

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 436

CS 209 413

AUTHOR Gaziano, Cecilie; McGrath, Kristin  
 TITLE Measuring the Concept of Media Credibility.  
 PUB DATE 5 Aug 85  
 NOTE 45p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (68th, Memphis, TN, August 3-6, 1985). A product of MORI Research, Inc., Minneapolis, MN.  
 PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)  
 EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
 DESCRIPTORS Attitude Measures; \*Credibility; \*Media Research; \*News Media; \*Newspapers; News Reporting; \*Public Opinion; \*Television; Test Validity  
 IDENTIFIERS \*Audience Response

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to explore attitudes toward the credibility of individual media and news media in general. The first phase of the study was a series of focused group discussions, while the second involved a national representative sampling of 1,469 adults interviewed by telephone, 875 of whom were then surveyed by mail. Credibility scores for newspapers and television were constructed and used as a "yardstick" with which to measure results, including indicators of credibility developed specifically for this study and indicators developed by other studies. These results showed that it is possible to develop a useful summary measure of credibility as long as the complexity of credibility is taken into account. The results also showed that, although people's attitudes toward credibility of newspapers and television are often similar, when forced to choose, they are likely to perceive television as more credible than newspapers. Television was chosen by most respondents as the medium: (1) they would believe concerning reports of conflict; (2) they would choose if they were limited to just one source for local, state, or national/international news; and (3) they consider most reliable for local, state, and national/international news. Newspapers were named as most reliable for understanding complex or controversial local topics. (Extensive tables of data are included.) (HTH)

\*\*\*\*\*  
 \* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
 \* from the original document. \*  
 \*\*\*\*\*

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.  
 Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED 262436

## MEASURING THE CONCEPT OF MEDIA CREDIBILITY

A Paper Prepared to Accompany the Presentation of:

Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust/An ASNE Research Report

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY  
Cecilie Gaziano

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Cecilie Gaziano  
Research Analyst

Kristin McGrath  
President

MORI Research, Inc.  
7901 Xerxes Avenue South, Suite 102  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55431  
Telephone (612) 881-6909 or 881-2380

Presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication,  
Memphis, Tennessee, August 5, 1985

## ABSTRACT:

### MEASURING THE CONCEPT OF MEDIA CREDIBILITY

A large body of research spanning several decades which shows that many people distrust the media led the American Society of Newspaper Editors to sponsor a comprehensive national survey of media credibility. The study, conducted by MORI Research, was designed to measure attitudes toward individual media and news media in general. One research goal was to disentangle credibility problems of "the news media" and television from those of newspapers. Another goal was to learn more about areas in which newspapers are strong and those in which they are vulnerable, so that newspapers might be better prepared to develop actionable strategies to address weaker areas. Because the study was done for newspapers, this paper has emphasized findings related to newspapers.

Since previous research has shown that media credibility is a complex concept, MORI Research used a number of operational definitions of "credibility," including abstract and concrete measures. A credibility score was constructed and used as a "yardstick" with which to measure results, including other indicators of credibility developed specifically for this study, as well as indicators developed by other research studies.

Respondents were divided into groups which were high, medium, and low on newspaper and television credibility, and these three groups were compared in a number of areas, four of which were selected for discussion in this paper. Respondents were compared also on other operational definitions of credibility.

Respondents were asked to choose among magazines, radio, television, and newspapers under several different conditions. Television was the choice of the largest percentage of respondents for each of these measures except for understanding complex or controversial local topics. Newspapers were named by the largest percentage under that condition.

Therefore, it appears that although people's attitudes toward credibility of newspapers and television are often similar, when forced to choose, they are more likely to pick TV than newspapers as more credible. Credibility scores were related to people's choices in most cases. However, giving high credibility scores to newspapers was not related to choice of newspapers over television in several cases. Also, being a daily newspaper reader did not always insure choosing newspapers over television.

Respondents were also asked about their attitudes toward freedom of the press. They were most supportive of press freedoms when the news media serve as watchdogs over government. They were less supportive when rights of the press appear to collide with the rights of ordinary citizens. Credibility scores tended to be related to these attitudes, although some attitudes were so strongly held that credibility did not play a role.

## MEASURING THE CONCEPT OF MEDIA CREDIBILITY

Five decades of communication research have broadly outlined a problem of considerable public distrust of the news media (Erskine, 1970-1971; Gaziano and McGrath, 1985). Estimates of the magnitude of the problem depend on how "credibility" is measured. The purpose of this paper is to describe credibility measurement in previous research and to report the results of a national survey which treated credibility as a multidimensional concept.

### RESEARCH DEFINITIONS OF "CREDIBILITY"

Media credibility research has two primary ancestors, the work of Mitchell V. Charnley (1936) on newspaper reporting accuracy and the work of the Yale group on believability of source as a component of persuasive communication impact (Hovland, Janis, and Kelly, 1953; Hovland and Weiss, 1951).

Interest in credibility increased after the Roper polling organization began to ask a question in surveys for the Television Information Office about the relative believability of media and got differing results between 1959 and 1961, which pointed to increased public trust in television, compared with newspapers (e.g., Roper, 1983). The question was: "If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, the magazines and the newspapers, which of the four versions would you be most inclined to believe--the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?" Since 1961, television's lead over other media has increased. However, the margin for newspapers has remained relatively stable.

The Roper question has been the most frequently used operational definition of credibility in published research. At least 14 other studies have used some version of the Roper question (Abel and Wirth, 1977; Baxter and Bittner, 1974; Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Chang and Lemert, 1968;

Gantz, 1981; Greenberg, 1966; Jacobson, 1969; Lee, 1978; Lemert, 1970; Mulder, 1980; Reagan and Zanaty, 1979; Shaw, 1981; Shaw, 1973; and Stempel, 1973). Some of these studies have found that whether the question specifies "local" news stories or "national" news can influence results on the relative credibility of TV and newspapers. In some studies newspapers have been more believable than television for local news (Lemert; Stempel), although this has not always been so (Gantz; Stempel; Abel and Wirth).

Probably the second most frequent operational definition of media credibility is how much or what percentage of the news in the media people believe (e.g., Abel and Wirth, 1977; Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Gantz, 1981; Izard, 1984; Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, 1979).

When researchers' interest in credibility began to mushroom in the 1960s, interest in developing the concept more fully also grew. Hovland and his colleagues (1953) identified two main components of credibility as "trustworthiness" and "expertise." This led some scholars to be interested in identifying underlying dimensions of credibility through factor analysis, such as "safety," "qualification," "dynamism," "knowledgeability," "accuracy," "fairness," and "completeness" (e.g., Berlo, Lemert, and Mertz, 1969-70; Lee, 1978; Jacobson, 1969). Others have studied the main or sole source of most news (Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Chang and Lemert, 1968; Greenberg, 1966; Lemert, 1970).

Scholars also began to approach credibility in other ways, such as specifying demographic and political variables which might be related (Westley and Severin, 1964; Greenberg, 1966). Differentiating between credibility characteristics of personal and mass media information sources (Weiss, 1956; Sargent, 1965; Baxter and Bittner, 1974); examining audience perceptions of how well the press covers different population groups (Meyer, 1973); and perceptions of techniques of news coverage (Fielder and Weaver, 1981).

