A TIMES MIRROR INVESTIGATION OF PUBLIC
ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NEWS MEDIA, CONDUCTED BY
THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION

Times Mirror

January 1986

Foreword

The lead editorial in the November 30, 1985, issue of *Editor & Publisher* took aim at the "puzzling inconsistencies" of recent public opinion survey findings:

"It would seem," wrote the magazine's editors, "that the public's interpretation of terminology may differ from that of the pollsters."

Times Mirror agrees. We've been disquieted for some time now not only by the "puzzling inconsistencies" but also by their implication—that the pollsters hadn't probed enough to fully identify the public's true perspectives.

We reckoned that the public might really be telling these pollsters, "If you're not sure what we really think and feel about the news media, it's because you haven't yet asked us the right questions. Dig deeper."

We decided to do just that. Our first step—taken in November, 1984—was to engage Professor Michael J. Robinson of George Washington University and the American Enterprise Institute to help us frame the inquiry.

Three months later, we turned to The Gallup Organization, and specifically to its President, Andrew Kohut, to design and carry out an investigation designed expressly to uncover the public's most basic attitudes toward the news media...to find out if there were in fact real consistencies underneath the apparent inconsistencies.

Times Mirror is pleased to present here the results of this investigation, and to acknowledge the efforts of Professor Robinson and President Kohut. They have worked hard to reconcile the inconsistencies that have long bedeviled all of us in the news media, and to a remarkable degree, they have succeeded.

Our work will be better for theirs, and so, we trust, will the work of everyone in our common enterprise. It is in that spirit that we offer this report.

Robert F. Erburu
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer
Times Mirror

Overview

A year-long investigation, sponsored by Times Mirror, indicates that press supporters in America outnumber critics two to one. It also shows that supporters and critics alike think the press is not free enough from outside influences in the way it reports the news.

These conclusions are *not* the result of any single question or response. They emerge, instead, from a statistical interpretation based on dozens of measures applied to thousands of respondents interviewed throughout 1985. These are but two of 16 major conclusions—all of which appear on the following page. But it isn't just the conclusions Times Mirror wants to present in this report. The way in which Gallup conducted these surveys also becomes an important part of the story.

A year ago, Times Mirror asked The Gallup Organization to design a series of studies and surveys that, taken together, would provide a deeper understanding of public orientations toward the press. Recognizing that many other studies existed—but knowing, too, that these earlier polls often raised as many questions as they answered—Times Mirror commissioned Gallup to develop its own methodology, one that would probe the underlying dimensions of public opinion toward the press. Times Mirror also asked Gallup to design the study so it could be repeated to track future public attitudes toward the press. Finally, Gallup was assigned the task of solving some of the puzzles in public attitudes toward the press that other polls had presented.

Beginning last spring, Gallup conducted focus group interviews in three metropolitan areas. Then, last summer, Gallup carried out four waves of national survey research. All told, Gallup conducted some 4,000 interviews in the summer and autumn of 1985. The focus groups and four national surveys constitute the largest, most fully integrated analysis ever conducted into public thinking about the American news media.

The study employed sophisticated cluster analysis techniques rarely used in public opinion research. The conclusions rendered are based not only on what people said to individual questions, but on the overall patterns of responses given during the course of the one-hour interview. The study not only looked at literal responses, but what respondents seemed to mean when all the pieces were put together and their attitudes considered as a whole.

The size of the surveys allowed Times Mirror and Gallup to revisit some of the most customary issues in public attitudes toward the news media—including measures of credibility and favorability, traditional concerns in past polls. This landmark study also incorporated new indicators dealing with the saliency of the press and with the relative value the public assigns to press freedom.

But Times Mirror and Gallup believe the study's most distinguishing characteristic is the *approach* used in studying public opinion toward the press. Gallup moved beyond traditional polling practices and conducted a full-scale investigation.

In order to do this investigation, Gallup also initiated a "double-back" methodology. As is often done, Gallup interviewed thousands of the same people at different points in time. But, in this instance, the re-interviewing—doubling back—was done not to measure change in opinion over time. Instead, the "double-back" technique allowed Gallup to explain some of the enigmas that emerged in earlier surveys and which appeared also in the earliest phases of Gallup's own research.

Findings

We offer 16 major conclusions, many of which run counter to the conventional wisdom concerning public opinion and the nation's press.

1. 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.

2. Print news organizations are not seen as any more or less believable than electronic media. Little variation is found in the believability ratings for the basic categories of news organizations. However, ratings for specific media vary widely with both the highest and the lowest ratings being accorded to print organizations.

3. Prominent news media personalities earn higher credibility ratings than the organizations that employ them.

4. There is an independency issue. Majorities think the press is excessively influenced by the "establishment" and special interests.

5. Overall measures of favorability reveal a reservoir of public support for news organizations that is wide, but not deep.

6. Although the public expresses few doubts about accuracy, it harbors serious reservations about other press practices such as fairness and objectivity.

7. Knowledge about the press is meager—even basic terminology is often misunderstood.

8. The press does not attract as much public attention as it believes it does. Large elements of the population are indifferent to it and to issues that concern it.

9. While most do not know that the First Amendment guarantees freedom of the press, the public values the ideas that government should stay out of the newsroom and that the press should play an energetic watchdog role.

10. *Four basic underlying dimensions* divide public attitudes toward the news media:

- attitudes concerning the *independency* of the press from the "establishment."
- attitudes concerning the extent to which *social and political groups influence the press.*
- beliefs about the *practices* of news organizations.
- beliefs about the *character* of news organizations and their impact on society.

11. When analyzed statistically, these dimensions produce *three positive orientations* toward the press:

- **The Reflexive Supporters**—uncritical, uninvolved and unsophisticated in their approval.
- **The Empathetic Supporters**—informed, involved, critical of the press' dependency on outside influences.
- **The Ambivalent Supporters**—uninvolved, question some press practices, appreciate press' value.

12. When analyzed statistically, these dimensions produce *three negative orientations,* as well:

- **The Main Street Critics**—informed, critical of press practices and value.
- **The Embittered Critics**—alienated, unsophisticated, critical of press on all counts.
- **The Vociferous Critics**—sophisticated, involved, vocal, critical of press, see press as an adversary of power structure.

13. Taken together, the supportive groups are twice as large as the critical groups.

14. Although supporters outnumber critics two to one, the critics generally exhibit greater knowledge about the press, greater interest in press issues and greater likelihood of expressing themselves about the press.

15. The public maintains a favorable disposition toward the press despite serious criticisms of press practices, in part because it appreciates the press' watchdog role and because it values and enjoys the news.

16. To the degree that the press has a credibility problem, it is because its critics are more vocal, intense and involved with press issues than are its supporters. Given who the critics are, there is no reason for complacency. We do not see a crisis. We *do* see an issue that needs continuing attention.

Table of Contents

Introduction and Summary

Riddles are commonplace in American public opinion. During our first 200 years, attitudes toward our institutions and leaders have often seemed enigmatic to the point of inconsistency.

The public typically disdains Congress and re-elects incumbents. Even before President Ronald Reagan, the electorate showed a tendency to approve of the President more than the President's policies. The police have always sensed two faces of public opinion toward law enforcement—passionate support and intense disapproval at the same time from the same people.

All of this applies equally to the press. Well before concern of a credibility gap, polls about the news media presented a variety of enigmas and riddles. Looking at the most recent polls, one can find a growing number of opinion puzzles, many of which tie closely to the perceived crisis in credibility that led to all the current polling.

- Why, for example, does the public generally express overall favorable opinions about newspeople and news organizations, then proceed to question the fairness of the press?
- How is it that Democrats and Republicans, more often than not, express similar opinions toward the news media, even though some critics, and much of the public, accuse the media of liberal bias?
- Why is it that although the polls generally indicate that the public approves of the news media, the people who do the reporting seem so certain that the nation has reached a flashpoint in public hostility toward the press?

Times Mirror is in the news business. Moved by its own concern over the apparent credibility issue, as well as by the realization that so many enigmas in press opinion do exist, Times Mirror came to The Gallup Organization asking for answers—answers as to the crisis in confidence, and to the seeming contradictions that have made recent polls so frustrating to read.

Times Mirror gave us methodological *carte blanche*, asking simply that our research do four things:

- Explore again the basic parameters of public opinion toward the press—questions of credibility among them;
- Uncover the underlying dimensions of public attitudes toward the news media;
- Create a methodology that would help to solve the enigmas associated with past research in press opinion;
- Design an instrument able to track changes over time in the basic public orientations toward the press.

The Investigation

We at Gallup understood from the outset that a traditional one-shot national poll wouldn't do what Times Mirror wanted. To begin, tracking requires years of polling, a process to which Times Mirror is committed. But the entire assignment required a more comprehensive and integrated approach than what has come before.

Our initial hunch was that unless we adopted a more innovative methodology than polling on individual items, we would never discover the fundamental dimensions and orientations toward the press. And without those, there was little hope of explaining the riddles of public confidence in, and public attitudes toward, the news media. So, we decided to employ two out-of-the-ordinary strategies to get what we wanted. The first is rarely used in public opinion polling. The second, to our knowledge, has never been used before.

Segmentation Analysis

The first strategy is fundamentally statistical, a way of *analyzing* data. Most polling research about the news media is limited by the methods used to interpret the evidence. Having been asked to look at underlying dimensions, Gallup felt from the start that a more sophisticated statistical approach was needed, not the typical table-by-table analysis used in election polls. We opted instead for segmentation analysis, a complex technique that combines the two related practices of "factor analysis" and "cluster" research.

In the end, the decision to use these techniques gave us some of the most important clues we have in unlocking the riddles associated with public opinion toward the press. It was through "segmentation analysis" that we were able to uncover the six basic—and distinguishable—orientations toward the press, orientations that we discuss in Part Two of this report.

"Double-Back" Interviewing

The second innovation is more purely methodological, a way of *collecting* data. It became clear to us during the earliest phases of this research that we were facing the same sorts of enigmas earlier researchers had uncovered. And at that point, we

decided to adopt an investigation instead of a one-shot poll—a method of operation akin to solving a mystery.

Whenever we found a new and intriguing finding, or when we bumped into another unsolved puzzle, we went back into the field to ask a new set of questions that might turn up new clues. In essence, after the initial round of focus groups had been completed in May 1985, we began to "double-back" after each subsequent wave of research, to try to find the pieces of the puzzle still unresolved from the last wave.

Rarely has any polling organization had the opportunity to "double-back" and learn more of what the public was really saying about a major institution. Doubling-back became one of the most important elements in solving the enigmas of public attitudes toward the press.

This report presents most of the major findings of our investigation. Part One addresses our first assignment: presenting a full-scale description of the public at large, straightforward findings concerning familiar issues about the press, topics like press freedom or press practices and, of course, the perceived credibility gap. Part One also includes evidence dealing with the visibility of the news media.

Part Two moves beyond the basic descriptions and grapples with those tougher assignments Times Mirror gave us. In Part Two we present surprising findings as to the fundamental nature of public attitudes toward the news media. We also offer a six-group classification of public orientations toward the media, three positive and three negative. In the end, we use the findings in Part Two to move us toward resolution of the enigmas that helped motivate our original enterprise.

There is, of course, one assignment not yet completed—long term tracking of public attitudes toward the press. But Gallup and Times Mirror plan to track opinion during the next several years—and not just on individual items. Gallup and Times Mirror intend to calibrate changes in the basic shape of press opinion as we move into the 1990s. As early as last spring, at the request of Times Mirror, Gallup developed and tested a new telephone-based technique for monitoring *orientations* of opinion well into the future.

The Stages of Research

Parts One and Two are the data chapters. But before turning to them, The Gallup Organization wants to make explicit the paths we followed in conducting this investigation. Our methodology was unique and understanding it is essential to appreciate the findings.

Focus Groups in April

Beginning in April 1985, Gallup conducted focus group interviews in Chicago, Los Angeles, and the New York metropolitan area. Focus group research involved lengthy and intensive discussion among those respondents who agreed to participate, with a moderator acting only as a guide.

Focus groups had been used before in press opinion research, but we wanted a very close look at possible contradictions in public attitudes and also a chance to search new dimensions of criticism about the press that earlier studies might have missed.

In the end, the focus group sessions led us to three preliminary conclusions:

- There *are* major contradictions in public attitudes toward the press.
- There is seemingly less an issue of believability than of independence. While we initially suspected that either bias or believability would be the most important dimension in public opinion, independence showed itself to be a surprisingly important component of public attitudes.
- The focus groups made us decide that we would need to "double-back," to take initial findings and use them to design the next phase of the research.

The Pilot Survey in May

The focus group findings led to a pilot study, conducted by phone among more than 250 respondents, drawn from a national sample. Doubling-back, we asked questions in the pilot study that flowed from our experience with the focus groups.

With the data from the pilot study in hand, we moved to the first of the two statistical techniques upon which we counted. That technique, "factor analysis," paid quick dividends—confirming that independence is as important a dimension of attitudes toward the press as the focus groups had suggested. Attitudes toward bias and believability do drive opinion. But "double-back" interviewing and "factor analysis" were telling us that independence of the press is at least as seminal a factor.

Most important, the pilot survey reinforced our initial hunch that traditional techniques of data analysis were inadequate, that dividing the public into typical demographic or political groupings was not the best way to discover major orientations toward the press. "Segmentation analysis" now seemed less a luxury than a necessity.

The First National Survey: June and July

In June and July 1985, Gallup interviewed more than 2,100 Americans in their homes, one-to-one. These interviews averaged more than an hour. We felt that only personal interviews would provide the time and the conditions necessary for obtaining the information we needed, especially given the techniques we intended to employ.

In these personal interviews, we incorporated the kinds of items that would allow us to pinpoint the dimensions of public attitudes and to segment the population into its basic orientations toward the press. But the national survey in June and early July raised two other concerns. First, it came during the TWA hostage crisis—in part a press crisis—and second, it did not fully answer a major riddle—why the public likes the press but questions so seriously the ways the press does its job. We doubled-back again.

The Second National Survey: August

We had always intended to revisit our respondents in the fall. But because our first survey coincided, in part, with the TWA hostage crisis, we also decided to conduct a second national survey in August 1985 with a new sample. We wanted to make sure that our first set of findings had not been unduly influenced by the hostage crisis.

Our fresh sample of more than 1,000 respondents told us two things. First, that the types of opinions we tapped in June and July were not particularly volatile, and second, that public attitudes concerning the news media were slightly *more* favorable *during* the crisis. Corroborating the findings of the other polls taken at the time, our August survey indicated the public tends especially to appreciate the news media during a crisis.

The November "Double-Back" Survey

In November 1985, we re-interviewed the same respondents we had contacted in June and July. We did this principally because our analysis had shown us that even the press' harshest complainants often said positive things about it. In fact, the three negatively disposed segments of the population told us in June and July that they like and believe many of the newspeople and news organizations they criticize. Given these findings, we needed one more chance to "double-back," one more pass at solving riddles. We asked new questions of our original respondents, hoping to learn why people like news organizations and dislike so much about their day-to-day performance.

Part One Summary: The Public at Large

Part One of this report presents *un*segmented findings, what the public *at large* says about the five major avenues of public opinion we started out to map: Visibility, Knowledge, Believability, Criticisms, and Worth. In Part One we look at the aggregate public opinion.

Visibility

The press, as an institution, is not particularly visible to the public at large. News *personalities* are visible, but even the most celebrated journalists often go unrecognized by more than half the national news audience.

Nor is the press, as an institution, a major focus of discussion among the mass public. Although many Americans can recognize the faces of major news personalities, nearly four of five respondents tell us they do not "talk about" journalists, even "sometimes." In fact, journalists, as a profession, rank eighth in a list of nine groups of professionals when we asked respondents which groups they are most likely to discuss. Only scientists elicit less discussion.

Most press issues pass by the general public relatively unnoticed. The general public rarely knows the names or facts associated with those press issues that many newspeople assume the nation is following. Last summer, fewer than one in five Americans knew that Jesse Helms was trying to buy CBS; only one in 20 could tell us why. Fewer than half could identify Dan Rather by photograph.

Knowledge

The general public does understand some of the most important aspects of the news process. But the public is often unaware of the most fundamental facts about the news business and the laws of the press.

When given choices, about nine Americans in 10 can define a press release. Three-quarters of the population understand the general relationship between the wire services and local newspapers; three-quarters know that press secretaries work for government officials, not for news organizations.

On the other hand, only half know that *Time* and *Newsweek* are owned by different companies. Only four in 10 can accurately define an editorial. Only three in 10 know it is the First Amendment that provides for free press. Fewer than three in 10 have any real understanding of the laws of libel.

Believability

The public expresses something of a consensus. They *believe* the major news organizations. In fact, if "believability" *per se* were the only credibility issue, one could practically close the book on the presumed crisis of confidence.

Among those expressing an opinion, 86 percent of the public give NBC good marks for believability; 87 percent give good marks to CBS; 87 percent give good marks to ABC. Local TV news gets an 85; the "daily newspaper you are most familiar with" earns an 84.

Major news personalities do at least as well as the organizations that employ them. And at the risk of comparing incomparables, news personalities do very well when measured against one of America's greatest communicators, Ronald Reagan. Network anchorpeople, correspondents and commentators all get higher believability scores than the President. Anchorpeople, past and present, get the highest believability scores of all.

Not only is the press perceived as believable, it is also perceived as likeable. When asked to give an overall favorability rating, clear majorities express positive feeling for major news organizations and famous newspeople.

Ninety percent of those expressing an opinion rate radio news as "very favorable" or "mostly favorable." Eighty-eight percent express favorable opinions about their own newspaper; 89 percent express favorable opinions about local TV news, the same percentage for network TV news. At the time of these surveys, all major news organizations were more favorably regarded than President Reagan.

Although the general public sees the press as believable, and is favorably disposed toward it, this support is lukewarm. Many more Americans say "mostly favorable" than say "very favorable" when asked to rate the press. Many more Americans give good grades for believability than give excellent grades. And people who know most about the press are less certain of its believability.

Criticisms

Although Americans like the press, the public also expresses serious reservations about press practices and performance. Clear majorities feel that the news media are too invasive and too negative. A close majority feels that the press tends to "favor one side" in its coverage of issues. A plurality senses "political bias" in reporting.

The public also sees the press as dependent, often influenced by the powerful. In fact, more of the public see a problem with the *independence* of the press than with press *accuracy.* Only a third see news organizations as inaccurate, but a majority sees news organizations as "often influenced by powerful people and organizations."

Lopsided majorities sense that news organizations are often influenced in their reporting by the federal government, business corporations, advertisers and labor unions. Just as it questions the impartiality of the news product, the public at large questions also the independence of the press.

On the other hand, when asked about the character and professionalism of newspersons, solid majorities express supportive opinions. Eight in 10 feel that news organizations care about the quality of their work. More than seven in 10 rate news organizations as "highly professional."

Gallup finds two things that have been found previously about press criticism:

- The public has few reservations about the quality and character of the press people
- But the public also has serious reservations about several press practices.

And Gallup also finds something else: there is an independence issue in the public mind that underlies criticisms of the press.

The Worth of a Free Press

The public does not believe in the absolute right of free press. On a number of free press issues, the public considers government involvement acceptable. On most policy issues, however, a plurality or majority wants the government to stay out of the way. And the public values deeply the watchdog role.

There is a three-level pattern to these opinions. First, when the public weighs the rights of private citizens versus the rights of a free press, the public sides with the individual. Nine Americans in 10 believe that a news organization should face libel suits if it says things about a person that are false. One in six would have the press pay for a critical story even if the facts were true.

Second, when the public weighs the rights of the community against the rights of free press, the public values the rights of the community more. Seven in 10 feel that it is more important not to discourage voting than to allow networks to make election predictions before the polls close. Six in 10 think "freedom of the press" means the public's right to hear all sides, not the right of news organizations to report what they choose.

Third, and perhaps most relevant, when the public weighs the rights of the press against the rights of government or political leaders, the public

usually opts for freedom of the press.

Pluralities want the government to stay out of equal time and fairness issues. A majority believes "precensorship" is a bad idea in "almost any type" of news. When given the basic facts surrounding the Pentagon Papers case, two-thirds voted to publish the papers. Above all, the public thinks the watchdog is worthwhile: Americans believe, four to one, that the press keeps leaders in line, not that the press keeps leaders from doing their job.

Part Two Summary: The Segmented Public

Part Two examines the dynamics that underlie the public's opinions, and analyzes the dimensions which divide the public into its basic orientations toward the press.

A Four Dimensional Space

Gallup finds that four major factors lie beneath press opinion. These factors emerge from a statistical technique that analyzes opinion comprehensively, not on the basis of one or two items, but on the basis of all questions considered in the equation.

This statistical technique, factor analysis, allows us to move beyond our preconceived notions about what the public is thinking, and lets the public speak for itself. The public, through this prism, tells us that the four most fundamental criteria for evaluating the press are:

- The extent to which individuals perceive the press to be influenced by special interests
- The extent to which individuals perceive the press to be influenced by the power structure
- The extent to which individuals perceive the press as responsible in its news practices
- The extent to which individuals perceive the press as possessing character, or producing positive/negative consequences for the nation

The Six Group Segmentation

Using these dimensions, Gallup is able, mathematically, to group like-minded respondents. Employing "cluster analysis" we find six basic orientations toward the press—orientations based not on the demography of the respondents but on their answers to the questions considered.

Three orientations are positive, three are negative. The three positive clusters are large in membership and approximately equal in size.

- The Reflexive Supporters (21%)
- The Empathetic Supporters (26%)
- The Ambivalent Supporters (23%)

"Reflexives" react to the press uncritically. They like almost everything about the press. But theirs is a hollow support. "Reflexives" know little about the press, care little about press issues. Their appreciation is, in the end, merely reflexive.

The "Empathetics" are slightly more critical of the press than the "Reflexives." But "Empathetics" know much more about the news media than "Reflexives," and show greater sophistication in their support.

We term them "Empathetics" for two reasons: first, because these people tend to be the most enthusiastic about press freedom and worth and second, because this cluster expresses a reservation that comes very close to one the press often expresses on its own—that the press is not independent enough.

"Ambivalents" represent the transitional group. They question press practices, but they believe, too, that the press plays an important and beneficial role. "Ambivalents" best reflect the attitudes of the nation at large—regarding the press favorably but questioning its day-to-day performance.

The three negative clusters not only differ substantially in size, they also differ fundamentally from one another in their reasoning. From largest to smallest in number, these clusters are:

- The Main Street Critics (15%)
- The Embittered Critics (10%)
- The Vociferous Critics (5%)

In brief, the Main Street Critics express doubts about press practices, so much doubt, in fact, that unlike the "Ambivalents," Main Street Critics tend also to question whether the press' role is genuinely beneficial. And unlike the "Ambivalents," the Main Street Critics express greater support for limiting press freedom.

The Embittered Critics also disdain and distrust the media, questioning its professionalism, its character and its worth. The "Embittered" tend to dislike and distrust *all* our major institutions and leaders, with the exception of the military. The "Embittered" even tend to dislike Ronald Reagan, a fact that differentiates them fully from the two other negative groups.

Vociferous Critics are the smallest group, but perhaps the most interesting. Vociferous Critics distrust the press, question its character, and see it as harmful, particularly on matters involving national security. The "Vociferous," unlike most groups, see the press as more independent, not easily influenced by government, business and the like. But what makes the "Vociferous" particularly interesting is that they know more about the press, think more often about press issues, and follow the news more than any other group.

There is a general tendency for the negatively disposed to be more interested in, and knowledgeable about, the news media. It is, in fact, the "Main Streeters" and "Vociferous" among our six clusters who are the most informed, the most involved, and the most expressive when it comes to the press and press issues. The "Vociferous" and "Main Streeters" prove to be substantially more intense in their feelings and more vocal in their opinions.

Thoughtful readers will already have begun piecing together one of the puzzles of press opinion. It seems clear that if press critics are more expressive than press supporters, then newspeople will sense more criticism than exists in the nation as a whole. It isn't paranoia that explains why reporters feel as if they're under siege. It's that press critics articulate their criticisms so forcefully.

But this truth does not emerge until one segments the population into its basic attitudinal clusters. Segmentational research does help solve some of the mystery that surrounds press opinion in America. Still, mysteries should be resolved at the end of the story, not at the beginning. What follows now are Parts One and Two in their entirety, puzzles and all.

Part One
The Public at Large

IN SEARCH OF A CRISIS

Concern about a crisis in confidence is not new to modern journalism. During the McCarthy era, the Agnew years, the Janet Cooke affair, the press read and heard much about growing public disapproval.

In the mid-1980s, however, the press and its critics have begun to hear more and more from a third party—the pollsters of America. During the last five years, an increasing number of polling organizations have worked to measure the meaning and depth of the crisis, asking both the public and the press corps about the growing credibility gap.

Part One summarizes that portion of our polling which ties directly to the perceived credibility gap. But Part One looks too at a number of things about the gap that have, until now, gone unaddressed. Gallup chose to start from the beginning—to test some of the more rudimentary assumptions about the credibility crisis, assumptions rarely tested before.

The fact is, a crisis in confidence, focused toward the media or any other political institution, assumes a lot. It assumes that the public thinks about that institution, knows something about its performance, and pays attention to the events and issues associated with the growing crisis. A crisis also means that things have grown worse—fallen from some earlier, happier standard or condition.

In Part One, we never get too far away from what has been, at least during the 1980s, the most central issue in attitude toward the news media—the press' image in the public's collective mind. But in Part One we start from way back in the story.

Press Visibility: Slightly Less Than Meets the Eye

Nothing is more basic than visibility. Visibility must precede image, good or bad.

If nobody talks about a candidate for office, he or she does face a crisis in public opinion—the crisis of voter non-recognition. But if the public is *not* talking about the CIA, *not* talking about the Supreme Court, *not* talking about the Federal Reserve Board, then it makes less sense to believe that those institutions face a flashpoint in community attitudes.

The same should hold for the press. Limited visibility would tend to imply a limited crisis. Yet there is very little research about the visibility, the personal relevance, of the press as an *institution*. So, from the outset Gallup built several measures of personal relevance and visibility into these surveys.

What we find is three-part in nature. First, the press is not a particularly salient institution—not a major focus for discussion or concern. Second, while a few news personalities are quite famous, many important newspeople are surprisingly invisible to the general public. Third, press-related events and issues are not particularly important to the public, and often go unnoticed.

Journalism as a Focus of Discussion

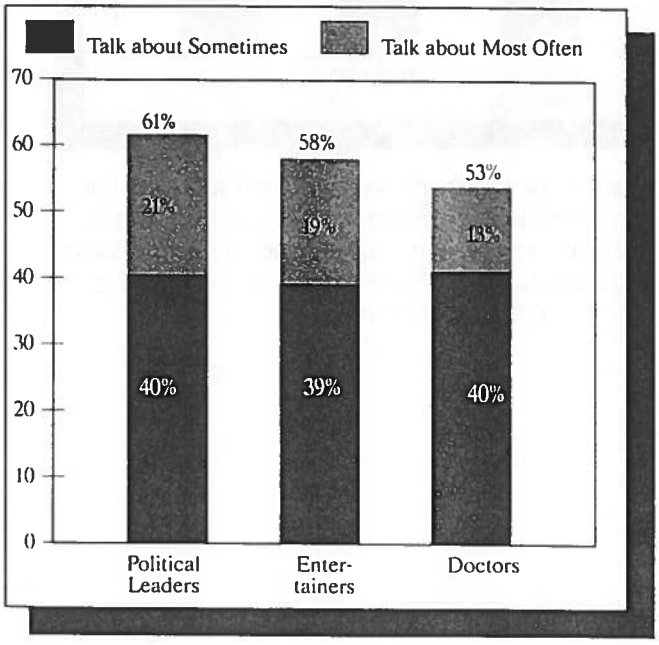
The public does not talk much about the press. When given a list of nine groups of professionals (doctors, lawyers, entertainers, clergymen, etc.), the public at large ranks journalists *eighth* as a focal point of discussion with friends and acquaintances. Only scientists elicit less discussion.

About two Americans in 10 tell us they talk about journalists "sometimes." (See Figure 1.) About one percent of the public talks "most often" about journalists when compared with the other eight groups of professionals included on the list. For

Figure 1

JOURNALISM AS FOCUS OF DISCUSSION

Question: Here is a list of some different groups of people. After you read through this list, tell me which, if any, of these groups you sometimes talk about with your friends and acquaintances. Just call off the letter or letters.



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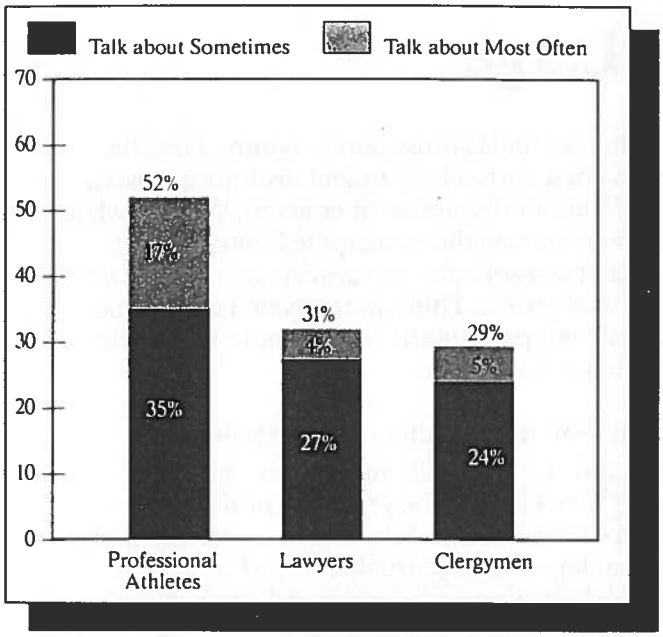
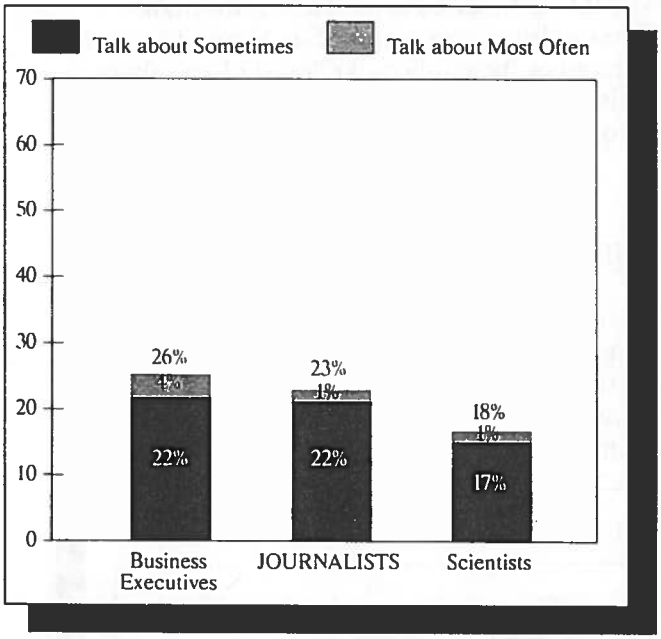




whatever reasons, the press fails to stimulate much discussion within the general public, at least not in comparative terms. Nor is this the level of discussion one would usually associate with a crisis in public opinion for a major institution.

The Visibility of News Personalities

Most Americans do have a preferred journalist. Two-thirds (66 percent) of the public can name a reporter as their "favorite." In fact, more Americans can cite a favorite journalist than can name a favorite political leader or athlete.

Preferred journalists come mostly from television, and to a lesser degree from national media organizations. Network news personalities dominate the list—more than 60 percent of those expressing a preference name one of them as his or her favorite.

Network news does not, however, produce the absolute visibility level one might expect. Even the most celebrated network newspeople go unrecognized by more than half the population. Only one, Barbara Walters, is identified by a clear majority of those respondents shown publicity photographs. Five other news celebrities—Dan Rather, Ted Koppel, Mike Wallace, Tom Brokaw and George Will—were recognized by less than half the respondents. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2

RECOGNITION LEVELS OF FAMOUS JOURNALISTS AND POLITICAL LEADERS COMPARED: "PHOTO" IDENTIFICATION

Question: Here are some photos of well known Americans and people who are less well known. As I read off the number corresponding to each photo, tell me if you happen to know this person's name and who he or she works for.

