2a is to examine differences in credibility scores among people whose perceptions of media bias are different. Because the dependent variable here, credibility of newspaper or television, is assumed to be on interval scale, ANOVA tests were done to examine it.

Table 6 displays the results of the ANOVA which tests the effects of perceived ideological media bias on the credibility of newspaper and television. For both newspapers and television, the effects of perceived media bias in political ideology on credibility are statistically significant at the .01 level, indicating mean differences among the three groups are highly likely to be

Table 6. Results of ANOVA Tests on Effects of Perceived Ideological Media Bias on Media Credibility

	Effects of perceived ideological bias			
On credibility	MS	df	F	p
Newspaper credibility	859.40	2	30.62	<.01
Television credibility	591.63	2	20.01	<.01

caused by differences among groups rather than by chance. In other words, variations in media credibility scores among the three groups, those who thought the media were more

conservative than they were, those who thought the media were more liberal, and those who thought media were ideologically about the same as they were, are significantly greater than variations among individual respondents within each group.

Table 7 shows the means and standard deviations for each of these groups. As expected from Hypothesis 2a, for both newspapers and television, a mean credibility score evaluated by those who thought media were ideologically about the same as them is higher than the credibility scores of other groups in which respondents thought the media were more conservative or more liberal. In order to test the statistical significance of the mean difference between the category of "about the same" and, in turn, the "more conservative" and "more liberal" categories, a t-test was done for each pair. For newspapers, the mean difference between "about the same" and "more conservative" groups is 3.81 ($t(447) = 5.48$, $p < 0.01$) and the mean difference between the "about the same" and "more liberal" groups is 5.01 ($t(484) = 2.89$, $p < 0.01$). For television, those mean differences are 2.19 ($t(352) = 2.89$, $p < 0.01$) and 3.17 ($t(542) = 6.21$, $p < 0.01$) respectively.

From these results, it can be said that people who considered the media's political ideology to be different from theirs were more likely to negatively evaluate media

credibility than those who considered the media's ideology to be about the same as theirs.

Table 7. Means and Standard Deviations of Credibility for Three Categories of Perceived Ideological Bias

	Newspaper Credibility		TV Credibility	
Perceived bias	mean	sd	mean	sd
More conservative	16.46	5.77	17.25	5.02
About the same	19.30	4.95	19.11	5.08
More liberal	15.74	5.38	16.17	5.91

It might be said that Hypothesis 2a is supported by these results in that people with perceptions of smaller ideological gaps between themselves and the media evaluated media credibility more positively than those with perceptions of larger ideological gaps. However, there is reason to doubt that Hypothesis 2 is fully supported by this evidence. Perceived media bias in political ideology is not a measure of whether respondents thought a medium in question was conservative or liberal but is rather a measure of whether they thought that it was more conservative or more liberal than themselves. For example, when a conservative answered that the media were more liberal, he or she might think that

the media were moderate and thus by some other standards ideologically unbiased.

Effects of Perceived Bias in Party Coverage

The procedures to test Hypothesis 2b are the same as those for Hypothesis 2a. But, an important difference is that, unlike perceived media bias in ideology, the variables for perceived bias in partisanship measured perceptions of bias that are not relative to respondents' own party affiliation. Perceived bias in party coverage was measured by asking respondents' opinion of how Republicans and Democrats were covered by newspapers and television, independent of their own partisanship. Respondents were given three categories to respond with: "too favorable," "just about right," and "not favorable enough."

ANOVA were done for four (2 x 2) possible relationships between perceived bias in party coverage and media credibility; that is, two variables of credibility of newspaper and television by two variables of perceived bias in coverage of Republicans and Democrats. Results displayed in Table 8 show the effects of perceived bias in party coverage on media credibility are statistically significant at the .01 level for all four relationships. A significant result means that, for example, the mean differences in newspaper credibility scores among the three groups of those

who thought coverage of the newspaper on Republicans was too favorable, just about right, and not favorable enough are large, compared to the differences in credibility scores of individual respondents within the groups. Thus, the differences among the bias categories on all four credibility variables could be said not to be caused by chance but by real differences among those groups at the probability level of $p < 0.01$.

Table 8. ANOVA of Effects of Perceived Bias in Party Coverage on Media Credibility

	Effects of perceived bias in party coverage			
	MS	df	F	p
Newspaper credibility				
Bias in coverage of Republican	929.45	2	32.32	<.01
Bias in coverage of Democrat	720.36	2	24.72	<.01
Television credibility				
Bias in coverage of Republican	934.97	2	35.02	<.01
Bias in coverage of Democrat	587.93	2	21.44	<.01

From the results of the ANOVA tests, comparisons of mean differences among the 3 categories of perceived media bias in partisanship are justified. Hypothesis 2b suggests that people who think the media are favorable to one party are more likely to evaluate media credibility negatively than

those who think media are unbiased in partisanship. As seen in Table 9, the means for credibility are low for groups in which respondents thought the media coverage was biased toward a political party and high for groups where

Table 9. Means and Standard Deviations of Credibility for Three Categories of Perceived Partisanship Bias

	N'paper Credibility		TV Credibility	
	mean	sd	mean	sd
Perceived bias in coverage of Republicans				
Too favorable	15.79**	5.90	16.71**	5.15
Just about right	18.54	5.21	18.31	5.11
Not favorable enough	14.68**	5.44	13.63**	5.64
Perceived bias in coverage of Democrats				
Too favorable	15.30**	5.66	14.84**	5.88
Just about right	18.35	5.27	18.14	5.07
Not favorable enough	15.49**	6.04	16.46*	5.91

** mean difference from "just about right" category is statistically significant at p<.01.
* mean difference from "just about right" category is statistically significant at p<.05.

respondents thought the media coverage of a political party was just about right. The results are invariable for coverage of Republicans and Democrats and for coverage by newspaper and television. The mean differences between the

"just about right" category and both "too favorable" and "not favorable enough" are statistically significant for all possible pairs. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is supported by analyses of the relationships between perceived bias in the media coverage of political parties and credibility. Unlike analyses of the effects of perceived media bias in political ideology, this acceptance of Hypothesis 2 is without reservations.

Effects of Involvement in Political Position on Media Credibility

Hypothesis 1 suggests that audience members' political position positively affects their perceptions of media bias by inclining them to judge the media position to be closer than it actually is to an extreme opposite to their own position. Hypothesis 2 states that audience members' perceptions of media bias in political position negatively influence the degree to which they evaluate the media to be credible.