McCombs and Washington (1983) have identified four main areas of research on media credibility: (1) confidence in institutions, (2) honesty and ethical standards, (3) perceptions of various industries, and (4) the public's attitudes with respect to believability, accuracy, fairness, and bias. Whitney's (1984) review of previous research adds characteristics of press performance not related to bias or believability (e.g., invasion of privacy, covering up stories) and the relationship of the press to government (e.g., balancing First Amendment freedoms against other public goals and rights) to this list. The Public Agenda Foundation has explored freedom of speech issues and credibility (Immerwahr and Doble, 1982; Immerwahr, et al, 1980a,b).

#### Measurement Issues

One major criticism of the Roper question about believability of media when reports conflict is that people may have different referents in mind, depending upon medium. For example, people may think of local topics with regard to newspapers and national topics with regard to television (Reagan and Zenaty, 1979). A second concern is that situations in which people receive conflicting reports from various news media might not occur often, or if they do occur, people may not be aware of contradictory reports (Meyer, 1974).

Other variables are the nature of the event, geographic scope of event, amount of media use, historical period, type of topic, and dimension of media (i.e., local stations, networks, wire services, staff reporters, news anchors, etc.), and beliefs or actions of the audience (Meyer, 1974). Edelstein and Ito (1985) have found that respondents may evaluate the media in terms of channel characteristics more often than in terms of dictionary or scholarly definitions of "credibility." Credibility may also be measured in terms of

people's personal experiences with local media (Burgoon, Burgoon, and Wilkinson, 1981). Several researchers have concluded that credibility is a multi-dimensional concept (e.g., Meyer, 1974; Gantz, 1981; Burgoon, et al, 1981).

The mounting evidence that the public greatly distrusts the news media and that this distrust may be increasing led the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) to commission a study to provide the most comprehensive look at credibility to date, with a particular focus on newspapers.

This study, conducted by MORI Research, Inc., approached the concept of credibility as a complex concept and highlighted a number of aspects of the problem (MORI Research, 1985a,b,c). First, a credibility score was constructed and used as a "yardstick" with which to compare results, including other credibility measures. Results differed somewhat, depending (1) on whether credibility was operationalized as an abstract concept or a concrete one, and (2) the conditions under which credibility concerns may arise.

#### METHODOLOGY

The study had two phases. The first phase was a series of focus group discussions; the second was a national, representative sampling of adults aged 18 and older living in the contiguous United States. The quantitative phase of the project had two parts. First, a national, representative and project-able sample of adults was interviewed by telephone. Then, during the second part, respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire mailed to them at home.

The initial telephone sample was selected through random-digit dialing, a technique that allows unlisted numbers to be included. Up to four attempts were made to reach respondents determined to be eligible for the survey. Respondents were selected within households by a random method (e.g., see Salmon and Nichols, 1983) with a quota for sex. All interviewing was conducted from central, monitored facilities.

Interviews, lasting 20 minutes on the average, were completed with 1,600 adults between December 7, 1984, and January 19, 1985. The statistical margin of error for a random sample of this size is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Error margins are larger for sub-groups.

During the initial telephone interviews, respondents were asked to give their names and addresses so a second questionnaire could be sent to them through the mail. Those who agreed received a 12-page questionnaire, a cover letter, and a \$1 incentive. After about a week, these people were re-contacted by telephone so they could read back numbers corresponding to their answers on the mail questionnaire. Final telephone interviews were completed with 1,002 respondents during this second phase (December 14 to January 30). The completion rate was 58% of contacts with eligible respondents, and those taking part in the second phase were 63% of those completing the first part. The coefficient of inter-coder agreement for coding the open-ended questions is .94.

For the analysis, results were weighted by sex, education, household size, and race to match national figures from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Results described in this paper and the report are based on the weighted data, totalling 1,469 persons. Results for the second part are based on responses from the mail sub-sample, whose weighted total is 875 persons.

The mail sub-sample somewhat underrepresents people aged 18 to 24 and 65 or older, people with lower education and income, blacks, men, and widowed people. It slightly overrepresents people aged 25 to 44, those with higher education and income, women, married people, and those who read a newspaper yesterday. Based on a comparison of answers to the initial phone interview, there were essentially no differences between those who completed the mail questionnaire and those who did not as far as other media use characteristics, demographics, or attitudes toward news and the media were concerned.



## THE CONCEPT OF CREDIBILITY

In order to provide a standard against which responses to different types of questions about the media could be compared, credibility scores for newspapers and television were constructed. Then people were divided into groups that were high, medium and low on credibility, and these three credibility groups were compared on attitudes toward reliability of news reporting, the trustworthiness of news media to help people understand news, and which media they would believe in the face of conflicting news reports. The three groups also were compared on attitudes toward the media as institutions, the role and function of the news media, newsgathering techniques, news judgment decisions, perceptions about journalists, and freedom of the press.

### Overall Credibility Scores

The first step in constructing an overall credibility score was a factor analysis of 16 items measuring people's attitudes toward newspapers on a number of dimensions including fairness, bias, completeness, accuracy, trustworthiness, and concern for the public interest. People were asked to rate these characteristics from 1 to 5 on a 5-point scale. Items were coded or recoded so that they were scaled in the same direction with 5 as the highest possible rating and 1 the lowest possible rating. Percentages are shown in Table 1 for those giving newspapers a 4 or 5 for each item.

The factor analysis showed that 12 of these items grouped together. The concept which appeared to tie these items together was credibility. Some previous research suggested that the items would separate into different dimensions of credibility, but that did not happen in this case. Table 1 shows the factor loadings (the higher the loading, the greater the relationship) of the aspects of the credibility problem that were combined to create the overall credibility score.

The same information for television news is shown in Table 2.

Television news items tended to separate into two credibility groups, but no new items grouped with either of these. There appeared to be no reason not to use the same 12 items in a single credibility score for television news.

In addition, a "reliability of coverage" score was developed by adding up ratings given to newspapers and television for reliability of coverage of 17 specific topics. In general, results were similar when credibility scores and reliability of coverage scores were contrasted. Because of this similarity, this paper will refer only to the credibility scores.

Television and newspaper credibility scores were correlated moderately with each other ( $r = .40$ ,  $p = .0001$ ), suggesting that people's attitudes toward these media are similar to a certain degree. About 61% of respondents scored either medium or high on the two media, and about 13% were low on both. Another 26% scored low on one but higher on the other.

### Constructing Scores

Although some experts prefer to reduce a measurement to as few factors as possible, another consideration in this factor analysis was construction of a score. Using a number of factors provided a good distribution of responses, a desirable characteristic for scores.

Respondent ratings were translated into a score by adding up their ratings on each of the 12 credibility items. The lowest possible credibility score was 12 (less if respondents did not give an answer for each item), and the highest possible score was 60. Based on these scores, respondents were divided into three credibility groups (high, medium, and low), as shown below:

<u>Credibility Group</u>	<u>Newspaper Credibility</u>	<u>Television Credibility</u>
Low (scores of 7-20)	25% (N = 213)	27% (N = 232)
Medium (scores of 21-30)	43% (N = 374)	43% (N = 362)
High (scores of 31-60)	32% (N = 275)	30% (N = 256)

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview, N = 862 with 13 observations missing; TV credibility, N = 850, 25 observations missing).