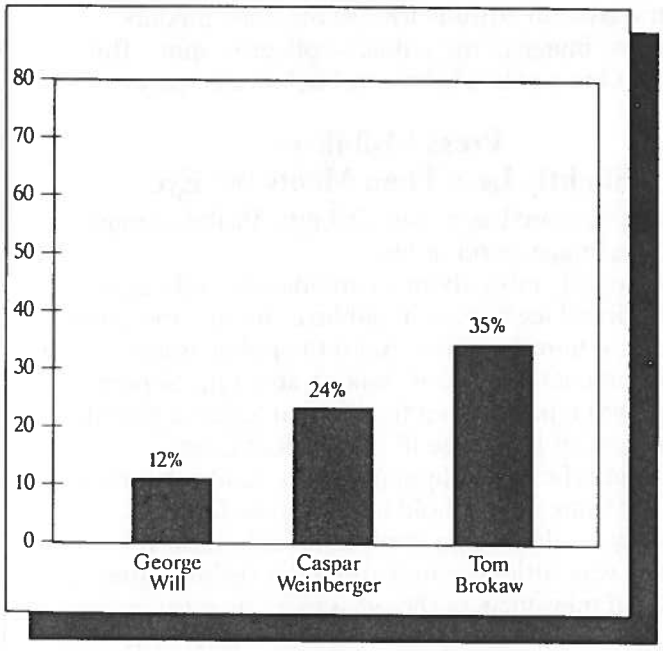
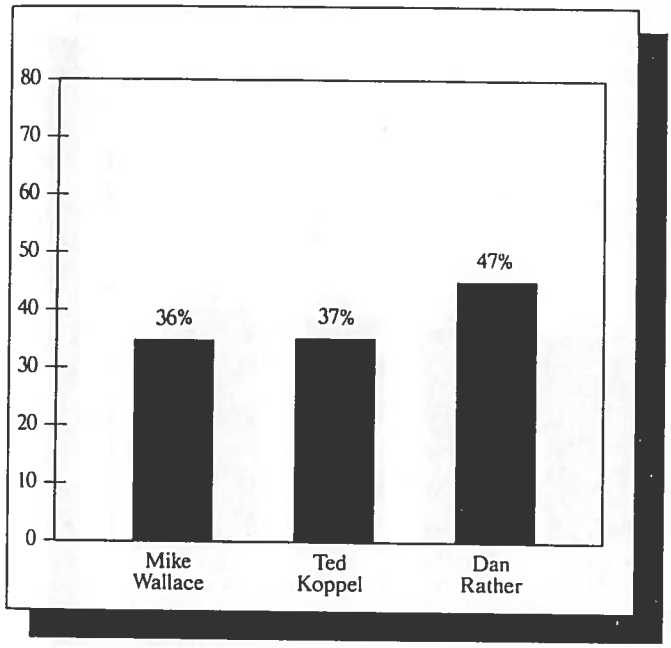
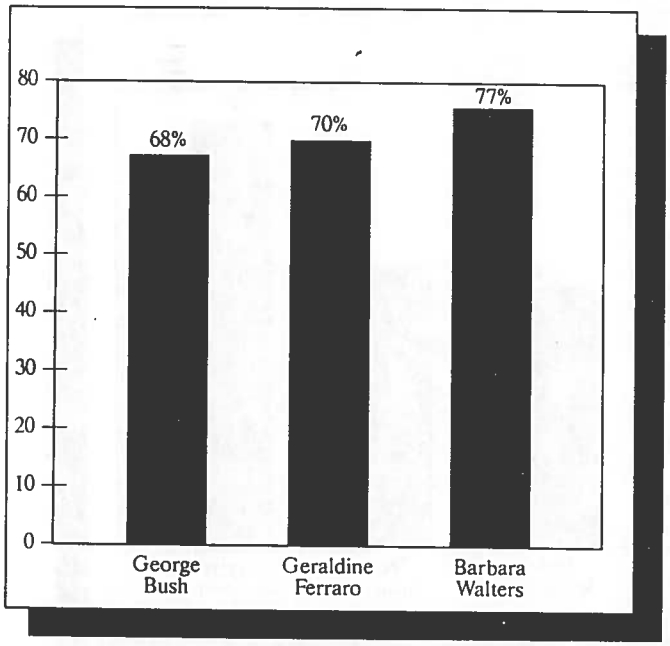


Figure 2 (Cont'd)





Slightly less than half the population recognize Dan Rather's photo. Photos of Koppel, Wallace and Brokaw were identified by fewer than four in 10 respondents. George Will, despite his continuing appearances on David Brinkley's *This Week*, ABC's *World News Tonight* and recent designation in *The New York Times* as America's most visible news commentator, was recognized by fewer than one person in eight.

The most prominent political leaders are more visible than the individual news anchors. George Bush and Geraldine Ferraro are more recognized than every newsperson other than Barbara Walters. The Secretary of Defense, however, trails all the news anchors in terms of recognition.

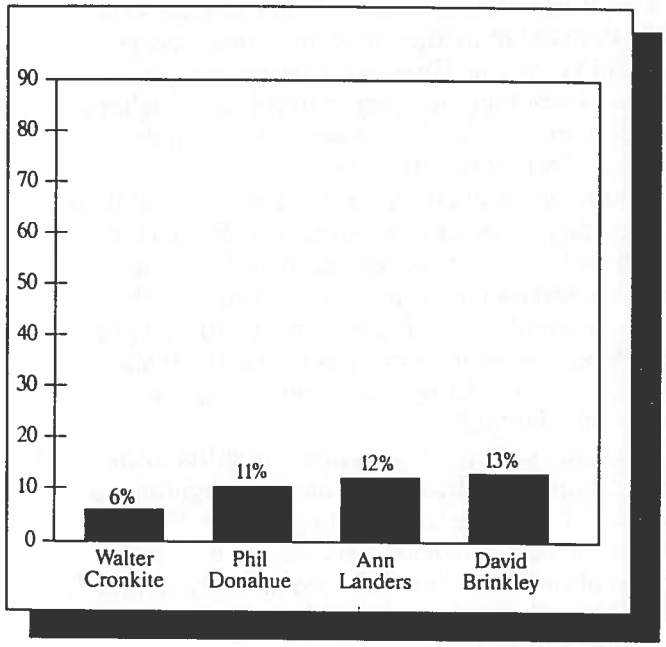
That network anchors are more recognized than the Secretary of Defense is impressive. But so too is the fact that in the age of television and the era of network television news, almost two-thirds of the public cannot place the faces of most national press celebrities, even when they belong to Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes*, Ted Koppel at *Nightline*, or Tom Brokaw on *Nightly News*.

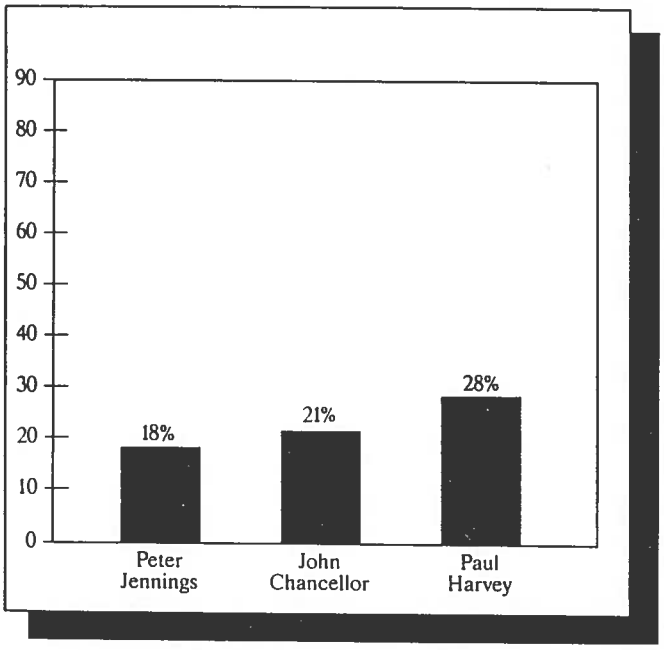
The same pattern exists when one shifts from photographic identification to name recognition, a much easier test, one that invites guessing. Figure 3 presents the percentage of respondents who volunteered that they have "never heard of" or "can't rate" each of the following prominent people who work in the news business.

Figure 3

RECOGNITION OF PEOPLE IN THE MEDIA: NAME IDENTIFICATION

This figure shows the percent saying they "Never Heard of" or "Can't Rate" the following newspeople, and includes all names in the questionnaire except those already listed in Figure 2.





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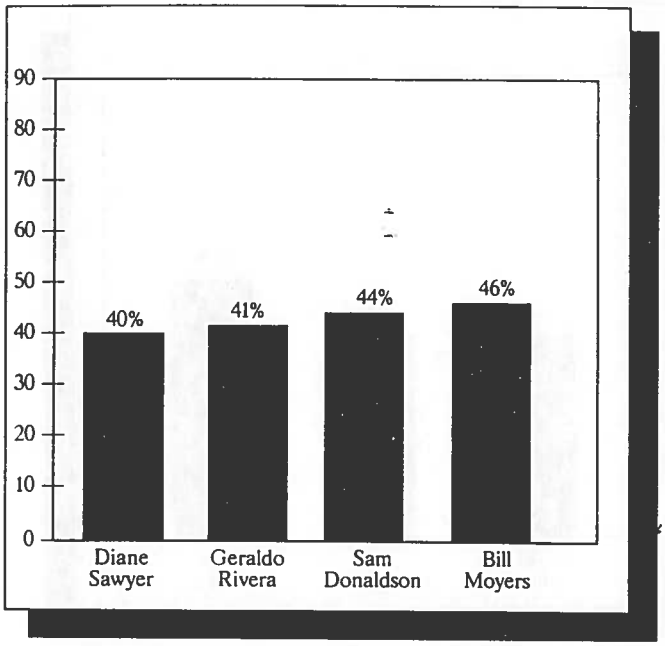
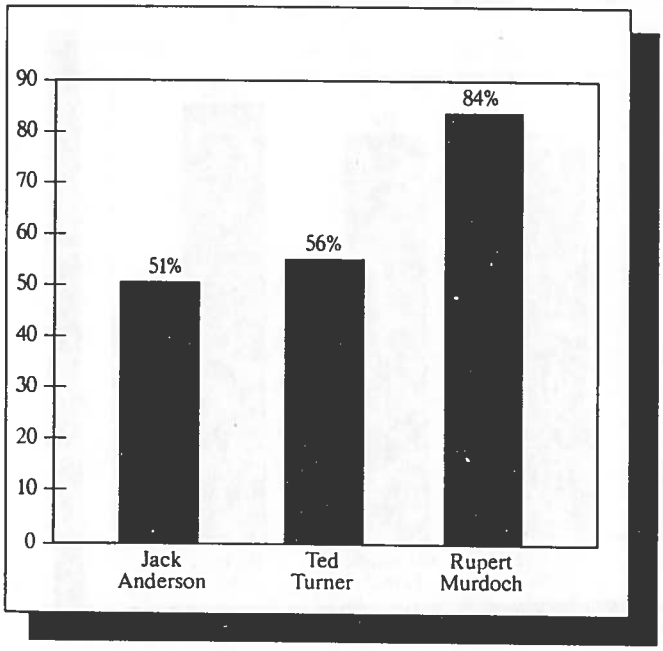




These statistics concerning name recognition tell us two things about personal visibility in the news industry. First, soft newspeople can have great visibility—Phil Donahue and Ann Landers, for example, are more visible than Peter Jennings or John Chancellor. Second, even controversial journalists are, despite their professional notoriety, less than visible to the public at large. For example, Bill Moyers and Jack Anderson are unknowns to about half the population.

Personal Relevance of Press-Related Events and Issues

Most press-related policy issues and events stimulate modest amounts of information or personal concern. A lopsided majority (62 percent) tells us candidly that it's *not* concerned about equal time issues in political advertising. A majority (51 percent) tells us directly that it's *not* concerned about issues associated with regulating fairness in the coverage of controversial subjects. Among those issues included, only controversies associated with early election predictions produce a majority (51 percent) to say yes, the issue concerns them.

The information level about press issues is also quite limited. Six in 10 Americans said "yes," when asked if they remembered "hearing or reading anything about General William Westmoreland's libel suit." But only one in three could tell us which news organization Westmoreland sued.

Three in 10 had "heard or read about a group led by Jesse Helms trying to buy a controlling interest in a major news organization." But only two in 10 knew that news organization was CBS. Only five percent mentioned allegations of bias (any type) when asked why Helms is trying to take over CBS.

Some news personalities are visible, most newspeople are not. *News* is a concern. But news events about the press and press issues often go unnoticed or unremarked. The press is probably less visible, and less salient to the public, than newspeople believe.

Press Knowledge: Knowing Basics

Until now, surveys have done little to measure the level of public knowledge about the news media. But we think it is important to tap more than public opinion. It's important to test for public awareness as well.

Knowledge questions are, however, hard to administer by phone. In fact, one of the reasons Gallup opted for personal interviews was so that we could gauge the level of public knowledge about the news media.

Knowledge touches the confidence issue at best tangentially. But we believe that the news media will profit from learning what kinds of things the public does know— which things are less understood.

For the most part, knowledge about the press produces its own hierarchy. Regardless of the types of questions asked, the public shows

- Some understanding about the news *process*—how news gets delivered
- Less understanding about the news *business*—who owns what, who does what
- General *mis*understanding about press law and regulation.

Knowledge about Process

We asked four knowledge questions that involve the news process—where news comes from and how it gets reported. On all four the public tended to get it right. Using multiple choice questions, we asked respondents about the nature of a *press release,* the function of an *anchorperson,* the job of a *press secretary* and the significance of the *wire services.*

Even taking guessing into account, most respondents seem to hold a proper conceptualization of a press release, an anchorperson, a press secretary, and a wire service.

When asked to choose:

- 85 percent of the public understand that a press release is "a written statement given to reporters," not a "news piece written by a reporter"
- 79 percent know that "anchorpeople mostly present stories others get for them," not that anchorpeople mostly "get stories themselves"
- 75 percent realize that a press secretary at the White House "is employed by the President," not employed "by the news organizations that cover the President"
- 76 percent recognize that wire services, like AP and UPI, provide "most of the national and international news that goes into [smaller] newspapers"

These findings imply too that at least one American in four thinks the White House press secretary is employed by the news media. About one in seven believes a press release starts with a reporter, not an official. Still, compared with information levels about the news industry or about press law, knowledge about the news process seems almost profound.

Knowledge about the News Business

Knowledge about the news business falls far below knowledge about the news process. Compared with questions about news process, questions about media ownership and control reveal information levels markedly lower, sometimes producing not many more right answers than one would expect by chance.

Start with two terms that are elementary in the vocabulary of the news industry, "newspaper chain" and "newspaper editorial." Respondents had considerable difficulty selecting the right definition of a newspaper chain, and even greater difficulty defining an editorial. Given four possible answers:

- 55 percent knew that a chain is "a group of newspapers that are owned by a single company" —45 percent did not know
- 41 percent knew that an editorial is "an opinion piece which represents the official position of the newspaper on an issue" —59 percent did not know

Nor does the public know anything about the chain of command in a typical news organization. At best, four in 10 know that a publisher outranks an editor and a reporter at a typical newspaper. In fact, three in 10 believe that reporters outrank either the editor or the publisher.

Perhaps most remarkable, when asked whether *Time* and *Newsweek* "are owned by the same company or different companies," an overwhelming proportion could not say. Only 27 percent could state that *Time* and *Newsweek* are owned by "different companies." Thirteen percent said "same company." Sixty percent said "not sure."

Even when encouraged to guess, only 52 percent got it right, 30 percent got it wrong, 18 percent refused to guess. Chance guessing alone would, of course, produce a 50-50 split.

Knowledge about Press Law and Regulation

Knowledge about press law and regulation is often *less* than what we would expect to see by chance—indicating public *misunderstanding*, not mere lack of information.

As far as regulation of the media is concerned, whatever the question, majorities get the wrong answer. The public does not understand the most basic truths concerning the degree of broadcast regulation in America. Nor does it know about the almost complete absence of government regulation of print:

- 55 percent do *not* know that television stations are more closely regulated by the federal government than newspapers
- 67 percent do *not* know that there is no formal professional training required in order to report the news in a newspaper
- 73 percent do *not* know that there is no formal training required in order to report the news on television

Laws pertaining to libel are widely misunderstood. Although a majority (58 percent) says it understands about libel law, we find that the vast bulk of the public is either wrong or completely uninformed about the single most important fact concerning libel law and political leaders—that the press has added protection against libel suits when the plaintiff is a public official. Seventy-three percent do *not* know that libel laws are "different for public officials and private citizens." In fact, even among those who say that they do understand libel law, nearly two-thirds still get it wrong. Those people think libel law is the same for public officials and private persons.

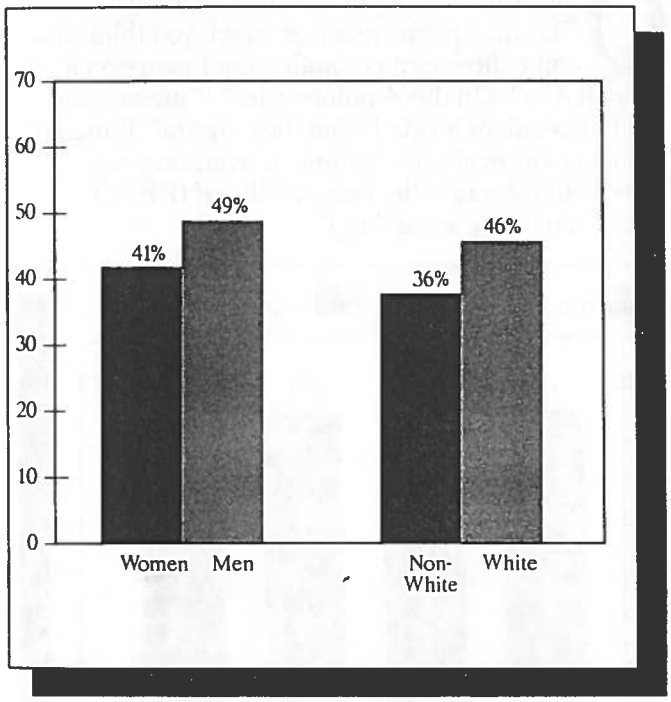
For journalists, the First Amendment is practically catechism. Not for the public at large. Only three Americans in 10 can tell us that the First Amendment is the "part of the U.S. Constitution" that "mentions freedom of the press." Even if one accepts the "Bill of Rights" as a correct answer, fewer than half (45 percent) know which portion of the Constitution provides for "free press."

These findings are aggregated. And looking only at the public-at-large masks some truth about press knowledge. As expected, knowledge in all areas varies as a function of sociology and interest. Knowledge correlates modestly with gender, race, region, and level of urbanization. Men, caucasians, Easterners, and urbanites tend to know more about the press.

Levels of information correlate more dramatically with occupation, income, news consumption and, of course, education. Professionals, heavy news consumers and the educated know much more about the press, regardless of topic. Figure 4 shows how important each of the demographic variables is in knowing something as important as the portion of the Constitution providing for the free press.

Figure 4

PERCENT KNOWING THAT "FIRST AMENDMENT" OR THE "BILL OF RIGHTS" PROVIDES FOR FREEDOM OF THE PRESS



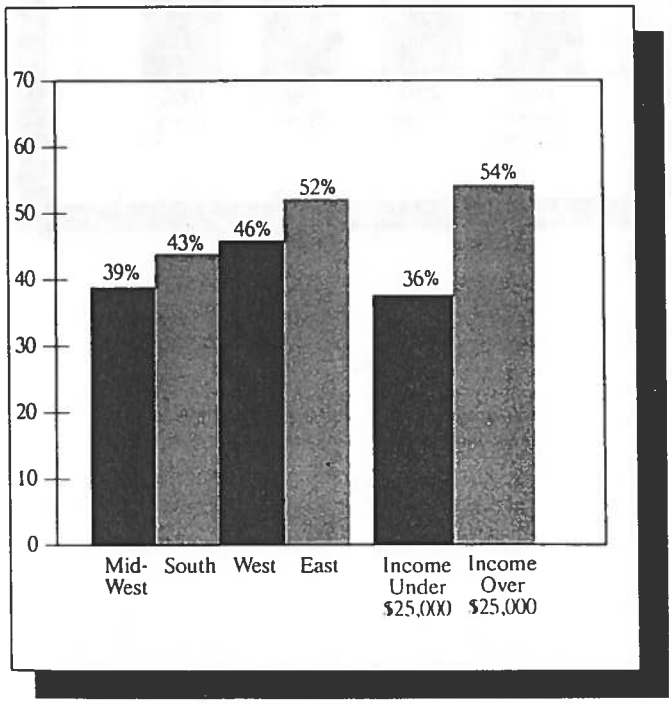
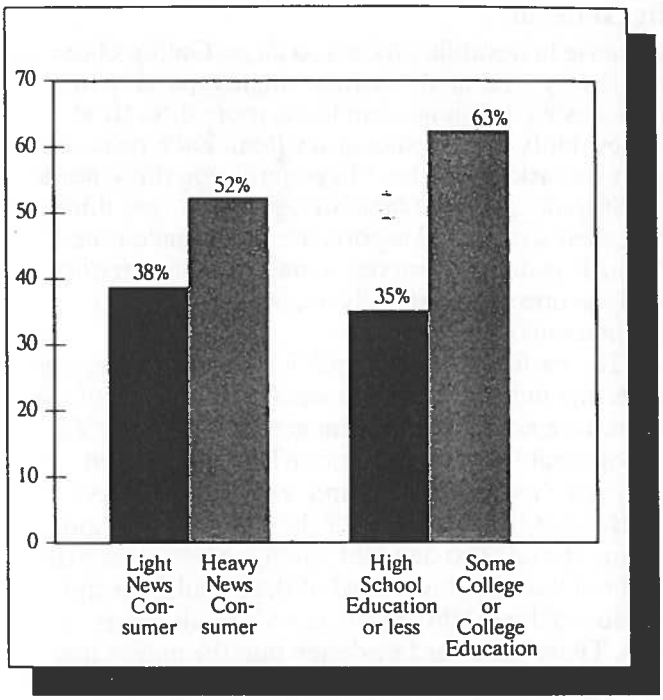


Figure 4 (Cont'd)



As expected, demographic and social variables help explain levels of press knowledge. But except for basic terminology, absolute levels of knowledge are low in almost all demographic groups. Still, the public knows best those aspects most relevant to them as consumers of news, and as citizens. The public knows most about process, how news gets to them through government channels and press channels. It is, quite probably, the most important sort of information for them to have.

Believability: Mostly Believable

Pollsters can define credibility in different ways. Some choose to define it quite broadly, including in their definitions topics like press sensitivity and press character.

We choose, instead, to separate each of these topics and look first at *believability,* and then move on to discuss other performance issues in turn.

If one defines credibility narrowly, as believability, then the public expresses something of a consensus: the public believes the press. In fact, if believability *per se* were the only credibility issue, one could justifiably close the book on the credibility gap.

The Accuracy of News Organizations in General

Because believability looms so large, Gallup chose not to rely on a single item, or single type of item, in assessing it. But no item looks more directly at believability than the accuracy item. Each respondent was asked whether "In general, you think news organizations get the facts straight, or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate." In the first national survey, a majority (55 percent) said the press was basically accurate, a minority (34 percent) said "no."

The earliest history of public opinion polling suggests that public attitudes toward the accuracy of the press have not markedly changed. In the late 1930s the original *Fortune* polls, done by Roper, found about one respondent in three expressing reservations about the credibility of the news media. And during the last two decades, Gallup surveys have discovered that roughly a third of the population still questions the validity of the news it reads, hears or sees. There is no hard evidence that the nation has grown more suspicious about the facts.

The Believability of Specific News Organizations

When given *specific* news organizations to evaluate, the public gives better marks for believability than the accuracy item, taken alone, would imply.

Each respondent in the first national survey was given a list of 20 different news organizations—organizations as different as *The Wall Street Journal* is from the *National Enquirer.* Respondents were asked to rate each news organization in terms of believability, using a scale of one to four.

When evaluating different kinds of news organizations, the public can discriminate dramatically. The public is, for example, four-and-one-half times as likely to give good marks for credibility to *The Wall Street Journal* as it is to the *National Enquirer.*

But when evaluating the major national news organizations, the press establishment, the public discriminates far less often. In fact, the public tends to give fairly high marks for credibility to all the serious national news media. On average, more than eight in 10 give the highest or second highest grade to all of the most prominent news organizations appearing on the list.

Note, however, that many more people give good marks for believability than give excellent marks. (See Figure 5.) Networks, for example, receive the highest credibility score from about three in 10, the second highest score from about five in 10.

Figure 5

BELIEVABILITY RATINGS FOR SELECTED MASS AND ELITE MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

Question: I am going to read another list. This time please rate how much you think you can believe each organization I name on a scale of 4 to 1. On this 4-point scale, "4" means you can believe all or most of what they say and "1" means you can believe almost nothing of what they say. How would you rate the believability of (READ ITEM) on this scale of 4 to 1?

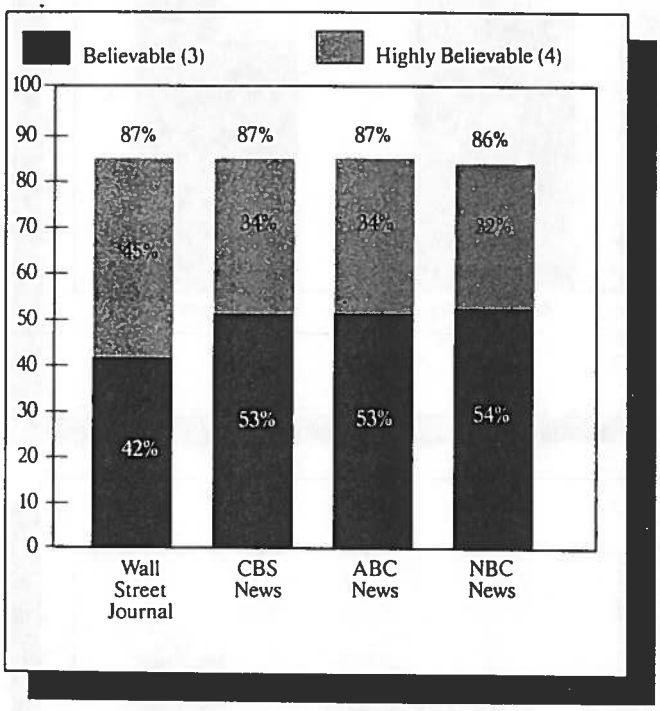
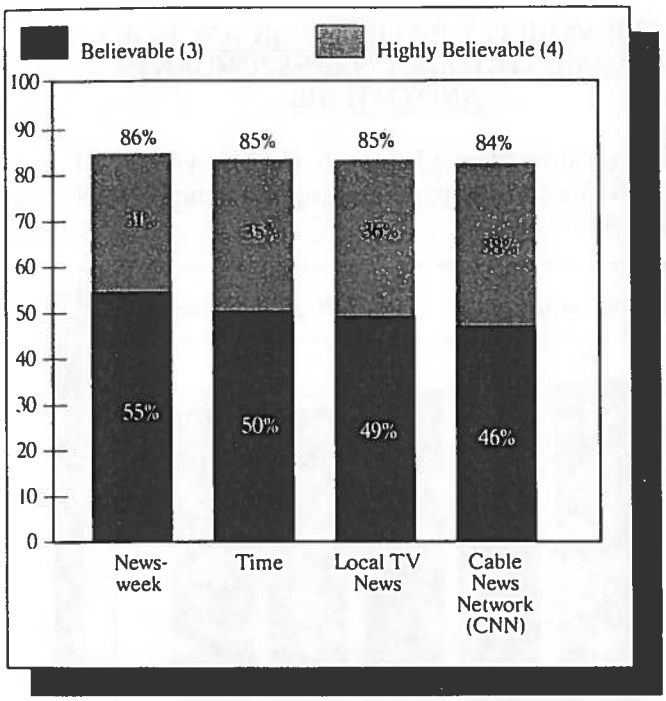
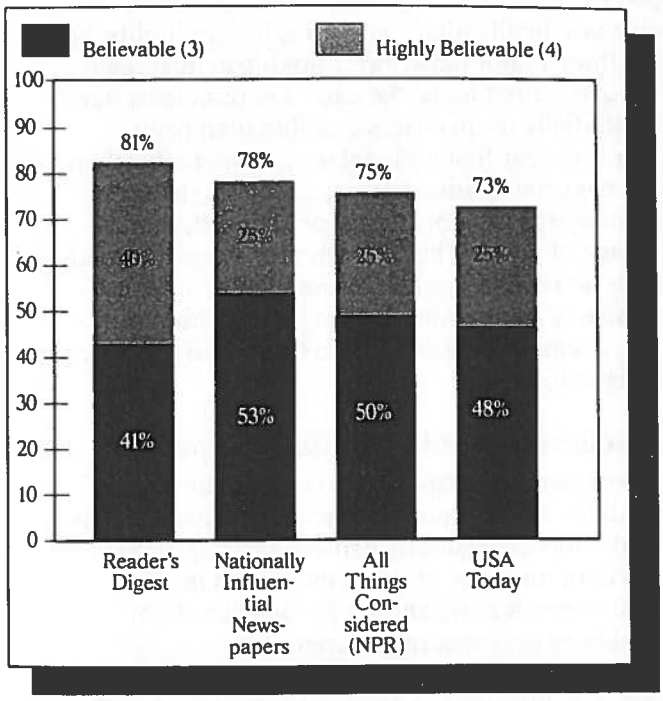
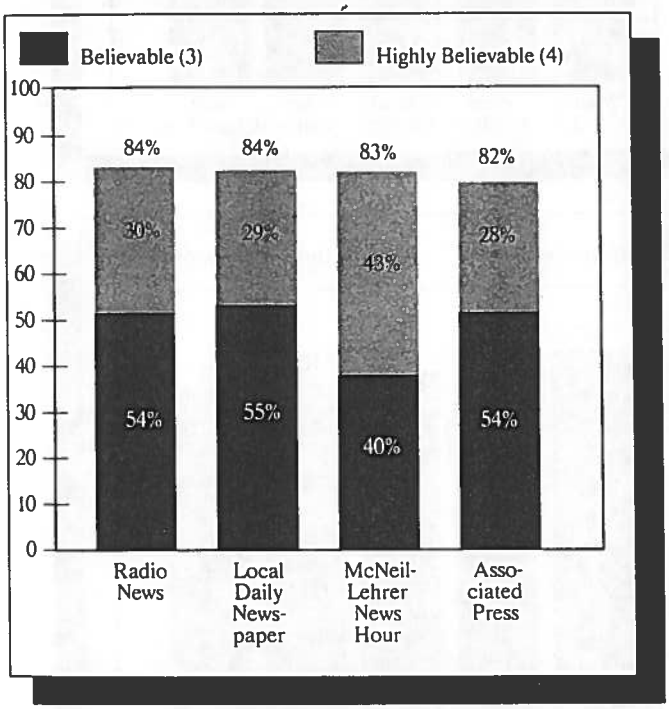
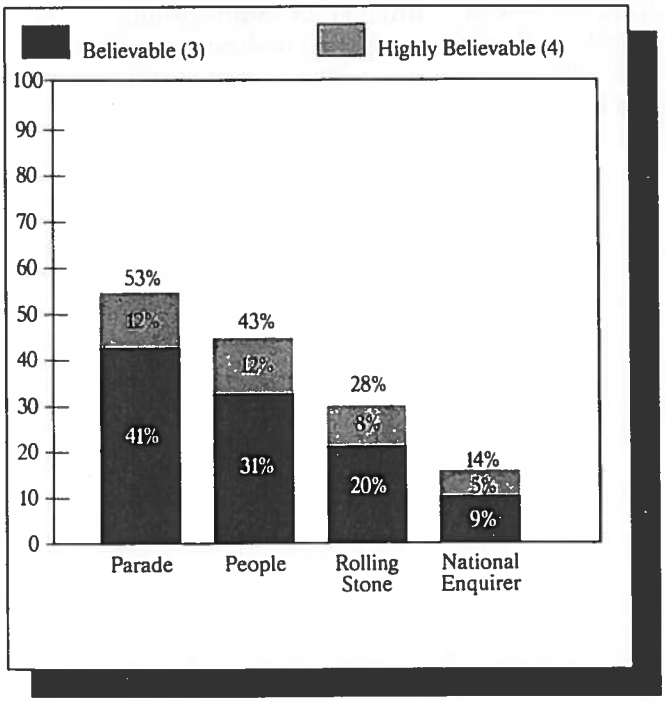


Figure 5 (Cont'd)









To a limited degree, major news organizations are judged by *type*. *Time* and *Newsweek*, for example, receive practically identical scores for credibility. So do the three major networks. Looking at aggregate scores one cannot make the case that broadcast news is substantially more or less credible than print.

Nor is it clear that national sources do better than local news organizations. What is clear is that the hard news organizations, local or national, print or electronic, do well. The soft news organizations and tabloids do poorly. For all but the most sensationalist of news organizations, looking at *specific* news sources seems to reveal a public that mostly believes the press it follows.

The Believability of Specific Newspersons

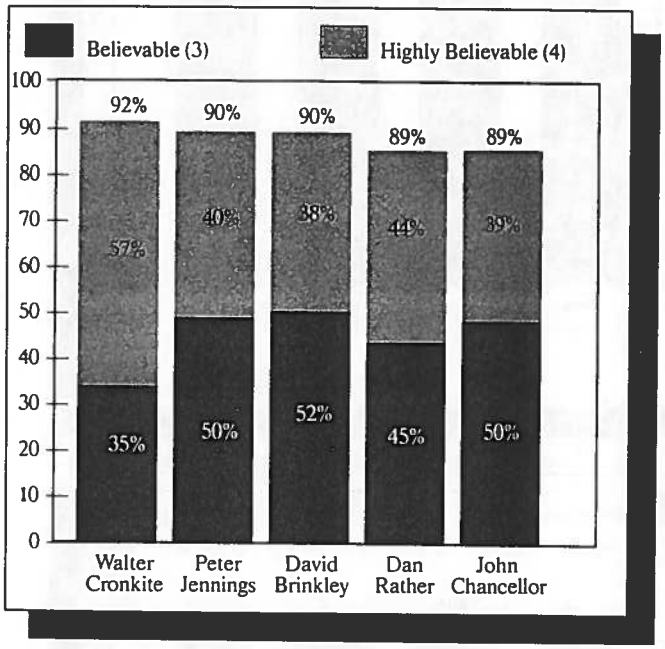
The most visible newspersons receive even higher believability scores than specific news organizations. News anchors consistently achieve slightly higher ratings than the networks that employ them. The average network news anchor is considered not believable by only one in 10 Americans.

About four in 10 expressing an opinion grant the highest possible score to each of the three network news anchors—Dan Rather, Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw. Combining the two highest scores into a believability index, the network anchors are considered believable by about 90 percent of the population. (See Figure 6.)

Figure 6

BELIEVABILITY RATINGS FOR ANCHORS, COMMENTATORS, CORRESPONDENTS, AND OTHERS

Question: Next, please rate the believability of the following people, using the same scale of 4 to 1.