On the basis of Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, that audience members' involvement in political position negatively affects their evaluation of media credibility, logically follows. In other words, for example, people who identify themselves as conservative or liberal (or Republican or Democrat) are more likely to evaluate the credibility of the newspaper and television negatively than

those who think they are moderates (or Independents). This section will report the test of that hypothesis.

As a first step, the relationship for Hypothesis 3a is examined. Before differences in newspaper or television credibility scores among conservatives, moderates, and liberals are compared, the statistical significances of the differences must be tested. Table 10 shows the results of the ANOVA.

The results are disappointing. For both newspaper and television, the statistical significance of the effects of political ideology on credibility are far from significant ($p = 0.43$ and $p = 0.83$ respectively). The results indicate

Table 10. ANOVA Tests of Effects of Political Ideology on Media Credibility

	Effects of political ideology			
Credibility	MS	df	F	p
Newspaper credibility	25.42	2	.84	0.43
Television credibility	5.43	2	.18	0.83

that, compared to the variances of credibility scores among individual observations within a category, the differences in mean credibility scores between categories are too small to conclude that the differences do not occur by chance. The

null hypothesis that conservatives, moderates, and liberals are not different in judging media credibility must be retained. Hypothesis 3a does not seem to be supported by the data.

Table 11 shows ANOVA tests, for the same purpose, applied to the effects of political partisanship. Again, both for newspapers and television, the effects of audience members' partisanship on evaluation of media credibility are not significant ($p = 0.35$ and $p = 0.70$ respectively). Compared to the differences in means of media credibility

Table 11. ANOVA Tests of Effects of Partisanship on Media Credibility

	Effects of partisanship			
Credibility	MS	df	F	p
Newspaper credibility	31.38	2	1.04	0.35
Television credibility	10.09	2	.34	0.70

scores among Republicans, Independents, and Democrats, the differences among individual audience member's credibility scores within categories are too large to accept the alternative hypothesis that there are differences in judging media credibility among people belonging to different parties. Republicans, Independents, and Democrats do not

appear to be different in their evaluations of newspaper and television credibility.

Null hypotheses are upheld for the effects of both political ideology and partisanship. Means and standard deviations of groups in political ideology and partisanship are not displayed because comparisons of them are meaningless.

Because Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 seem to logically generate Hypothesis 3, it is worthwhile to investigate reasons why the data do not appear to be consistent with it, considering that Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 are supported by the data. Two-way ANOVA tests were done for newspapers and television to examine possible interaction effects for political ideology and perceived media bias in ideology. Results in Table 12 show that the effects for interaction between political ideology and perceived media bias in ideology were not statistically significant ($p = .77$ for newspapers, $p = .62$ for television), neither are the main effects for political ideology while the main effects of perceived bias are significant.

Figure 4 shows mean scores for conservatives, moderates, and liberals on perceived ideological media bias. The figure provides a graphic representation for the comparison between the effects of political ideology and perceived bias on credibility. While there is some difference between

categories (the effects of perceived bias), there is little difference within categories (the effects of political ideology).

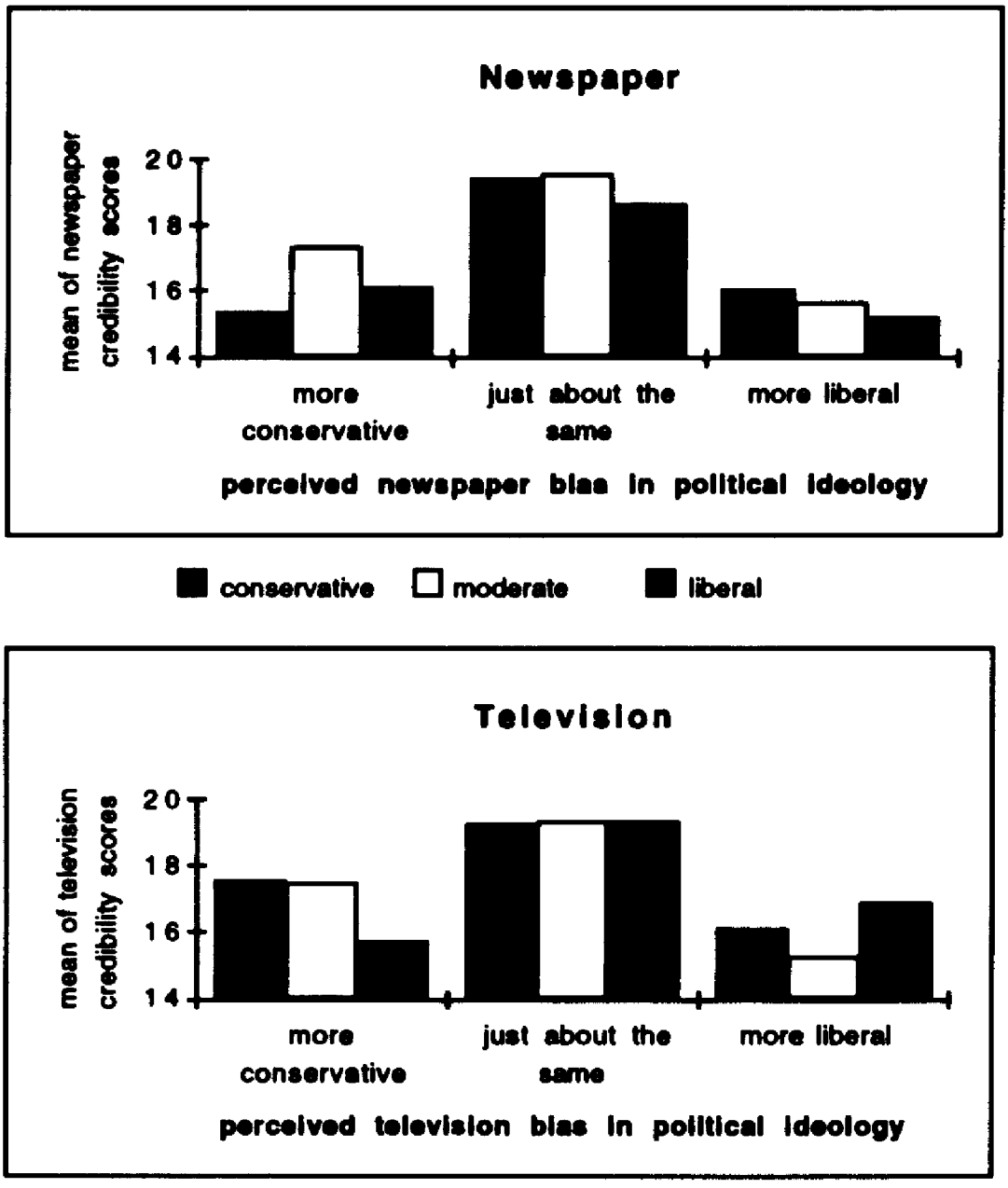
Table 12. Two-way ANOVA Tests of Effects of Political Ideology and Perceived Ideological Bias in Media on Media Credibility