#### How Newspapers and Television Rated on the Credibility Items

When all of the credibility and non-credibility items are taken into account, the percentages of people rating newspapers and television news highly (4 or 5 on a 5-point scale) on these characteristics were quite similar. Newspapers tended to do somewhat better than television on concern for the community's well-being, respecting people's privacy and not sensationalizing. Television news came out a little higher on reporter training.

Newspapers were rated highly by 6 people in 10 on concern for the community's well-being and patriotism. About 5 in 10 evaluated newspapers this favorably for fairness, trustworthiness, morality, accuracy, being factual, and reporters' being well trained. TV's ratings were similar.

Newspapers did relatively less well (high ratings by about 4 in 10) on being unbiased, telling the whole story, caring what the reader thinks, watching out for the reader's interests, separating fact and opinion, and being concerned for the public interest. Areas in which newspapers were especially likely to receive low ratings were respecting people's privacy and sensationalism. TV's ratings also were similar.

#### COMPARISON OF CREDIBILITY SCORES AND OTHER OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

MORI Research approached the concept of credibility as a complex concept and highlighted fourteen aspects of credibility. In order to illustrate

further the usefulness of the credibility scores as a summary measure, this paper will discuss the first four of these aspects of credibility:

1. Believability of media when news reports conflict.
2. Coverage of local, state, national and international news.
  - a. Preferred single source of news.
  - b. Reliability of reporting.
  - c. Ability to understand the news.
3. Coverage of specific topics, including controversy.
4. Responsible exercise of First Amendment rights.

#### 1. Believing Media When News Reports Conflict

Participants were asked the Roper poll question, and their answers were quite similar to those of the most recent Roper poll. They would be most inclined to believe TV as to believe newspapers by a two to one margin (52% versus 25%). Nine percent said radio, and 14% said magazines (Table 3).

Credibility scores were strongly related to the choice of newspapers or television as the medium to believe in the face of conflicting reports (Table 4). For instance, those who gave newspapers high credibility scores were more than twice as likely to believe newspapers than those with low newspaper credibility scores. Those with high TV credibility scores tended to select television. However, a large proportion of those scoring high on newspaper credibility would believe television.

The most frequent reason people gave for selecting television was that "seeing is believing" (Table 3). One respondent said, "You can see their eyes. You can tell if they're lying." Other reasons for believing television were that TV delivers news fast, easy and first, has some advantage of TV related to credibility, or that other media are unsatisfactory in some way.

People who said they would believe newspapers most often cited the ability of newspapers to provide detail, to take time to prepare reports, or to have some advantage related to credibility.

Which medium people would believe is an important consideration. Half of those surveyed said they had heard conflicting reports of a news story from different news sources. When asked to provide details about this, half of these respondents said that the conflict involved two or more different media, such as television and newspapers. About one-third said that two or more of the same kind of medium were involved, such as several TV stations, or they pointed out differences within sections of the same newspaper. When asked what conflicting reports were about, people most often mentioned breaking news stories about crimes, disasters, assassinations and attempted assassinations involving public figures.

Exposure to conflicting reports lessens media credibility. Almost two-thirds of those with low newspaper or TV credibility scores were aware of conflicting reports; less than half of those with high scores were aware of such reports.

## 2. Coverage of Local, State, National and International News

Coverage of local news long has been considered the major franchise of daily newspapers in the United States. Coverage of national and international news has become a particularly strong area for television. Findings from the survey, which support this view, also suggest some concerns for newspapers about their stronghold on local news coverage.

People rated daily newspaper coverage very important in helping them deal with complex local issues. About half chose newspapers when asked which one of their local news media they would trust the most to help them understand "a situation in your local area that is hard to understand or is

controversial." <sup>4</sup> Just under 4 in 10 chose television. Another 11% chose radio and 2%, magazines. (See Table 5.)

People who gave high ratings to newspaper credibility (Table 6) and those who read newspapers "almost every day" were particularly likely to trust newspapers for helping them understand complex local issues. In both cases, about 6 in 10 said they would choose their local newspaper.

However, about half the respondents chose television as the medium they would turn to if they "had to choose one source for local news." <sup>5</sup> Only one-third chose newspapers. A few would pick radio (12%) or magazines (2%). Preferences for a single source of state news were similar: television, 57%; newspapers, 33%; radio, 8%; and magazines, 2%. Results differed somewhat by readership and by newspaper credibility ratings:

- Among people who read newspapers every day or almost every day, 45% said they would choose newspapers for local news, and 42% would choose television.

- Among those who rated newspaper credibility high, 43% chose newspapers and 46% chose television as the medium for local news.

Almost 6 in 10 chose television as the single most reliable source for "local and state news." <sup>6</sup> Once again, newspaper readership and credibility ratings made some difference, but not a great deal.

#### National and International News

When respondents were asked which one of the news media they would trust to help them understand national news, 57% chose television, compared to 29% for newspapers (5% said radio and 9% said magazines). Being a daily newspaper reader made only a slight difference in how people answered, but ratings of newspaper credibility did have an impact.

- Among those rating newspaper credibility high, 35% chose newspapers as the medium they would trust to help them understand controversial news.

● Among those rating newspaper credibility low, 24% said they would put their trust in newspapers.

About 7 in 10 chose television as the most reliable medium for national and international news and as the one source they would choose for national and international news. Even among people awarding newspapers high credibility ratings, 68% said that television is more reliable for national and international reporting.

### Preferences for Print and Broadcast Media in General

In general, if people interviewed had to choose one way of getting news and information, 64% would rather get it on TV or radio and 36% would rather read it in print. Even a majority of frequent newspaper readers preferred broadcast (Table 4).<sup>7</sup>

Giving high credibility scores to newspapers did not have much influence on preferences for newspapers or magazines, but giving high scores to television did affect preferences for television or radio (Table 5).

● Among people who rated newspaper credibility high, 59% preferred broadcast media. This is almost as high a proportion as those rating newspaper credibility low, who preferred broadcast (64%).

● Among those rating TV credibility high, 74% preferred broadcast. Even among those rating TV credibility low, more than half (54%) would rather get their news from broadcast media.

### 3. Coverage of Specific Topics

Survey respondents gave daily newspapers and TV high marks for their reliability overall, the quality of their reporting and their coverage of controversial issues (Table 7). However, the survey did reveal some concerns about how certain topic areas are covered. This section will describe overall ratings and then describe more specific ratings, including coverage of controversy.

Respondents were asked to rate the overall reliability of their daily newspapers on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant "not at all reliable" and 5 meant "very reliable." Just over 6 in 10 gave positive reliability ratings to their newspaper (either a 4 or 5 on the scale), while 7 percent gave negative ratings (either a 1 or 2). Ratings for television news were almost identical. On similar 1-to-5 scales, "the quality of reporting" in daily newspapers received positive ratings from about 6 in 10 respondents. About 7 in 10 rated the quality of television reporting this high. About 1 in 10 rated either medium negatively on reporting quality.

Credibility ratings and overall ratings of reliability, quality of reporting, and coverage of controversial issues were highly correlated (Table 8). For example, 88% of those giving newspapers high credibility ratings also gave newspapers very positive ratings for reporting quality. This contrasts with 31% of those who scored low on newspaper credibility who rated newspapers highly for reporting quality.