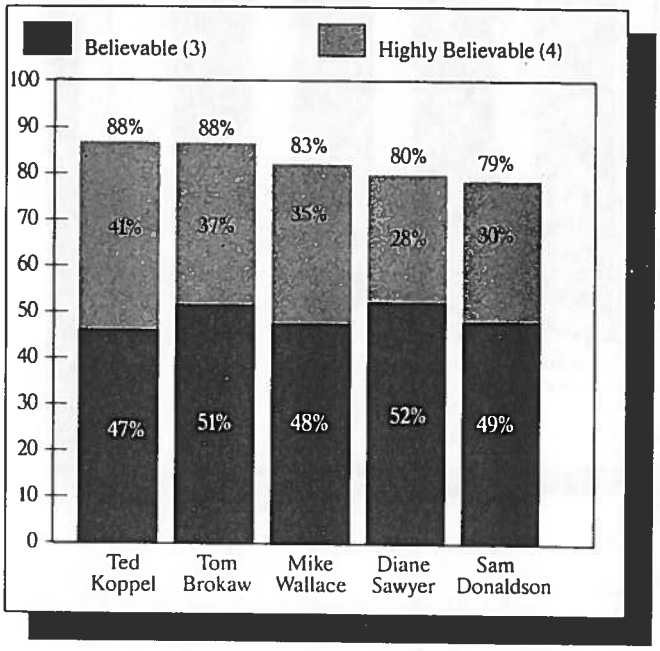
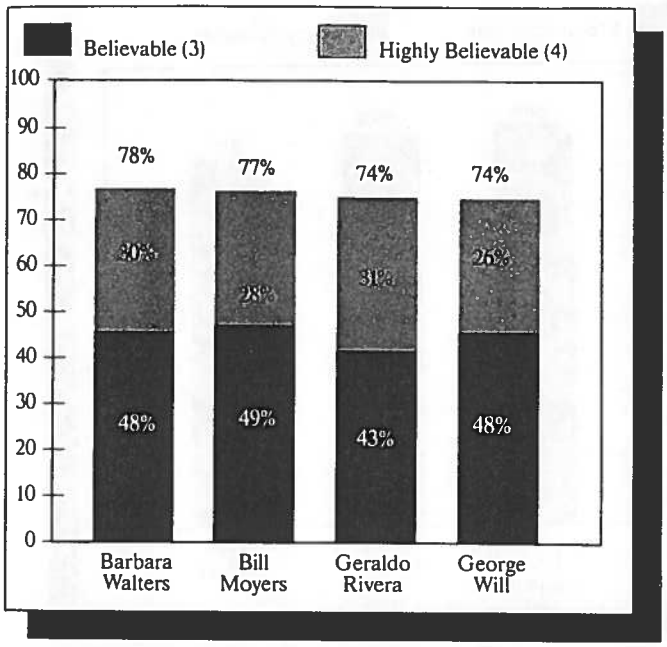
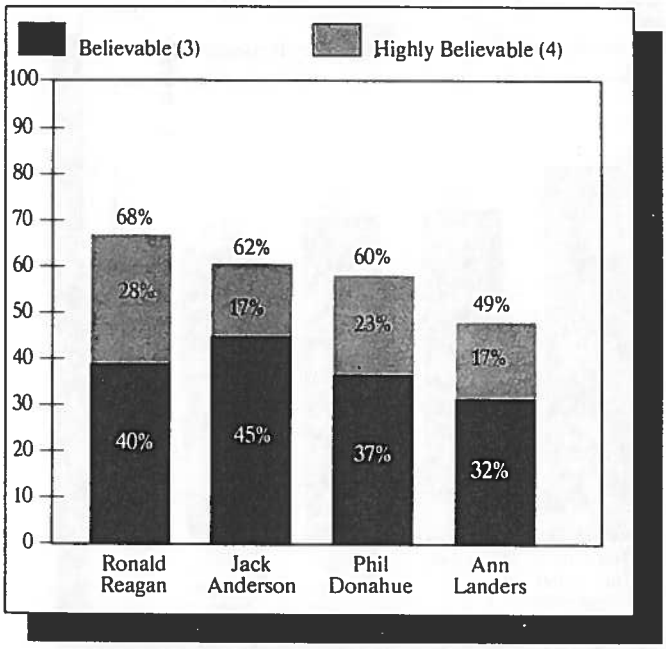


Figure 6 (Cont'd)





Walter Cronkite remains the benchmark. Although Dan Rather, his replacement, does well (44 percent give Rather the highest score, 45 percent the second highest), Cronkite in retirement maintains his unique station. Fifty-seven percent grant Cronkite the highest possible score for believability —only eight percent consider him less than credible.

Correspondents have slightly less believability than anchorpeople. Using again the believability index, Sam Donaldson, Mike Wallace and Diane Sawyer fall about 10 points below the anchors.

The public divides on commentators. John Chancellor and David Brinkley, former anchors, have believability scores that challenge those of the current anchormen. Bill Moyers and George Will—always commentators, never anchors—receive scores that are more typical of the correspondents.

At the low end of the scale are the soft news personalities—Phil Donahue and Ann Landers. A majority (51 percent) gives Landers low marks for believability. Four in 10 have reservations about Phil Donahue as a credible source of information.

One of the more remarkable findings in Figure 6 is that *all* the network newspeople get higher believability scores than President Reagan. We consider in a moment whether that comparison is a fair one, especially to a president.

Favorability of News Organizations

Credibility has so fully dominated the thinking of most press critics that issues of favorability have been generally forgotten. Yet, by definition favorability is part of image. And Gallup finds that the news media are quite favorably regarded. Nearly nine Americans in 10 who express an opinion express a favorable opinion concerning the nation's press. On average, one in four grants to the press the highest score. (See Figure 7.)

Figure 7

COMPARATIVE FAVORABILITY RATINGS

Question: I'd like your opinion of some people and some organizations. As I read from a list, please tell me which category on this card best describes your *overall opinion* of who or what I name.

Categories: Very Favorable
Mostly Favorable
Mostly Unfavorable
Very Unfavorable
Never Heard Of
Can't Rate

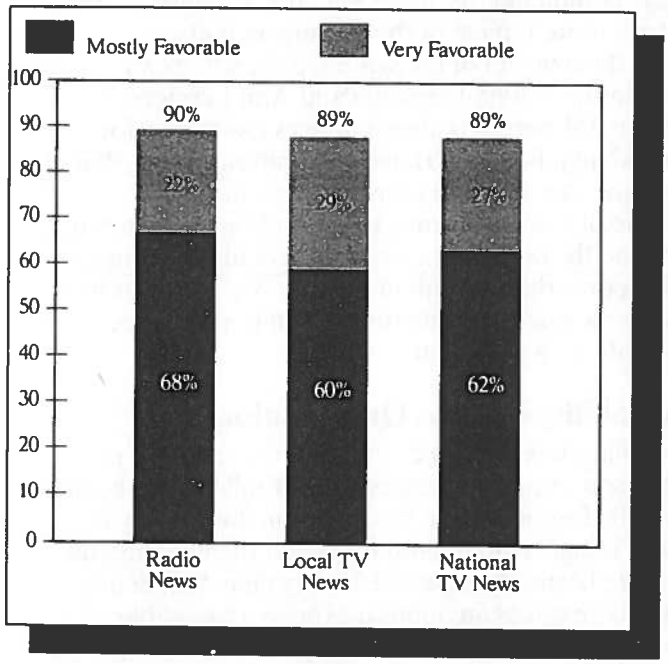
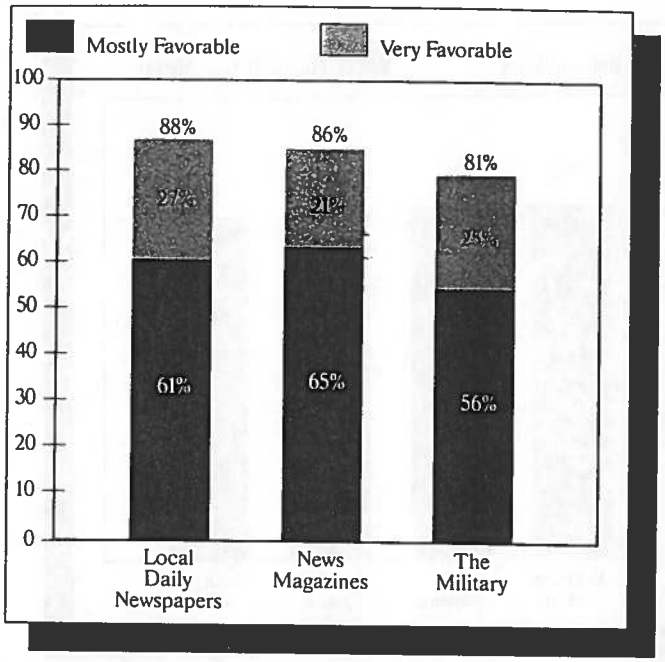
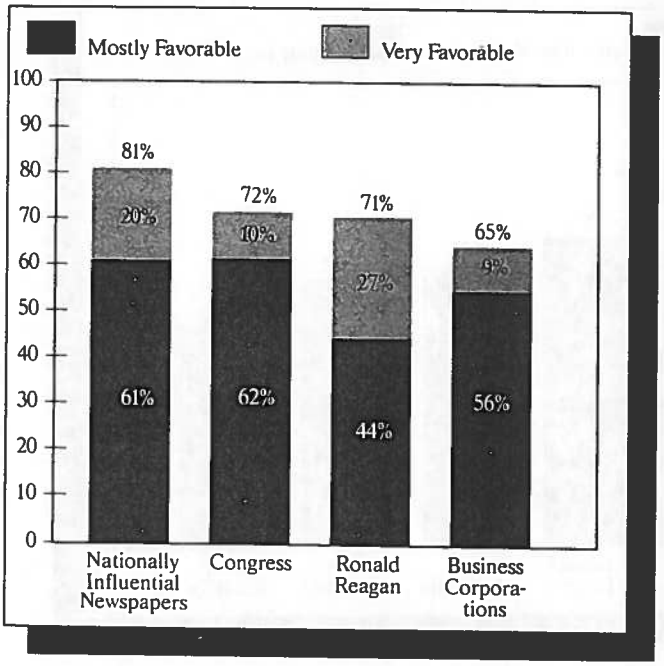


Figure 7 (Cont'd)





Local TV news and network TV news do equally well—89 percent of the public regard both sources either "very" favorably or "mostly" favorably. Local print does as well as TV news, with 88 percent holding "very" favorable or "mostly" favorable opinions of "the daily newspaper you are most familiar with."

Radio news is somewhat less likely to elicit the highest possible score, but radio does quite well on the overall favorability index; the combination of "very" favorable and "mostly" favorable responses is 90 percent. News magazines receive a composite score of 86 percent; "large nationally influential newspapers" score an 81.

As Figure 7 makes clear, these favorability scores are high in absolute levels and in comparative perspective. All the major news types on the list—national magazines, radio news, etc.—do better than the rest of the institutions or persons evaluated. News organizations consistently received higher favorability scores than Congress, labor unions, business corporations, the military and even Ronald Reagan. The President's favorability index is 71.

Almost every demographic and political group expresses positive feelings about the major news media. Using the favorability index, we find that network news, as an important example, earns a 91 among women, and 88 among men.

Among the young, the index is 90, among seniors 91; among Republicans the score is 89, among Democrats 92. Among strong conservatives the index is 84, among strong liberals it's 91. There is a slight tendency for the right to be less positive than the left, but both are favorably disposed.

In fact, the more intriguing pattern, one we address again in Part Two, is that those who know more about the press tend to be less happy with it. Using a measure of press knowledge built from the information items mentioned above, we find that the most knowledgeable give the networks a favorability score of 84, the least knowledgeable a score of 93. Still, all the traditional demographic and political groups answer "mostly" favorable or "very" favorable when asked to judge overall the nation's press.

It should be remembered that pollsters have always found the public to have a penchant for positivity—a tendency to say it likes most things and most people associated with the society at large. And, as with believability, the public is much more likely to label news organizations "mostly" favorable not "very" favorable, an indication that support is wide rather than deep. But those two qualifications cannot erase the fact that news organizations rank higher in favorability than the rest of the institutions and organizations that these respondents evaluated.

In short, the public *likes* the press. One of the greatest challenges in this report is to reconcile the public's overall approval of the national news media with a list of complaints it so readily voices.

The Reagan Comparison

How favorable is favorable? How believable is believable?

These questions always invite debate. But what is beyond debate is that Ronald Reagan is both liked and approved in the mid-1980s. During the first national survey, 60 percent of our sample approved of the way President Reagan was handling his job; and more than twice as many approved as disapproved.

At the time, Reagan was as popular as he was approved. Seventy-one percent of those expressing themselves gave the President "very" favorable or "mostly" favorable ratings.

With approval and favorability ratings at those levels, it isn't surprising that President Reagan was also regarded at the time as believable: 68 percent of those rating the President considered him credible.

Yet President Reagan was seen then as less believable than all the major anchors and major news organizations that appear in this study. (See Figures 6 and 7.) Reagan's believability index was 68. Local TV news, for example, earned an 85; *Time* and *Newsweek* each got an 86; Tom Brokaw, an 88; Dan Rather, 89; Peter Jennings, 90.

President Reagan was also less favorably regarded by the public than were all the major organizations which comprise the press establishment. Network news, for example, had a favorability index more than 20 points higher than Reagan during the first national survey.

One qualification is in order. President Reagan is not in the non-partisan news business. He is in partisan politics. Rather, Jennings, and Brokaw are very credible, but they are in the believability business, not in partisan politics.

The news media sell believability foremost; presidents do not. The news media do *not* face a large portion of the electorate that is, by partisan identification, predisposed to disbelieve and dislike them; presidents do. To compare either the credibility or the favorability of a partisan president to a non-partisan news industry is to disadvantage the president.

Yet, that ought not detract from the other side of the comparison. If the press and its prominent practitioners are perceived as more believable and regarded more favorably than President Reagan during his second term, then one might want to reconsider whether there is a crisis in credibility focused at the press.

Criticisms: Real Reservations about Performance, Few about Character

Believability is but one aspect of confidence. Gallup asked a series of questions about other possible strengths and weaknesses that the public senses in the way the press does its job. In our surveys, we focused on two related aspects of the press' reputation: press character and press performance. In general, the public expresses few reservations about the character of news organizations or newspeople. But the public at large has several reservations about day-to-day press practices and behavior.

Press Character

We asked four questions that touch public attitudes toward the basic character of the press, questions about values as fundamental as morality and as relevant as professionalism.

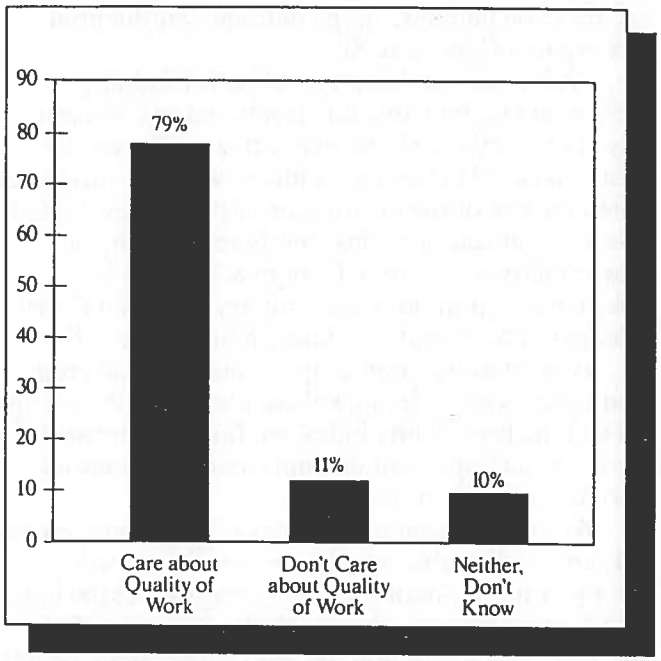
Character questions pertain to the perceived nature of press people, not so much the quality of their work. And on these values questions, the American news audience gives high marks.

Nearly eight in 10 Americans say that news organizations "care about how good a job they do" (79 percent). More than seven in 10 (72 percent) say the press is "highly professional." Asked if the word "moral" applies to news organizations, or if "immoral" applies instead, the public opts for "moral" four to one (54 percent versus 13 percent). (See Figure 8.) On these fundamental qualities, the public sees newspeople as decent citizens and news organizations as trying to do a responsible job.

Figure 8

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE "CHARACTER" OF NEWS ORGANIZATIONS

Question: I'm going to read you some pairs of opposite phrases. After I read each pair, tell me which one phrase you feel better describes news organizations generally. If you think that *neither* applies, please say so.



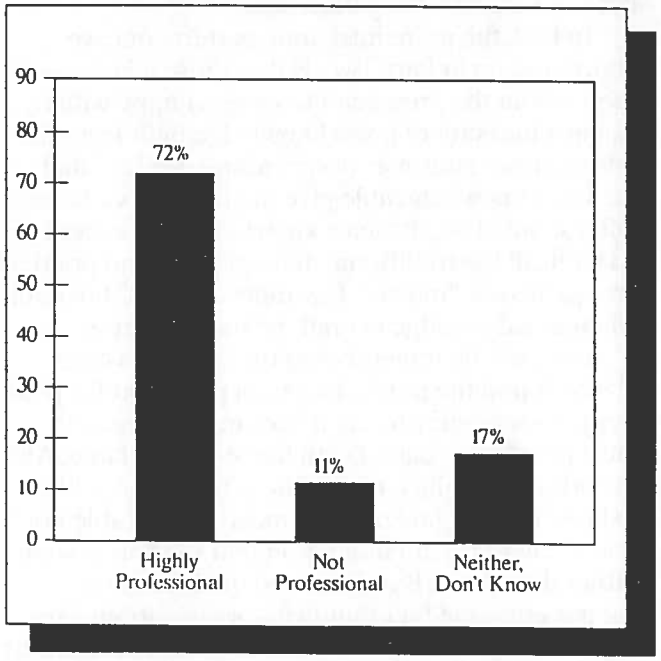
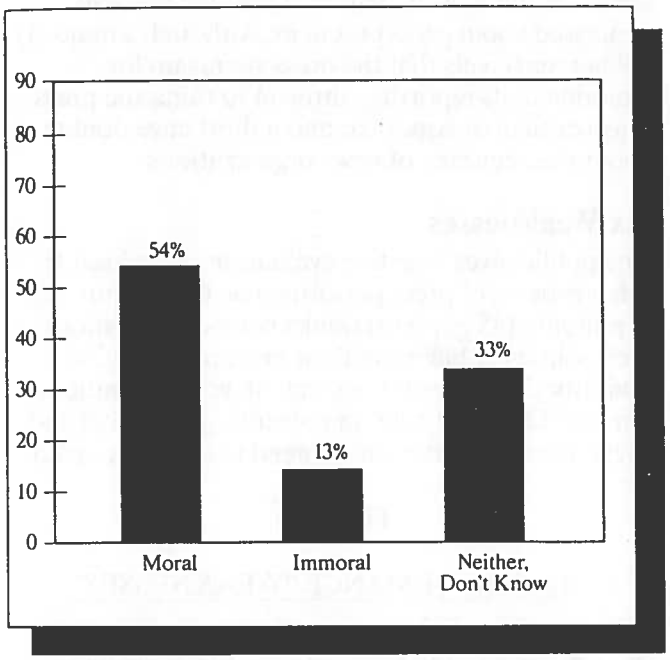
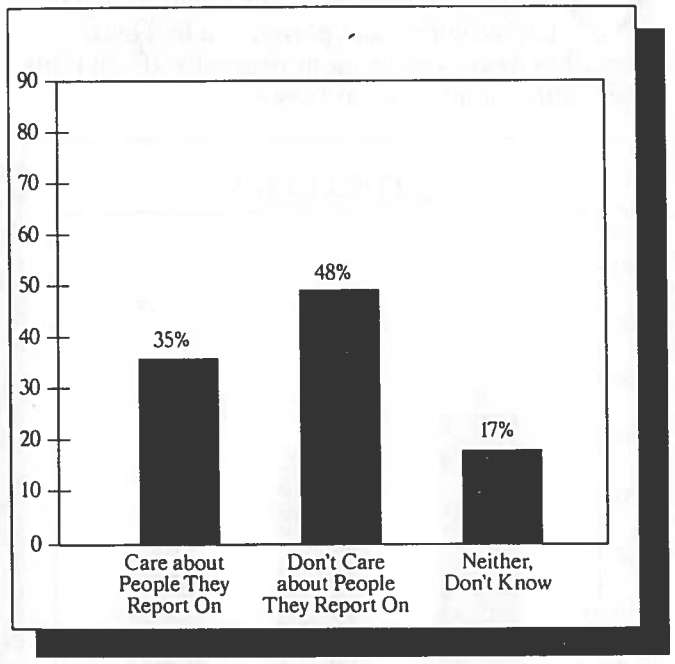


Figure 8 (Cont'd)





On one character item the public has its doubts. A plurality (48 percent) says that news organizations tend not to care about the people about whom they report. But that issue ties less directly to the nature of press character than to the nature of press work. And it is there that most doubts about the press emerge.

Press Behavior and Practice

On a host of behavioral issues, the public *is* critical. On topics like fairness and independence, and above all, respect for privacy, the public at large expresses doubt and sometimes serious disapproval about performance.

The first national survey asked nine specific questions aimed directly at public attitudes toward press behavior. Accuracy was the first, and the one we've already considered. And accuracy is one of the few performance tests on which the public gives good grades.

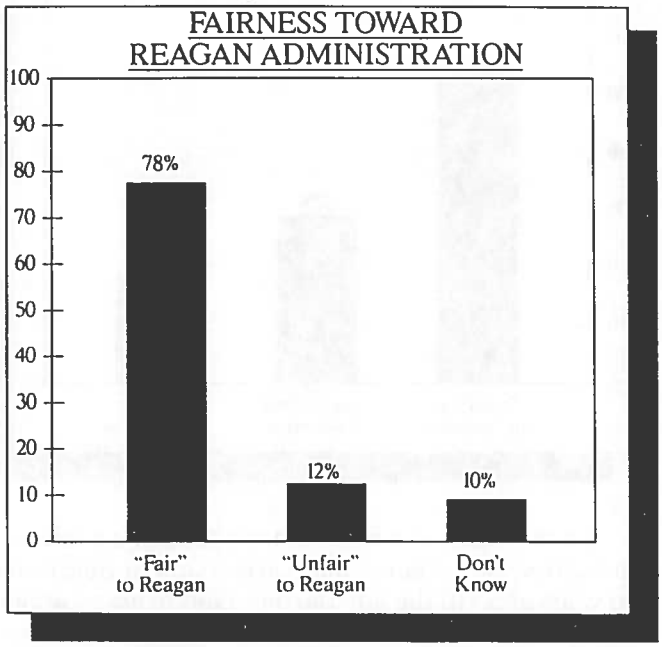
Three Strengths

Again, a majority believes that news organizations get the facts straight. And by an even more lopsided percentage the public also feels that news organizations are "fair to the Reagan Administration." (See Figure 9.) Almost eight in 10 think the press is fair to Reagan; only one in 10 says "no," with the rest undecided.

Figure 9

THREE PERFORMANCE "STRENGTHS"

Practices in which the Public Expresses Approving Attitudes toward a Press Pattern of Behavior



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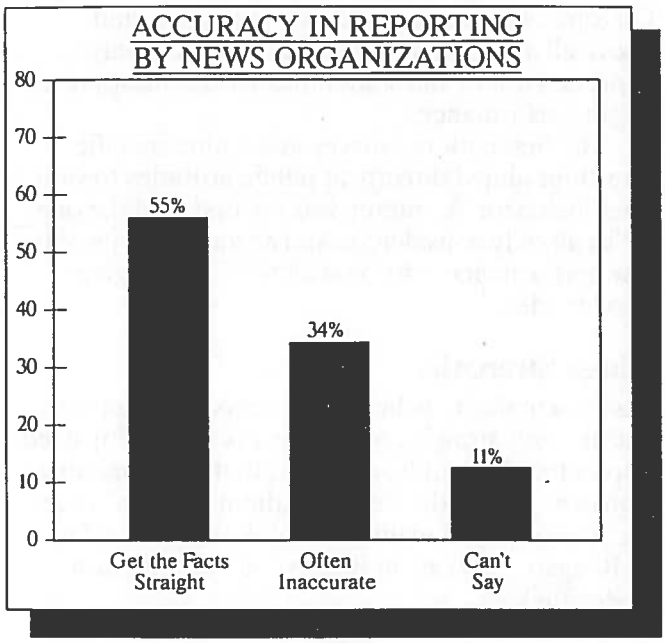
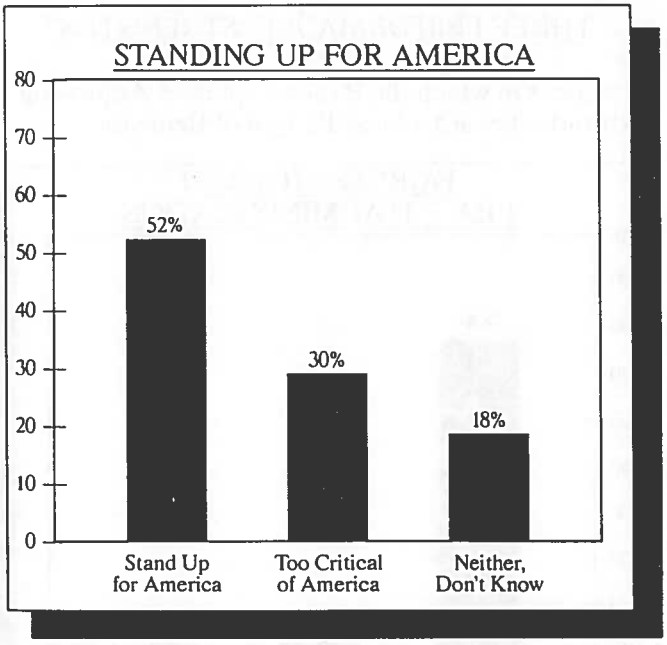




Remarkably, this is very much the same answer the nation gave when Gallup asked similar questions 50 years ago. (In the late thirties, Gallup asked about newspapers and the Roosevelt Administration.) The public believed then, apparently as it does now, that the press generally is fair to presidents, and to their administrations.

This perception—that the press treats Reagan fairly—is the most widely held positive opinion expressed about press practices. Although a majority (52 percent) feels that the press stands up for America in its reporting, three in 10 think the press is too critical of America; and a third have doubts about the accuracy of news organizations.

Six Weaknesses

The public gives negative evaluations in at least six other aspects of press performance. (See Figure 10.) A plurality (45 percent) thinks news organizations are "politically biased in their news reporting." A majority (53 percent) feels that news organizations tend to "favor one side" in presenting "political and social issues," a criticism we need to consider again.

Figure 10

SIX PERFORMANCE "WEAKNESSES"

Question: I'm going to read you some pairs of opposite phrases. After I read each pair, tell me which *one* phrase you feel better describes news organizations generally. If you think that *neither* applies, please say so.

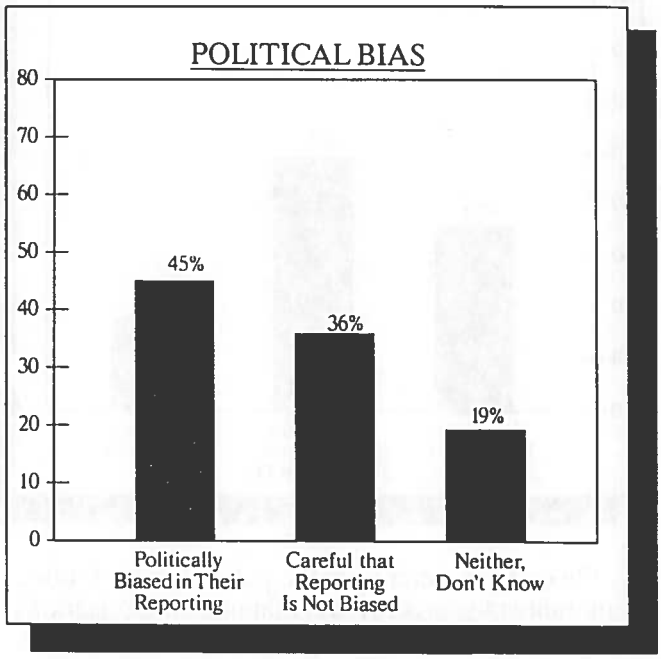
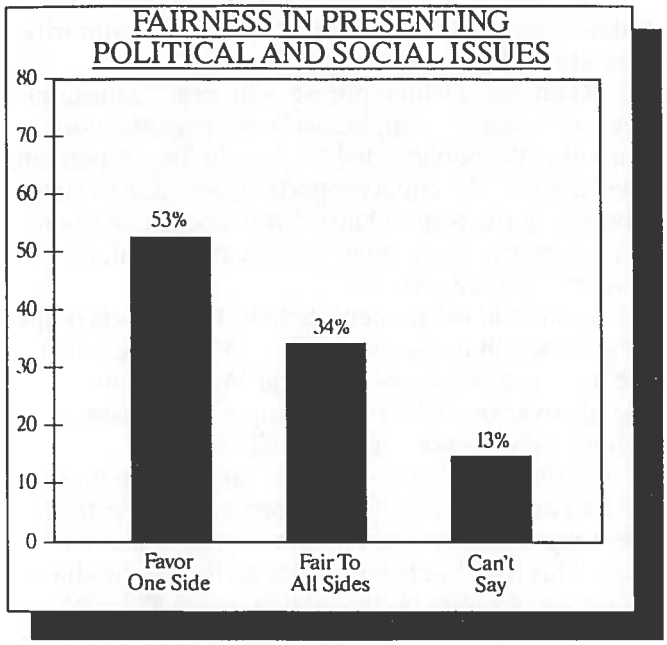


Figure 10 (Cont'd)

Question: In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides or do they tend to favor one side?



Question: In general, do you think news organizations are pretty independent, or are they often influenced by powerful people and organizations?

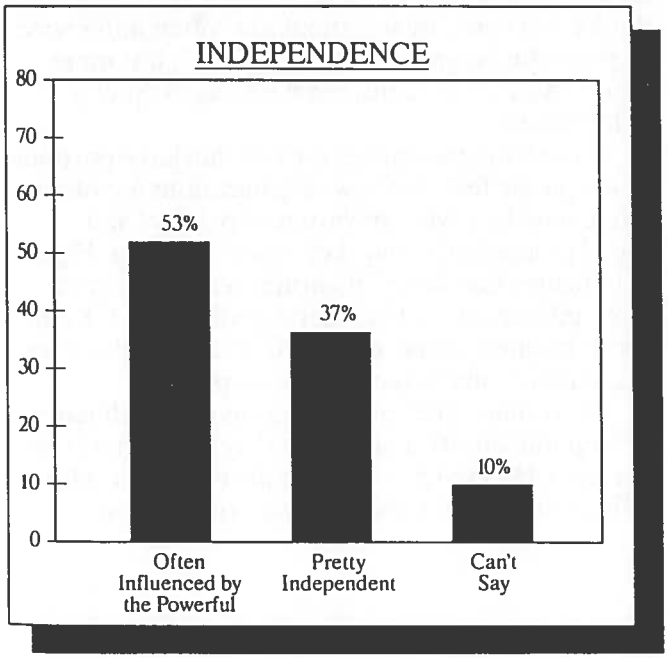
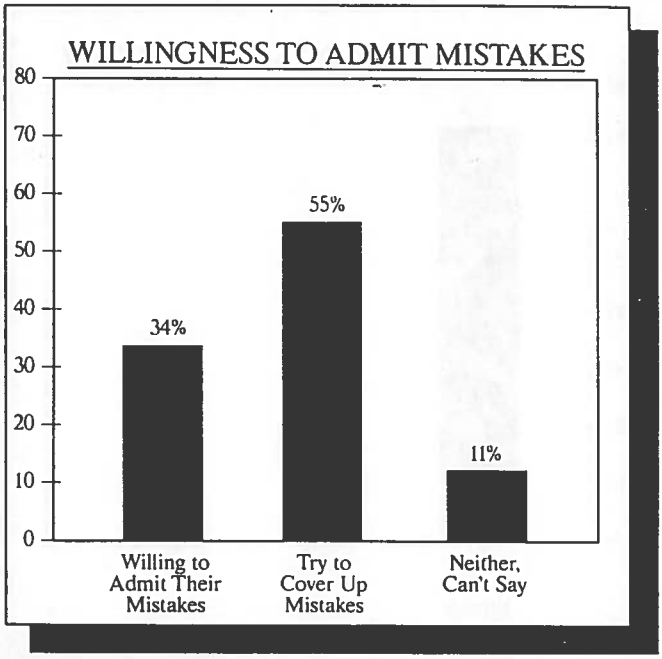


Figure 10 (Cont'd)

Question: I'm going to read you some pairs of opposite phrases. After I read each pair, tell me which *one* phrase you feel better describes news organizations generally. If you think that *neither* applies, please say so.



Question: In general, do you think news organizations pay too much attention to *good news*, too much attention to *bad news*, or do they mostly report the kinds of stories they should be covering?