	On Newspaper Credibility			
Effects of	MS	df	F	p
Political ideology	20.2	2	0.71	0.49
Perceived bias	610.8	2	21.43	0.00
2-way interaction	12.85	4	0.45	**0.77**
Effects of	On Television Credibility			
Political ideology	6.67	2	0.22	0.80
Perceived bias	573.7	2	18.92	0.00
2-way interaction	19.8	4	0.65	**0.62**

In order to be consistent with Hypothesis 3a, the mean scores for moderates (white bars) should be higher than those for the other two groups. But, as shown in earlier analyses, that expectation is not satisfied.

One thing must be recalled about the effects of political ideology. As seen in the analysis of Hypothesis 1a, more respondents (50.8%, 53.9% respectively for newspaper

Figure 4. Effects of Political Ideology and Perceived Media Bias on Media Credibility



and television) among moderates belong to the "just about the same" category than among conservatives(37.4%, 26.3%) or liberals (39.4%, 46.8%). The bar graph does not reflect this difference in the percentage because it exploits the mean scores which does not utilize difference in the frequency.

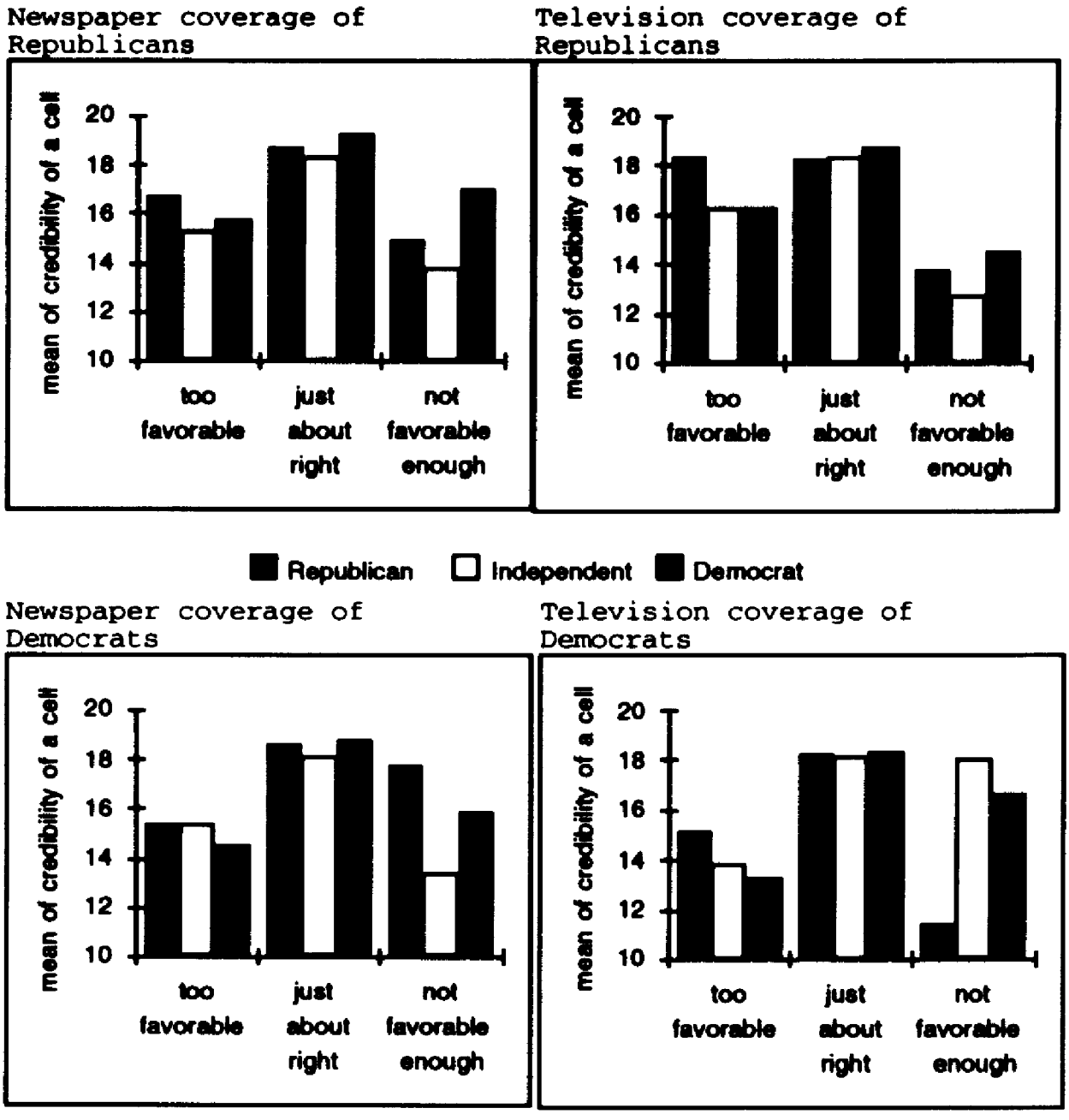
Table 13 shows results for testing the effects of partisanship and perceived partisanship of media on media credibility. As seen in Table 13, in all four two-way ANOVA tests, the interaction effects between partisanship and perceived media bias in coverage of political parties were not statistically significant.

Figure 5 shows mean scores for Republicans, Independents, and Democrats within each category of perceived media partisanship. The mean scores for Independents (white bars) should be higher than those for the other two groups according to Hypothesis 3b, but, as displayed in earlier analyses, that expectation is not satisfied. Some mean scores for "too favorable" and "not favorable enough" categories are unexpectedly high or low; it may be due to the fact that the cells are too small because most cases fall into the "just about right" category. Thus some extreme cases in the other cells had more influence on the mean scores.