#### Coverage of Controversy

Four in ten ASNE survey respondents could name a controversial or touchy subject in their local areas, and two-thirds of these persons said they had been able to get all the information they desired about that topic. Those aware of local controversies were more likely to say that local newspapers were doing a good or excellent job of covering that topic (78%) than they were to say this of television news (66%). Television did slightly better than newspapers, however, on overall coverage of controversial issues--receiving ratings of 4 or 5 on a five-point scale (See Table 7). Fifty-six percent rated television highly, and 50% rated newspapers highly.

When results for responses to questions on coverage of controversy are compared with results for the question on which media help people to



understand a complex or controversial topic, the data suggest that newspapers are perceived as covering controversy better than television but that newspapers also may be more vulnerable to criticism of this kind of coverage than television is because newspapers do more of this kind of reporting. People's expectations of newspapers may be higher than their expectations of television in this area.

Disparities between respondents giving high and low credibility ratings were not as sharp on this measure as on other results (data not shown). People giving low newspaper credibility scores were almost as likely as those giving high scores to say that newspapers were doing a good or excellent job in covering local conflicts (70%, compared with 84%). Similarly, those giving low TV credibility scores were almost as likely as those giving high scores to say that TV was doing an excellent or good job of covering a local controversy.

However, differences were very sharp between those giving newspapers and television high ratings for coverage of controversial issues in general. For instance, 85% of those giving TV high credibility scores rated television news very positively, as opposed to 29% of those giving TV low credibility scores who also rated television news very positively.

#### Reliability of Reporting on 17 Topics

Respondents rated the reliability of newspaper coverage of 17 different topics, using the same 1-to-5 scale described earlier. Newspapers were rated highly (4 or 5) by a large majority (6-7 in 10) for coverage of local news, elections, natural disasters, crime and entertainment news (Table 9).

Roughly 5 people in 10 evaluated newspapers highly for reporting on the economy, President Reagan, the government in Washington, business news, religious news, and health and medical news.

Newspapers were given relatively lower marks for coverage of the Arab countries, Latin America, Israel, the Soviet Union, and the abortion issue. Roughly 4 in 10 rated reporting of these topics highly.

Respondents also graded TV news for reliability of reporting in these areas, and they tended to evaluate newspapers and television similarly, except that newspapers were given an edge in local news and television was given a slight advantage in coverage of natural disasters.

Respondents' credibility scores were related to their ratings of television and newspaper coverage of these topics (Table 10). Differentials between those giving low TV and newspaper credibility scores and those giving high scores were sharp, about 20 or 25 percentage points apart on every topic.

#### 4. Responsible Exercise of First Amendment Rights

ASNE survey respondents appeared to be the most supportive of press freedoms when the press was seen as a watchdog over government. They took the strongest positions on limiting freedom of the press when the press was seen as an institution which tramples on other people's rights and takes advantage of the ordinary citizen. (See Table 11.)

#### The Principle of Press Freedom

A substantial minority, 4 in 10 respondents, indicated a desire for curbs on freedom of the press in the 1985 ASNE study. This minority disagreed that the media exercise their right to freedom of expression responsibly and that it is important to maintain a free press.

Newspaper credibility ratings were related to agreement with the statement that "sometimes, there's too much freedom of the press," but television credibility ratings were not (Table 12). However, both newspaper and television credibility ratings were highly correlated with agreement

with the statement that "the media abuse their Constitutional guarantee of a free press."

### The Watchdog Role

The minority who took a critical view of press rights was smallest when the issue was whether or not the press oversteps bounds in its role as a watchdog over public officials (Table 11). One-fourth said that the press often gets in the way so that public officials cannot do the job they were elected to do. All the others subscribed to the view that the press helps keep public officials honest. Once again, TV and newspaper credibility ratings were related to press criticism (Table 12).

### Protection of Sources

Two-thirds of those interviewed for the ASNE study agreed that a reporter has the right to refuse to give the government information which he or she has obtained but which has not yet been made public (Table 11). More than two-thirds agreed that a journalist's right to protect confidentiality of sources is like the right of confidentiality extended to doctors or members of the clergy.

Newspaper and television credibility scores were not highly related to agreement with these viewpoints (Table 12). Those giving low scores and those giving high scores were about equally likely to agree that reporters can refuse to give government information. Those giving low scores were somewhat less likely than those giving high scores to liken journalists' rights of confidentiality to rights of doctors and clergy.

### Court Trials and Conflicting Rights

When the issue was the rights of ordinary people versus press rights, then people surveyed in the ASNE study were much less likely to favor the

press (Table 11). Seven in 10 said that a person's right to a fair trial outweighed the public's right to be informed. Further, 7 in 10 agreed with a more strongly worded statement, that news media often make people accused of crimes look guilty before they are tried in court.

People giving high credibility scores to TV and newspapers were almost as likely as those giving low scores to support the right to a fair trial over the public's right to be informed and to agree that the news media often make people accused of crimes look guilty before trial.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Since previous research has shown that media credibility is a complex concept, MORI Research used a number of operational definitions of "credibility," including abstract and concrete measures. A credibility score was constructed and used as a "yardstick" with which to measure results, including indicators of credibility developed specifically for this study and indicators developed by other studies. These results showed that it is possible to develop a useful summary measure of credibility as long as the complexity of credibility is taken into account.

Results also showed that, although people's attitudes toward credibility of newspapers and television often are similar, when forced to choose, they are likely to perceive television as more credible than newspapers.

Respondents were asked to choose among magazines, radio, television, and newspapers under the following conditions:

- Which one medium they would believe when media reports conflict.
- Which media they would choose if limited to just one source for:  
(a) local news, (b) state news, or (c) national and international news
- Which media would help them to understand a complex or controversial issue which is (a) local or (b) national.

- Which single medium is most reliable for: (a) local and state news or (b) national and international news.

Television was the choice of the largest percentage of respondents for each of these measures except for understanding complex or controversial local topics. Newspapers were named by the largest percentage under that condition.

Credibility scores were related to people's choices in most cases, although giving high credibility scores to newspapers was not always related to preferences for newspapers. Further, being a daily newspaper reader did not always insure choosing newspapers over television.

Respondents were also asked about issues related to freedom of the press. They were most likely to support press freedoms when media serve as watchdogs over government. They were least likely to support First Amendment rights when the rights of ordinary people are at stake. Although people's stands on newspaper and television credibility frequently were related to their attitudes toward press freedoms, this was not so with regard to the rights of ordinary citizens to receive a fair trial. People's strong support of the press when it needs to keep information and sources confidential also did not depend on credibility ratings.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

One area for future research is the role of journalists in people's perceptions of media credibility. MORI Research is now in the process of surveying more than 50 newspapers, including about 1,500 newspaper journalists, on this topic. The study, sponsored by the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, will be concluded in fall 1985, and the data will be available through the Roper Center. Other areas which would benefit from further research include the potentially eroding local news "franchise" of newspapers, credibility differences between broadcast and print, and the ordinary person's distrust of media.

## FOOTNOTES

1. In 1959, 32% said they would believe newspapers, and 29% said they would believe television. In 1961, 24% said they would believe newspapers, and 39% said television. In 1982, 22% said newspapers and 53% said television.