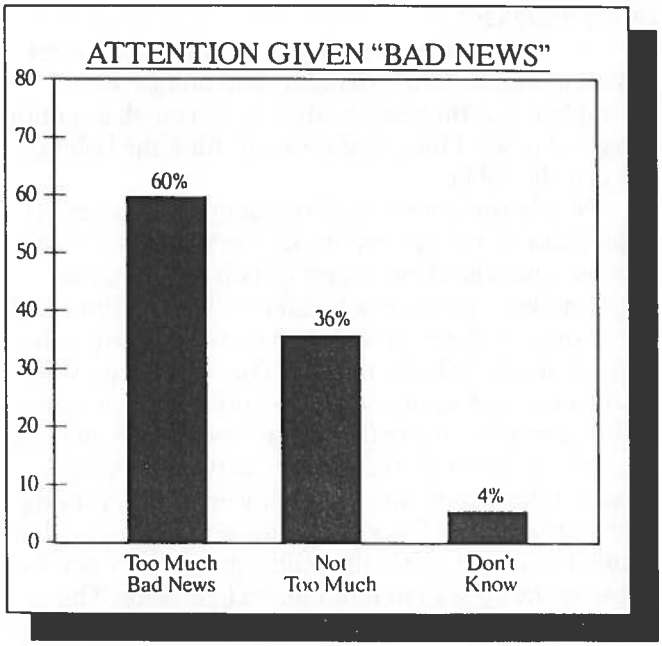
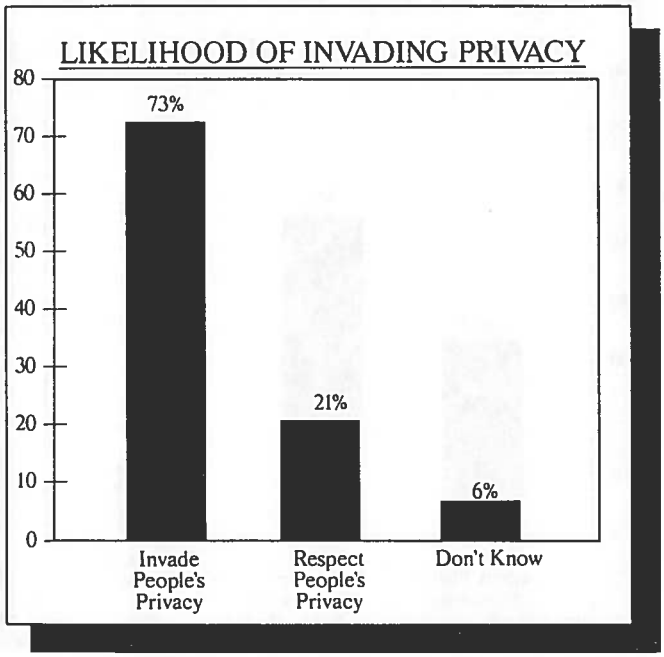


Figure 10 (Cont'd)

Question: Do you feel news organizations often invade people's privacy or do they generally respect people's privacy?



One of the most surprising findings is that a majority (53 percent) sees the press as "often influenced by powerful people and organizations," *not* as independent. Another majority (55 percent) believes news organizations are likely to try and "cover up their mistakes."

A majority sees news organizations as too interested in bad news (60 percent) and one percent complain that the news media pay too much attention to good news. Thirty-five percent think the balance is as it should be.

Nearly three-fourths of the sample (73 percent) feel that news organizations invade people's privacy. Invasiveness is hardly a new criticism, but in the last analysis, it's the most widely held criticism of all.

Some of these critical opinions raise doubts that are particularly fundamental. That a majority sees issue coverage as one-sided is something no responsible newsperson can dismiss as trivial. And, in fact, the perception that the press is, in issue coverage, likely to favor one side is actually growing. Although the public gives higher marks for accuracy now than back in the late 1970s, the public gives lower marks now for fairness than it did in the late 1960s. The growing doubt about press fairness in issue coverage underlines public concerns on performance issues.

Liberal Bias

During the 1980s, the most vocal critics of the press focused on the notion of liberal bias. But does the public also sense liberal bias in news reporting?

The evidence is mixed. While a plurality of the public sees news organizations as liberal, a minority sees liberal bias in news reporting.

When asked which phrase—"liberal," "conservative" or "neither"—applies to "news organizations generally," the public is divided. One in five (20 percent) says "neither." An equal proportion says "don't know." The rest of the respondents divide about two to one: 41 percent say news organizations are liberal, 19 percent say conservative.

About half (45 percent) believe the press is politically biased in its reporting. Four in 10 (41 percent) see news organizations as liberal. We find that slightly over one-fifth of the sample (22 percent) believes news reporting is liberally biased.

On the other hand, using the same procedure, we find nearly one in 10 (nine percent) thinks that press reporting is biased in favor of the conservatives. This fits closely with what earlier studies have found—a plurality of the public sensing a bias of some sort. And among those who do think that there is bias, the clear majority sees it as liberal.

The Independence Issue

The focus groups and the national surveys all uncovered an independence issue. A majority (53 percent) thinks that news organizations are "often influenced by powerful people and organizations"; just more than a third (37 percent) see the press as "pretty independent."

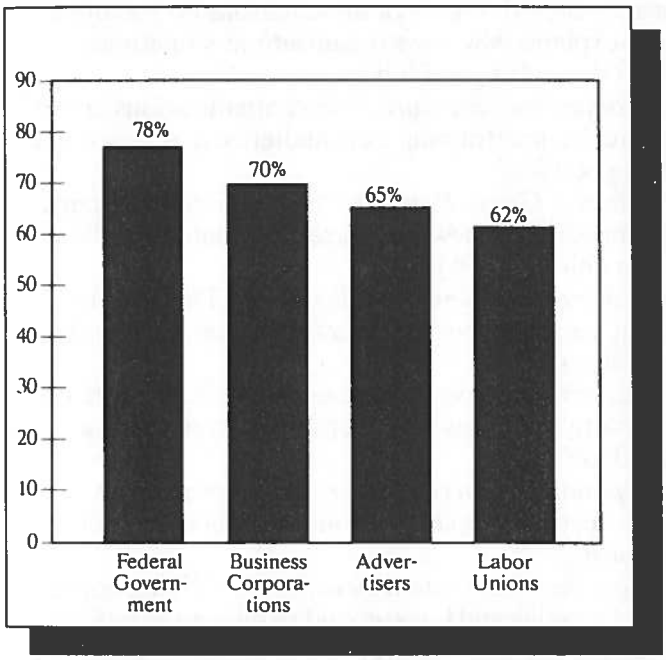
More telling perhaps is the fact that large portions of the public feel that news organizations are often influenced by a wide spectrum of political and social groups in the way they report the news. Figure 11 indicates that heavy majorities see the press as often influenced by the federal government (78 percent); business corporations (70 percent); advertisers (65 percent); and labor unions (62 percent).

Clear majorities see the press as often influenced by Republicans (60 percent) and by Democrats (58 percent). Half (50 percent) see the military as often influencing the way the press reports the news.

Figure 11

PERCENT OF PUBLIC SEEING EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AS OFTEN INFLUENCING THE WAY NEWS IS REPORTED

Question: Now I will read a list of some different groups. As I read each one, tell me whether you feel this group *often influences* organizations in the way they report the news, or not.



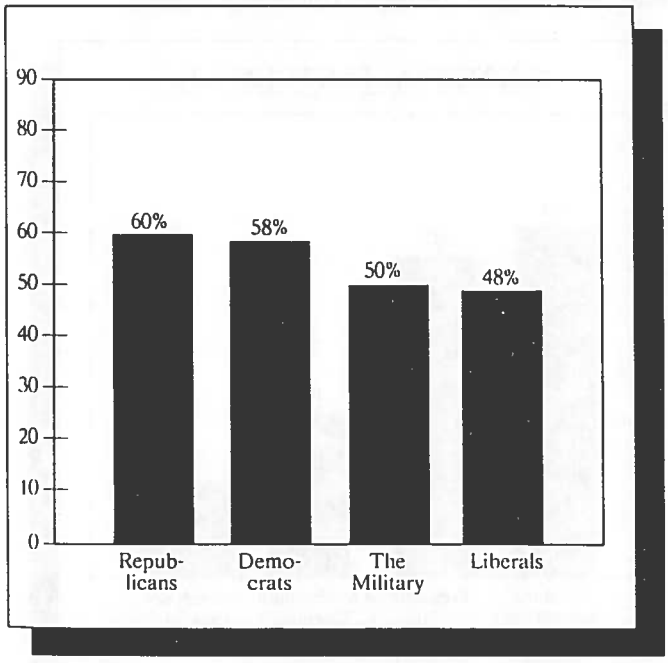
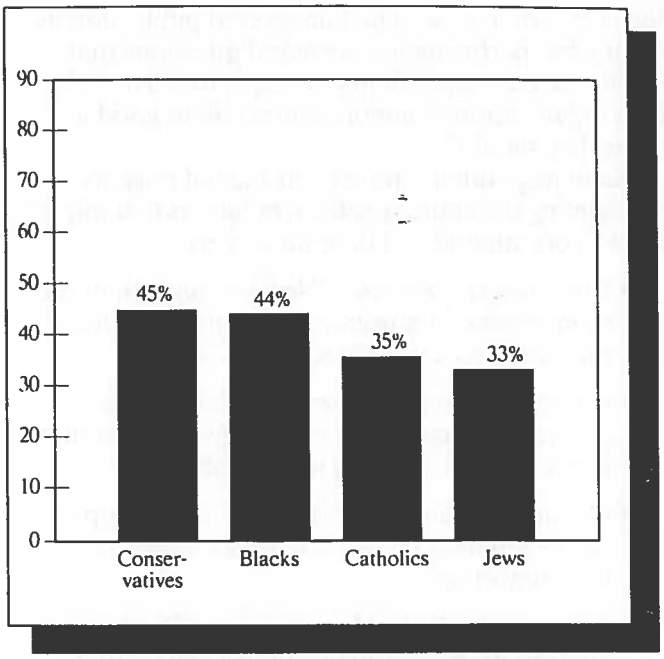


Figure 11 (Cont'd)



A plurality (48 percent) feels that liberals influence the way news gets reported. A slightly slimmer plurality (45 percent) thinks that conservatives exert substantial influence on news work.

Blacks, Catholics, and Jews are the only three groups not seen by a majority as able to influence the news process on a regular basis.

On this issue of influence, there is partisanship. On most performance issues Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives tend to agree. Here, however, these groups divide themselves emphatically as to which special interest has greater power to influence news reporting. Democrats and liberals see Republicans and conservatives as more likely to influence the press. Republicans and conservatives see things the other way. But all these groups see the press as *dependent* and most people see government, business corporations and advertisers as influencing news reporting as a routine.

At a minimum, the independence issue is something of a surprise. Contemporary press critics usually argue that the media have become arrogant, even imperial. The public sees the press as anything but.

Attitudes toward the independence of the press are key in discovering the underlying orientations in press opinion. Perceptions of independence are as important as perceptions of bias in explaining the configuration of attitudes toward the press.

The independence issue even emerges as central when the public tells us why it feels the press performs badly: more often than not, the public sees press failure as a consequence of external influences.

Why the Press Behaves As It Does

Because earlier surveys had uncovered public doubts about press performance, we asked questions that would give our respondents a chance to tell us "why news organizations sometimes don't do as good a job as they should."

Each respondent chose from a list of reasons representing the entire spectrum of factors that might lead to poor practices. Those factors are:

- *Commercial Pressure:* "News organizations are so interested in attracting a big audience that they don't do a good job."
- *Interest Group Pressure:* "Special interest groups put pressure on news organizations that keeps them from doing a good job."
- *Opinion Bias in the Newsroom:* "Newspeople can't keep their opinions from showing up in their reporting."
- *Government News Management:* "The government keeps news organizations from getting the real story."
- *Advertiser Pressure:* "Advertisers put pressure on news organizations that keeps them from doing a good job."
- *Less Than Competent Newspeople:* "Newspeople lack the skills and background to do a good job."
- *Budgetary Restrictions:* "News organizations don't want to spend the money to do things right."

What factors do respondents consider key? To begin, the public all but dismisses the notion that poor performance, when it happens, occurs because of budgetary constraints. (See Chart 1.) Nor does the public consider the incompetence of newspeople a major factor in press failures. Nor are advertisers regarded as a major reason why the press fails to live up to expectations.

Chart 1

MOST IMPORTANT REASON NEWS ORGANIZATIONS DON'T ALWAYS DO A GOOD JOB

Question: We've talked about some things which news organizations do well and not so well. Here are some possible reasons why news organizations sometimes don't do as good a job as they should. Which of these reasons do you think best explains why news organizations sometimes don't do such a good job?

Commercial Pressure: "News organizations are so interested in attracting a big audience that they don't do a good job."

Interest Group Pressure: "Special interest groups put pressure on news organizations that keeps them from doing a good job."

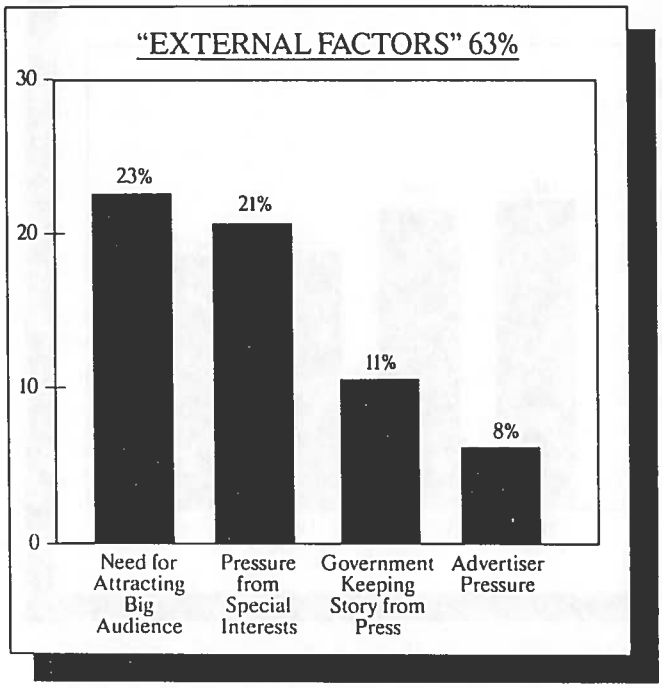
Government News Management: "The government keeps the news organizations from getting the real story."

Advertiser Pressure: "Advertisers put pressure on news organizations that keeps them from doing a good job."

Opinion Bias in the Newsroom: "Newspeople can't keep their opinions from showing up in their reporting."

Less than Competent Newspeople: "Newspeople lack the skills and background to do a good job."

Budgetary Restrictions: "News organizations don't want to spend the money to do things right."



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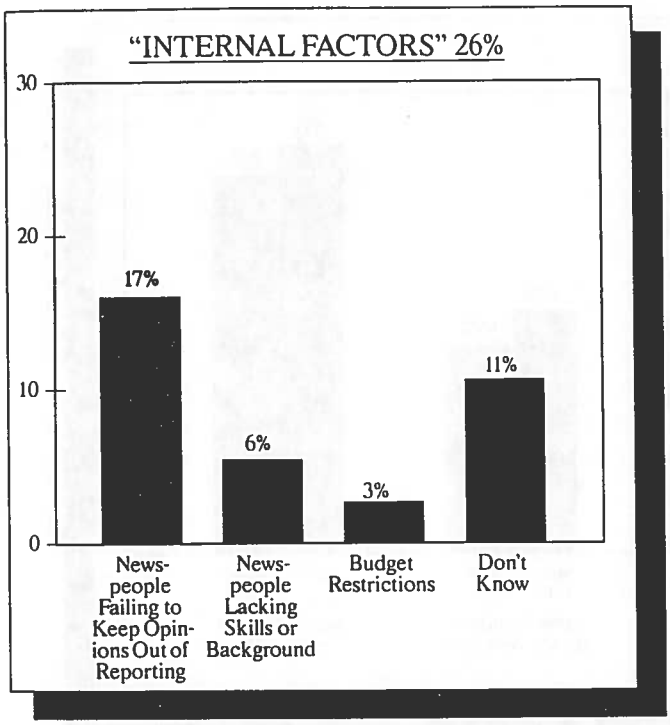


It is, instead, *commercial pressure* (audience appeal) and *interest group pressure* that top the list. Twenty-three percent think the sins of performance derive mostly from the need to please subscribers or viewers. Twenty-one percent consider "interest group pressure" the major factor in poor press performance.

Together, commercial pressure and interest group pressure account for about half the expressed reasons why the press sometimes performs badly.

Personal bias ranks third: one respondent in six (17 percent) believes that poor practice results mainly from newspersons failing to keep their personal opinions out of their reporting. News management, the government keeping the press from getting the real story, is fourth, cited by one in 10 (11 percent).

The public, apparently, sees the sins of the press mostly as the result of external forces—audience, interest groups, government and advertisers (63 percent)—rather than internal factors—personal bias, newspeople's backgrounds and budgets for news operations. In other words, poor performance is a consequence of dependence.

Whatever the public's reasoning about performance issues, one fact is clear. The public senses poor performance in several areas: invasiveness, negativism, one-sidedness and dependence on the powerful.

The Riddle of Two-Mindedness

How is it possible for the public to be so "two-minded" about the press? How can it express such overall favorability, so much willingness to believe the press, then proceed to question the fairness, the independence, even the manners of newspeople and news organizations?

Part of that is straightforward. Although the public answers negatively when given a list of specific performance issues, it is not so negative when given open-ended questions about press behavior.

When asked what they "like most" and "like least" about the way news organizations "do their job," the public has more to say about its likes than its dislikes. When given latitude to discuss performance in their own words, respondents are more likely to speak positively than negatively about news organizations. All told, positive comments outpace negatives by about three to two.

Still, the enigma remains. To like the press and yet to question its fairness is a conundrum. But by conducting "double-back" interviews and asking new questions of the two-minded respondents, we can now explain more of this riddle than ever before.

The focus group sessions and our first national survey had suggested four possible solutions to the riddle of two-mindedness. People might be two-minded because they feel that press failures don't matter that much:

- If the press is accurate
- If the press serves as a watchdog
- If the inherent difficulties in getting the story insure some failure
- If they, the respondents, really like the news itself.

We doubled-back in November 1985 and asked questions to deal with these four possible solutions to two-mindedness. Analyzing the responses, we find that accuracy is not enough to explain two-mindedness; nor is recognizing the inherent difficulties in journalism. Feeling that bias is inherent, or feeling that reporters have to do unpleasant things does little to prevent performance criticism from turning into general disapproval.

It is, instead, the watchdog function and, above all, the appeal of the news *per se* that keep performance critics satisfied overall.

Valuing the watchdog tends to neutralize criticism of press performance, and the news has the same ameliorating effect, perhaps even to a greater degree.

People who appreciate the watchdog, despite other criticism, appear satisfied with news organizations in general. People who enjoy the news—the product—tend even more to look beyond performance failures.

Public appreciation of news keeps people satisfied with the press. Public appreciation of the watchdog does the same thing, even in the face of some performance failure. The watchdog function and the news product, two things almost everyone favors, are the keys to the riddle of two-mindedness.

The TWA Hostage Crisis

The TWA hostage crisis helps us understand the importance of news in explaining two-mindedness.

If news leads to greater support for news organizations, public approval should increase when more news is being delivered. And that predication seems to be borne out by public response to the news media during the TWA hostage crisis.

Press coverage of the TWA hostage crisis was extensive and sensational, and so was criticism of that coverage. But despite all the media criticism—in the press, of the press and often by the press—our surveys indicate that public support for the news media was slightly higher during the crisis than two months after it. (See Figure 12.)

Figure 12

OPINIONS ABOUT PRESS, BOTH DURING AND TWO MONTHS AFTER TWA HOSTAGE CRISIS (PERCENT EXPRESSING "POSITIVE" OPINIONS)

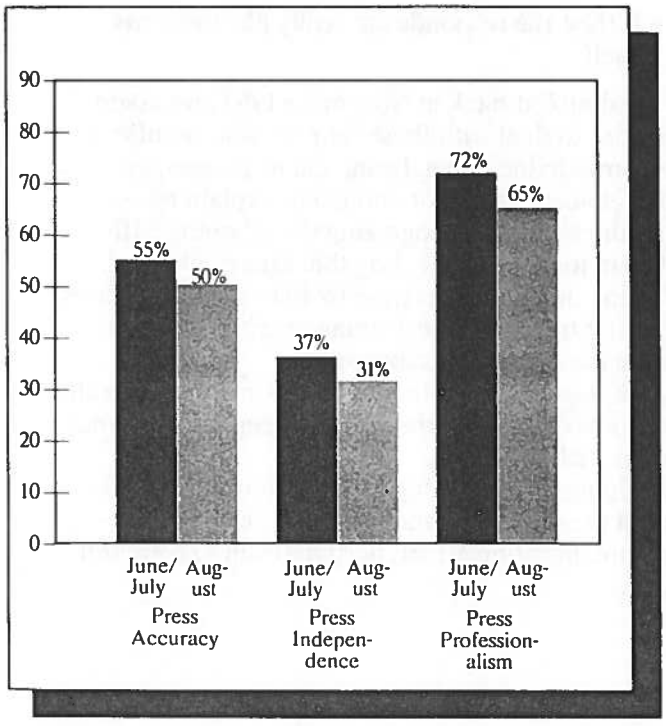
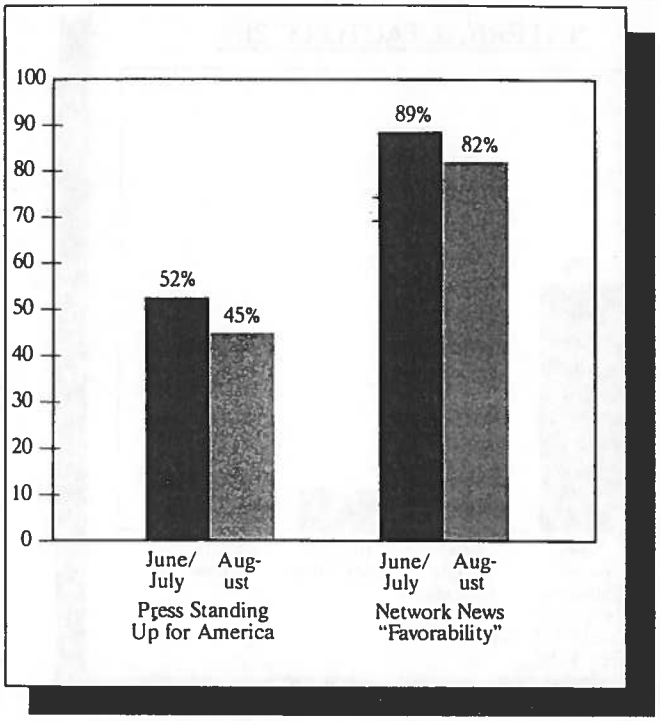


Figure 12 (Cont'd)



Our surveys support other polls. Despite the criticism of the media, public support for the press was actually higher during the crisis of TWA Flight #847.

Worth of the Free Press: Freedom From Government, Not Much Else

Attitudes concerning credibility and performance represent the behavioral dimension of opinion. But there is also a value dimension; i.e., what the public feels a free press is worth. We included several items that gauge the value the public assigns to press freedom.

The results are mixed, but patterned. The value of press freedom is very much related to the question of who pays the cost. When the issues involve the rights of news organizations versus the rights of the government, the public usually sides with the press. But when the issues involve the rights of the press versus the rights of individuals or the rights of the community, the public regularly goes against the press.

Press Freedom, Libel Law and Rights of Individuals

Earlier surveys have looked closely at the public's attitude toward the rights of the press when weighed against the rights of the accused. We aimed at a different issue—the rights of press versus private citizens who have not been charged with a crime. In short, we wanted to know what the public feels about the rights of both sides in libel suits.

One thing is clear, the public believes consensually in libel law. Nine in 10 (89 percent) believe that "freedom of the press" does *not* give news organizations the right "to say anything about a person, whether true or false, without having to face a libel suit." (See Figure 13.)

Figure 13

PRESS FREEDOM VS. INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

Question: Some people feel that in a free society news organizations should be able to say anything about a person, whether true or false, without having to face libel suits. Others believe that even in a free society news organizations should be subject to libel suits if they say critical things about people that are false...Which position comes closer to your opinion?

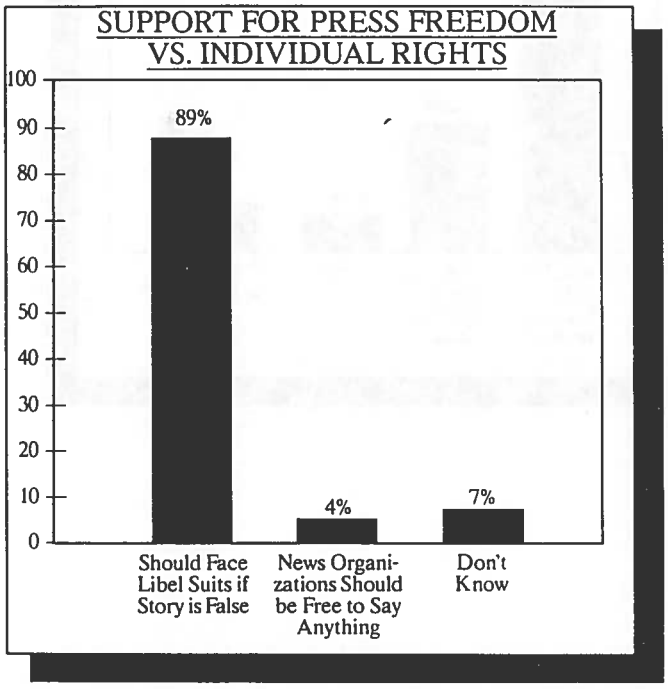
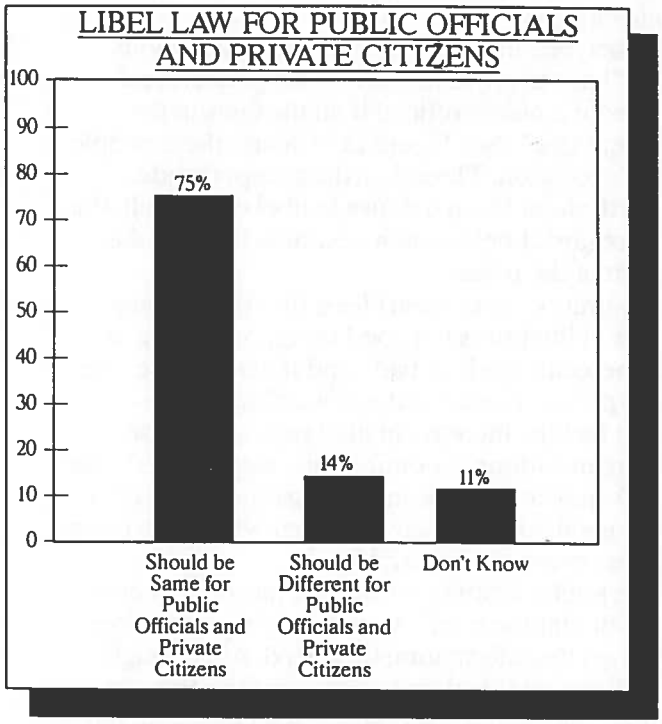
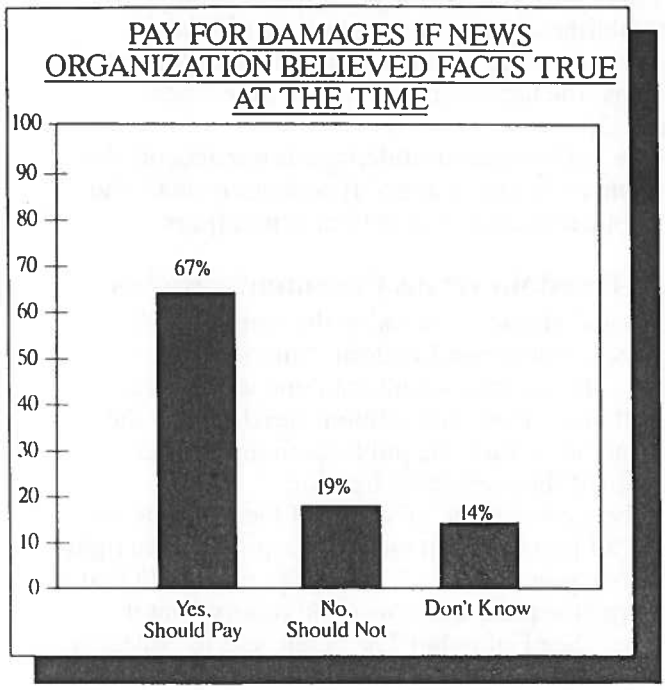


Figure 13 (Cont'd)

Question: What do *you* think—compared to private citizens, should it be *more difficult* for a public official to sue a news organization for libel or should the libel laws against news organizations be *the same* for public officials and private citizens?



Question: What about if the facts in the story about a public official turned out to be false, but the news organization believed the facts were true at the time of publication—should the news organization have to pay damages or not?



The public believes so thoroughly in libel law, the rights of private citizens to sue news organizations for damages, that it rejects the notion that public officials should face a tougher standard of proof than anyone else. A full 75 percent believe that libel law should be the same for public officials and private citizens.

In fact, one in six believes news organizations should "have to pay damages for a highly critical story about a public official if all the facts in the story were true." (See Figure 13.) Clearly these people are the exception. Three-fourths accept the idea that truth should be a defense in libel cases. Still, the public regards libel law as a desirable limit on the freedom of the press.

A plurality (49 percent) feels that the growing number of libel suits is a good thing; only three in 10 (29 percent) see it as bad. And that's *not* because today's press is considered less worthy. Only 15 percent feel the increase in libel suits stems from news organizations becoming "less responsible." The fact is Americans see the increasing numbers of libel suits as good because they feel it helps keep the press from becoming irresponsible.

The public attitude toward the law of libel does *not* mean that the public would deny reporters freedom to get the information they need. Almost eight in 10 (78 percent) feel that "sometimes a reporter should be allowed to keep his source confidential if that is the only way he can get his information." Apparently, the public values truth sufficiently to accept confidentiality.

But falsehood *always* pays a price, even if it is levied unintentionally against a government official. Two-thirds (67 percent) say that if a news organization publishes a falsehood against an official, it should have to pay damages, even if the organization "believed the facts were true at the time." (See Figure 13.)

The public neither understands nor accepts the rationale of "actual malice." It accepts, instead, the rights of persons to protect their reputations.

Press Freedom versus Community Rights

The public also tends to value the community's right more than press freedom. Americans place higher value on their own First Amendment freedoms than on First Amendment freedoms for the news media. In fact, the public actually defines freedom of the press as *its* freedom.

When asked what "freedom of the press means to you," 61 percent say it means "the public has a right to hear all points of view"; only 23 percent hold that it means "the press can cover and report what it chooses." (See Figure 14.) The public sees its collective right to hear as superior to the press' right to speak.

Figure 14

SUPPORT FOR PRESS FREEDOM VS. COMMUNITY RIGHTS

Question: What does freedom of the press mean to you? Does it mean: That the public has a right to hear all points of view? That the press can cover and report what it chooses? Or something else?

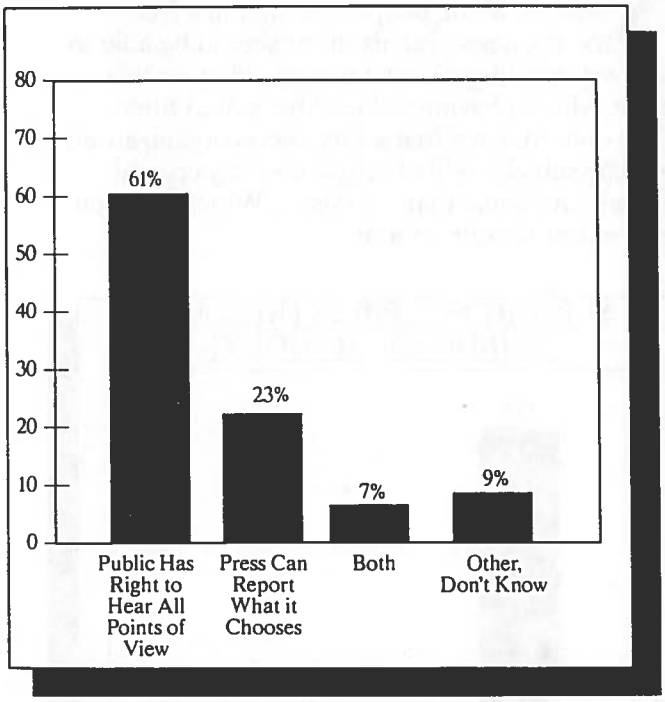
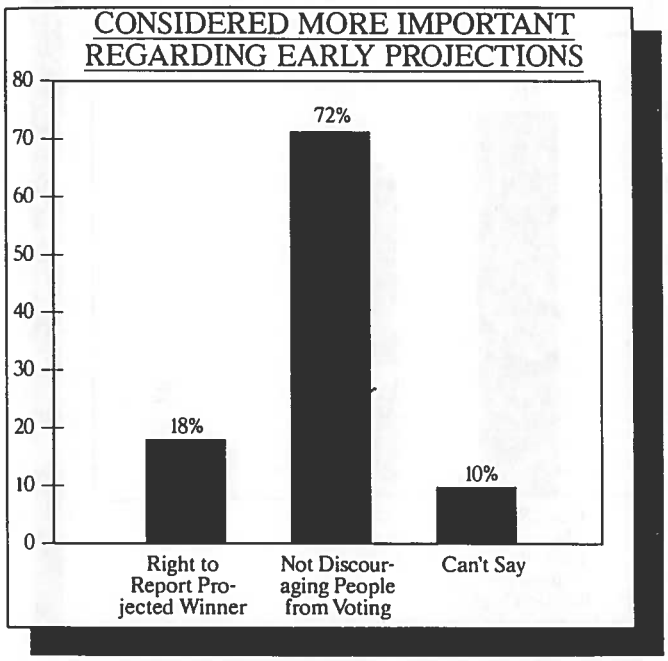


Figure 14 (Cont'd)

Question: Some people feel that if the TV networks can project the winner of an election before the polls have closed they have the right to report the projected winner. Other people feel that projecting winners before the polls close discourages some people from voting. Which is more important? Networks being able to tell their viewers who has won the election as soon as they think they know, or not discouraging some people from voting?



When the ballot box is involved, the preference for community rights is especially high. When asked "which is more important: networks being able to tell who won the election as soon as they think they know, or not discouraging some people from voting" in late balloting states, 72 percent say "not discouraging" voting.