Table 13. ANOVA Tests of Effects of Partisanship and Perceived Party Bias in Media on Media Credibility

	On newspaper credibility			
Effects of	MS	df	F	p
Partisanship	56.7	2	2.03	0.13
Bias perceived in coverage of Republicans	970.2	2	34.77	0.00
2-way interaction	23.3	4	0.84	0.50
Effects of				
Partisanship	42.9	2	1.51	0.22
Bias perceived in coverage of Democrats	719.8	2	25.34	0.00
2-way interaction	30.71	4	1.08	0.36
Effects of	On television credibility			
Partisanship	5.79	2	0.22	0.81
Bias perceived in coverage of Republicans	969.8	2	35.96	0.00
2-way interaction	30.5	4	1.13	0.34
Effects of				
Partisanship	2.12	2	0.07	0.92
Bias perceived in coverage of Democrats	645.8	2	23.46	0.00
2-way interaction	70.58	4	2.56	0.06

Figure 5. Effects of Partisanship and Perceived Media Bias on Media Credibility



CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSIONS

The analyses of data concerning respondents' confidence in people running media organizations seemed to favor an argument that there is a crisis in media credibility. Factor analysis of confidence in various social organizations verified that audience members distinguished media institutions as a group from other institutions. Factor analysis also showed that respondents had an ability to distinguish media institutions, government institutions and other social institutions from one another in terms of the trust they had in the people running them. The average score for respondents' confidence in media institutions was lower than that for the government. Those results suggest that, newspapers, television, and the press as a whole do not seem to inspire much confidence on the part of their audience.

Factor analysis of components of media credibility was generally consistent with a recent argument in the field that the decomposition of the concept of media credibility has led us nowhere. Ten items out of sixteen were related to only one factor for the newspaper. Two other factors for the newspaper passed the conventional threshold of acceptance (eigenvalue > 1.00). But both explained only small amounts

of variance. Factor analysis of credibility items for television generated four factors. The one factor which explained the most variance among the television credibility items included six items and seemed to represent credibility of news. But these other factors did not suggest a clear categorization of items.

Discussion of Hypotheses

First of all, the data show similar results for newspapers and television and for political ideology and partisanship despite the fact that they are not much related. Repetition of similar results may indicate that the measurement of the variables and the tests of the hypotheses were reliable.

The data support Hypothesis 1. The relationships between involvement in political positions and perceptions of media bias in political position were statistically significant. These relationships were found in chi-square tests for six contingency tables; 2 for political ideology and perceived bias in political ideology of newspapers and television and 4 for partisanship and perceived newspaper and television bias in coverage of Republicans and Democrats.

Likewise, the directions of influence due to political position were consistent with those expected by Hypothesis 1. The results from all six possible data analyses showed that. Conservatives were more likely to think the media were biased

toward liberals than moderates and liberals were; liberals were more likely to think the media were biased against them than conservatives and moderates were. The tendency was the same for Republicans and Democrats.

One thing should be noted about results from the analysis of Hypothesis 1. Most respondents, over 70% of valid cases, reported that they thought the newspaper and television coverage of Republicans or Democrats was neither favorable nor unfavorable for one party but just about right. The media must be doing their job fairly impartially with regard to coverage of political parties because even a survey like this, which was conducted just after a presidential election, showed a high percentage of approval.

The results of data analyses also supported Hypothesis 2. ANOVA tests for six possible relationships between perceived media bias in political position and media credibility were statistically significant. For perceived media bias in political ideology, respondents who thought the political ideology held by newspapers or television was about the same as theirs had higher average scores on media credibility than those who thought the political ideology of the newspapers or television was different from theirs.

There can be some doubt about the interpretation of the results because, for the perceived media bias in the ideology variable, the perception of media as ideologically the same

as respondents does not necessarily mean a perception that the media are unbiased for conservatives and liberals. Only for respondents who identified themselves as moderates, "more liberal" meant liberal and "more conservative" conservative.

But, according to social judgment theory, an attitudinal gap between a received message and highly involved people usually leads to perceptions of bias in the message because, for highly involved people, the latitude of noncommitment, where people feel neither rejection nor acceptance, is very narrow. Thus there is little chance for a message to fall into that zone and be given a fair evaluation. Thus, for conservatives (or liberals), who are ideologically involved, it is not unreasonable to assume that they usually mean that the media are biased toward liberals (or conservatives) when they say that the media are more liberal than they are (or more conservative than they are).

This kind of problem with imprecise measurement is inevitable in a secondary analysis where researchers usually have slim chances of finding variables that perfectly match their theory. If they find that kind of dataset, then it is likely their theory has already been tested by the researchers who generated the dataset. But, as mentioned earlier in discussion of the entity problem, broad interpretation of variables has its advantages, compared to variables which are narrowly operationalized and, thus,

perfectly matched to a theory. It requires flexibility in conceptualization and theorization and thus helps to facilitate new thinking as comparisons are made among studies in which operationalizations vary.

Doubts about interpretation of results from analyses of the effects of perceived media bias in political ideology might be alleviated by results from the analyses of the effects of perceived bias in media coverage of political parties on media credibility. The questions for perceived bias in partisanship were asked directly for fairness in newspaper or television coverage of political parties, not related to respondents' own party affiliation. Analyses on these variables supported Hypothesis 2 without any reservation that might be aroused by the relativity of the variables. Respondents who thought media coverage was too favorable or not favorable to a party were more likely to give that medium a lower credibility score than those who thought media coverage was about right.

Tests of Hypothesis 3 provided the most provocative outcomes. Because Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 were sustained by the data, there was a high chance that Hypothesis 3 was also to be supported. Nevertheless, the results of testing the hypothesis required retention of the null hypothesis.

A possible explanation for this is that moderates and Independents as a group are not less involved but may be highly involved in their moderacy or independence. This study does not address the "real" political position of the newspaper or television. But we can reasonably suppose that the real political positions of the media are near to the middle-of-the-road. Therefore, moderates and Independents should perceive smaller political gaps and assign credibility to the media due to the closeness of the media position to their own. The data showed no sign of such a tendency. That might indicate that they were indeed involved in their position and had narrow latitudes of acceptance.

There is an alternative explanation. As discussed in testing Hypothesis 1, involvement in political position has effects on whether people perceive bias in media and in what direction people think the media are favorable. But once people perceive bias in media, the degree to which they distrust media is not much different for the involved and uninvolved. This might be because the effects of perceived bias in media on evaluation of media credibility are much more powerful than those of political position.

Rejection of Hypothesis 3 does not mean that political position has no effects on media credibility. Testing differences in mean credibility scores among conservatives, moderates, and liberals did not take account of the

directions of perceived bias that influenced the credibility scores. Although the mean credibility score for moderates was not significantly different from that for conservatives or liberals, the compositions of those mean scores are different. Compared to the mean credibility score for moderates, that for conservatives was more influenced by the low scores of people who thought the media were biased toward liberals and that for liberals was more influenced by the low scores of people who thought media were biased toward conservatives. Thus, when we think about the directions of perceived bias that causes the low credibility score, we may say political ideology influences media credibility. The same thing can be said for partisanship and media credibility.