2. For instance, Gantz asked: "If perfect believability equals 100%, in your opinion, what percent of the news about the Buffalo (New York) area on (name of local station usually watched for early evening local news) do you believe?"

3. The other aspects of credibility measured in the 1985 ASNE survey were: (1) fairness, accuracy, and completeness of news coverage, (2) concerns about how the press treats ordinary people, (3) coverage of specific demographic groups, (4) news presentation issues, (5) respect for the media as institutions, (6) respect for people in the media, (7) perceptions of opinion and bias, (8) personal experience, (9) people who distrust media the most, and (10) newspaper and market characteristics.

4. This question is based on one in a Washington Post survey (see Sussman, 1981; Washington Post, 1981): "If there is a situation in the news that is hard to understand or controversial, which part of the major news media would you trust the most to help you understand it?"

5. For comparisons, see Roper (1983), Carter and Greenberg (1965), Lemert (1970), Lewis (1981), Shaw (1981), Clark, et al (1984), and Alter, et al (1984). Comparisons are discussed in Gaziano and McGrath (1985).

6. This question is based on a question asked by the L.A. Times survey (Lewis, 1981; Shaw, 1981): "Does the news seem more reliable to you when you see it on TV, or when you read it in a newspaper?"

7. Another way of measuring interest in newspapers and television news was to ask about how people would feel if they lacked access to either for some time. About one-fourth would feel lost without a newspaper, and somewhat less than half would miss a newspaper but get along without it. About one-third could get along easily without a newspaper. Orientation to TV news showed a similar pattern.

There was some overlap, although not a lot, between the newspaper-oriented and the TV news-oriented. About 4 in 10 would feel lost without either medium. Five in 10 could adjust without either although they would miss them, and 4 in 10 could live without either one.

Giving newspapers high credibility scores somewhat increased the chance that respondents would feel lost without newspapers, but not markedly so. There was a somewhat stronger relationship for TV news than for newspapers between high credibility scores and high orientation.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funding for this research project was provided by:

- The Associated Press
- The American Society of Newspaper Editors Foundation
- The American Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation
- Associated Press Managing Editors Association
- Cox Enterprises
- The Gannett Foundation
- The Scripps-Howard Foundation
- The Knight Foundation

The project was conducted by MORI Research, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Kristin McGrath, president of MORI Research, headed the research and coordinated planning with the ASNE Credibility Committee, of which David Lawrence, Jr., was chairman. Cecilie Gaziano, research analyst, was project director of the national survey. Virginia Dodge Fielder, director of news and circulation research for Knight-Ridder Newspapers, contributed ideas for report organization and writing.

Sharon Polansky, doctoral student at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, helped develop codes for open-ended questions and did coding. Paula Hartman, of MORI Research, also developed codes for open-ended questions and did coding. Other coders were Karen McKeon and James Jeffery at MORI Research. Brent Stahl, research analyst, Lee Kaplan, account executive, and Arline Satrom, research assistant, all MORI staffers, made conceptual and technical contributions to project planning and report preparation.

Jeanne Drew Surveys, Inc., conducted the interviewing, and C. J. Olson Market Research, Inc., also conducted some interviewing.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Copies of a published summary of the focus group and national survey research, Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust, are available at \$6.50 from the American Society of Newspaper Editors, P.O. Box 17004, Washington, D.C. 20041 (phone 703-620-6087). There is a 20 percent discount for orders of 20 or more copies. Make checks payable to ASNE. Copies of this technical report and a focus group report also are available from ASNE.

The data tapes for the study have been deposited with the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut. Inquiries may be addressed to the Center at Box U164, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CN 06268. Telephone (203) 486-4441.

An annotated bibliography on media credibility is included in MORI Research (1985c).

## REFERENCES

- Abel, John D. and Michael O. Wirth  
 1977 "Newspaper vs. TV Credibility for Local News," Journalism Quarterly, 54:371-375.
- Alter, Jonathan with Lucy Howard and Nancy Stadtman  
 1984 "The Media in the Dock," Newsweek, pp. 66-72 (October).
- Baxter, Leslie A. and John R. Bittner  
 1974 "High School and College Student Perceptions of Media Credibility," Journalism Quarterly, 51:517-520.
- Berlo, David K., James B. Lemert, and Robert J. Mertz  
 1969-70 "Dimensions for Evaluating the Acceptability of Message Sources," Public Opinion Quarterly, 33:563-576.
- Burgoon, Michael, Judee K. Burgoon, and Miriam Wilkinson  
 1981 "Newspaper Image and Evaluation," Journalism Quarterly, 58:411-419, 433.
- Carter, Richard F. and Bradley S. Greenberg  
 1965 "Newspapers or Television: Which Do You Believe?," Journalism Quarterly, 42:29-34.
- Chang, Lawrence K. H. and James B. Lemert  
 1968 "The Invisible Newsman and Other Factors in Media Competition," Journalism Quarterly, 45:436-444.
- Charnley, Mitchell V.  
 1936 "Preliminary Notes on a Study of Newspaper Accuracy," Journalism Quarterly, 13:394-401.
- Clark, Martire & Bartolomeo, Inc.  
 1984 Relating to Readers in the 80s. American Society of Newspaper Editors, P. O. Box 17004, Washington, D. C. 20041.
- Edelstein, Alex S. and Youichi Ito  
 1985 "Communicating Opinions About Social Problems," Paper presented to the American Association for Public Opinion Research; Americana Great Gorge Hotel; McAfee, New Jersey; May 17, 1985.
- Erskine, Hazel Gaudet  
 1970-71 "The Polls: Opinion of the News Media," Public Opinion Quarterly, 34:630-643.
- Fielder, Virginia Dodge and David H. Weaver  
 1981 "Public Opinion on Investigative Reporting," Newspaper Research Journal, 3(2):54-62.
- Gantz, Walter  
 1981 "The Influence of Researcher Methods on Television and Newspaper News Credibility Evaluations," Journal of Broadcasting, 25:155-169.



- Gaziano, Cecilie and Kristin McGrath  
 1985 "The Media Credibility Problem: Putting the Research into Perspective." Paper presented to the American Association for Public Opinion Research; American Great Gorge Hotel; McAfee, New Jersey (May 19).
- Greenberg, Bradley S.  
 1966 "Media Use and Believability: Some Multiple Correlates," Journalism Quarterly, 43:655-670, 732.
- Hovland, Carl I., Irving L. Janis, and Howard H. Kelley  
 1953 Communication and Persuasion. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Hovland, Carl I. and Walter Weiss  
 1951 "The Influence of Source Credibility," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 15.
- Immerwahr, John and John Doble  
 1982 "Public Attitudes Toward Freedom of the Press," Public Opinion Quarterly, 46:177-187.
- Immerwahr, John, Jean Johnson, and John Doble  
 1980a The Speaker and the Listener: A Public Perspective on Freedom of Expression. Public Agenda Foundation, 750 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017.  
 1980b "Technical Appendix. The Speaker and the Listener: A Public Perspective on Freedom of Expression." New York: Public Agenda Foundation.
- Izard, Ralph S.  
 1984 "Media Ethics: What the Public Expects," paper presented to the American Association for Public Opinion Research. Lake Lawn Lodge, Delavan, Wisconsin (May).
- Jacobson, Harvey K.  
 1969 "Mass Media Believability: A Study of Receiver Judgments," Journalism Quarterly, 46:20-28.
- Lee, Raymond S. H.  
 1978 "Credibility of Newspaper and TV News," Journalism Quarterly, 55:282-287.
- Lemert, James B.  
 1970 "News Media Competition Under Conditions Favorable to Newspapers," Journalism Quarterly, 47:272-280.
- Lewis, I. A.  
 1981 "The Media," Los Angeles Times Poll No. 45. Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Company.
- McCombs, Maxwell E. and Laura Washington  
 1983 "Opinion Surveys Offer Conflicting Clues as to How Public Views Press," Presstime, 5(2)4-9 (February).