This notion that the public's First Amendment rights are greater than those of the press is also manifest in popular notions of press reforms. When asked whether licensing requirements for journalists would be a good idea, a majority is either indifferent or opposed. But among those who feel licensing journalists would improve journalism, a heavy majority thinks that licensing would *not* restrict press freedom.

The same holds true for legally limiting the number of newspapers a single company can own. A majority is indifferent or opposed. But those who think limiting ownership would improve journalism reject the idea that it restricts press freedom.

Press Freedom versus Government Prerogative

When the public weighs press freedom against its own, the public sounds almost repressive. But that is not the case when the public weighs press freedom against the powers of the government. Putting the government into the equation shifts public sentiment in favor of press freedom.

Consider first how the public feels when asked about government involvement in political advertising or fairness issues. (See Figure 15.)

Figure 15

SUPPORT FOR PRESS FREEDOM VS. GOVERNMENT PREROGATIVE

Question: Some people think that the government should ensure that political candidates have an equal chance to buy political advertising on television (in newspapers) if they have the money. Others feel that the government should not get involved in this matter. Which position is closer to your opinion?

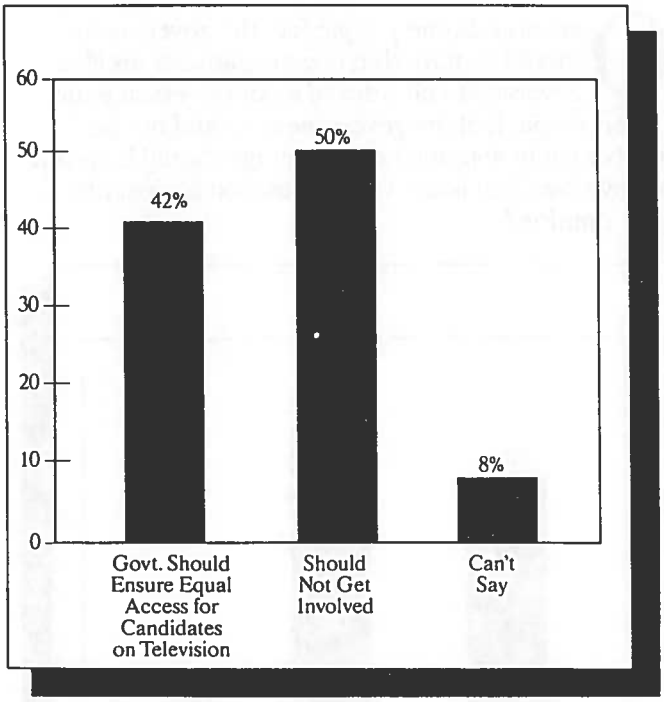
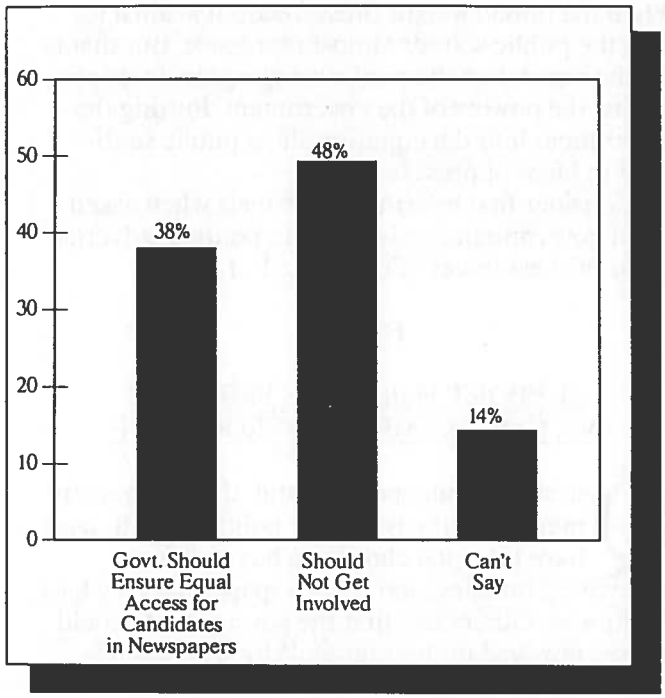
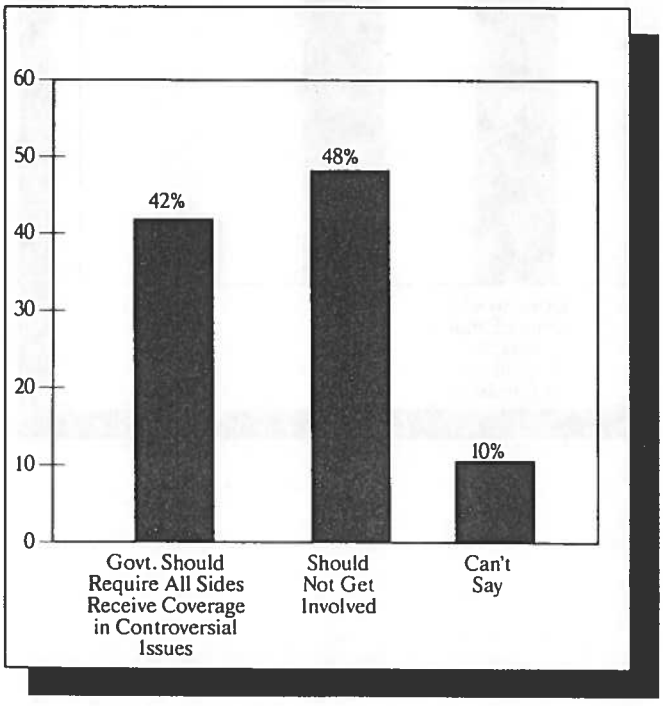


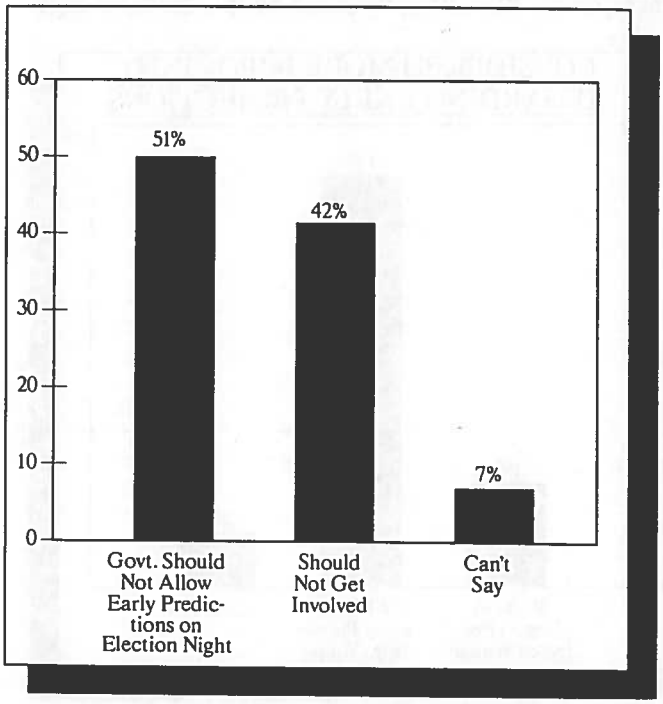
Figure 15 (Cont'd)



Question: Some people feel the government should require that news organizations give coverage to all sides of a controversial issue. Other people feel the government should not be involved in how much news coverage should be given to any side of an issue. Which position is closer to your opinion?



Question: Some people feel the government should require that the TV networks make *no* projections on the outcome of elections on election night until the polls have closed and everyone has voted. Others feel that the government should not be involved in deciding when and how to report about election. Which position is closer to your opinion?



Although federal law requires broadcasters to provide equal time in political advertising, if the public were to vote, that policy would be defeated. When asked whether "the government should ensure that political candidates have an equal chance to buy political advertising on television" or whether "the government should not get involved," 50 percent opt for no government involvement; 42 percent would ask the government to "ensure equal access." The same pattern holds for political advertising in newspapers. The public wants the government to stay out of the issue.

We also have, as policy, a fairness doctrine in broadcasting. But were the fairness doctrine subject to a referendum it would, among our respondents, lose. When asked if the government "should require that news organizations give coverage to all sides of a controversial issue" or "should not get involved in how much news coverage should be given to any side," a plurality (48 percent) wants the government uninvolved.

Given options, the public expresses a more libertarian view of telecommunications policy than currently exists. On fairness and equal time issues, the public prefers the government stay away.

Ironically, the one instance in which the public expresses majority support for control is one area in which no controls presently exist. Fifty-one percent think "the government should not allow early election projections," while 42 percent say the government "should not get involved." But here, too, the public shows sensitivity to the problems that government could cause.

When asked whether the networks should project early winners at the risk of discouraging turnout, better than seven in 10 say "no"—a near consensus. But when asked whether the government should keep networks from reporting the outcome, there was a 21 point drop in the percentage opposing projections. Press freedom is more fully valued when that freedom is weighed against the prerogatives of government.

Censorship, the Pentagon Papers and the *Progressive* Cases

National security issues fall between the prerogatives of political leaders and the rights of the community. Not surprisingly, therefore, on questions of national security the public is closely divided—so closely divided that the plurality opinion can shift over the course of a summer.

In the first national survey a slim plurality (44 percent) felt that it was "more important...that the government be able to censor news stories it feels threaten national security" than it was for "the news media to be able to report stories they feel are in the national interest" (38 percent). Two months later, the plurality (44 percent) voted in favor of the news media "being able to report."

This issue of government censorship stands at the center of press freedom and worth. So there were three other items given respondents on this subject, two of which are hypothetical, yet historic, legal cases in press freedom. Again, the results are mixed about censorship, but they reveal a public more libertarian than generally assumed.

Respondents were given first a question about the law of censorship. Specifically, they were asked whether it was "good policy" or "bad policy" that "current law makes it very difficult to block...news stories of almost any type before publication."

Journalists will recognize this as a plainly worded test of attitudes toward prior restraint. And the public gives a fairly plainly worded response. By more than two to one, Americans think it "good policy" that makes it "very difficult to block publication" of "almost any type" of news.

Respondents were then asked to decide two historic cases involving press freedom and national security. In laymen's terms, Gallup asked how the public would decide cases that symbolize the issues involved in the Pentagon Papers case and the *Progressive* case.

For each case, respondents were asked to decide whether, as federal judges, they would "block the story outright or allow the story to run and let those complaining make their case against the news organization after publication." The point was to decide "how to balance the rights of the free press against the rights of the government."

Although never told the name of the case or the real-world litigants, respondents were given a brief set of facts for the Pentagon Papers proceedings: during Vietnam a newspaper obtained background documents about how the United States initially got into the war; the newspaper believed it important that the information be published; the government wanted to block publication on the grounds that the documents were originally classified and that they might damage the reputation of the people involved.

When given these facts, a large majority sided with the newspaper. (See Chart 2.)

Then respondents were asked, without being given the name of the real case, how they would decide the *Progressive* case, the so-called H-bomb case.

Chart 2

HOW AMERICANS WOULD DECIDE CASES PATTERNED AFTER THE PENTAGON PAPERS TRIAL AND THE *PROGRESSIVE* CASE

Question—Case A: During Vietnam, a newspaper obtains background documents about how the U.S. got involved in Vietnam. The newspaper thinks it is important to the public that the information be published. The government wants you, the judge, to block publication on the grounds that the documents were originally classified and that the information might be damaging to the reputations of the political leaders mentioned in the documents. As a judge, do you decide:
1) To block publication, *or*
2) To allow the story to be published
0) Don't know

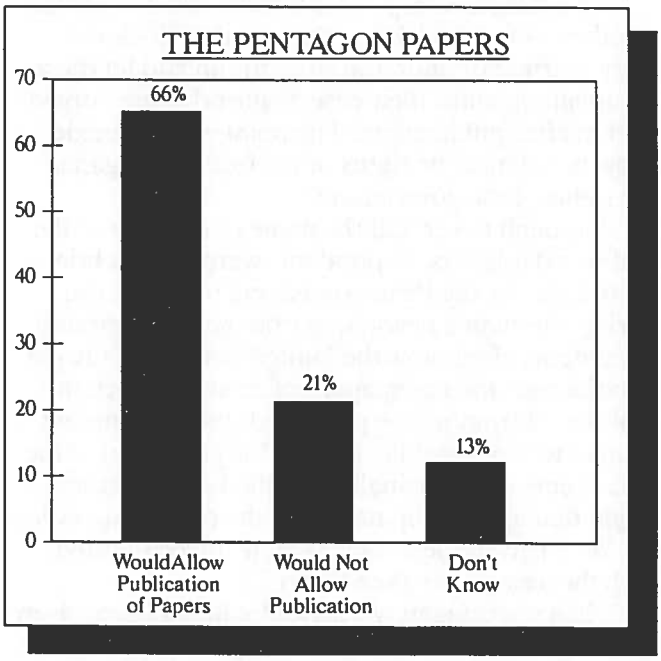
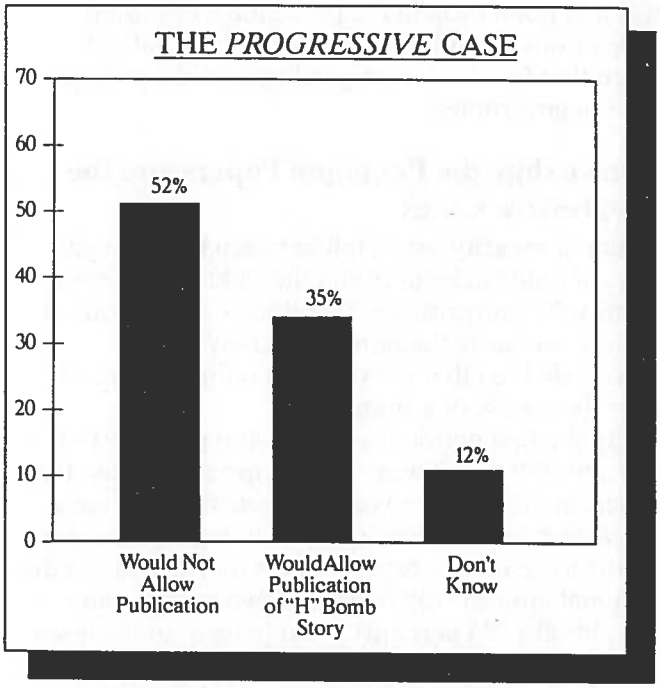


Chart 2 (Cont'd)

Question—Case B: A magazine wants to publish an article based on publicly available information. The article describes some important points on how to build a nuclear weapon. The government argues that under the law it has the right to block through the courts any communications which contain information about nuclear weaponry which might harm the U.S. The magazine argues that all of the factual material has already appeared in published material, much of it in encyclopedias. As judge, do you decide:
1) To block publication, *or*
2) To allow the story to be published
0) Don't know



The facts provided were these: a magazine wanted to publish an article about building a nuclear weapon, an article based on publicly available information; the government argued the law provides for blocking any communication about nuclear weaponry that "might harm the United States"; the magazine argued all of the material had appeared in published material, much of it in the encyclopedia.

Given these facts, the public sided with the government; among those expressing an opinion, the ratio was three to two for censoring the article. Thirty-five percent voted to publish the H-bomb story. (See Chart 2.)

How does this compare with the real world of press law? The Supreme Court never took up the *Progressive* case. The federal judge in Wisconsin who made the original determination sided with the government.

The Supreme Court did, however, decide in favor of the press in the Pentagon Papers case. The vote at the Court was six to three, a narrower majority than in the public at large.

"Watchdoggery"

The public grants press freedom grudgingly when it comes at the cost of citizens. But the public is much more supportive of free press when the trade-off comes at the expense of political leaders. And, when press worth is defined in terms of the watchdog role, the public shows support to the point of enthusiasm.

Respondents were asked two items designed to test the worth of the watchdog: first, whether "by criticizing political leaders news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job...(or), from doing things that should not be done," and then, whether "by criticizing the military, news organizations weaken the country's defenses...(or) keep our nation militarily prepared."

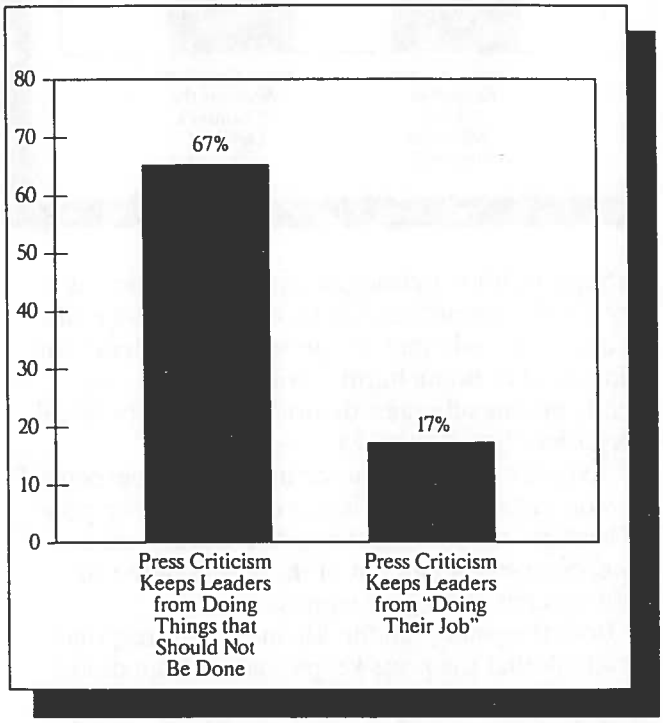
In both, a sizable advantage falls with the press. There is support for the notion that watchdogging helps much more than it hurts. (See Figure 16.) In a ratio of four to one the public feels the press keeps political leaders from doing wrong, not from doing their job. In a ratio of five to three the public believes press criticism is more likely to strengthen national defense, not weaken it. There is a clear tendency to show more support for checking up on the government than checking on the military. But for both, watchdogging is regarded as a plus.

Figure 16

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CONSEQUENCES OF PRESS CRITICISM OF "POLITICAL LEADERS" AND OF "THE MILITARY"

Question: Some people think that by criticizing political leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job. Others think that such criticism is worth it because it keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done. Which position is closer to your opinion?

Some people think that by criticizing the military, some organizations weaken the country's defense. Others think that such criticism helps keep our nation militarily prepared. Which position is closer to your opinion?



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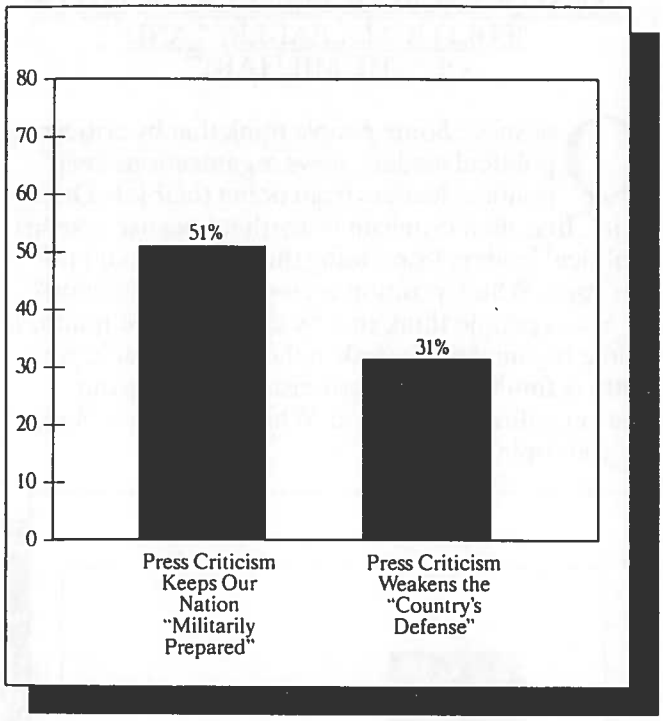


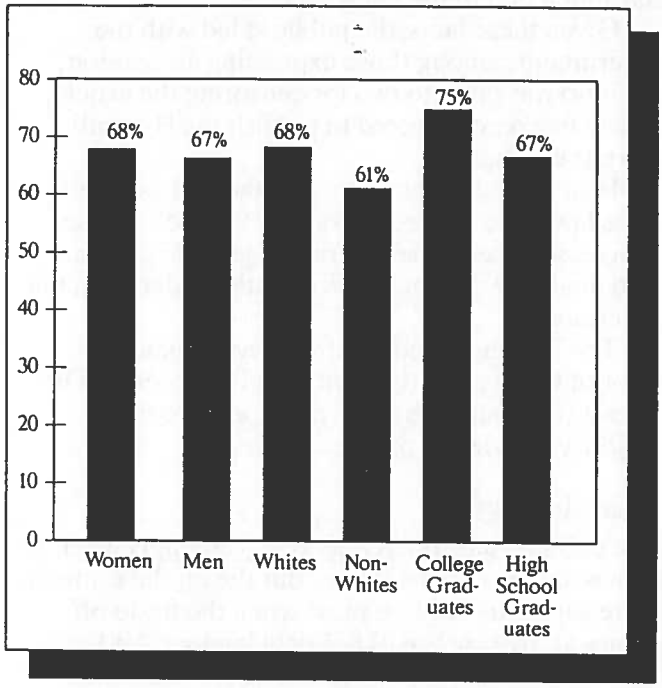
Support for watchdogging political leaders is very much a consensus. On this fundamental political question—whether the press keeps leaders from doing good or doing harm—opinion varies only slightly among all major demographic and political categories. (See Figure 17.)

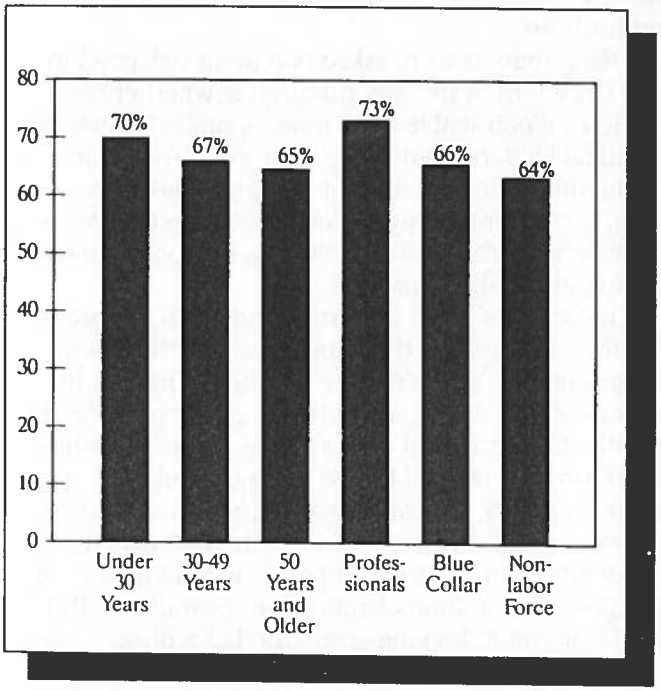
Sixty-seven percent of the men and 68 percent of the women say the press is more likely to keep political leaders "from doing things that should not be done." Sixty-eight percent of the whites agree, as do 61 percent of the non-whites.

Both the young (under 30) and senior respondents think that the press keeps leaders from doing what ought not be done. Sixty-five percent of those more than 50 years of age say yes to the notion that the press keeps leaders from doing wrong. For the young, the figure is 70 percent.

Figure 17

PERCENT BELIEVING PRESS CRITICISM KEEPS POLITICAL LEADERS FROM DOING WHAT SHOULD NOT BE DONE, VARIOUS DEMOGRAPHIC AND POLITICAL GROUPS





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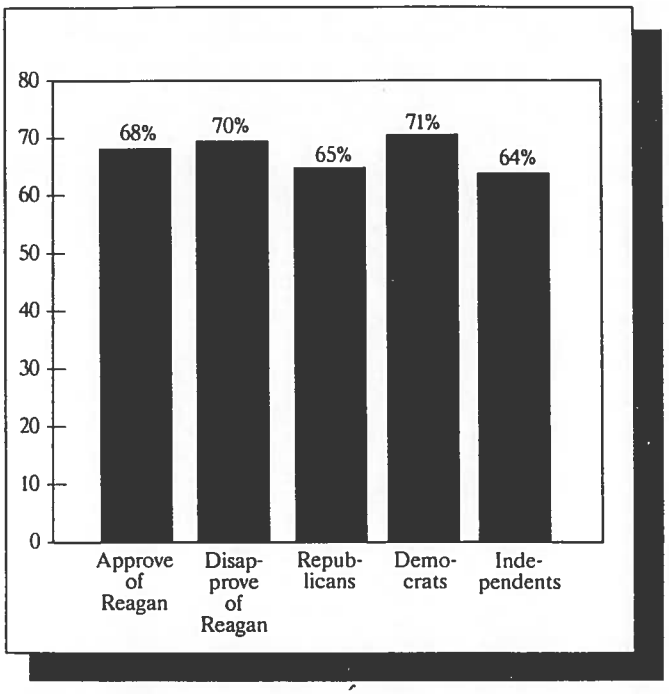
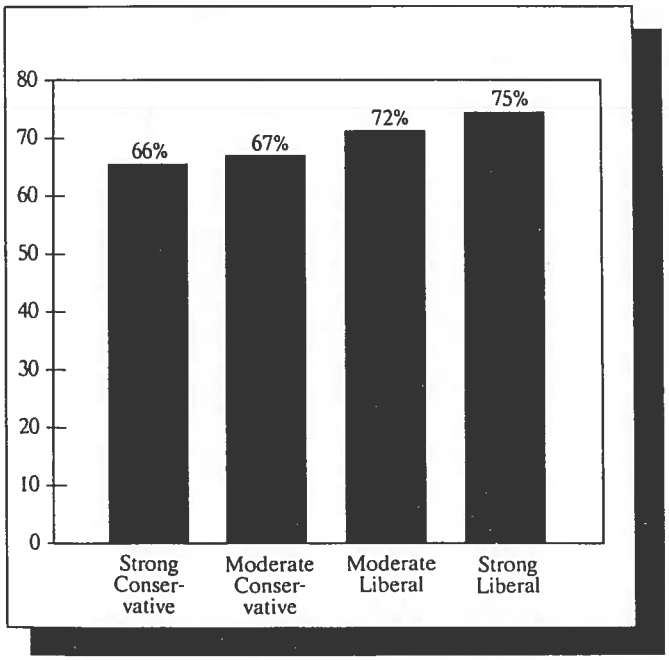




Perhaps most remarkable is that the left and the right are on the same side when evaluating the cost and benefit of watchdogging. Sixty-seven percent of those Americans who describe themselves as conservative believe the press is more likely to keep leaders from doing wrong than from doing their job. Among those calling themselves liberal, the figure is 73 percent. All sides support "watchdoggery."

Helpful to Democracy?

Watchdog appreciation probably explains another important finding. On what might be the acid test of public attitudes toward free press, 54 percent of our respondents believe that news organizations protect the democratic process. Twenty-three percent argue that the press hurts the process. When forced to make what may be an ultimate evaluation on worth, the public at large sees the press as beneficial to the political process. And once again the belief that the press is more beneficial than deleterious cuts across the *entire* array of social and political groups that comprise this survey. All the usual categories of respondents think the press is beneficial for democracy: men and women, rich and poor, old and young, Democrats and Republicans.

But more than one in five says that news organizations harm democracy. And, if all the typical demographic groupings fail to tell us who these people are, we need another approach to identify basic orientations toward the press that will explain press opinion. That approach comes in Part Two.

Part Two
The Segmented Public

EXPLAINING RIDDLES

Why do so many different groups express similar opinions about the role of the news media in American democracy? Does that limited variation among groups emerge because press opinion is uncomplicated? Unidimensional? Or does shared opinion mean just the opposite?

Our analysis indicates that press opinion is anything but unidimensional. In fact, our research suggests that press opinion is *four* dimensional.

Factor Analysis and the Dimensions of Press Opinion

Social scientists and statisticians have perfected a technique for unlocking the basic, sometimes hidden, structures of attitudes. This technique is "factor analysis."

Factor analysis is a mathematical tool, a statistical technique that examines all the opinions expressed in all the questions considered, all at one time. Factor analysis asks first whether there is a single dimension or factor that efficiently structures all expressed opinions. If not one factor, the technique asks whether it is two or three and so on.

Factor analysis, then, reduces many opinions to the smallest number of dimensions needed to structure those opinions. And only those dimensions powerful enough to meet an acceptable standard of significance are contained in the solution.

Factor analysis, for example, has generally been able to structure decisions by federal judges on thousands of cases into four or five basic factors; no matter how many opinions expressed by judges, the dimensions that underlie them are few in number. Factor analysis can reduce enormous amounts of information into basic components.

This technique has a second advantage. It allows the public to speak for itself about the underlying dimensions of opinion. Rather than assuming, *a priori*, that believability or political bias or professionalism are the basic strains, factor analysis looks inside the data to determine what they really are.

Factor analysis has another advantage. By uncovering the number of dimensions structuring press opinion, factor analysis tells us how complicated it is. And our conclusion is that attitudes toward the news are at least four dimensional.

We start with the Special Interests factor.

The First Dimension: The Special Interests and the Press

When asked whether news organizations are influenced by social and political interests, respondents gave answers that are strongly interrelated. Those who see blacks, Catholics and Jews as likely to influence the way the press reports the news are also likely to see Democrats, conservatives and Republicans as influential. Those who regard blacks, Catholics, and Jews as unlikely to influence news reporting are also unlikely to regard Democrats, conservatives, and Republicans as major influences.

We have a Special Interests dimension here, one tied to the independence issue. This Special Interests factor does not fit neatly along the ideological spectrum, left to right—an important consideration in explaining one, and perhaps a second, major press enigma. The Special Interests dimension rests, instead, on the conviction that the press is often influenced by social or political groups that have a point of view. The direction in which that view points appears to be irrelevant.

The Second Dimension: The Power Structure and the Press

The second dimension in press opinion, like the first, involves attitudes about the dependence of the press. This second factor involves the public's thoughts as to whether advertisers, business corporations, the federal government and the military frequently influence news reporting.

We label these institutions "the power structure." And, apparently, the public lumps them together when it thinks in terms of press dependence. Those who see any of these four groups as powerful tend to see them all that way and vice versa.

Respondents who see the power structure as influential are not necessarily the same respondents who consider special interests as powerful. These dimensions are not one and the same, but both tap attitudes about the forces that influence the news media.

The Third Dimension: The Press and Its Performance

As expected, there is a performance dimension to press opinions. Evaluations of performance do not correlate very closely with attitudes toward depen-

dence, whether using the special interests or the power structure as the measure. But performance issues do correlate heavily among themselves.

To see the press as politically biased, or unfair, is for the most part to see it as uncaring, invasive and too negative. Those who criticize on any of these performance issues tend to criticize on the rest.

In short, the public does think in terms that imply a performance factor. Like the professional critics who make performance a major dimension of their own criticisms, the general public also evaluates the press in terms related to day-to-day practices. But this performance dimension is no more powerful than the other factors that structure press opinion.

The Fourth Dimension: The Character of the Press

Most Americans do not regard the press as immoral, unprofessional or too critical of America. But some do. And those who see the press as any of those, tend to see the press as all of them. We have a fourth dimension, then, one that involves the basic character of the press. And, as before, this dimension is not necessarily associated with the others. It is a separate factor.

Unlike the others, however, the character dimension is less tightly drawn. The character factor also includes an element closely related to *consequences.*

Those who see the press as lacking in character are also likely to see the press as harmful to American democracy. And, as always in dimensional analysis, the opposite applies. Whatever the reason for a structuring of attitudes along lines of character *and* consequences, the character dimension is a powerful strain in press opinion.

The Uses of a Four Dimensional Space

Our factor analysis produces a four dimensional space of press attitudes. But how does a four dimensional space help explain press opinion?

It does three things. First, and most obviously, it certifies the complexity of press opinion: a four dimensional space is neither easy to comprehend nor easy to describe.

Second, the four dimensional space allows us to resolve, in part, the riddle of shared opinion: how it happens that Democrats and Republicans, even liberals and conservatives—sometimes express similar attitudes toward the press. Some underlying dimensions of press opinion do not have a partisan cast, so the tie between ideology and press opinion is loosened. And because there are so many dimensions working here, no single dimension—left to right—can accommodate the richness of press opinion.

Democrats and Republicans, for example, both see the press as dependent on groups and the power structure. So Democrats and Republicans hold a shared opinion about dependency that can neutralize their somewhat more partisan opinions concerning liberal bias.

The third advantage of dimensional analysis is the most important. By uncovering these factors, we make it possible to define the basic orientations toward the press. The four dimensional space provides the raw material for "clustering" respondents, for segmenting the population into its most basic orientations.

The Six Group Segmentation

"Clustering"

Findings obtained through factor analysis can be converted into opinion clusters. These clusters represent a summary of press opinion, a summary that places each respondent into that cluster which best represents his or her overall attitude.

This procedure, combining factor analysis and clustering technique, is called segmentational research. Although used in marketing, segmentational analysis has, to our knowledge, never been applied comprehensively in research about attitudes toward the press.

Segmentation and clustering have considerable utility. Clustering identifies like-minded people on the basis of their total expression. And it provides the best solution as to the actual number of groups—clusters—inside the data. Segmentation, by providing information about the make-up of these clusters, helps unlock puzzles in press opinion.

Six Clusters

The data support a six-cluster classification. And although there are three positive clusters and three negative, the positive clusters are, in actual membership, much larger. All told, clustering indicates that positives outnumber negatives seven to three. Seventy percent of the sample fall inside the positive orientations; 30 percent fall among the negative. (See Chart 3.)