Discussion of Political Ideology and Partisanship

It appears that respondents judged their party affiliation more easily than their political ideology. When asked whether they were conservative, liberal, or moderate, 28% of respondents said they did not think in those terms. When asked about party affiliation, only 7% of respondents reported they had no political preference.

The percentage of people who reported the media were more conservative or liberal than they were is higher than the percentage of those who said the newspaper or television

was too favorable or unfavorable to one party. Respondents seemed to perceive less partisanship bias in media than political-ideological bias. Perhaps respondents accepted the coverage of political personnel and parties as just news and did not have or use their own internal information and criteria. That explanation might be supported by the fact that 67% of the respondents reported that the election coverage was reliable or very reliable for both newspapers and television (see Appendix B). On the other hand, they may have used their own attitude as a ruler for coverage of ideologically-charged issues, or perhaps ideological issues were more controversial and much more vulnerable to be perceived as biased than political news. Thus, political ideology is more likely to influence perceived bias in media and, then, media credibility, than partisanship is.

Perception of Bias, Credibility, and Media

As seen in the data analyses, involvement in political position affects perceived bias in media and, through it, media credibility. As expected, many respondents thought the media were biased against their political position. When we consider the perception of media's political position as a perception of reality or the social environment, the result indicates that the perception of reality is affected by the respondent's pre-existing attributions. Because few people experience direct contact with mass media as institutions,

the perception of the media must be affected by messages from the media. It is unreasonable to think that conservatives or Republicans have some special experience which liberals or Democrats do not have in order to perceive media bias against themselves. Conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, are often exposed to the same messages from the media. What makes them perceive the media differently exists inside themselves not in the messages or in the media. Therefore, as expected, the data indicate that audience member's attributes influence the evaluation of message sources.

Respondents who perceived media bias were more likely to distrust media. An interesting thing about this is that the perception of bias itself is more important than the direction of bias. For a conservative, "more conservative" media are less credible than media that are ideologically "about the same." For a Democrat, media "too favorable" to Democrats are less credible than media that have "about the right" coverage of Democrats. This finding may indicate the sensitivity and importance of perception of bias in media credibility.

The data show that both conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, are not much different in how they feel about media bias. If they perceived bias in the media, they were more likely to perceive it against them. This may

indicate that their minds are somewhat independent of what the mass media do to them. The media offered them the same things; they received different things.

In this kind of situation, it is hard to find a way to satisfy all conflicting parties. It will be difficult for the media to please both conservatives and liberals (or Republicans and Democrats) when conservatives think the media's position is skewed toward the liberal side and liberals think the reverse. Improvement in media performance may help but it would probably not be enough to make people trust the media more. Perhaps the media could inform the public that they are simultaneously perceived to be biased toward conservatives by some audience members and toward liberals by some others. As Park (1955) argued that news was objective when conflicting parties simultaneously interpreted the news as favorable (or unfavorable) to their side, the media might argue that they are in the middle-of-the-road position when two conflicting parties alike insist that media coverage is not favorable enough to their side.

An important finding in the present study is that people trust the media best when they think there is little difference between themselves and media. Thus, rather than trying to maintain distance from various social groups, I would argue that the media had better find common denominators among divergent social groups and try to come

close to the whole society by accommodating those common denominators. That way, society and the media may thrive together.

For Future Study

This study investigated two concepts which have received little attention in previous research on media credibility: political position and perceived bias in the media. Studies, such as hostile media effects, have examined the effects of involvement in social groups on perceived bias in media coverage. But they have not dealt with media credibility. Some scholars have investigated issue involvement and media credibility but not perceived bias in the media coverage of an issue. Despite the fact that people holding extreme political positions often attack media credibility, few studies have dealt directly with the effects of political position on media credibility. Perhaps, as seen in the study, it is because there are no direct effects of political position on media credibility. Rather, political position affects media credibility indirectly, through perceived bias.

This study shows that political position has effects on perceived bias and that perceptions of bias influence evaluation of media credibility. Although the data showed that involvement in political position might not affect media credibility directly, they also revealed that it influenced perceptions of bias in media, which in turn influenced

credibility. Thus, in a sense, this study showed the importance of perceived bias in media as an intervening factor between political position and media credibility as well as its importance in itself.

Future study may consider perceived bias in media as a major player in evaluations of media credibility and investigate the concept in more detail. The results of the present study suggest that there might be two sources (or types) of perceived bias: the perceived gap or distance from media (relative bias) and the perceived position of media (absolute bias). Future studies should probably consider three variables: the respondent's position, the media's perceived position, and the respondent's perceived gap between his or her position and the media's position. Each of these can be compared in terms of their relationship with media credibility. In doing that comparison, it may be interesting to probe those who feel too much bias <u>toward their side</u> (such as a conservative with the perception of "more conservative" media, or a Democrat who thinks media coverage of Democrats is "too favorable").

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS AND DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE FIRST PHASE SURVEY

Questions of the first phase used in the analysis and the distributions of their answers

"First, I'm going to name some institutions in this country. For each one I'd like to ask: As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence in them? The first one is:"

Banks and financial institutions

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	385	40.0
Only Some	508	52.8
Hardly Any	70	7.3
Missing (DK & refused)	39	

Organized religion

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	293	30.9
Only Some	444	46.8
Hardly Any	212	22.3
Missing (DK & refused)	53	

Education

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	387	39.2
Only Some	478	48.5
Hardly Any	121	12.3
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Executive branch of the federal government (i.e., the President and his cabinet)

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	380	38.3
Only Some	408	41.1
Hardly Any	204	20.6
Missing (DK & refused)	10	

Organized Labor

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	120	12.7
Only Some	458	48.3
Hardly Any	370	39.0
Missing (DK & refused)	53	

The press

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	201	20.4
Only Some	538	54.7
Hardly Any	245	24.9
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Congress

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	215	23.0
Only Some	604	61.8
Hardly Any	158	15.2
Missing (DK & refused)	25	

Television

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	162	16.5
Only Some	520	52.8
Hardly Any	302	30.7
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

The U.S. Supreme Court

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	407	42.4
Only Some	447	46.6
Hardly Any	105	11.0
Missing (DK & refused)	42	

Newspapers in General

	Frequency	Valid percent
Great Deal	244	24.5
Only Some	592	59.4
Hardly Any	160	16.1
Missing (DK & refused)	6	

"Do you think of yourself as a liberal, a moderate, or a conservative, or don't you think of yourself in those term?"