- Meyer, Philip  
 1973 "Elitism and Newspaper Believability," Journalism Quarterly, 50:31-36.
- Meyer, Timothy J.  
 1974 "Media Credibility: The State of the Research," Public Telecommunications Review, 2(4):48-52.
- MORI Research, Inc.  
 1985a "Focus Group on Newspaper Credibility," American Society of Newspaper Editors, P.O. Box 17004, Washington, D.C. 20041.  
 1985b Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust. American Society of Newspaper Editors, P.O. Box 17004, Washington, D.C. 20041.  
 1985c "Technical Appendix/Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust," American Society of Newspaper Editors, P.O. Box 17004, Washington, D.C., 20041. (With annotated bibliography on media credibility.)
- Mulder, Ronald  
 1980 "Media Credibility: A Use-Gratification Approach," Journalism Quarterly, 57:474-476.
- Reagan, Joey and Jayne Zenaty  
 1979 "Local News Credibility: Newspapers vs. TV Revisited," Journalism Quarterly, 56:168-172.
- Roper, Burns W.  
 1983 Trends in Attitudes Toward Television and Other Media: A Twenty-Four Year Review. (New York: Television Information Office.)
- Salmon, Charles T. and John Spicer Nichols  
 1983 "The Next-Birthday Method of Respondent Selection," Public Opinion Quarterly, 47:270-276.
- Sargent, Leslie W.  
 1965 "Communicator Image and News Reception," Journalism Quarterly, 42:35-42.
- Shaw, David  
 1981 "Public Finds News Media More Fair than Accurate," Los Angeles Times (October 11, pp. 1, 20, 21) and "Public Relies on TV for News of World, Papers for Local Coverage, Survey Finds," Los Angeles Times (October 13, Late Final Edition, pp. 3, 22).
- Shaw, Eugene  
 1973 "Media Credibility: Taking the Measure of a Measure," Journalism Quarterly, 50:306-311.
- Stempel, Guido, III  
 1973 "Effects on Performance of a Cross-Media Monopoly," Journalism Monographs, No. 29 (June).

Sussman, Barry

1981 "Public Has Sharp Complaints about News Media, Poll Says,"  
Washington Post, pp. A1-2 (August 16).

Washington Post

1981 Release: "Public Attitudes Toward the Media Survey."  
Washington Post Company. (See also: Sussman, 1981.)

Weiss, Walter

1956 "Opinion Congruence with a Negative Source on an Issue as a Factor  
Influencing Agreement on Another Issue," Journal of Abnormal and  
Social Psychology, 52:109-114.

Westley, Bruce H. and Werner J. Severin

1964 "Some Correlates of Media Credibility," Journalism  
Quarterly, 41:325-335.

Whitney, D. Charles

1984 "Attitudes Toward the News Media: Three Publics," paper  
presented to the American Association for Public Opinion  
Research, Lake Lawn Lodge, Delavan, Wisconsin (May).

Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc.

1979 "Tracking the Attitudes of the Public Toward the Newspaper  
Business," three reports for American Newspaper Publishers  
Association, Washington, D.C., ANPA News Research Reports, No. 19  
(April 20).

TABLE 1: ITEMS CHOSEN FOR NEWSPAPER CREDIBILITY SCORE

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview (N = 875).

<u>Credibility Factors</u>	<u>Factor Loading</u>	<u>% Who Rate Newspapers Highly on Item</u>
Are fair or unfair	.66	52%
Are biased or unbiased	.66	36%
Tell the whole story or don't tell the whole story	.71	43%
Are accurate or inaccurate	.69	49%
Invade or respect people's privacy	.66	30%
Do or do not watch after readers' interests	.55	36%
Are or are not concerned about the community's well-being	.47	61%
Do or do not separate fact and opinion	.71	38%
Can or cannot be trusted	.72	51%
Are concerned about the public interest or are concerned about making profits	.57	42%
Are factual or opinionated	.71	50%
Have well-trained or poorly trained reporters	.57	48%

The other items which did not group with the credibility items had to do with caring about what the reader thinks, sensationalizing, being moral, and being patriotic. Patriotism (rated highly for newspapers by 62%) grouped only with concern for the community. The other three grouped together into a "social concerns" factor:

<u>Social Concerns Factor</u>	<u>Factor Loading</u>	<u>% Who Rate Newspapers Highly on Item</u>
Care or do not care what readers think	.71	44%
Sensationalize or do not sensationalize	.55	30%
Are moral or immoral	.77	53%

TABLE 2: ITEMS CHOSEN FOR TELEVISION CREDIBILITY SCORE

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview (N = 875).

<u>Credibility Factors</u>	<u>Factor Loading</u>	<u>% Who Rate TV News Highly on Item</u>
Group 1: CREDIBILITY		
Is fair or unfair	.77	52%
Is biased or unbiased	.82	39%
Tells the whole story or doesn't tell the whole story	.71	40%
Is accurate or inaccurate	.68	50%
Group 2: CREDIBILITY		
Invades or respects people's privacy	.66	24%
Does or does not watch after viewers' interests	.76	31%
Is or is not concerned about the community's well-being	.72	51%
Does or does not separate fact and opinion	.57	38%
Can or cannot be trusted	.57	48%
Is concerned about the public interest or is concerned about making profits	.70	38%
Is factual or opinionated	.63	48%
Has well-trained or poorly trained reporters	.36	57%

For television news also, three of the items which did not cluster with credibility items grouped in a social concerns factor. Patriotism (rated highly for TV news by 54%) tended to group with sensationalism and reporter training.

<u>Social Concerns Factor</u>	<u>Factor Loading</u>	<u>% Who Rate TV News Highly on Item</u>
Cares or does not care what audience thinks	.78	44%
Sensationalizes or does not sensationalize	.38	20%
Is moral or immoral	.74	47%

TABLE 3: AWARENESS OF CONFLICTING REPORTS

1. If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, magazines, and newspapers, which of the four versions would you be the most inclined to believe--the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?

Radio	9%
Television	52
Magazines	14
Newspapers	25

2. Why do you feel that way? Total

a. Radio Responses 7%\*

Channel dimensions (cannot see it, fast)	2%**
Other comments	7

b. Television Responses 47%

Visual component (seeing is believing)	21%
Channel dimensions (fast, easy, first)	12
Comments related to credibility	13
Other comments	19

c. Magazine Responses 13

Channel dimensions (depth, more time)	10%
Other comments	7

d. Newspaper Responses 23

Channel dimensions (detail, more time)	14%
Positive comments related to credibility	10
Other comments	8

e. Other Responses 12\*\*

3. As far as you can recall offhand, have you ever heard conflicting reports of the same story from different news sources?