Chart 3

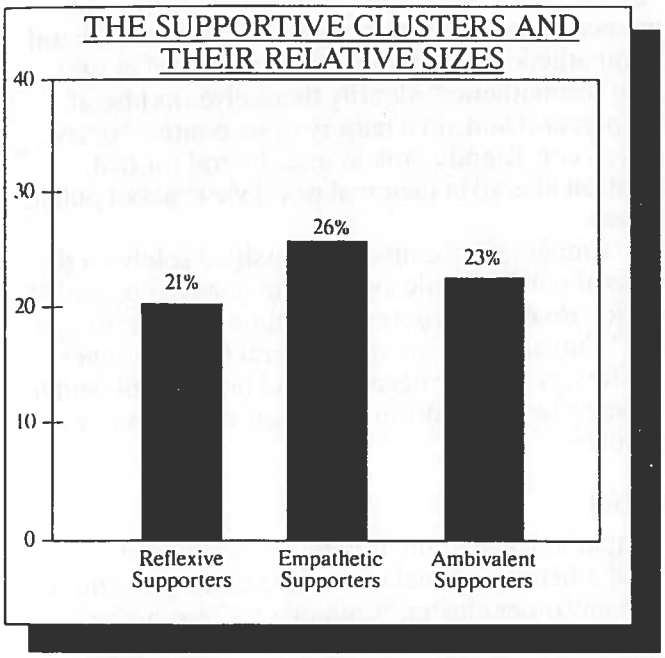
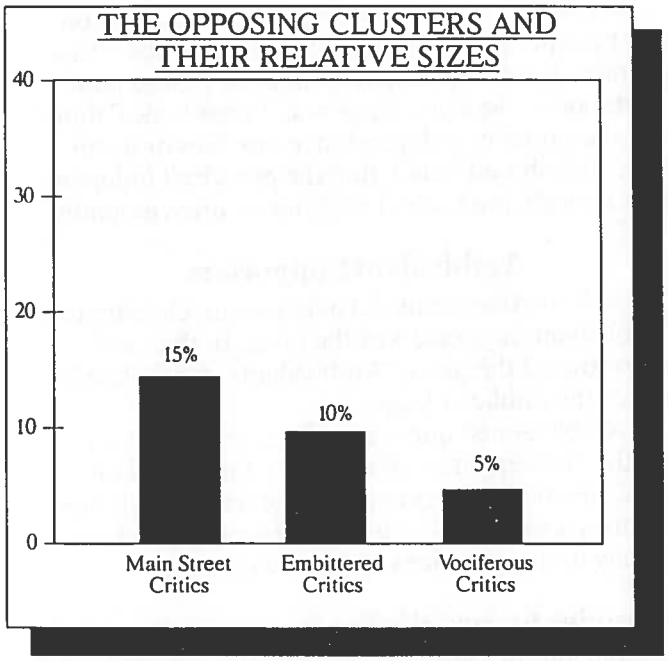


Chart 3 (Cont'd)



Obviously, knowing only the raw totals isn't enough. We need to look inside each of these clusters and learn something about the make-up and the nature of their support or their opposition.

Supporters of the Press

Reflexive Supporters

Reflexive Supporters make up a fifth (21 percent) of the entire sample. Regardless of the issue involved, "Reflexives" are the least likely to see any real problems with the press.

Attitudes toward the Press

Most criticism of the press involves what we have termed day-to-day practice. In fact, all clusters, except "Reflexives," have at least two criticisms about press performance. "Reflexives" have but one: the press is too invasive—perhaps the least weighty of all the criticisms about performance.

"Reflexives" view the press as accurate, fair, independent, professional, caring and beneficial. So unquestioning are "Reflexives," that they, unlike the other positive orientations, see no problem with press dependence. They consider news organizations to be independent from the power structure and the special interests, too.

Involvement with the Press

For the news media, "Reflexives" would appear to be among the most reassuring of groups. But Reflexive Supporters are limited not so much in the degree of their support, but in the quality of that support.

To begin, "Reflexives" are among the least involved with the news media. They watch television, but not much television news. One in four does not read a newspaper, the highest proportion of any cluster. "Reflexives" also know less about the press than any other cluster, and, as a group, care less about press issues than any other. Among "Reflexives," and only among "Reflexives," do we find a full majority not caring about early predictions on election night.

"Reflexives" are also the least likely to communicate their opinion to the press. As a group, "Reflexives" are only one-half as likely as the rest ever to have written a letter to the editor.

Characteristics

Like the supportive groups generally, "Reflexives" are disproportionately likely to be women. In addition, "Reflexives" are disproportionately likely to be black and to have gone only to grade school. "Reflexives" identify with the Democratic party and labor unions. Demographically and politically, "Reflexives," more than any other cluster, represent important elements of the New Deal coalition, not so much liberal as working people or the lower middle class.

Label

"Reflexives" are uncritical, uninvolved and unsophisticated in their approval. They, most of all, are likely not to have a considered opinion on the issues that surround the press. No group likes the press more. No cluster sees so little problem with the news media. But in the end, this support is not based on much knowledge of or interest in the news. It is reflexive.

Empathetic Supporters

Empathetic Supporters constitute just more than one-fourth (26 percent) of the entire population. "Empathetics" have very favorable attitudes toward news organizations and newspeople. Their doubts about practices epitomize their belief that the failures of the press are caused by pressure from the outside, especially special interests.

Attitudes toward the Press

"Empathetics" see only a few problems with the news media. They consider the press to be believable, fair, professional, caring, moral and, more than any other cluster, beneficial. "Empathetics" believe, more than five to one, that press criticism of political leaders is a plus.

"Empathetics," like every group, express reservations about the invasiveness of news organizations. "Empathetics," like every cluster other than the "Reflexives," believe the press is too concerned with bad news.

But what distinguishes "Empathetics," particularly from the other two positive clusters, is that "Empathetics" believe the press is influenced by all the special interests and by the power structure as well. Given a list of 12 groups and institutions that might influence news work, "Empathetics" say that *all* these groups and institutions influence news reporting on a regular basis. Perhaps more than any other opinion cluster, the "Empathetics" regard the press as influenceable.

Involvement with the Press

Unlike the other two positive clusters, "Empathetics" are knowledgeable about, interested in and likely to follow the press.

One-third know that the First Amendment is the free press amendment. For the other two positive clusters, the fraction is one in four. "Empathetics" are nearly twice as likely to talk about journalists as the two other supportive groups. And the "Empathetics" are twice as likely as the other positive clusters to list national news magazines as their favorite periodical.

Characteristics

"Empathetics" are disproportionately likely to be women, upper income, college-educated and liberal. "Empathetics" are, in fact, the most liberal cluster. The "Empathetics" identify themselves as liberal (41 percent) and, on a battery of six contemporary issues, consistently rank as most liberal (or tied for most liberal) in their real-world views about public policy.

"Empathetics" cannot be classified solely on the basis of political philosophy—a majority approved of the job Reagan was doing at the time of these surveys. But "Empathetics" are more liberal than the other clusters, positive or negative. And their left-of-center views apparently inform their basic attitudes toward the press.

Label

"Empathetics" earn their label two ways. First, "Empathetics" appreciate the role of the press more than any other cluster. "Empathetics" are, among all the groups, the most likely to feel that "watchdoggery" helps. "Empathetics" empathize with the job the press is trying to do and want to give it freedom to continue.

Second, "Empathetics" express the reservation that newspeople themselves frequently voice—that the press is too dependent on interest groups and institutions. Like some reporters, "Empathetics" think that the problem is dependence, not bias or accuracy. This shared belief, that the press isn't independent enough, is a second meaning of press empathy.

Ambivalent Supporters

One in four Americans (23 percent) are classified as Ambivalent Supporters of the press. In their attitudes toward the press, "Ambivalents" most closely mirror the public at large.

"Ambivalents" question neither the character nor the consequences of the press. But "Ambivalents," much like the general public from which they are drawn, express a long list of reservations about the day-to-day practices of the news media.

Attitudes toward the Press

Like the nation, "Ambivalents" regard news organizations as accurate, professional and beneficial. Like the nation, "Ambivalents" also consider the press to be one-sided, negative and invasive. "Ambivalents" share the opinion with the nation at large that the press is dependent. And they also express their belief that the power structure has more influence on news work than the special interests.

In short, no cluster comes closer to expressing the national opinion than do the "Ambivalents." In fact, even their attitudes toward issues of press freedom match nearly perfectly with the general public.

Involvement with the Press

"Ambivalents" also fall near the middle of the sample in terms of knowledge and use of the press, and they fall just slightly below the national averages when answering information questions about the First Amendment or the terminology of journalism.

"Ambivalents" express a level of concern about press issues that sits just below the national mean. Among the "Ambivalents," journalists are a point of discussion for slightly fewer than one person in five. For the nation, it's slightly more than one in five.

The same holds for the pattern of news consumption—"Ambivalents" fall at or below the average. Nineteen percent of the populace hardly ever reads a newspaper and the percentage for the "Ambivalents" is precisely the same.

Characteristics

The demographic and political profiles of this cluster are as centrist in nature as their attitudes toward the press. Although "Ambivalents" are somewhat more likely than the nation to be women, to be working class and to be high school graduates, "Ambivalents" are not notably different in their demography from the rest of the nation. In terms of party affiliation and political philosophy, they reflect, again, national public opinion.

Label

"Ambivalents" are the transitional group, the cluster that bridges the gap between enthusiastic support and serious criticism. Like the public, the "Ambivalents" hold two minds about the press—approving it, appreciating it, yet, at the same time, questioning its practices. The "Ambivalents" mirror the public in many ways, but mostly they reflect the two-mindedness of the nation toward the press, the nation's own ambivalence.

Opponents of the Press

Main Street Critics

Main Street Critics are the largest cluster among the negative groups, accounting for 15 percent of the population. "Main Streeters" hold critical evaluations of the press on three of the four dimensions—questioning the independence of the press, the performance of the press and, to a degree, its consequences. Main Street Critics tend not to question the character of the press.

Attitudes toward the Press

Main Street Critics have doubts about virtually every performance standard. They see the press as liberally biased, dependent, one-sided, intrusive, negative and uncaring. Main Street Critics even fault the news media for inaccuracy. Other critics say more damning things about the people and consequences of the news media, but Main Street Critics are the most negative group on several performance issues.

More than nine in 10 (92 percent) think the press favors one side, a higher proportion than any other cluster. More than nine in 10 (92 percent) feel the press intrudes into personal privacy.

"Main Streeters," however, do not translate performance failures into a wholesale indictment of newspeople. A clear majority of the Main Street Critics regard the press as highly professional. Nearly all Main Street Critics believe that news organizations care about the quality of their work. And, although Main Street Critics tend to feel that the press is harmful to democracy, it is a fairly close plurality believing that, not a hard majority.

Involvement with the Press

Main Street Critics watch, listen and read slightly more than the national news audience.

Main Street Critics show greater interest in the press than any of the positive clusters. Among the rest of the population, about one in five talks about journalists. For "Main Streeters," the ratio is one in three.

"Main Streeters" also know more about the press than any of the positive clusters. On questions about the news process, Main Street Critics do particularly well. Main Street Critics reflect the general pattern for the negative clusters; consuming more news and knowing more about the press than the positive groups.

Characteristics

"Main Streeters," like the members in all negative clusters, are likely to be men and likely to have had immediate family in the military. But they also have a demography of their own.

"Main Streeters" have an educational background that is modest; fewer than one in five hold a college degree. Disproportionately white, Protestant and likely to live in small town America, "Main Streeters" are a conservative slice taken from middle America.

Main Street Critics have a political dimension. Two-thirds regard themselves as conservative; one-third call themselves strongly conservative. Four in 10 label themselves Republican. Three-fourths approved Ronald Reagan's performance at the time of this survey.

Some clusters do have an ideological base: "Empathetics," for example, seem to hold a view of the press that reflects their liberal politics. Main Street Critics manifest at least as much ideology as the "Empathetics," and their ideology is conservative. For the Main Street Critics that conservatism influences their opinions about the press.

Label

Informed, involved and critical, this cluster expresses an attitude toward the press that reflects conservative, yet middle-American, reservations about the way the press performs. But this cluster can't bring itself, unlike the other negative groups, to see the press as wholly harmful to American politics. They see one-sidedness. They see liberal bias, too. But they also see some benefit from a free press, and they see some character in newspeople. And those perceptions put these people where they are—on Main Street.

Embittered Critics

Embittered Critics represent the second largest negative cluster: one in 10 Americans (10 percent) fall within this orientation.

The "Embittered," unlike any other group, fault the press on all four dimensions: dependence on special interests, dependence on the power structure, day-to-day performance, even character. Only the "Embittered" give the press consistently failing grades for character.

Attitudes toward the Press

In the view of the "Embittered," the news media fail every test of performance. Two-thirds consider the press inaccurate, the highest proportion in any cluster.

What differentiates the "Embittered" from the rest of the negative clusters, however, is the depth of their indictment. Only the "Embittered" see the press as immoral and unprofessional. Eight in 10 (80 percent) feel that news organizations don't care about the quality of their work. And eight in 10 (80 percent) believe the press harms democracy, almost twice the proportion believing so among the Main Street Critics. No group disdains, distrusts and dislikes news organizations as deeply as the "Embittered."

Involvement with the Press

Unlike the other negative clusters, the "Embittered" are not particularly involved with the press or with press issues. The "Embittered," if anything, fall slightly below the national average in terms of knowledge about, interest in and consumption of the news.

Compared with the general public, the two other negative clusters are more likely to know that press freedom is a First Amendment right. The "Embittered" are slightly less likely to know. The "Embittered" are only half as likely as other negative clusters to talk about journalists, and are less likely to do so than the nation at large. And the "Embittered" follow the news less than the other critical groups, and less than two of the three positive groups as well.

Characteristics

The demography of the "Embittered" differentiates them from all other clusters, but differentiates them most from the other negative groups.

The "Embittered," like the other negative clusters, are disproportionately likely to be men. But the "Embittered" are also more likely than the others to be non-white, lacking a high school diploma and more than 50 years of age. And two-thirds of the "Embittered" fall within the two highest classifications measuring social alienation.

Most remarkable is the political composition of the "Embittered." Among all clusters, the "Embittered" are least likely to be Republican, as likely as any cluster to be Democratic. They are, by self-identification, the least conservative of the three negative groups. In fact they are as liberal as two of the positive clusters.

There is an overall tendency for liberals to fall into the positive clusters, conservatives to fall within the negative. But the "Embittered" disabuse us of the notion that attitudes toward the press are always that simple. The second largest negative cluster, and the cluster most profoundly disaffected from the news media, is the least Republican and among the more liberal. Whatever the cause of their animosity, the "Embittered" symbolize the failure of simple left-right ideology in explaining press opinion.

Label

The "Embittered" have no political philosophy that explains them. Demography helps some. Weak in educational attainment, disproportionately drawn from the older age groups and most likely to have served in the military, the "Embittered" have a sociology and an alienation that implies a disaffection from the establishment, press or otherwise.

But this group manifests a social-psychological element that may, in the end, best explain them. Compared with all other groups, these people tend to disapprove of the national media and Ronald Reagan, too. They feel less favorable toward all major institutions, the military excepted.

Vociferous Critics

Although fewest in number, the Vociferous Critics may be the most interesting, and important, cluster of all. Only one in 20 (five percent) holds a set of attitudes defined here as "Vociferous," but these people matter. Theirs is the most informed and the most vocal criticism in the nation.

Attitudes toward the Press

Vociferous Critics share some press opinions with the "Main Streeters" and with the "Embittered" too. But some press opinions the "Vociferous" hold alone.

Like all negative clusters, the "Vociferous" complain about a long list of performance failures, political bias and unfairness in particular. But the "Vociferous" do not fault the press broadly for inaccuracy. Nor do they regard the news media as unconcerned about the quality of their work.

Like the "Embittered," Vociferous Critics question the morality of the press and their willingness "to stand up for America." Like the "Embittered," a lopsided majority of the Vociferous Critics believe the news media harm democracy. And like the Main Street Critics, the "Vociferous" see the press as influenced by special interests.

Vociferous Critics, however, do hold a unique opinion among the negative clusters. The "Vociferous" believe that the press is independent of the power structure. Vociferous Critics, more than any other cluster, see the press as uninfluenced by the federal government.

Only one Vociferous Critic in five regards the federal government as often influencing the news media. The "Vociferous," in short, feel that the news media can stand up to the power structure, they just wish the press would not stand up so often.

Involvement with the Press

The "Vociferous" are as extraordinary in their involvement with the press as they are in their judgments about it.

Consider first knowledge of the news media. Excluding the "Vociferous," fewer than three Americans in 10 have heard about Jesse Helms' attempt to buy a network. Among the "Vociferous," the figure is one of every two. The "Vociferous" are twice as likely as the rest of the population to know that Helms wants to buy CBS, twice as likely to know why.

Vociferous Critics also use the national news media more than any other cluster. The "Vociferous" are twice as likely as the rest of the nation to list news magazines as their favorite periodical. No cluster watches network news more often. Nearly a third of the "Vociferous" read *The Wall Street Journal* or *The New York Times.*

Vociferous Critics also exhibit the highest levels of interest in press issues. Excluding them, slightly less than half the public is concerned about early predictions on election night. Among the "Vociferous," eight in 10 (79 percent) care about this issue.

Involvement can also mean expressiveness. And the "Vociferous," above all, excel at that.

Vociferous Critics are, compared with all other clusters, most likely to have written to an editor; most likely to have been quoted in the press and most likely to have complained to a news organization about a story.

Characteristics

Vociferous Critics are, among all clusters, most likely to be men working as professionals. In fact, almost half classify themselves as business people or professionals. The "Vociferous" are also most likely to have attended college and to live in the urbanized East. Their demographics are upscale.

Nonetheless, Vociferous Critics are not the wealthiest cluster—Empathetic Supporters earn as much. Vociferous Critics do not, then, represent an economic elite, a group to be explained by wealth.

Vociferous Critics can, however, be understood in terms of their politics. Among the "Vociferous," eight in 10 (79 percent) approve of Ronald Reagan; Republicans outnumber Democrats two to one; conservatives outnumber liberals nearly three to one. And Vociferous Critics hold consistently conservative positions on all policy questions asked.

Vociferous Critics are not in or near the Fortune 500, but they are dedicated to the political values of traditional conservatism. If there is a committed, intense and ideological opposition to the press, one that knows what the news media are trying to do and objects to it, the "Vociferous" are it.

Label

There is a social and political dimension to this cluster. They are upscale and very conservative and their attitudes toward the media are intense and informed.

But this cluster is as exceptional in its expressiveness as its beliefs. No group is as vocal. These people are, more than any, in a position to speak and be heard. When the press listens to the public, the loudest sounds come from the "Vociferous."

The Meaning of the Clusters

What do we learn from the clusters that we might otherwise not have known?

First, they corroborate the original findings about the nation at large. Our overall analysis showed that, when given straightforward questions, substantial majorities say the press is believable, even likeable. Using a more powerful and comprehensive set of techniques, we now find the same thing—most Americans, all things considered together, hold a positive *orientation* toward the news media.

Second, we gain insight into the nature of the opposition. If, as we discovered, all political and demographic groups regard the press as beneficial to democracy, we want to uncover the kinds of groups who think it isn't so. Now we know. It is, above all, the Embittered Critics and the "Vociferous."

For the public at large, only 23 percent see the press as hurting democracy. Among the "Vociferous," that figure is 64 percent; among the "Embittered," the percentage climbs to 80.

Third, the segmentation provides hunches about the causes of press opinion. Clustering points to those forces that lead people to feel as they do.

Consider the "Embittered." There is a political dimension to press opinion—conservatives are somewhat more critical. But Embittered Critics cannot be easily explained politically. Their opposition is neither Republican nor particularly conservative in base.

It is likely that the "Embittered" are psychological in their attitudes toward the press, offering a world view that is based on their personality more than their politics. But without clustering, one would have a difficult time even imagining that.

Fourth, clustering gives greater explanatory power. Without clustering attitudes, traditional approaches to explaining press opinion often fall quite short.

Clustering, for example, does more than demographics in explaining who believes in press freedom and who doesn't. Clustering also does better than political ideology in explaining attitudes toward the worth of a free press. In fact, clustering does a somewhat better job of explaining attitudes toward the value of press freedom than do the individual's attitudes toward news organizations in general. In explaining attitudes toward free press, knowing whether a person likes the press is actually less powerful a factor than knowing that respondent's basic orientation, his or her cluster.

Figure 18 contains a pair of graphs showing that the clusters do a better job of explaining basic beliefs about the impact of the news media than do three other important and relevant variables. The clusters prove somewhat more powerful than party affiliation or political ideology in explaining opinions about the impact and value of the news media. In fact, the clusters, as a variable, even prove more powerful in explaining attitudes toward the impact of the news media than the respondents' overall favorability rating concerning the press.

Consider, for example, two questions having to do with the effect of a free press on national politics. (See Figure 18.) The first question deals with the way in which the press influences policy making, the second deals with the real beneficiary of press freedom—the people or the press itself.

Respondents were asked whether the press influences policy more by merely reporting the facts, or more by the way the press chooses to select and present the stories it provides. Respondents were also asked whether, in the long run, press freedom benefits the public more or the news media more.

On both questions the right is slightly more critical of the press than is the left. And those who dislike the media are somewhat more suspicious of the way the press affects public policy and more doubting as to the real beneficiary of press freedom. (See Figure 18.) Those differences between categories are comparatively small, usually running around 10 percent.

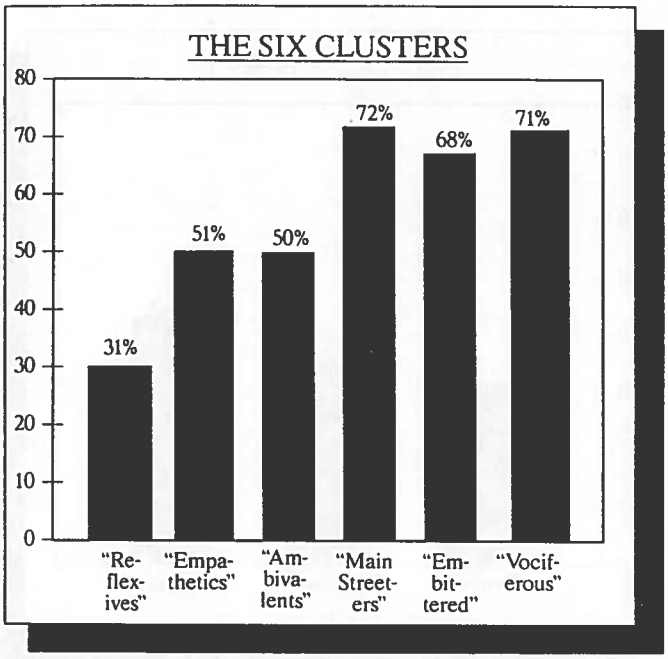
But the clusters produce differences that are much greater on both questions. The most negative clusters are 20 to 30 points more critical or suspicious about the impact of the news media on the policy process.

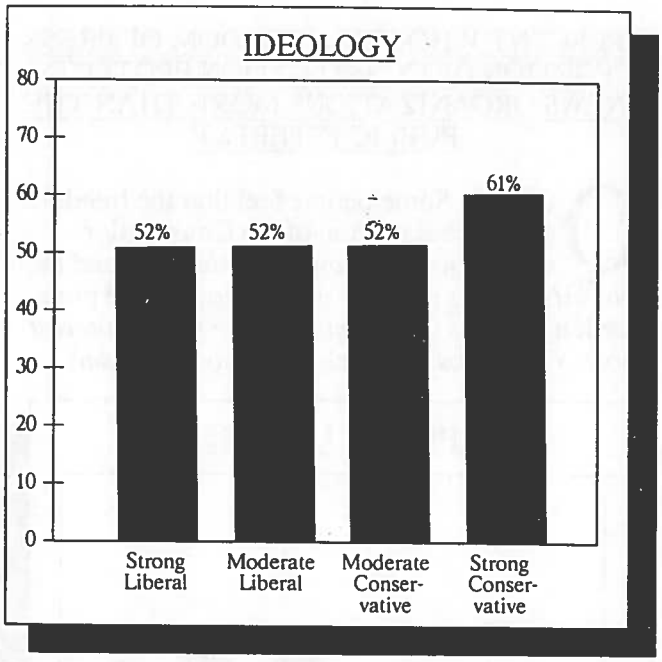
Figure 18A

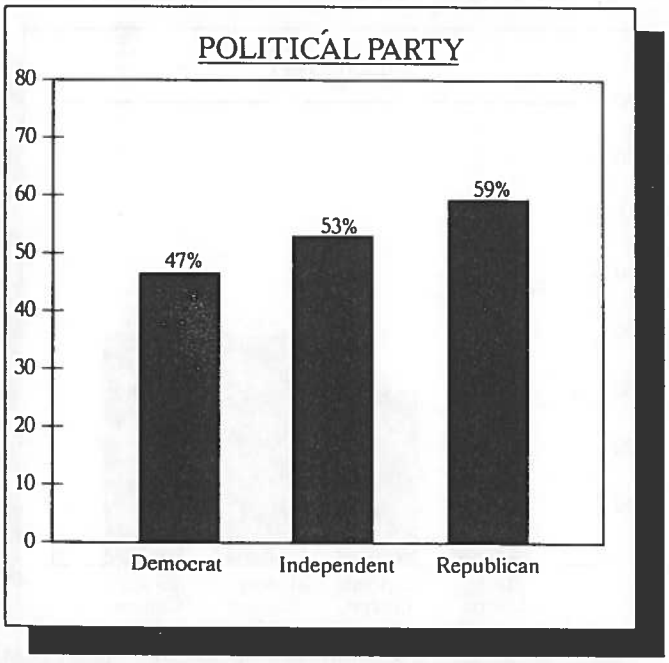
PERCENT WHO FEEL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS AFFECT NATIONAL POLICY THROUGH NEWS SELECTION AND PRESENTATION

Question: Some people feel that news organizations have *almost no effect* on national policy and public affairs. Others feel that news organizations affect policy and public affairs *mainly by presenting the facts.* Still others feel that news organizations affect policy and public affairs *mainly by what news stories they decide to cover* and how they present them. Which position is closest to your opinion?

Figure 18A (Cont'd)







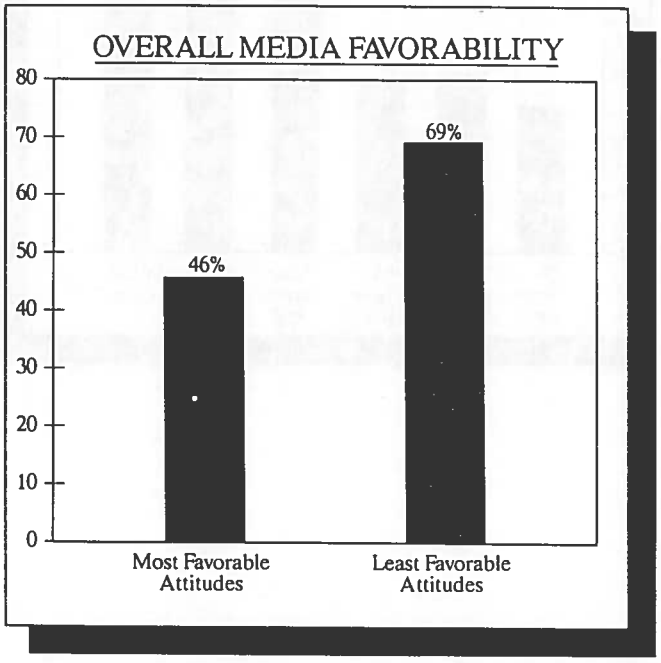
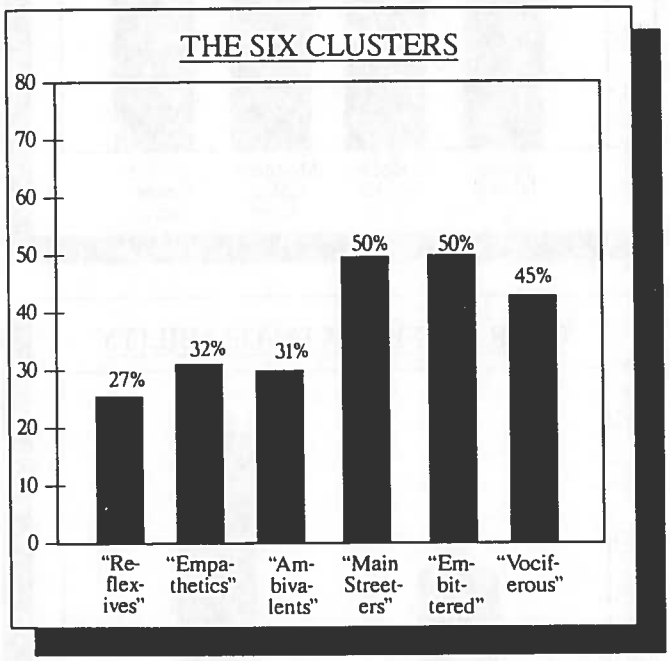
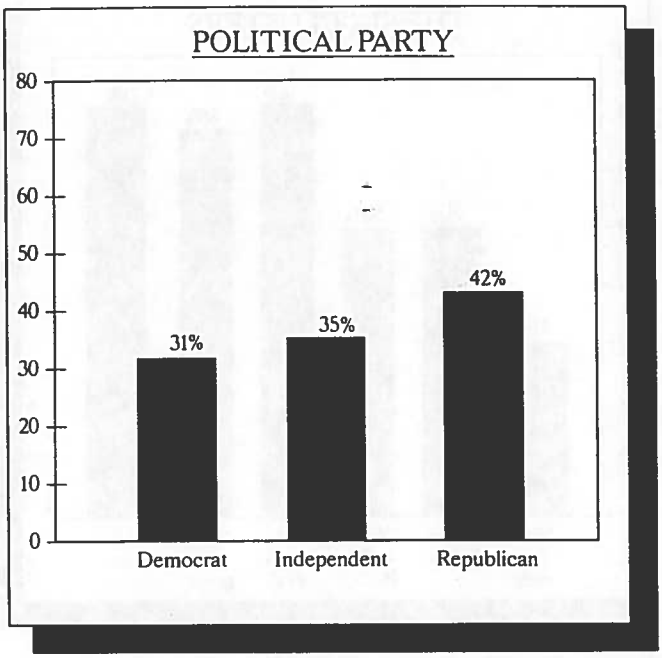


Figure 18B

PERCENT WHO FEEL FREEDOM OF PRESS PORTION OF CONSTITUTION PROTECTS NEWS ORGANIZATIONS MORE THAN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

Question: Some people feel that the freedom of the press portion of the Constitution mainly protects *news organizations and their interests*. Others feel that the freedom of the press portion protects the *people and the public interest* more. Which position is closer to your opinion?





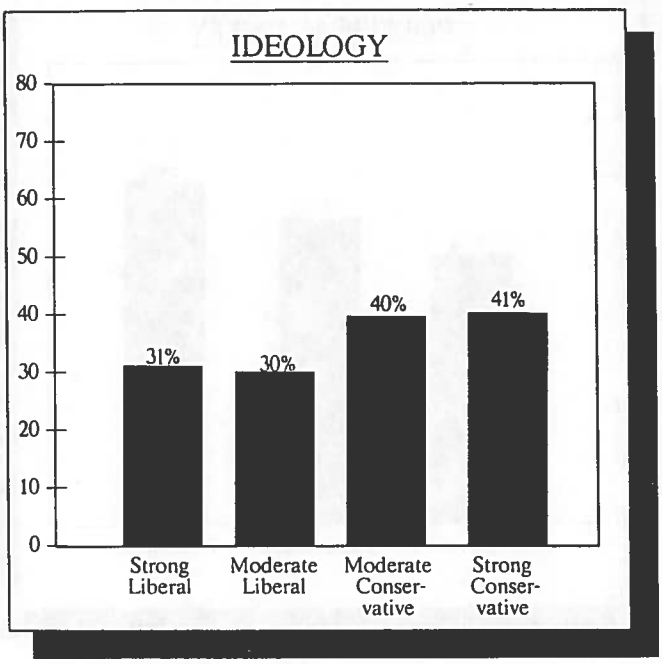
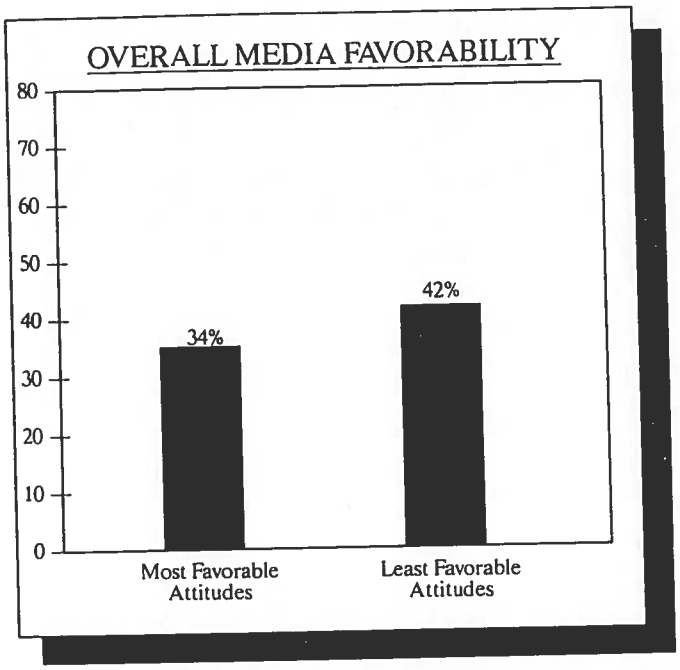


Figure 18B (Cont'd)



Finally, clustering and segmentational research help solve enigmas. Consider again the riddle of shared opinion—why, for instance, Democrats and Republicans can sometimes appear to think alike. Part of that is the complexity of press opinion. But part, too, is that the second largest negative group is disproportionately liberal and Democratic.

Clustering also explains the riddle of the "other" credibility gap, why newspeople sense so much hostility in a world where deep-seated hostility toward the press is an exception. The answer lies mainly in the nature of the opposition, particularly the "Main Streeters" and the "Vociferous" clusters.