	Frequency	Valid percent
Liberal	275	28.1
Moderate	278	28.5
Conservative	144	14.7
Don't think in those terms	280	28.7
Missing (DK & refused)	25	

"What is the highest grade of school you have completed?"*

	Frequency	Valid percent
Less than high school		

graduate	114	11.5
high school graduate	397	38.1
some college	267	26.9
college graduate & more	234	26.9
Missing (DK & refused)	8	

* Answers originally ranged from 1 (the first grade) to 20 (Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., or Law degree) and were grouped into the above four categories for analysis.

"What is your age?"*

	Frequency	Valid percent
18-25	133	13.3
26-35	259	25.9
36-45	218	21.8
45-55	134	13.4
56-65	153	15.3
66 and more	102	10.2
Missing (DK & refused)	3	

* Answers originally were taken as years and grouped into the above 6 categories for analysis.

"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what would you say?"

	Frequency	Valid percent
Republican	333	33.9
Democrat	244	24.9
Independent	326	33.2
Other	3	.3
No political preference	75	7.6
Missing (DK & refused)	10	

"Think about your total household income in 1984, was the total income under $5,000, between 5 and 10, between 10 and 15, between 15 and 20, between 20 and 25, between 25 and 30, between 30 and 35, and between 35 and 50, between 50 and 75, or over $75,000?"*

	Frequency	Valid percent
Less than $14,999	260	28.1
$15,000 to $24,999	271	29.3
$25,000 to $49,999	307	33.2
Over $50,000	88	9.5
Missing (DK & refused)	76	

* Answers were originally taken into ten categories and grouped into the above four categories for analysis.

Sex*

	Frequency	Valid percent
Male	413	41.3
Female	588	58.7

* There is no missing case here due to "DK or refused." But a case was missed because of a wrong data input.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS AND DISTRIBUTIONS OF THE SECOND PHASE SURVEY

Questions of the second phase used in the analysis and the distributions of their answers

Now, we'd like you to think about the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with. The following set of questions all deal with that particular newspaper. Please answer all of the questions regardless of how often you read a newspaper.

Here are some pairs of words and phrases with opposite meanings. Please circle the number in between each pair that best represents how you feel about the daily newspaper you have in mind. For example, the first set of words is "fair" and "unfair." If you think the newspaper is extremely fair, you would circle "1." If you think the newspaper is extremely unfair, you would circle "5." Or, you can circle any number in between.

Fair / Unfair

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	208	21.0
2	298	30.1
3	384	38.8
4	74	7.5
5	26	2.6
Missing (DK & refused)	12	

Unbiased / Biased

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	104	10.5
2	248	25.1
3	413	41.8
4	158	16.0
5	64	6.5
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Tell the whole story / Doesn't tell the whole story

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	130	13.2
2	297	30.1
3	359	36.3
4	134	13.6
5	68	6.9
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Accurate / Inaccurate

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	149	15.0
2	352	35.5
3	353	35.6
4	111	11.2
5	26	2.6
Missing (DK & refused)	11	

Respects people's privacy / Invades people's privacy

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	101	10.2
2	189	19.1
3	393	39.6
4	179	18.0
5	130	13.1
Missing (DK & refused)	10	

Does not care what the reader thinks / Cares what the reader thinks

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	99	10.0
2	140	14.1
3	313	31.6
4	283	28.6
5	155	15.7
Missing (DK & refused)	99	

Watches out after your interests / Does not watch out after your interests

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	115	11.7
2	236	23.9
3	432	43.7
4	132	13.3
5	73	7.4
Missing (DK & refused)	13	

Concerned about the community's well-being / Not concerned about the community's well-being

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	277	28.0
2	329	33.2
3	232	23.4
4	114	11.5
5	39	3.9
Missing (DK & refused)	11	

Separates facts from opinions / Mixes together facts from opinions

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	133	13.4
2	252	25.5
3	365	37.0
4	148	15.0
5	90	9.1
Missing (DK & refused)	13	

Can be trusted / Can't be trusted

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	180	18.2
2	314	31.6
3	363	36.7
4	86	8.7
5	45	4.6
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Sensationalizes / Does not sensationalize

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	97	9.8
2	177	18.0
3	402	40.8
4	204	20.7
5	105	10.7
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

Immoral / Moral

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	53	5.4
2	83	8.3
3	309	31.4
4	278	28.2
5	263	26.7
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

Patriotic / Unpatriotic

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	305	30.9
2	307	31.1
3	248	25.1
4	81	8.2
5	46	4.7
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Concerned mainly about the public interest / Concerned mainly about making profits

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	154	15.6
2	277	28.0
3	350	35.4
4	119	12.0
5	88	8.9
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Factual / Opinionated

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	171	17.3
2	321	32.5
3	322	32.6
4	125	12.7
5	48	4.9
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Reporters are well trained / Reporters are poorly trained

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	190	19.2
2	271	27.4
3	374	37.6
4	107	10.8
5	47	4.8
Missing (DK & refused)	13	

Now, here are some different kinds of people. For each, please give your opinion of how they are covered by the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with. Is the coverage too favorable, just about right, or not favorable enough?

Republicans

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	183	18.6
Just about right	723	73.3
Not favorable enough	80	8.1
Missing (DK & refused)	11	

Catholics

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	78	7.9
Just about right	842	85.7
Not favorable enough	62	6.3
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Born-again Christians

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	97	9.9
Just about right	732	74.9
Not favorable enough	148	15.1
Missing (DK & refused)	25	

Business people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	251	25.5
Just about right	674	68.4
Not favorable enough	61	6.2
Missing (DK & refused)	16	

People on welfare

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	193	19.6
Just about right	612	62.1
Not favorable enough	181	18.3
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

Blacks

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	138	14.0
Just about right	693	70.4
Not favorable enough	153	15.5
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Women who work outside the home

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	70	7.1
Just about right	737	74.7
Not favorable enough	179	18.2
Missing (DK & refused)	16	

Democrats

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	117	11.8
Just about right	774	78.3
Not favorable enough	98	9.9
Missing (DK & refused)	13	

Housewives

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	21	2.1
Just about right	659	66.6
Not favorable enough	309	31.2
Missing (DK & refused)	12	

Communists

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	138	14.1
Just about right	772	79.1
Not favorable enough	66	6.8
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Labor union members

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	193	19.6
Just about right	666	67.7
Not favorable enough	125	12.7
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Environmentalists