Yes	51%
No	49

\*These percentages do not include respondents whose answers were vague or did not know.  
 \*\*Respondents could give more than one answer.

TABLE 4. AWARENESS OF CONFLICTING REPORTS AND CREDIBILITY SCORES

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview (N = 862 with 13 observations missing).

1. If you got conflicting or different reports of the same news story from radio, television, magazines, and newspapers, which of the four versions would you be the most inclined to believe--the one on radio or television or magazines or newspapers?

	<u>Newspaper</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>		<u>Television</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Radio	14%	5%	12%	6%
Television	49	51	46	61
Magazines	22	10	19	11
Newspapers	15	34	23	23

2. As far as you can recall offhand, have you ever heard conflicting reports of the same story from different news sources?

Yes	62%	46%	67%	42%
No	38	54	33	58

TABLE 5: NEWS SOURCE PREFERENCES

A. UNDERSTANDING NEWS

1. If there is a situation in your local area that is hard to understand or is controversial, which one of your local news media would you trust the most to help you understand it?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Television	37%	32%
Newspapers	50	58
Radio	11	9
Magazines	2	1

2. Now, thinking about national news: if there is a situation in the national news that is hard to understand or is controversial, which one of the news media would you trust the most to help you understand it?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Television	57%	56%
Newspapers	29	33
Radio	5	3
Magazines	9	8

B. RELIABILITY OF LOCAL, STATE, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL NEWS

1. Overall, does local and state news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Television	58%	53%
Newspapers	31	37
Radio	7	6
Magazines	4	4

2. Overall, does national and international news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Television	68%	65%
Newspapers	19	23
Radio	4	3
Magazines	9	9

(Table is continued on the next page.)



(Table 5, continued)

C. PREFERRED NEWS SOURCE

1. If you had to choose one source for local news, which source would you choose--newspapers, television, radio, or magazines?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Television	50%	42%
Newspapers	36	45
Radio	12	11
Magazines	2	2

2. If you had to choose one source for state news, which source would you choose--newspapers, television, radio, or magazines?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Television	57%	51%
Newspapers	33	41
Radio	8	7
Magazines	2	1

3. If you had to choose one source for national and international news, which source would you choose--newspapers, television, radio, or magazines?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Television	72%	67%
Newspapers	18	21
Radio	5	5
Magazines	5	7

D. PREFERENCES: PRINT VS. BROADCAST

1. Some people prefer to read their news in newspapers or magazines, and some people prefer to get news on TV or radio. If you had to choose one way of getting news and information, would you rather read it in a newspaper or magazine, or would you rather get it on TV or radio?

	EVERYONE SURVEYED	DAILY NEWSPAPER READERS
Newspaper or magazine	36%	44%
Television or radio	64	56

2. If you weren't able to read a daily newspaper for quite some time, which of the following comes closest to the way you would feel: You'd feel lost without a daily newspaper, you'd miss it but could get along without it, or you could get along easily without a newspaper. (Repeated for television news.)

	NEWSPAPER	TV NEWS
Would feel lost without it	24%	27%
Would miss it but get along	42	45
Could get along easily	34	28

TABLE 6: NEWS SOURCE PREFERENCES AND CREDIBILITY

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview (N = 862 with 13 observations missing).

A. UNDERSTANDING NEWS

1. If there is a situation in your local area that is hard to understand or is controversial, which one of your local news media would you trust the most to help you understand it?

	<u>Newspaper</u>		<u>Television</u>	
	<u>Credibility</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Credibility</u>	<u>Score</u>
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Television	33%	30%	29%	41%
Newspapers	48	61	57	48
Radio	16	7	10	10
Magazines	3	2	4	1

2. Now, thinking about national news: if there is a situation in the national news that is hard to understand or is controversial, which one of the news media would you trust the most to help you understand it?

Television	55%	54%	48%	64%
Newspapers	24	35	33	28
Radio	9	3	5	3
Magazines	12	9	13	5

B. RELIABILITY OF NEWS

1. Overall, does local and state news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?

Television	58%	52%	53%	66%
Newspapers	24	42	33	27
Radio	10	4	9	5
Magazines	8	2	6	2

2. Overall, does national and international news seem more reliable to you when you see it on television, read it in a newspaper, hear it over the radio, or read it in a magazine?

Television	67%	68%	61%	80%
Newspapers	15	22	19	14
Radio	8	1	5	2
Magazines	10	9	14	5

(Table continued on next page)

(Table 6, continued)

C. PREFERRED NEWS SOURCE

1. If you had to choose one source for local news, which source would you choose--newspapers, television, radio, or magazines?

	<u>Newspaper</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>		<u>Television</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Television	45%	46%	47%	54%
Newspapers	33	43	36	33
Radio	20	10	15	12
Magazines	2	1	2	1

2. If you had to choose one source for state news, which source would you choose--newspapers, television, radio, or magazines?

Television	58%	53%	51	62
Newspapers	29	41	38	33
Radio	10	5	9	5
Magazines	3	1	2	1

3. If you had to choose one source for national and international news, which source would you choose--newspapers, television, radio, or magazines?

Television	69%	69%	64%	78%
Newspapers	14	25	21	17
Radio	9	1	6	1
Magazines	8	5	9	4

D. PREFERENCES: PRINT VS. BROADCAST

1. Some people prefer to read their news in newspapers or magazines, and some people prefer to get news on TV or radio. If you had to choose one way of getting news and information, would you rather read it in a newspaper or magazine, or would you rather get it on TV or radio?

	<u>Newspaper</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>		<u>Television</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Newspaper or magazine	36%	41%	46%	26%
Television or radio	64	59	54	74

2. If you weren't able to read a daily newspaper for quite some time, which of the following comes closest to the way you would feel: You'd feel lost without a daily newspaper, you'd miss it but could get along without it, or you could get along easily without a newspaper. (Repeated for TV news.)

	<u>Newspaper</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>		<u>Television</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Would feel lost without it	19%	30%	19%	35%
Would miss it but get along	40	47	44	49
Could get along easily	41	24	37	16

TABLE 7: COVERAGE IN GENERAL

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interviews (N = 875).

1. Overall, how would you rate the reliability of the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with (television news)? Please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" means "not at all reliable" and "5" means "very reliable."

	DAILY NEWSPAPERS	TELEVISION NEWS
Positive (rated as 4 or 5 on the 5-point scale)	63%	65%
Neutral (rated as 3)	30	29
Negative (rated as 1 or 2)	7	6

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of reporting of the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with (television news)? Please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" means "very poor quality" and "5" means "very good quality."

Positive	59%	72%
Neutral	31	22
Negative	10	6

3. Overall, how would you rate the coverage of controversial issues of the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with (television news)? Again, please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" is "poor" and "5" is "excellent."

Positive	50%	56%
Neutral	37	34
Negative	13	10

TABLE 8. OVERALL RATINGS OF REPORTING AND CREDIBILITY SCORES

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interviews (N = 875).

1. Overall, how would you rate the reliability of the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with (television news)? Please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" means "not at all reliable" and "5" means "very reliable."

	<u>Newspaper</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>		<u>Television</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Positive (rated 4 or 5)	31%	90%	35%	95%
Neutral (rated 3)	50	7	51	4
Negative (rated 1 or 2)	19	3	14	1

2. Overall, how would you rate the quality of reporting of the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with (television news)? Please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" means "very poor quality" and "5" means "very good quality."