Knowledge and Press Criticism

One puzzle has not been solved, however, the relationship between knowledge and negative attitudes. Two of the three negative groups—"Main Streeters" and "Vociferous"—are well above average in terms of their knowledge of the press. Two of the three positive groups—"Reflexives" and "Ambivalents"—fall below the mean.

Nor is this simply a statistical artifact. In the public at large, those who know more about the news media like it less. Those who rate highest on press knowledge, for example, give the networks a favorability score of 84, 11 points lower than the least informed. In fact, the lowest quarter in terms of knowledge, gives the networks twice as many "excellents" as the highest.

Part of this is due to sophistication; generally the most knowledgeable on any topic tend to express more skeptical opinions. But that fact doesn't tell us for certain whether learning more about the press, in and of itself, *causes* more negative feelings. And that is a possibility.

It is also possible that the critics of the press just work harder at knowing their opposition. It is possible, too, that knowing about the news media is tied to some other variable that does cause disapproval—more disapproval than sophistication alone would engender.

We do not know yet what causes what, and won't know for sure without doubling-back again. What we do know, however, is that those who know more about the press are more critical. That pattern holds among the clusters and within the public at large.

So despite the overall approval of the news media, the truth is the best informed are often the least impressed. And that fact, lamentable as it must be to the nation's press, leads to the final question. How do all these pluses and minuses balance out in terms of press opinion?

Conclusions

1. No Believability Crisis

If credibility means believability, there is no credibility crisis.

The vast majority of the citizenry thinks the major news organizations in America are believable. Nor is there broad-based disapproval of the nation's press. Quite the contrary.

If one accepts Ronald Reagan as a watermark of approbation, then American journalism meets the test of popular approval. And so do the most prominent practitioners of the trade. Americans believe and approve of the press more than they do Reagan, or any other political person or institution we included in our survey.

Three reservations are in order, however. First, the public appreciates the press far more than it approves of news media performance, an enigma we have wrestled with from the start. Second, the public generally awards B's, not A's. On the subjects of believability and favorability, marks are good, not excellent. Third, public approval is asymmetrical. In a sense, critics are more critical than supporters are supportive.

Despite these qualifications about specific practices, shallow support and asymmetrical opinions, it's very hard to make a case that there is a crisis in believability or favorability facing the nation's press. But what about credibility more broadly drawn? Is there a credibility crisis more loosely construed?

If nothing else, we have redefined and refined the nature of the crisis. It isn't about character. It isn't about believability. It isn't about the consequences of free press. It is, in the end, about the day-to-day performance failures that the public perceives.

2. Few Libertarians; Few Authoritarians

Freshman students in journalism learn that Jefferson preferred newspapers without government to government without newspapers. Seniors learn that Jefferson advised against reading, let alone believing, those very newspapers.

Americans express some of Jefferson's ambivalence. Like Jefferson, most Americans think the press fails to live up to expectations or standards. But most, again like Jefferson, believe that government control is about as undesirable as an unrestricted press.

There are very few absolute defenders of free press or devoted advocates of libertarianism. In fact, using a combined measure of five important items dealing with press freedom from government, we found only 16 percent expressing "libertarian" opinions on all five of those items.

A committed libertarian would renounce even libel laws. Yet almost every American accepts them. Many treasure them. A strict libertarian would give any news organization the right to call an election as soon as it felt it knew the winner. The public would restrict early calls. A libertarian would think that "freedom of the press" means freedom for news organizations. Most Americans believe that "freedom of the press" means their right to hear, not the press' right to speak.

There are very few libertarians, but neither do we find many authoritarians, people wanting to repress the news media or subject it to across-the-board governmental control. Like Jefferson, most Americans believe that the press, whatever its failures, should function unfettered by the central government.

The public says "no" to formal censorship and says "no" to prior restraint. The public says "no" to the government requiring fairness in news coverage. The public says "no" to the government requiring equal advertising time on television or space in newspapers for political candidates. And the public says "yes," emphatically, to publishing a story such as the Pentagon Papers.

On these three issues, fairness, equal time and publication of classified documents from the Vietnam War, the American people sound more libertarian than the policy-makers who made the real-world choices.

The libertarian element seems most evident when the public looks directly at the costs and benefits of the watchdog press. Americans believe whole heartedly that press criticism keeps the government from doing harm, not its work.

National security is a red flag for the public. Mention national security and the public inevitably becomes less concerned about press freedom. But government is a red flag as well. Mention government, even in national security issues, and the public winds up shifting back in the direction of free press.

Using the same five items about press freedom from government, we found only three percent saying "no" to free press on all five items—far fewer than the percentage always saying "yes." The public is opposed to press freedom when the issues involve the rights of individuals, the community or the electorate. But when weighing the rights of press against the prerogatives of government, the American people wind up very much in the middle.

The press ought not to expect much public support for liberalizing press laws and broadcast regulations. But neither should the press expect public pressure in the near future to adopt greater legal controls. The one exception might be the public demand to prohibit election projections before the polls have closed.

3. Old-Fashioned Criticism

During the first half of this century most press critics focused their complaints on the pernicious influence of big money in journalism. In those days, the typical press seminar dealt with all the possible evils that advertisers and corporate ownership could visit on the American press. Could a newspaper be an objective, aggressive watchdog if that newspaper had to make a profit on the basis of advertising dollars, or even subscribers?

Times have changed, and we don't hear much of that from press critics today. One reads more about the liberal content of network news or about the imperial media undermining political institutions.

But turn to the public, and you hear more of the old criticism than the new. Public criticism today sounds like professional criticism of the 1920s.

Consider the issue of bias. Much, perhaps most, of the contemporary media criticism aims at the notion that the national media are biased in favor of liberalism, and that this liberal bias matters a great deal.

And the public? A plurality says the press is biased. A plurality sees the press as liberal, a plurality sees more liberal than conservative bias in the media. And yet our research indicates that, in the end, about one in five believes that the news product itself is liberally biased. In fact, there is even a question as to whether the public means political bias when it complains of bias.

Most important, the public, like the old-time critics, attributes press failure more to commercial pressure and interest group pressure than to biased newspeople. Like the old-timers, the modern public thinks the largest problems are maintaining audience and accommodating to pressure groups.

And it isn't liberal pressure groups necessarily. When asked which groups influence news reporting most, Americans list the federal government first, business corporations second, and advertisers third. That listing implies that the heaviest pressure is perceived as coming from the right, not the left.

Nor has the public adopted the contemporary criticism that the news media are imperial. Most respondents *do* see the media as growing in influence. But most still see the press as more dependent than imperial.

The public thinks powerful groups and institutions push the press around. The fact is, most do not see the press as too critical of the powerful. Fewer than one in five believes that the press spends too much time covering political corruption.

We find almost no evidence that the public regards the news media as too adversarial. Sounding like critics of old, Americans seem more concerned with the power of audience, business, government and advertisers than the power of an imperial press corps. Rude yes; imperial no.

4. Solvable Riddles

Not all the enigmas are easily resolved: Americans, for example, are certain that the press is fair to Reagan but they also doubt that the press is fair. But double-back interviewing and segmentational analysis do help solve three major riddles.

The Riddle of Two-Mindedness

Our research corroborates most earlier polling: much of the public has two minds about the press. On most performance issues, the public disapproves. As to overall evaluation, the public likes the press and its prominent people.

Most Americans *are* consistent. Either they like the press and press performance or they like neither. But a large number are inconsistent, questioning performance, and at the same time expressing general approval.

The solution to this riddle is two-fold. First, the value of the watchdog neutralizes much of the criticism about practices. If citizens value the press as a watchdog, they tend to look beyond performance failures.

Second, an appreciation of news tends to ameliorate criticism about practices. News, as product, has the power to make the press look good, performance failures notwithstanding.

Most Americans value both the watchdog and the news. Even among those who see poor press performance, these two benefits—"watchdoggery" and information—tend to produce overall approval.

It goes too far to say that performance criticisms do not matter. But criticism of press behavior can be substantially neutralized by the product—news—and by the by-product of news—"watchdoggery."

And performance criticisms are less likely to lead news audiences to turn off the set or cancel a subscription than are overall attitudes toward specific news organizations. Our final "double-back" interviews indicate that "liking" the press is somewhat more important than performance criticisms in determining who tunes out, gives up, or stays with a news source.

The Riddle of Shared Opinion

Political ideology does help to predict some attitudes toward the press. Conservatives, for example, are somewhat more willing to limit press freedom. Liberals are more likely to be placed in one of the three positive press orientations.

But the correlations are often weak. On many basic measures like credibility, favorability and "watchdoggery," the correlation barely exists.

Why so much of shared opinion? The segmentational analysis suggests the answer.

Only some of the underlying dimensions are amenable to the usual left-to-right formulation. Bias, for example, is a dimension that does have an ideological base. But bias is not a simple left-right issue for much of the public, and the bias issue is, in the end, only a part of one of four dimensions.

Perceptions of independence are also important. And the independence issue does not fit neatly left to right—in our data or in the literature about the press.

In fact, we find, as others have found, a tendency for the extremists on both sides of the political spectrum to hold slightly less positive attitudes toward the press. This may reflect the right's notion that the press is liberally biased and the left's that the press is too dependent on the power structure. But the fact that the extremes on both sides are more critical clearly implies that press opinion does not exist unidimensionally.

For those in the middle, these dimensions of bias and independence may be at odds, or confused. So we find those usually disagreeing on political issues often in agreement about the press.

The "Embittered," for example, tend to be liberal in ideology and disproportionately black. Yet they hold the most comprehensively negative attitudes toward the press we could uncover. And some very conservative people are found in the press positive groups, perhaps because they regard the press as a crucial check on big government, regardless of liberally biased reporting.

So press opinion emerges from several dimensions of attitude, and that complexity puts traditional liberals and conservatives in places they might not expect to be. But shared opinion is no accident. Shared opinion is a consequence of the several strains that underlie opinions toward the press.

The Riddle of the "Other" Credibility Gap

One recent survey found that six reporters in 10 consider the credibility gap "quite serious." That finding symbolizes nicely the "other" credibility gap—the press' belief that the public broadly disapproves. Despite a number of surveys that have shown the public to be favorably disposed, we consistently hear newspeople saying it isn't so—the public dislikes and distrusts them.

One can explain this in a number of ways. A few polls do show declining confidence. Our surveys do indicate serious reservations on some performance issues. One might even argue that newspeople feel better if they sense public disapproval: nobody should like the watchdog.

One thing is, however, certain. The public does not disapprove. The press is popular with the majority of the American people. The press probably overstates its image problems.

We think that this riddle is best solved by understanding the nature of those who approve and disapprove. Though comparatively small in number, the critics are well-equipped to make their criticisms register.

The "Embittered" are the only group among the critical who do not have social, political or communicative advantages. "Main Streeters" and the "Vociferous" have, compared with supporters, all the advantages.

The "Vociferous" are particularly important in solving the enigma of the "other" credibility gap. The "Vociferous," though a tiny fraction of the population, are well-positioned, well-connected, well-informed and well-exercised in their criticism. The "Vociferous" are twice as likely as the rest of the sample to be professional; twice as likely to be mentioned in the press itself; more than twice as likely to score highest on press knowledge questions and more than twice as likely to have complained personally to a newspaper or TV station about a news story. "Main Streeters," too, have the knowledge, interest and expressiveness that amplifies the sound of their voice. But the "Vociferous" seem to be key.

Among supporters, only the "Empathetics" come anywhere close to the "Vociferous" in any of the indicators of social status, involvement, or vocalism. But on these dimensions, the "Empathetics" also fall short of the "Vociferous," far short.

It isn't the quantitative dimension of opposition so much as the qualitative dimension. The press hears more disapproval than really exists in the public at large because the opponents are louder. The loudest opinions, as opposed to public opinion, have reinforced the feeling among newspeople that there is a crisis. But the opposition is still an insurgency, not a rebellion.

We do not know whether this insurgent opposition is growing—tracking the major press orientations begins with this report. What is clear is that the insurgency does more than explain this last enigma. It also means the press does have a problem. The insurgents are generally more formidable than the loyalists they confront, hence more likely to matter. Insurgents could mean much more than their numbers imply, even more than a mere misperception on behalf of newspeople who hear the criticism.

5. An American Point of View

Ask an American what he thinks of big business, and chances are good he'll groan about greed and self-indulgence. Ask about the free enterprise system, and he's likely to say it's okay. Ask about Lee Iacocca, however, and he'll probably express approval that extends all the way to the Chrysler Corporation.

The same basic pattern holds for the news media. In our research, we asked about press performance, and people often mentioned "that microphone" too often shoved into the faces of the bereaved. Yet, when asked about watchdogging the government, the public paused and said that it was good. And asked about Dan Rather, Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw, nine in 10 Americans said positive things.

We think the analogy between press opinion and business opinion holds in several respects. First, as Chrysler profits from Iacocca, the news media benefit from their most visible spokespersons, whether Rather, Jennings, Brokaw or the rest. Popular leaders reflect favorability on their company, be it Chrysler or a news organization.

Second, just as consumers like products even as they question the motives and practices of those who provide them, the public likes news. Free commercial markets produce a wealth of products. Free commercial press produces a wealth of news. So both systems have real worth in the public's mind, motives and practices in either system notwithstanding.

Third, whether it's the car business or the news business, the public sees commercial pressure and motive as beneficial, even if criticizable. One business competes with another, rendering the industry more responsive to consumers. One news organization competes with another, rendering the press more responsible, or at least more responsive.

Eventually the analogy breaks down. But when it does, the press gains the advantage in public opinion. First, the analogy assumes the public feels the same about the press and about business. Our own research tells us "no." The public favors news organizations to business corporations by a wide margin. In our survey, business organizations rate a favorability index in the mid-60s. Network news approaches 90.

Second, as far as the public is concerned, competition keeps car companies responsive—that's its benefit. But with the press there is a bonus: competition not only keeps news organizations responsive, it also keeps the government from being *irresponsible.*

We don't know for sure why the press does better than business in our surveys. Perhaps it is because newspeople are so much more visible than business leaders—many TV news organizations have their own Iacocca. Perhaps it's the public's notion that the press is more public-spirited. Perhaps it's the bonus offer—the watchdog effect.

What we do know is that, in the end, the public sees more good than bad in any form of competition. Journalists, for example, tend to think the increasing number of libel suits is at least chilling. The public believes the increase is a clear and positive good.

And so it goes. Americans look to all their institutions with reservations about motives and performance. But for the most part, they accept the worth of commercial pressure and of adversarialism. And typically they like the product they get from both.

It is ironic, to be sure. Despite the notion that it has become anathema to the general public, the press emerges as one of the nation's most favorably regarded institutions. But that irony ought not to mask a much more important truth about public opinion.

Americans like the press and its practitioners. They like the product and its consequences. But most Americans do see a dark side to their free and commercial press. That may sound like the ultimate enigma in news media opinion. But in the last analysis, it's ultimately the American point of view.

TECHNICAL APPENDIX

SUMMARY OF SURVEY METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research project, personal and telephone interviews were conducted among adult Americans on four separate occasions. The following is a brief description of the methodology for each phase of the interviewing.

The Pilot Telephone Survey

Between May 28-31, 1985, Gallup interviewed a national sample of 253 adults by telephone. This pilot study served to test the efficacy of the proposed questionnaire for the principal survey and its adaptability to a telephone interview methodology. It also provided a preview of what the eventual segmentation analysis was likely to show.

The Principal Personal Interview Survey

Face-to-face, personal interviews were conducted among a nationally representative sample of 2,104 adults for this, the main survey component. The sampling and interviewing methodology employed is identical to the procedures used for all Gallup Poll public opinion surveys. Interviews were conducted during the period June 22-July 13, 1985. The margin of error due to sampling for the total sample of 2,104 respondents is ± 3 percentage points.

The August "Re-Check" Survey

To test what effect, if any, the Beirut hostage crisis might have had on responses to the first national survey, a second personal interviewing survey was conducted from August 17-25, 1985. For this "re-check" survey, a newly drawn, nationally-representative sample of 1,018 adults was asked a short series of questions drawn from the questionnaire used in June and July. The questions selected were those considered to be most likely to detect the effect of a hostage crisis on public opinion toward the press.

The November "Double-Back" Survey

Between October 31 and November 12, 1985, Gallup successfully re-contacted and interviewed by telephone 1,002 of the original respondents from the first national survey. This "double back" survey allowed us to test our hypotheses for the inconsistencies in public opinion of the press which were uncovered in the principal survey.

DESIGN OF THE SAMPLE FOR GALLUP PERSONAL INTERVIEW SURVEYS

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, 18 years and older, living in the United States, except for those persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

The design of the sample is that of a replicated, probability sample down to the block level in the case of urban areas, and to segments of townships in the case of rural areas. Approximately 180 sampling locations were used in each survey. Interpenetrating samples can be provided for any given study when appropriate.

The sample design included stratification by these four size-of-community strata, using 1970 Census data: (a) cities of population 1,000,000 and over; (b) 250,000 to 999,999; (c) 50,000 to 249,999; (d) all other population. Each of these strata was further stratified into seven geographic regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, East Central, West Central, South, Mountain and Pacific. Within each city size-regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities were selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1970 Census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

Within localities so selected for which the requisite population data are reported, subdivisions were drawn with the probability of selection proportional to size of population. In all other localities, small definable geographic areas were selected with equal probability.

Separately for each survey, within each subdivision so selected for which block statistics are available, a sample of blocks or block clusters is drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions or areas, blocks or segments are drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks and each segment so selected, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignment is completed.

Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means weekends, or if on weekdays, after 4:00 p.m. for women and after 6:00 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times at home" weighting* procedure rather than by "call backs." This procedure is a standard method for reducing the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

The pre-stratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also minor adjustments of the sample are made by educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau (derived from their Current Population Survey) and by age.

*Politz, A. and Simmons, W., "An Attempt to Get the 'Not at Homes' into the Sample without Callbacks". JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION. Volume 44 (March, 1949), pp. 9-31.

SAMPLE COMPOSITION FOR THE PRINCIPAL SURVEY

	Weighted Percentages	Number of Interviews
Sex		
Male	48.0	(1048)
Female	52.0	(1056)
	100.0	(2104)
Race		
White	87.5	(1891)
Black	9.8	(183)
Other	2.7	(30)
	100.0	(2104)
Age		
18-29 years	25.7	(422)
30-49 years	37.3	(814)
50 years and older	36.9	(864)
Undesignated	0.1	(4)
	100.0	(2104)
Education		
College graduate	17.8	(431)
Other college	17.9	(391)
High school graduate	39.0	(809)
Less than high school graduate	25.1	(467)
Undesignated	0.2	(6)
	100.0	(2104)

Region	Weighted Percentages	Number of Interviews
East:		
Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia	24.9	(545)
Midwest:		
Ohio, Indiana, Illinois Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri	25.8	(597)
South:		
Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Louisiana	30.1	(579)
West:		
Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, California, Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Hawaii	19.2	(383)
	100.0	(2104)

Questionnaire for Principal Survey

INTRODUCTION: Good morning (afternoon, evening). My name is *(YOUR NAME)* and I'm an interviewer for the Gallup Poll in Princeton, New Jersey. We're taking a national survey on a current topic of interest.

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling his job as President?
   1 ☐ Approve
   2 ☐ Disapprove
   0 ☐ NO OPINION

Now on another subject...

2. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD A) Here is a list of some different groups of people. After you read through this list, tell me which, if any, of these groups you sometimes talk about with your friends and acquaintances. Just call off the letter or letters. RECORD RESPONSES IN 1ST COLUMN BELOW. (IF MORE THAN ONE, ASK: Which *one* group do you talk about *most* often? RECORD IN 2ND COLUMN BELOW. ACCEPT ONLY ONE ANSWER.)

	Sometimes Talk About	Talk About Most Often
a. Professional athletes	1 ☐	1 ☐
b. Business executives	2 ☐	2 ☐
c. Clergymen	3 ☐	3 ☐
d. Doctors	4 ☐	4 ☐
e. Entertainers	5 ☐	5 ☐
f. Journalists	6 ☐	6 ☐
g. Political leaders	7 ☐	7 ☐
h. Lawyers	8 ☐	8 ☐
i. Scientists	9 ☐	9 ☐
NONE	1 ☐	
CAN'T SAY	0 ☐	0 ☐

FORM I:
3. Who is your favorite athlete?

FORM II:
3. Who is your favorite political leader?

4a. Who is your favorite journalist or newsperson?
   1 ☐ Offered name (SPECIFY)_____
   _____
   8 ☐ NONE/DON'T HAVE ONE
   0 ☐ DON'T KNOW

IF RESPONDENT OFFERS NAME IN Q. 4a, ASK Q. 4b:

4b. Does the person you just named work for television news, a newspaper, a magazine, or radio news?
   1 ☐ TV news
   2 ☐ Newspaper
   3 ☐ Magazine
   4 ☐ Radio news
   5 ☐ Other (SPECIFY):_____
   _____
   _____

5a. Here is a different kind of question...if President Reagan had the following four calls at the same time waiting for him, which call do you think he *would* take first? (HAND RESPONDENT CARD B. RECORD IN 1ST COLUMN BELOW)

	Q. 5a	Q. 5b
The President of Harvard	1 ☐	1 ☐
The Chairman of the Board of IBM	2 ☐	2 ☐
The Editor-in-Chief of the Washington Post	3 ☐	3 ☐
The Principal Bishop of the Episcopal Church	4 ☐	4 ☐
DON'T KNOW (DK)	0 ☐	0 ☐

5b. (RESPONDENT RETAINS CARD B) In *your* opinion, which call *should* he take first? (RECORD IN 2ND COLUMN ABOVE)

6. (HAND RESPONDENT PHOTOS 1-9) Here are some photos of well known Americans and some people who are less well known. As I read off the number corresponding to each photo, tell me if you happen to know this person's name and who he or she works for.

a. (PHOTO 1)
   NAME:
   1 ☐ George Bush
   2 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK
   WHO HE WORKS FOR:
   1 ☐ U.S. Federal Gov't/ President
   2 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK

b. (PHOTO 2)
   NAME:
   1 ☐ Dan Rather
   2 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK
   WHO HE WORKS FOR:
   1 ☐ CBS/CBS News
   2 ☐ Named TV channel or station (No mention of CBS)
   3 ☐ 60 Minutes
   4 ☐ NBC, ABC, CNN
   5 ☐ TV news, not sure which organization
   6 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK

c. (PHOTO 3)
   NAME:
   1 ☐ Ted Koppel
   2 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK
   WHO HE WORKS FOR:
   1 ☐ ABC/ABC News
   2 ☐ Named TV channel or station (No mention of ABC)
   3 ☐ Nightline
   4 ☐ CBS, NBC, CNN
   5 ☐ TV news, not sure which organization
   6 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK

d. (PHOTO 4)
   NAME:
   1 ☐ Geraldine Ferraro
   2 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK
   WHO SHE WORKS FOR:
   1 ☐ U.S. Congress (Formerly)/Democratic Party/Walter Mondale
   2 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK

e. (PHOTO 5)
   NAME:
   1 ☐ Tom Brokaw
   2 ☐ Other response
   0 ☐ DK
   WHO HE WORKS FOR:
   1 ☐ NBC/NBC News
   2 ☐ Named TV channel or station (No mention of NBC)
   3 ☐ ABC, CBS, CNN
   4 ☐ TV news, not sure which organization

f. (PHOTO 6)

NAME:	WHO HE WORKS FOR:
1 ☐ Mike Wallace	1 ☐ CBS/CBS News
2 ☐ Other response	2 ☐ Named TV channel or station (No mention of CBS)
0 ☐ DK	3 ☐ 60 Minutes
	4 ☐ NBC, ABC, CNN
	5 ☐ TV news, not sure which organization
	6 ☐ Other response
	0 ☐ DK

g. (PHOTO 7)

NAME:	WHO HE WORKS FOR:
1 ☐ Caspar Weinberger	1 ☐ U.S./Federal Gov't./ Defense Dept./Reagan Cabinet/Pentagon
2 ☐ Other response	2 ☐ Other response
0 ☐ DK	0 ☐ DK

h. (PHOTO 8)

NAME:	WHO HE WORKS FOR:
1 ☐ George Will	1 ☐ ABC/ABC News
2 ☐ Other response	2 ☐ Named TV channel or station (No mention of ABC)
0 ☐ DK	3 ☐ NBC, ABC, CNN
	4 ☐ TV news, not sure which organization
	5 ☐ Washington Post/ Newspaper Syndicate
	6 ☐ Newsweek magazine
	7 ☐ Other response
	0 ☐ DK

i. (PHOTO 9)

NAME:	WHO SHE WORKS FOR:
1 ☐ Barbara Walters	1 ☐ ABC/ABC News
2 ☐ Other response	2 ☐ Named TV channel or station (No mention of ABC)
0 ☐ DK	3 ☐ 20/20
	4 ☐ NBC, CBS, CNN
	5 ☐ TV news, not sure which organization
	6 ☐ Other response
	0 ☐ DK

7. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD C) I'd like your opinion of some people and organizations. As I read from a list, please tell me which category on this card best describes your *overall* opinion of who or what I name. Probably, there will be some people and organizations on this list that you have never heard of. First, how would you describe your opinion of (READ ITEM)?

	Very Favorable	Mostly Favorable	Mostly Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable	Never Heard Of	Can't Rate
Ronald Reagan	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Ted Kennedy	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Jesse Helms	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
The Congress	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
The Moral Majority	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
The CIA	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Labor unions	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Business corporations	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
The nuclear freeze movement	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
The women's movement	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
The military	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
The daily newspaper you are most familiar with*	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Large nationally influential newspapers— such as the New York Times, Washington Post and Los Angeles Times	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
News magazines	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Network TV news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Your local TV news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Radio news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
C-Span	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Ted Turner	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
Rupert Murdoch	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐

*INTERVIEWER: ASK THE FOLLOWING AFTER RESPONDENT RATES THIS ITEM: What is the name of the daily newspaper you are most familiar with?

_____ NAME

9 ☐ NOT FAMILIAR WITH ANY (VOL.)
0 ☐ DK/NA

8. I am going to read another list. This time please rate how much you think you can believe each organization I name on a scale of 4 to 1. On this 4-point scale, "4" means you can believe *all or most* of what they say and "1" means you can believe *almost nothing* of what they say. How would you rate the believability of (READ ITEM) on this scale of 4 to 1?

	Believe			Cannot Believe	Never Heard Of	Can't Rate
The daily newspaper you are most familiar with	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Large nationally influential newspapers—such as the New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
The Wall Street Journal	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
USA Today	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
The Associated Press	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Time magazine	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Parade magazine	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
People magazine	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Reader's Digest	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Rolling Stone magazine	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Newsweek	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
The National Enquirer	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
NBC News	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
ABC News	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
CBS News	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
CNN—Cable News Network	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Your local TV news	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Radio news	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
"All Things Considered" on National Public Radio	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐

9. Next, please rate the believability of the following people, using this same scale of 4 to 1. (READ)

	Believe			Cannot Believe	Never Heard Of	Can't Rate
Ronald Reagan	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Jack Anderson	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
David Brinkley	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Tom Brokaw	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
John Chancellor	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Walter Cronkite	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Phil Donahue	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Sam Donaldson	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Paul Harvey	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Peter Jennings	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Ted Koppel	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Ann Landers	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Bill Moyers	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Dan Rather	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Geraldo Rivera	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Diane Sawyer	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Mike Wallace	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
Barbara Walters	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐
George Will	4	3	2	1	5 ☐	0 ☐

10. What do you like *most* about the way network TV news organizations do their job?

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. What do you like *least* about the way network TV news organizations do their job?

_____

_____

_____

_____

12. What do you like *most* about the way large, nationally influential newspapers do their job? (IF RESPONDENT ASKS FOR DEFINITION, READ THE FOLLOWING: I am referring to newspapers like the New York Times, Washington Post, and Los Angeles Times.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

13. What do you like *least* about the way large, nationally influential newspapers do their job?

14. What do you like *most* about the way national weekly news magazines do their job? (IF RESPONDENT ASKS FOR A DEFINITION, READ THE FOLLOWING: I am referring to Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report.)

15. What do you like *least* about the way national weekly news magazines do their job?

16. Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about newspapers and how they operate. I will read you the titles of some people who work in a newspaper organization. Tell me, in your opinion, which generally *ranks highest* in the organization and which ranks *second highest.* The titles are editor, publisher and reporter. (RECORD *ONE* ANSWER IN EACH COLUMN)

	Ranks Highest	Ranks Second
Editor	1 ☐	1 ☐
Publisher	2 ☐	2 ☐
Reporter	3 ☐	3 ☐
DK	0 ☐	0 ☐

17. Newspapers have to get their news from somewhere. Big newspapers like The New York Times or the Los Angeles Times have reporters and offices around the world to collect that news. But how about *smaller* newspapers... how do you think they get most of the national and international news that goes into their papers? (HAND RESPONDENT CARD D) In your opinion, on which *one* of these possible sources do they most rely?

1 ☐ A. Other newspapers
2 ☐ B. Television news
3 ☐ C. The wire services, like AP and UPI
4 ☐ D. Their advertisers
5 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
0 ☐ DK

18. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD E) Recently, there has been some talk about newspaper chains. In your opinion, which of the following best describes what a *newspaper chain* is? Just call off the letter.

1 ☐ A. A group of newspapers that get together to share services and reporters
2 ☐ B. A group of newspapers that are owned by a single company
3 ☐ C. A group of newspapers that specialize in one particular type of news—for example, business news
4 ☐ D. A group of newspapers that operate in the same part of the country
5 ☐ NEVER HEARD OF A NEWSPAPER CHAIN (VOL.)
0 ☐ NO ANSWER

19a. In your opinion, what is a *press release:* is it a short news piece written by a reporter, OR is it a written statement given out to reporters by an official?

1 ☐ News piece written by reporter
2 ☐ Written statement given to reporters — GO TO Q. 20
0 ☐ NOT SURE

19b. What is your best guess—do you think a press release is a short news piece written by a reporter, OR is it a written statement given out to reporters by an official?

1 ☐ News piece written by reporter
2 ☐ Written statement given to reporters
0 ☐ NO ANSWER

20. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD F) Most newspapers include editorials. In your opinion, which of the following statements comes closest to what an editorial is: Just call off the letter.

1 ☐ A. An opinion piece written by a prominent citizen
2 ☐ B. An opinion piece written by a syndicated columnist
3 ☐ C. An opinion piece which reflects how the reporters feel about an issue
4 ☐ D. An opinion piece which represents the official position of the newspaper on an issue
5 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
0 ☐ DK

21a. Do you happen to know whether *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines are owned by the same company, or by different companies?

1 ☐ Same company
2 ☐ Different company — GO TO Q. 22
0 ☐ NOT SURE

21b. Just your best guess—do you think *Time* and *Newsweek* are owned by the same company or by different companies?

1 ☐ Same company
2 ☐ Different company
0 ☐ NO ANSWER

FORM I:

22. All lawyers are required to take certain courses before they practice their profession. Do you happen to know whether or not *newspaper reporters* must have any formal journalistic training before they can practice their profession?

FORM II:

22. All lawyers are required to take certain courses before they practice their profession. Do you happen to know whether or not TV news people must have any formal journalistic training before they can practice their profession?

23. People who read the news and introduce news segments on TV news shows are often called anchorpersons. Thinking about *network TV* anchorpersons, such as Dan Rather...To the best of your knowledge, on a day-to-day basis, do these network TV anchorpersons generally go out and get stories on their own OR do they mostly present news stories that others get for them?

1 ☐ Get stories themselves
2 ☐ Mostly present stories others get for them
0 ☐ DK

24a. Do you happen to know whether the White House press secretary is employed by the president or by the news organizations who cover the president?

1 ☐ President
2 ☐ News organizations — GO TO Q. 25
0 ☐ NOT SURE

24b. What is your best guess—do you think the White House press secretary is employed by the president or by the news organizations who cover the president?

1 ☐ President
2 ☐ News organizations
0 ☐ NO ANSWER

25. In your opinion, which are more closely regulated by the federal government: newspapers or television stations? —OR would you say the federal government regulates newspapers and television stations about the same?

1 ☐ Newspapers
2 ☐ Television
3 ☐ Same
0 ☐ DK

26. During the past few years, there has been a lot of discussion concerning freedom of the press. Do you happen to know which part of the U.S. Constitution mentions freedom of the press? (IF YES, ASK: Which part is that?)

1 ☐ Yes, First Amendment
2 ☐ Yes, Bill of Rights
3 ☐ Yes, other (SPECIFY): _____
4 ☐ CONSTITUTION MAKES NO MENTION OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS (VOL.)
0 ☐ No, DK

Next, I'd like to ask some more general questions to get your views on how well news organizations do their job.

ASK EVERYONE:

27. In general, do you think news organizations get the facts straight or do you think that their stories and reports are often inaccurate?

1 ☐ Get facts straight
2 ☐ Inaccurate
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY—GO TO Q. 29

INTERVIEWERS: INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q. 27 WHEN READING Q. 28

28. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD G) Are there any specific types of news organizations that you feel are especially likely to (get the facts straight/be inaccurate)?

1 ☐ Network TV news
2 ☐ Local TV news
3 ☐ Nationally influential newspapers
4 ☐ The daily newspaper you are most familiar with
5 ☐ Radio news
6 ☐ News magazines
7 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
8 ☐ ALL THE SAME (VOL.)
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

ASK EVERYONE:

29. In presenting the news dealing with political and social issues, do you think that news organizations deal fairly with all sides or do they tend to favor one side?

1 ☐ Fairly with all sides
2 ☐ Favor one side
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY—GO TO Q. 32

INTERVIEWERS: INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q. 29 WHEN READING Q. 30

30. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD G) Are there any specific types of news organizations that you feel are especially likely to (deal fairly with all sides/favor one side)?

1 ☐ Network TV news
2 ☐ Local TV news
3 ☐ Nationally influential newspapers
4 ☐ The daily newspaper you are most familiar with
5 ☐ Radio news
6 ☐ News magazines
7 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
8 ☐ ALL THE SAME (VOL.)
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY (VOL.)