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	135	13.8
Just about right	672	68.7
Not favorable enough	171	17.5
Missing (DK & refused)	24	

Military leaders

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	129	13.1
Just about right	737	75.0
Not favorable enough	117	11.9
Missing (DK & refused)	19	

Young people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	43	4.4
Just about right	671	67.9
Not favorable enough	274	27.7
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Jewish people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	50	5.1
Just about right	837	85.3
Not favorable enough	94	9.0
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Police

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	103	10.4
Just about right	666	67.5
Not favorable enough	218	22.1
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Senior Citizens

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	57	5.8
Just about right	636	64.4
Not favorable enough	295	29.9
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Wealthy people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	381	38.6
Just about right	564	57.1
Not favorable enough	42	4.3
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Hispanics

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	77	7.6
Just about right	765	78.1
Not favorable enough	138	14.1
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Nuclear freeze activists

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	191	19.5
Just about right	637	65.1
Not favorable enough	151	15.4
Missing (DK & refused)	23	

The average person

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	11	1.1
Just about right	689	69.8
Not favorable enough	287	29.1
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Now, here is a list of topics. For each, please rate the reliability of coverage by the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with. By reliable, we mean "dependable." Please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" means "not at all reliable" and "5" means "very reliable." You can circle "1" or "5" or any number in between.

The economy

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	44	4.5
2	87	8.8
3	364	36.8
4	365	36.9
5 (Very reliable)	128	13.0
Missing (DK & refused)	12	

President Reagan

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	54	5.5
2	91	9.2
3	288	29.1
4	365	36.9
5 (Very reliable)	190	19.2
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Crime

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	50	5.1
2	70	7.1
3	268	27.1
4	400	40.4
5 (Very reliable)	201	20.3
Missing (DK & refused)	13	

Israel

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	43	4.4
2	81	8.2
3	488	49.6
4	267	27.2
5 (Very reliable)	104	10.6
Missing (DK & refused)	19	

The Arab countries

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	55	5.6
2	96	9.8
3	484	49.3
4	249	25.4
5 (Very reliable)	97	9.9
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Election coverage

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	32	3.2
2	50	5.1
3	236	24.1
4	365	37.0
5 (Very reliable)	302	30.6
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Latin America

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	52	5.3
2	112	11.4
3	480	48.9
4	250	25.5
5 (Very reliable)	88	9.0
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Local news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	26	2.6
2	36	3.6
3	212	21.4
4	365	36.9
5 (Very reliable)	351	35.5
Missing (DK & refused)	12	

The abortion issue

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	55	5.6
2	95	9.6
3	403	40.9
4	308	31.2
5 (Very reliable)	125	12.7
Missing (DK & refused)	16	

The soviet Union

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	63	6.4
2	103	10.5
3	427	43.4
4	275	27.9
5 (Very reliable)	116	11.8
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Natural disasters

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	29	2.9
2	40	4.0
3	251	25.4
4	384	38.9
5 (Very reliable)	284	28.7
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

The arms race

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	51	5.2
2	97	9.8
3	401	40.6
4	306	31.0
5 (Very reliable)	132	13.4
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

The government in Washington

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	53	5.4
2	100	10.1
3	348	35.2
4	337	34.1
5 (Very reliable)	151	15.3
Missing (DK & refused)	13	

Business news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	27	2.7
2	63	6.6
3	353	35.7
4	366	37.0
5 (Very reliable)	177	17.9
Missing (DK & refused)	14	

Religious news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	41	4.1
2	97	9.8
3	396	40.0
4	306	30.9
5 (Very reliable)	150	15.2
Missing (DK & refused)	12	

Health and medical news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	30	3.0
2	64	6.5
3	366	36.9
4	348	35.1
5 (Very reliable)	183	18.5
Missing (DK & refused)	11	

Entertainment news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	25	2.5
2	65	6.6
3	307	31.0
4	368	37.2
5 (Very reliable)	224	22.6
Missing (DK & refused)	13	

In general, do you think the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with is more conservative politically than you are, more liberal, about the same as your are--or is it hard to tell?

	Frequency	Valid percent
More conservative	160	16.3
About the same	294	29.9
More liberal	198	20.2
Hard to tell	330	33.6
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Now, we'd like you to think about <u>television news</u>. The following questions all deal with television news. Please answer all of the questions.

Here are some pairs of words and phrases with opposite meanings. Please circle the number in between each pair that <u>best</u> represents how you feel about television news. For example, the first set of words is "fair" and "unfair." If you think the newspaper is extremely fair, you would circle "1." If you think the newspaper is extremely unfair, you would circle "5." Or, you can circle any number in between.

Fair / Unfair

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	188	19.1
2	317	32.3
3	378	38.5
4	83	8.5
5	15	1.6
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Unbiased / Biased

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	101	10.3
2	272	27.7
3	416	42.4
4	159	16.2
5	33	3.4
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Tell the whole story / Doesn't tell the whole story

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	125	12.7
2	260	26.4
3	335	34.1
4	197	20.0
5	66	6.7
Missing (DK & refused)	19	

Accurate / Inaccurate

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	145	14.8
2	352	35.9
3	366	37.3
4	105	10.7
5	13	1.5
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Respects people's privacy / Invades people's privacy

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	72	7.3
2	143	14.6
3	357	36.4
4	269	27.4
5	141	14.4
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Does not care what the reader thinks / Cares what the reader thinks

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	74	7.5
2	149	15.1
3	325	33.0
4	255	25.9
5	181	18.4
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Watches out after your interests / Does not watch out after your interests

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	87	8.9
2	211	21.5
3	458	46.5
4	158	16.1
5	68	6.9
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Concerned about the community's well-being / Not concerned about the community's well-being

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	151	15.3
2	337	34.2
3	346	35.2
4	118	12.0
5	32	3.3
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Separates facts from opinions / Mixes together facts from opinions

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	112	11.4
2	262	26.7
3	365	37.2
4	175	17.8
5	68	6.9
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Can be trusted / Can't be trusted

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	148	15.1
2	334	34.0
3	376	38.3
4	96	9.8
5	29	3.0
Missing (DK & refused)	19	

Sensationalizes / Does not sensationalize

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	148	15.1
2	266	27.1
3	376	38.3
4	128	13.0
5	63	6.4
Missing (DK & refused)	23	

Immoral / Moral

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	39	4.0
2	76	7.8
3	387	39.5
4	290	29.6
5	187	19.1
Missing (DK & refused)	23	

Patriotic / Unpatriotic

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	221	22.6
2	316	32.2
3	297	30.3
4	96	9.8
5	50	5.1
Missing (DK & refused)	22	

Concerned mainly about the public interest / Concerned mainly about making profits

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	112	11.4
2	258	26.3
3	395	40.2
4	148	15.1
5	69	7.0
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Factual / Opinionated

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	139	14.2
2	334	34.0
3	357	36.4
4	110	11.2
5	42	4.3
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Reporters are well trained / Reporters are poorly trained

	Frequency	Valid percent
1	258	26.2
2	313	31.8
3	305	31.0
4	82	8.3
5	25	2.5
Missing (DK & refused)	19	

Now, here are some different kinds of people. For each, please give your opinion of how they are covered by television news. Is the coverage too favorable, just about right, or not favorable enough?