Positive	31%	88%	49%	94%
Neutral	44	10	37	6
Negative	25	3	14	0

3. Overall, how would you rate the coverage of controversial issues of the daily newspaper you are the most familiar with (television news)? Again, please use a scale of "1" to "5," where "1" is "poor" and "5" is "excellent."

Positive	25%	81%	29%	85%
Neutral	41	16	48	13
Negative	34	3	23	1

TABLE 9: RELIABILITY OF COVERAGE OF TOPIC AREAS

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview (N = 875).

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 (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.

	NOT RELIABLE (1 or 2)	NEUTRAL (3)	RELIABLE (4 or 5)
Local news			
Newspaper	7%	21%	72%
TV News	6	28	66
Election coverage			
Newspaper	9	24	67
TV News	9	25	66
Natural disasters			
Newspaper	8	25	67
TV News	5	22	73
Crime			
Newspaper	14	25	61
TV News	10	32	58
Entertainment news			
Newspaper	10	30	60
TV News	7	32	61
President Reagan			
Newspaper	16	28	56
TV News	14	30	56
Health and medical news			
Newspaper	9	35	56
TV News	7	36	57
Business news			
Newspaper	9	36	55
TV News	8	36	56
The economy			
Newspaper	15	35	50
TV News	14	36	50
The government in Washington			
Newspaper	17	33	50
TV News	17	33	50

(continued on next page)

(Table 9, continued. Based on Part 2 subsample.)

	NOT RELIABLE (1 or 2)	NEUTRAL (3)	RELIABLE (4 or 5)
Religious news			
Newspaper	13	39	48
TV News	12	44	44
The arms race			
Newspaper	15	39	46
TV News	15	40	45
The abortion issue			
Newspaper	16	39	45
TV News	14	43	43
The Soviet Union			
Newspaper	18	40	42
TV News	19	40	41
Israel			
Newspaper	13	49	38
TV News	12	48	40
The Arab countries			
Newspaper	17	47	36
TV News	15	45	40
Latin America			
Newspaper	17	47	36
TV News	17	48	35

TABLE 10: RELIABILITY OF COVERAGE OF TOPIC AREAS

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview (N = 875).

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 (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.

	<u>Newspaper</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>		<u>Television</u> <u>Credibility Score</u>	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Local news				
Newspaper	65*	85		
TV News			65*	84
Election coverage				
Newspaper	62	85		
TV News			64	83
Natural disasters				
Newspaper	64	80		
TV News			66	83
Crime				
Newspaper	53	77		
TV News			54	79
Entertainment news				
Newspaper	61	79		
TV News			63	80
President Reagan				
Newspaper	50	76		
TV News			52	76
Health and medical news				
Newspaper	58	76		
TV News			61	78
Business news				
Newspaper	56	77		
TV News			56	79
The economy				
Newspaper	48	73		
TV News			50	75
The government in Washington				
Newspaper	47	77		
TV News			48	77

\*This table uses a "scoring system," or weighted average instead of percentages.



(Table 10, continued)

Religious news				
Newspaper	53*	72		
TV News			52*	74
The arms race				
Newspaper	47	71		
TV News			47	74
The abortion issue				
Newspaper	49	70		
TV News			49	73
The Soviet Union				
Newspaper	46	69		
TV News			44	69
Israel				
Newspaper	47	69		
TV News			47	69
The Arab countries				
Newspaper	45	66		
TV News			47	68
Latin America				
Newspaper	45	67		
TV News			45	67

\*This table uses a "scoring system," or weighted average instead of percentages.

TABLE 11: PRESS RIGHTS VERSUS OTHER RIGHTS

Subsample: Those who completed Part 2 interview (N = 875.)

A. Which of the following statements comes the closest to how you personally feel:

	AGREE
1. It's important to have a free press even when the press acts irresponsibly.	58%
OR	
Sometimes, there's too much freedom of the press.	42%
2. The media abuse their Constitutional guarantee of a free press.	39%
OR	
The media are usually careful to be responsible.	61%
3. The press helps keep public officials honest.	76%
OR	
The press often gets in the way so that public officials can't do the job they were elected to do.	24%
4. A reporter has a right to refuse to give the government information he or she has obtained but which has not been made public.	65%
OR	
If the government feels it needs such information, it has a right to demand access to all of the files and notes of a reporter, whether the information has been made public or not.	35%
5. A journalist's right to protect confidentiality of sources is like the right of confidentiality extended to doctors or members of the clergy.	69%
OR	
Confidentiality is more important for doctors or members of the clergy than it is for journalists.	31%

(Table is continued on next page.)

(Table 11, continued. Based on Part 2 subsample.)

A. Which of the following statements comes the closest to how you personally feel: AGREE

6. A person's right to a fair trial is more important than the public's right to be informed. 71%

OR

The public's right to know is just as important as the right to a fair trial. 29%

B. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (strongly or somewhat combined):

	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE
The news media often make people accused of crimes look guilty before they are tried in court.	71%	12%	17%

TABLE 12: PRESS RIGHTS AND CREDIBILITY SCORES

Subsample: Those who participated in Part 2 interview (N = 862 with 13 observations missing).

A. Which of the following statements comes the closest to how you personally feel:	<u>Newspaper</u>		<u>Television</u>	
	<u>Credibility</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Credibility</u>	<u>Score</u>
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
1. It's important to have a free press even when the press acts irresponsibly.	54%	65%	56%	59%
OR				
Sometimes, there's too much freedom of the press.	46%	35%	44%	41%
2. The media abuse their Constitutional guarantee of a free press.	57%	24%	53%	20%
OR				
The media are usually careful to be responsible.	43%	76%	47%	80%
3. The press helps keep public officials honest.	64%	86%	59%	85%
OR				
The press often gets in the way so that public officials can't do the job they were elected to do.	36%	14%	41%	15%
4. A reporter has a right to refuse to give the government information he or she has obtained but which has not been made public.	62%	65%	66%	64%
OR				
If the government feels it needs such information, it has a right to demand access to all of the files and notes of a reporter, whether the information has been made public or not.	38%	35%	34%	36%
5. A journalist's right to protect confidentiality of sources is like the right of confidentiality extended to doctors or members of the clergy.	60%	75%	61%	71%
OR				
Confidentiality is more important for doctors or members of the clergy than it is for journalists.	40%	25%	39%	29%

(Table is continued on next page.)

(Table 12, continued; Part 2 subsample.)

A. Which of the following statements comes the closest to how you personally feel:	<u>Newspaper</u>		<u>Television</u>	
	<u>Credibility</u>	<u>Score</u>	<u>Credibility</u>	<u>Score</u>
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
6. A person's right to a fair trial is more important than the public's right to be informed. AGREE:	74%	66%	73%	66%
OR				
The public's right to know is just as important as the right to a fair trial. AGREE:	26%	34%	27%	34%
B. Please mark how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (strongly or somewhat combined):				
The news media often make people accused of crimes look guilty before they are tried in court. (Using a 5-point scale)				
Agree (scoring 1 or 2)	79%	67%	74%	62%
Neutral (scoring 3)	9	13	11	14
Disagree (scoring 4 or 5)	12	21	15	24