Republicans

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	152	15.5
Just about right	738	75.2
Not favorable enough	91	9.3
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Catholics

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	76	7.8
Just about right	841	86.3
Not favorable enough	58	5.9
Missing (DK & refused)	27	

Born-again Christians

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	99	10.2
Just about right	687	70.7
Not favorable enough	185	19.1
Missing (DK & refused)	30	

Business people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	202	20.7
Just about right	698	71.4
Not favorable enough	78	8.0
Missing (DK & refused)	24	

People on welfare

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	227	23.2
Just about right	579	59.1
Not favorable enough	173	17.7
Missing (DK & refused)	23	

Blacks

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	176	18.0
Just about right	661	67.4
Not favorable enough	143	14.6
Missing (DK & refused)	22	

Women who work outside the home

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	75	7.7
Just about right	715	73.3
Not favorable enough	186	19.1
Missing (DK & refused)	26	

Democrats

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	115	11.7
Just about right	799	81.4
Not favorable enough	67	6.8
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Housewives

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	21	2.1
Just about right	676	69.1
Not favorable enough	281	28.7
Missing (DK & refused)	24	

Communists

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	160	16.5
Just about right	755	77.8
Not favorable enough	55	5.7
Missing (DK & refused)	32	

Labor union members

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	220	22.5
Just about right	665	68.0
Not favorable enough	93	9.5
Missing (DK & refused)	23	

Environmentalists

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	146	14.9
Just about right	669	68.5
Not favorable enough	162	16.6
Missing (DK & refused)	25	

Military leaders

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	122	12.4
Just about right	734	74.8
Not favorable enough	125	12.7
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Young people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	39	4.0
Just about right	654	66.7
Not favorable enough	288	29.4
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Jewish people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	51	5.2
Just about right	827	84.7
Not favorable enough	98	10.0
Missing (DK & refused)	26	

Police

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	90	9.2
Just about right	652	66.5
Not favorable enough	236	24.3
Missing (DK & refused)	22	

Senior Citizens

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	51	5.2
Just about right	637	65.0
Not favorable enough	292	29.8
Missing (DK & refused)	22	

Wealthy people

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	360	36.7
Just about right	578	59.0
Not favorable enough	42	4.3
Missing (DK & refused)	22	

Hispanics

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	78	8.0
Just about right	774	79.1
Not favorable enough	126	12.9
Missing (DK & refused)	24	

Nuclear freeze activists

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	196	20.1
Just about right	649	66.6
Not favorable enough	130	13.3
Missing (DK & refused)	27	

The average person

	Frequency	Valid percent
Too favorable	17	1.7
Just about right	684	69.7
Not favorable enough	280	28.5
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Now, here is a list of topics. For each, please rate the reliability of coverage by television news. By reliable, we mean "dependable." Please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" means "not at all reliable" and "5" means "very reliable." You can circle "1" or "5" or any number in between.

The economy

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	37	3.8
2	97	9.9
3	358	36.4
4	354	36.0
5 (Very reliable)	138	14.0
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

President Reagan

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	48	4.9
2	78	7.9
3	318	32.3
4	357	36.3
5 (Very reliable)	183	18.6
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Crime

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	29	2.9
2	61	6.2
3	333	33.6
4	403	40.9
5 (Very reliable)	159	16.1
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

Israel

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	34	3.5
2	79	8.1
3	484	49.5
4	295	30.2
5 (Very reliable)	86	8.8
Missing (DK & refused)	24	

The Arab countries

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	38	3.9
2	106	10.8
3	458	46.8
4	288	29.4
5 (Very reliable)	89	9.1
Missing (DK & refused)	10	

Election coverage

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	24	2.4
2	57	5.8
3	240	24.4
4	352	35.8
5 (Very reliable)	311	31.6
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Latin America

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	41	4.2
2	126	12.8
3	487	49.6
4	248	25.3
5 (Very reliable)	79	8.1
Missing (DK & refused)	21	

Local news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	15	1.5
2	51	5.2
3	285	28.9
4	365	37.1
5 (Very reliable)	269	27.3
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

The abortion issue

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	43	4.4
2	99	10.1
3	452	45.9
4	269	27.3
5 (Very reliable)	121	12.3
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

The soviet Union

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	55	5.6
2	131	13.3
3	425	43.3
4	269	27.4
5 (Very reliable)	102	10.4
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

Natural disasters

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	14	1.4
2	26	2.6
3	226	22.9
4	448	45.5
5 (Very reliable)	271	27.5
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

The arms race

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	35	3.6
2	116	11.8
3	412	42.0
4	300	30.5
5 (Very reliable)	119	12.1
Missing (DK & refused)	20	

The government in Washington

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	40	4.1
2	113	11.5
3	359	36.4
4	330	33.5
5 (Very reliable)	144	14.6
Missing (DK & refused)	16	

Business news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	17	1.7
2	59	6.0
3	368	37.4
4	392	39.8
5 (Very reliable)	148	15.0
Missing (DK & refused)	18	

Religious news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	28	2.8
2	94	9.5
3	448	45.4
4	294	29.8
5 (Very reliable)	122	12.4
Missing (DK & refused)	16	

Health and medical news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	15	1.5
2	58	5.9
3	372	37.7
4	350	35.5
5 (Very reliable)	192	19.5
Missing (DK & refused)	15	

Entertainment news

	Frequency	Valid percent
1 (Not at all reliable)	12	1.2
2	47	4.8
3	339	34.4
4	368	37.4
5 (Very reliable)	219	22.2
Missing (DK & refused)	17	

In general, do you think television news is more conservative politically than you are, more liberal, about the same as your are--or is it hard to tell?

	Frequency	Valid percent
More conservative	82	8.3
About the same	277	28.2
More liberal	272	27.7
Hard to tell	352	35.8
Missing (DK & refused)	19	

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