IF "DEAL FAIRLY WITH ALL SIDES" IN Q. 29, ASK Q. 31

31. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD H) Which of the reasons on this card best describes why you think news organizations generally deal fairly with all sides of an issue? Just call off the letter or letters.

1 ☐ A. Journalist's training
2 ☐ B. Competition with other news organizations
3 ☐ C. Fear of lawsuits
4 ☐ D. Fear of government censorship or regulation
5 ☐ E. Journalists are fair-minded people
8 ☐ NONE OF THESE
9 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
_____
0 ☐ DK

ASK EVERYONE:

32. Are the news organizations you are most familiar with fair or unfair to the Reagan Administration?

1 ☐ Fair
2 ☐ Unfair
0 ☐ DK

33. In general, do you think news organizations are pretty independent, or are they often influenced by powerful people and organizations?

1 ☐ Pretty independent
2 ☐ Often influenced by the powerful
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY—GO TO Q. 35

INTERVIEWERS: INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q. 33 WHEN READING Q. 34

34. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD G) Are there any specific types of news organizations that you feel are especially likely to (be independent/be influenced by the powerful)?

1 ☐ Network TV news
2 ☐ Local TV news
3 ☐ Nationally influential newspapers
4 ☐ The daily newspaper you are most familiar with
5 ☐ Radio news
6 ☐ News magazines
7 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
8 ☐ ALL THE SAME (VOL.)
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

ASK EVERYONE:

35. Now I will read a list of some different groups. As I read each one, tell me whether you feel this group *often influences* news organizations in the way they report the news, or not. First...(READ)

	Yes, Often Influences	No, Does Not	Don't Know
Advertisers	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Blacks	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Business corporations	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Catholics	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Conservatives	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Democrats	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
The Federal Government	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Jews	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Labor unions	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Liberals	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
The military	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐
Republicans	1 ☐	2 ☐	0 ☐

36. In general, do you think news organizations pay too much attention to *good news*, too much attention to *bad news*, or do they mostly report the kinds of stories they should be covering?

1 ☐ Too much attention to good news
2 ☐ Too much attention to bad news
3 ☐ Report types of stories they should be covering
0 ☐ DK

37. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD G) Are there any specific types of news organizations that you feel are especially likely to pay too much attention to *bad news?*

1 ☐ Network TV news
2 ☐ Local TV news
3 ☐ Nationally influential newspapers
4 ☐ The daily newspaper you are most familiar with
5 ☐ Radio news
6 ☐ News magazines
7 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
8 ☐ ALL THE SAME (VOL.)
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

38. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD I) Which, if any, of the topics listed on this card do you think get *too much* attention by news organizations? Just call off the letter or letters. (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY IN COLUMN BELOW)

A. Corruption in government	1 ☐
B. Violent crime	2 ☐
C. The federal budget deficit	3 ☐
D. Fires, accidents, and disasters	4 ☐
E. Unemployment and bad economic conditions	5 ☐
F. Environmental problems like acid rain and toxic waste	6 ☐
G. Violence in families	7 ☐
H. Problems in the personal lives of famous people	8 ☐
I. International disputes	9 ☐
NONE OF THESE	1 ☐
Other (SPECIFY): _____	2 ☐
_____	
_____	
DK	0 ☐

39. Do you feel news organizations often invade people's privacy or do they generally respect people's privacy?

1 ☐ Invade people's privacy
2 ☐ Respect people's privacy
0 ☐ DK

40. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD G) Are there any specific types of news organizations that you feel are especially likely to *invade* people's privacy?

1 ☐ Network TV news
2 ☐ Local TV news
3 ☐ Nationally influential newspapers
4 ☐ The daily newspaper you are most familiar with
5 ☐ Radio news
6 ☐ News magazines
7 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____
8 ☐ ALL THE SAME
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

41. I'm going to read you some pairs of opposite phrases. After I read each pair, tell me which *one* phrase you feel better describes news organizations generally. If you think that *neither* phrase applies, please say so. (READ)

a. 1 ☐ Care about the people they report on? *or*
2 ☐ Don't care about the people they report on?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

b. 1 ☐ Willing to admit their mistakes? *or*
2 ☐ Try to cover up their mistakes?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

c. 1 ☐ Liberal? *or*
2 ☐ Conservative?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

d. 1 ☐ Moral? *or*
2 ☐ Immoral?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

e. 1 ☐ Growing in influence? *or*
2 ☐ Declining in influence?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

f. 1 ☐ Protect democracy? *or*
2 ☐ Hurt democracy?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

g. 1 ☐ Care about how good a job they do? *or*
2 ☐ Don't care about how good a job they do?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

h. 1 ☐ Highly professional? *or*
2 ☐ Not professional?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

i. 1 ☐ Stand up for America? *or*
2 ☐ Too critical of America?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

j. 1 ☐ Politically biased in their reporting? *or*
2 ☐ Careful that their reporting is *not* politically biased?
3 ☐ NEITHER APPLIES
0 ☐ DK

42. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD J) Listed on this card are some issues relating to news organizations which we have discussed. Which *one* of these issues, if *any* concerns or troubles you *most?* (RECORD IN 1ST COLUMN) Which would you rate second? (RECORD IN 2ND COLUMN) Which would you rate third? (RECORD IN 3RD COLUMN)

	1ST Mention	2ND Mention	3RD Mention
A. News organizations not getting the facts straight	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐
B. News organizations not dealing fairly with all sides of a political or social issue	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐
C. News organizations often being influenced by powerful people and organizations	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐
D. News organizations paying too much attention to bad news	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ☐
E. News organizations not respecting people's privacy	5 ☐	5 ☐	5 ☐
NONE OF THESE	9 ☐	9 ☐	9 ☐
DK	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐

43. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD K) On this card is a list of objectives for journalism. In your opinion which one is the most important objective in the list? (RECORD IN 1ST COLUMN) Which is second most important? (RECORD IN 2ND COLUMN) Are there any items on this list you feel should *not* be an objective of journalism? (RECORD IN 3RD COLUMN)

	1ST	2ND	Should *Not* Be An Objective
A. Reporting facts and events	1 ☐	1 ☐	1 ☐
B. Analyzing trends	2 ☐	2 ☐	2 ☐
C. Checking into corruption	3 ☐	3 ☐	3 ☐
D. Suggesting positions on issues	4 ☐	4 ☐	4 ☐
E. Endorsing candidates for office	5 ☐	5 ☐	5 ☐
F. Teaching values	6 ☐	6 ☐	6 ☐
G. Evaluating and reviewing products and services	7 ☐	7 ☐	7 ☐
Other (SPECIFY): _____	8 ☐	8 ☐	8 ☐
_____			
_____			
NONE OF THESE	9 ☐	9 ☐	9 ☐
DK	0 ☐	0 ☐	0 ☐

44. Some people feel that news organizations have *almost no effect* on national policy and public affairs. Others feel that news organizations affect policy and public affairs *mainly by presenting the facts.* Still others feel that news organizations affect policy and public affairs *mainly by what news stories they decide to cover* and how they present them. Which position is closest to your opinion?

1 ☐ Almost no effect on policy
2 ☐ Affect policy mainly by presenting the facts
3 ☐ Affect policy mainly by news selection and presentation
0 ☐ DK

45. Some people feel a news reporter should *always* reveal the source of his story to his readers. Others feel that *sometimes* a reporter should be allowed to keep his source confidential *if* that is the only way he can get his information. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Always reveal
2 ☐ Sometimes keep confidential
0 ☐ DK

46. Some people feel that the freedom of the press portion of the Constitution mainly protects *news organizations and their interests.* Others feel that the freedom of the press portion protects the *people and the public interest* more. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Protects news organizations more
2 ☐ Protects public interest more
3 ☐ BOTH EQUALLY (VOL.)
0 ☐ DK

47. What does "freedom of the press" mean to you? Does it mean: (READ)

1 ☐ That the public has a right to hear all points of view?
2 ☐ That the press can cover and report what it chooses?, or
3 ☐ Something else? (SPECIFY): _____
_____
_____
_____
4 ☐ BOTH '1' AND '2' (VOL.)
0 ☐ DK

48. Some people think that by criticizing political leaders, news organizations keep political leaders from doing their job. Others think that such criticism is worth it because it keeps political leaders from doing things that should not be done. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Keep political leaders from doing job
2 ☐ Keep political leaders from doing things that should not be done
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

49. Some people think that by criticizing the military, news organizations weaken the country's defenses. Others think that such criticism helps keep our nation militarily prepared. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Weakens defenses
2 ☐ Keeps nation prepared
0 ☐ DK

50. Which is more important to you: that the government be able to censor news stories it feels threaten national security *OR* that the news media be able to report stories they feel are in the national interest?

1 ☐ Government able to censor
2 ☐ News media able to report
3 ☐ Both equal (VOL.)
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

51. Some people think that the government should ensure that political candidates have an equal chance to buy political advertising on television if they have the money. Others feel that the government should not get involved in this matter. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Government should ensure equal access
2 ☐ Should not get involved
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

FORM II:

51. Some people think that the government should ensure that political candidates have an equal chance to buy political advertising in newspapers if they have the money. Others feel that the government should not get involved in this matter. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Government should ensure equal access
2 ☐ Should not get involved
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

52. While this issue may concern some people, is it one that particularly concerns *you*, or not?

1 ☐ Concerns
2 ☐ Does not
0 ☐ DK

53. Some people feel the government should require that news organizations give coverage to all sides of a controversial issue. Other people feel the government should not be involved in how much news coverage should be given to any side of an issue. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Government should require that all sides get coverage
2 ☐ Should not get involved
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

54. While this issue may concern some people, is it one that particularly concerns *you*, or not?

1 ☐ Concerns
2 ☐ Does not
0 ☐ DK

55. Do you think that newspapers should be allowed to take sides in their editorials during election campaigns?

1 ☐ Yes, should be allowed
2 ☐ No, should not
0 ☐ DK

56. We've talked about some things which news organizations do well and not so well (HAND RESPONDENT CARD L). Here are some possible reasons why news organizations sometimes don't do as good a job as they should. Which of these reasons do you think best explains why news organizations sometimes don't do such a good job? (RECORD IN 1ST COLUMN. IF MORE THAN ONE ANSWER, ASK: Which *one* of these reasons is most important?) (RECORD IN 2ND COLUMN)

	Best Explains	Most Important
A. Newspeople lack the skills and background to do a good job.	1 ☐	1 ☐
B. Advertisers put pressure on news organizations that keeps them from doing a good job.	2 ☐	2 ☐
C. Newspeople can't keep their personal opinions from showing up in their reporting.	3 ☐	3 ☐
D. News organizations don't want to spend the money to do things right.	4 ☐	4 ☐
E. News organizations are so interested in attracting a big audience that they don't do a good job.	5 ☐	5 ☐
F. Special interest groups put pressure on news organizations that keeps them from doing a good job.	6 ☐	6 ☐
G. The government keeps news organizations from getting the real story.	7 ☐	7 ☐
OTHER (SPECIFY): _____	9 ☐	9 ☐
_____		
_____		
DK	0 ☐	0 ☐

FORM I:

57. Some people feel the government should require that the TV networks make *no* projections on the outcome of elections on election night until the polls have closed and everyone has voted. Others feel that the government should not be involved in deciding when and how to report about elections. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Government should not allow early election projections
2 ☐ Should not get involved
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

FORM II:

57. Some people feel that if the TV networks can project the winner of an election before the polls have closed they have the right to report the projected winner. Other people feel that projecting winners before the polls close discourages some people from voting. Which is more important: networks being able to tell their viewers who has won the election as soon as they think they know, or not discouraging some people from voting?

1 ☐ Right to report
2 ☐ Not discourage voting
0 ☐ DK

58. While this issue may concern some people, is it one that particularly concerns *you*, or not?

1 ☐ Concerns
2 ☐ Does not
0 ☐ DK

On another subject...

59a. There has been some talk about having formal licensing requirements for journalists. What's your opinion—do you think formal licensing would *improve* the quality or *worsen* the quality of journalism?

1 ☐ Improve— ASK Q. 59b
2 ☐ Worsen
3 ☐ Would not affect (VOL.) —GO TO Q. 60a
0 ☐ DK

59b. Do you think formal licensing of journalists would restrict freedom of the press or not?

1 ☐ Yes, would restrict
2 ☐ No, would not — GO TO Q. 60a
0 ☐ DK

59c. Do you think the improvement in the quality of journalism would be worth the possible restriction of press freedom, or not?

1 ☐ Yes, worth it
2 ☐ No, not worth it
0 ☐ DK

ASK EVERYONE:

60a. There has been some talk about legally limiting the number of newspapers that a single company can own. What's your opinion—do you think this would *improve* or *worsen* the quality of journalism?

1 ☐ Improve
2 ☐ Worsen
3 ☐ Would not affect (VOL.) —GO TO Q. 61
0 ☐ DK

60b. Do you think that limiting the number of newspapers a company can own would restrict freedom of the press or not?

1 ☐ Yes, would restrict
2 ☐ No, would not —GO TO Q. 61
0 ☐ DK

60c. Do you think the improvement in the quality of journalism would be worth the possible restriction of press freedom, or not?

1 ☐ Yes, worth it
2 ☐ No, not worth it
0 ☐ DK

ASK EVERYONE:

61. All things considered, would you prefer to read a newspaper run by a company that owns *only one* newspaper, OR would you prefer to read a newspaper that is owned by a company which operates a *group* of newspapers?

1 ☐ One paper
2 ☐ Group
3 ☐ Makes no difference (VOL.)
0 ☐ DK

On another subject...

62a. Have you heard or read anything about a group led by Senator Jesse Helms trying to buy a controlling interest in a major news organization?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
0 ☐ DK
— GO TO Q. 63

62b. Do you happen to know which major news organization Senator Helms is trying to buy? (IF YES, ASK: Which one?)

1 ☐ CBS/Dan Rather
2 ☐ TV network (no mention CBS)
3 ☐ Other response (SPECIFY): _____

0 ☐ DK

IF "CBS" OR "TV NETWORK" MENTIONED IN Q. 62b, ASK Q. 62c:

62c. Why do you think Senator Helms is trying to do this?

_____

_____

_____

Now, a few questions about news organizations and libel laws...

63. Some people know a lot about libel laws while others know very little. How certain are *you* of the actual legal meaning of the term "libel": absolutely certain, fairly certain, or not certain?

1 ☐ Absolutely certain
2 ☐ Fairly certain
0 ☐ Not certain

64. Do you happen to know if the libel laws *are the same* whether a public official or a private citizen is suing a news organization—OR are the libel laws *different* for public officials and private citizens?

1 ☐ Same laws
2 ☐ Different laws
0 ☐ DK

65. What do *you* think—compared to private citizens, should it be *more difficult* for a public official to sue a news organization for libel OR should the libel laws against news organizations be *the same* for public officials and private citizens?

1 ☐ Should be different
2 ☐ Should be same
0 ☐ DK

66. During the past few years, public officials have become increasingly likely to sue news organizations for libel. In your opinion, does this increasing number of libel suits mean that the press is becoming less responsible, that public officials are becoming more willing to fight, or something else?

1 ☐ News organizations less responsible
2 ☐ Public officials more willing to fight
3 ☐ Something else (SPECIFY): _____

0 ☐ DK

67. Some people feel that the increasing number of libel suits by public officials is a good thing because libel suits make news organizations more responsible. Others feel that more libel suits by public officials is a bad thing because news organizations will be less willing to cover important and controversial stories about public officials. Which position is closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ Good thing
2 ☐ Bad thing
0 ☐ DK

68. Some people feel that in a free society news organizations should be able to say anything about a person, whether true or false, without having to face libel suits. Others believe that even in a free society news organizations should be subject to libel suits if they say critical things about people that are false...Which position comes closer to your opinion?

1 ☐ News organizations can say anything
2 ☐ Should face libel suits if they say things that are false
0 ☐ DK

69a. In your opinion, should a news organization have to pay damages for a highly critical story about a public official if all the facts in the story were true?

1 ☐ Yes, should pay
2 ☐ No, should not
0 ☐ DK

69b. What about if the facts in the story about a public official turned out to be false, but the news organization *believed* the facts were true at the time of publication—should the news organization have to pay damages or not?

1 ☐ Yes, should pay
2 ☐ No, should not
0 ☐ DK

70a. Earlier this year, there was a major libel suit in New York involving General William C. Westmoreland. Do you remember hearing or reading anything about General Westmoreland's libel suit?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
0 ☐ DK
— GO TO Q. 71

70b. Do you happen to remember which news organization he sued for libel?

1 ☐ CBS/Mike Wallace/The Uncounted Enemy
2 ☐ 60 Minutes (no mention CBS)
3 ☐ TV network (no mention CBS)
4 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____

0 ☐ DON'T REMEMBER

ASK EVERYONE:

71. Current law makes it very difficult to block—that is, to *pre-censor*—news stories of almost any type before publication. In your opinion, is this a good policy or a bad policy that makes it very difficult for the government to pre-censor news stories?

1 ☐ Good policy
2 ☐ Bad policy
0 ☐ DK

72. In the U.S., the power to pre-censor news belongs to judges. Imagine that you are a federal judge deciding how to balance the rights of a free press against the rights of the government or private citizens. For each of the two cases I'm going to read you, please tell me whether you would block the story outright, OR allow the story to run and let those complaining make their case against the news organization after publication.

CASE A: During Vietnam, a newspaper obtains background documents about how the U.S. got involved in Vietnam. The newspaper thinks it is important to the public that the information be published. The government wants you, the judge, to block publication on the grounds that the documents were originally classified and that the information might be damaging to the reputations of the political leaders mentioned in the documents. As judge, do you decide: (READ)

1 ☐ To block publication, OR
2 ☐ To allow the story to be published
0 ☐ DK

CASE B: A magazine wants to publish an article based on publicly available information. The article describes some important points on how to build a nuclear weapon. The government argues that under the law it has the right to block through the courts any communication which contains information about nuclear weaponry which might harm the U.S. The magazine argues that all of the factual material has already appeared in published material, much of it in encyclopedias. As judge, do you decide: (READ)

1 ☐ To block publication, OR
2 ☐ To allow the story to be published
0 ☐ DK

73a. Which group do you think is most important to the editor and publisher of the newspaper you read most often: their readers, their stockholders, congressional representatives, or the general public? (RECORD IN 1ST COLUMN BELOW)

73b. In *your* opinion, which group *should* be most important? (RECORD IN 2ND COLUMN ABOVE)

	Q. 73a Is Most Important	Q. 73b Should Be Most Important
Their readers	1 ☐	1 ☐
Their stockholders	2 ☐	2 ☐
Congressional representatives	3 ☐	3 ☐
General public	4 ☐	4 ☐
Other (SPECIFY): _____	5 ☐	5 ☐
DK	0 ☐	0 ☐

Now, just a few questions about your own reading, viewing and listening habits.

74a. Some people are so busy that they don't get to read a newspaper every day. How about you—do you get a chance to read a newspaper just about every day, or not?

1 ☐ Yes—GO TO Q. 74c
2 ☐ No
0 ☐ DK/NA

74b. Do you *sometimes* get a chance to read newspapers or do you *hardly ever* read a newspaper?

1 ☐ Sometimes
2 ☐ Hardly ever
3 ☐ Never read newspapers (VOL.)—GO TO Q. 78
0 ☐ DK/NA

74c. What daily newspaper do you read most often? (RECORD *ONE* ANSWER IN 1ST COLUMN) What other newspapers do you sometimes read? (RECORD IN 2ND COLUMN)

	Read Most Often	Sometimes Read
The New York Times	1 ☐	1 ☐
Los Angeles Times	2 ☐	2 ☐
The Wall Street Journal	3 ☐	3 ☐
The Washington Post	4 ☐	4 ☐
USA Today	5 ☐	5 ☐
Other (SPECIFY): _____	9 ☐	9 ☐
DK/NA	0 ☐	0 ☐

75. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD M) I'm going to read you some different parts of a daily newspaper. For each, tell me which category on this card best describes how closely you usually read this part of the paper. (READ)

	Spend A Lot of Time	Spend Some Time	Just Glance At It	Skip It Entirely	THIS IS NOT INCLUDED IN MY PAPER (VOL.)	DK/NA
a. National news stories	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
b. The advertisements	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
c. Features such as comics, puzzles and games, the daily horoscope, and so forth	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
d. The sports section	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
e. The business and financial news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
f. Personal advice columns like Dear Abby or Ann Landers	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
g. The obituaries	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
h. International news stories	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
i. The society pages—including weddings, engagements, and birth announcements	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
j. Articles about food, diet, cooking, and the like	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
k. Consumer tips on purchasing products and services	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
l. Information and schedules for TV shows, movies and other entertainment	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
m. The editorial and opinion pages	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
n. News stories about your city, town or region	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐
o. News stories and columns about religion	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	5 ☐	0 ☐

76. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD N) Here is a list of some writers of nationally syndicated newspaper columns. Please read through the list and tell me which of these columnists, if any, you sometimes read.

1 ☐ Jack Anderson
2 ☐ Art Buchwald
3 ☐ William F. Buckley
4 ☐ David Broder
5 ☐ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak
6 ☐ Ellen Goodman
7 ☐ Bob Greene
8 ☐ James J. Kilpatrick
9 ☐ Joseph Kraft
0 ☐ Mary McGrory
1 ☐ James Reston
2 ☐ Carl Rowan
3 ☐ Mike Royko
4 ☐ William Safire
5 ☐ George Will
8 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____

9 ☐ NONE
0 ☐ DK

77. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD O) Here is a list of some comic strips that appear in many newspapers across the country. Please read through the list and tell me which of these, if any, you sometimes read.

1 ☐ Beetle Bailey
2 ☐ Blondie
3 ☐ Bloom County
4 ☐ Cathy
5 ☐ Dick Tracy
6 ☐ Doonesbury
7 ☐ The Far Side
8 ☐ Nancy
9 ☐ Peanuts
1 ☐ NONE
2 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____

0 ☐ DK

ASK EVERYONE:

78. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD P) Which, if any, of the magazines listed on these cards do you read regularly—that is, 3 or 4 out of every 4 issues? Just call out the number or numbers that apply to you. (CIRCLE NUMBER OR NUMBERS BELOW)

01	11	21	31	41	51	61	71
02	12	22	32	42	52	62	72
03	13	23	33	43	53	63	73
04	14	24	34	44	54	64	74
05	15	25	35	45	55	65	75
06	16	26	36	46	56	66	76—NONE
07	17	27	37	47	57	67	00—DK/NA
08	18	28	38	48	58	68	
09	19	29	39	49	59	69	
10	20	30	40	50	60	70	

IF MORE THAN ONE MAGAZINE CHECKED IN Q. 78, ASK Q. 79

79. Which *one* of these magazines do you *most* enjoy reading? (WRITE IN NUMBER CORRESPONDING TO MAGAZINE. ACCEPT ONLY ONE ANSWER.)

☐☐

00 ☐ CAN'T SAY

ASK EVERYONE:

80. Approximately how many hours do you spend listening to the radio on an average weekday—taking into account listening to it at home, in your car, at work, or some other place? Just your best estimate.

_____ hours
00 ☐ Don't listen to the radio — GO TO Q. 83

81. Do you listen to the radio: (READ)

1 ☐ Mostly for music?
2 ☐ Mostly for news and information? OR
3 ☐ Mostly for sports?
4 ☐ Other (SPECIFY):_____
_____
0 ☐ DK

82. Which, if any, of the following do you sometimes listen to on the radio? (READ. CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

1 ☐ Local radio news talk shows or call-in shows on news subjects
2 ☐ A local radio "all news" station
3 ☐ Paul Harvey radio news
4 ☐ News programs on National Public Radio, such as "All Things Considered" or "Morning Edition"
9 ☐ NONE OF THESE
0 ☐ DK

ASK EVERYONE:

83. Approximately how many hours do you spend watching TV on an average weekday? Just your best estimate.

_____ hours

84a. Do you happen to watch any *local* TV news programs regularly, or not?

1 ☐ Yes—GO TO Q. 85a
2 ☐ No
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

84b. Do you *sometimes* watch local TV news programs or do you *hardly ever* watch local TV news?

1 ☐ Sometimes
2 ☐ Hardly ever
3 ☐ Never watch local TV news (VOL.)
0 ☐ DK

ASK EVERYONE:

85a. We're interested in how often people watch the major TV network evening news programs—by this we mean ABC World News Tonight with Peter Jennings, CBS Evening News with Dan Rather and NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw. Do you happen to watch network TV evening news programs *regularly*, or not?

1 ☐ Yes—GO TO Q. 86
2 ☐ No
0 ☐ DK/NA

85b. Do you *sometimes* watch network TV evening news programs, or do you *hardly ever* watch them?

1 ☐ Sometimes
2 ☐ Hardly ever
3 ☐ Never (VOL.) —GO TO Q. 87
4 ☐ DK/NA

86. Which *one* of the network TV evening news programs do you usually watch? (READ CHOICES)

1 ☐ ABC with Peter Jennings?,
2 ☐ CBS with Dan Rather?, OR
3 ☐ NBC with Tom Brokaw?
4 ☐ NONE IN PARTICULAR/IT VARIES/SWITCH AROUND (VOL.)
0 ☐ CAN'T SAY

ASK EVERYONE:

87. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD Q) Which, if any, of the television programs or cable services listed on this card do you view regularly?

1 ☐ ABC News Nightline
2 ☐ ABC 20/20
3 ☐ C-Span
4 ☐ Cable News Network (CNN)
5 ☐ Entertainment Tonight
6 ☐ Face the Nation
7 ☐ Frontline
8 ☐ Independent Network News
9 ☐ The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour
0 ☐ Meet the Press
1 ☐ The Phil Donahue Show
2 ☐ 60 Minutes
3 ☐ This Week with David Brinkley
4 ☐ Wall Street Week
5 ☐ Washington Week in Review
0 ☐ NONE OF THESE

88. We're interested in how much attention you pay to various items in television newscasts. I will read you a list of items. For each, tell me whether you pay this a great deal of attention, some attention, very little attention, or no attention. (READ LIST)

	A Great Deal	Some	Very Little	None	DK/NA
a. National news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
b. News about your city, town, or region	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
c. International news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
d. Sports news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
e. News about entertainers and well-known personalities	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
f. The weather report	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
g. Business and financial news	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
h. News about purchasing products and services	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
i. Analysis and commentary by TV newspersons	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐

89. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD R) Here is a list of reasons some people give for following the news. Which *one* of these reasons best describes why you, yourself, watch, read, or listen to the news? Just call off the letter. (ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES BUT DO NOT PROBE FOR THEM)

1 ☐ A. To learn about things that might be useful to me
2 ☐ B. To have something to talk with friends about
3 ☐ C. To be entertained
4 ☐ D. To find out about something exciting or interesting
5 ☐ E. To help me relax and forget about problems
6 ☐ F. To help pass the time
7 ☐ G. To feel more involved in what's going on in the world
8 ☐ H. To have something to help me in my job
1 ☐ NONE OF THESE
9 ☐ Other (SPECIFY): _____

0 ☐ DK

(THERE IS NO Q. 90)

91. Have you, yourself, ever been quoted or mentioned in a news story that was published or aired?

1 ☐ Yes
2 ☐ No
0 ☐ DK
— GO TO Q. 94

92. About how many times has this happened to you?

_____ number of times

93. Thinking about the last time you were quoted or mentioned in a news story, were you satisfied or dissatisfied overall with the way the story turned out?

1 ☐ Satisfied
2 ☐ Dissatisfied
0 ☐ DK

ASK EVERYONE:

94. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD S) Which, if any, of the items on this card apply to you? Just call off the letter or letters.

1 ☐ A. Personally have taken a journalism course in school
2 ☐ B. Personally worked for a high school or college newspaper
3 ☐ C. Personally worked for a news or media organization since leaving school
4 ☐ D. A member of immediate family is employed by a news or media organization
5 ☐ E. A personal friend is employed by a news or media organization
6 ☐ F. Personally have written a letter to the editor of a newspaper
9 ☐ NONE OF THESE
0 ☐ DK

95. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD T) This card lists various proposals being discussed in this country today. Would you tell me whether you generally favor or generally oppose each of these proposals? Just read off a number and letter for each one. (INTERVIEWER: CIRCLE APPROPRIATE NUMBER-LETTER.)

	Favor	Oppose
a. Changing the laws to make it more difficult for a woman to get an abortion	1A	1B
b. Allowing homosexuals to teach in the public schools	2A	2B
c. A mandatory death penalty for anyone convicted of murder	3A	3B
d. The ERA—Equal Rights Amendment	4A	4B
e. A constitutional amendment to permit prayer in the public schools	5A	5B
f. President Reagan's "Star Wars" proposal to develop a space-based defense against nuclear attack	6A	6B
g. Cutting back federal spending for defense and military purposes	7A	7B

96. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD U) Where would you place yourself on this scale in terms of your political views? Please read off the number. (INTERVIEWER: CIRCLE NUMBER)

CONSERVATIVE LIBERAL

1 2 3 4 5 6

0 ☐ NO OPINION

97. Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election coming up or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then or hardly at all?

1 ☐ Most of the time
2 ☐ Some of the time
3 ☐ Only now and then
4 ☐ Hardly at all
0 ☐ DK

98. (HAND RESPONDENT CARD V) Now I will read you some statements. For each, tell me which category on this card best describes how much you agree or disagree with the statement. (READ)

	Completely Agree	Mostly Agree	Mostly Disagree	Completely Disagree	Don't Know
a. People like me don't have any say about what the government does	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
b. Money is the most important factor influencing public policies	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
c. Politicians represent the general interest more frequently than they represent special interests	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
d. Generally speaking, people won't work hard unless they are forced to do so	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
e. Most people really do care what happens to the next fellow	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐
f. These days a person doesn't really know whom he can count on	1 ☐	2 ☐	3 ☐	4 ☐	0 ☐

Questionnaire for Press Opinion "Double-Back" Interview

INTRODUCTION: Hello I am _____ calling from The Gallup Organization. Several months ago one of our interviewers talked with a *(AGE)* year old *(MAN/WOMAN)* in this household. May I please speak with *(HIM/HER)?*

1. Do you approve or disapprove of the way Ronald Reagan is handling his job as President?
   1 ☐ Approve
   2 ☐ Disapprove
   0 ☐ DON'T KNOW

2. How much do you enjoy the personalities of the people on the news shows that you watch: (READ)
   1 ☐ A great deal?
   2 ☐ A fair amount?
   3 ☐ Not much?
   4 ☐ Not at all?
   0 ☐ DK

3. How much do you enjoy watching the news itself: (READ)
   1 ☐ A great deal?
   2 ☐ A fair amount?
   3 ☐ Not much?
   4 ☐ Not at all?
   0 ☐ DK

4. How much, if at all, do you look forward to reading the paper each day: (READ)
   1 ☐ Very much?
   2 ☐ A fair amount?
   3 ☐ Not too much?
   4 ☐ Not at all?
   0 ☐ DK

5. How much, if at all, do you look forward to watching the news on TV: (READ)
   1 ☐ Very much?
   2 ☐ A fair amount?
   3 ☐ Not too much?
   4 ☐ Not at all?
   0 ☐ DK

6. Which, if any, have you done because you objected to the way a news organization was dealing with or presenting a story: (READ)
   1 ☐ Turned off the news in anger?
   2 ☐ Threw away a paper or magazine in anger?
   3 ☐ Cancelled a subscription to a paper or magazine?
   4 ☐ Stopped watching a particular news program?
   5 ☐ Tried to avoid the news?
   6 ☐ Wrote or phoned a station or paper to complain?
   0 ☐ NONE/DK

7a. In our first interview some people told us that news organizations are often influenced in the way they report the news by powerful organizations and special interest groups. In your opinion, which *one* of the following groups has the most negative effect on the way news organizations report the news: (READ LIST)

	Q. 7a One	Q. 7b Next
Advertisers?	1 ☐	1 ☐
The government?	2 ☐	2 ☐
Political groups?	3 ☐	3 ☐
Minority and ethnic groups?	4 ☐	4 ☐
NONE	5 ☐	
DK	0 ☐	0 ☐

GO TO Q. 10

7b. And which next? (RECORD ABOVE)

8a. Well in what ways, if any, do (ANSWER IN Q. 7a) influence the way news organizations report the news: (READ LIST)
   1 ☐ News organizations are afraid to offend it (them)?
   2 ☐ News organizations are manipulated by it (them)?
   3 ☐ People in news organizations sympathize with its (their) point of view?
   4 ☐ News organizations try to please it (them)?
   0 ☐ DK

8b. In what ways, if any, do (ANSWER IN Q. 7b) influence the way news organizations report the news: (READ LIST)
   1 ☐ News organizations are afraid to offend it (them)?
   2 ☐ News organizations are manipulated by it (them)?
   3 ☐ People in news organizations sympathize with its (their) point of view?
   4 ☐ News organizations try to please it (them)?
   0 ☐ DK

9a. In your opinion, what is the main result of (ANSWER IN Q. 7a) influence on news organizations. Would you say it leads news organizations to: (READ LIST)
   1 ☐ Sensationalism?
   2 ☐ Bias?
   3 ☐ Disrespect for people's privacy?
   4 ☐ Inaccuracy?
   5 ☐ Covering up certain stories?
   6 ☐ Something else? (SPECIFY): _____
   _____
   _____
   0 ☐ DK

9b. In your opinion, what is the main result of (ANSWER IN Q. 7b) influence on news organizations. Would you say it leads news organizations to: (READ LIST)
   1 ☐ Sensationalism?
   2 ☐ Bias?
   3 ☐ Disrespect for people's privacy?
   4 ☐ Inaccuracy?
   5 ☐ Covering up certain stories?
   6 ☐ Something else? (SPECIFY): _____
   _____
   _____
   0 ☐ DK

Just a few final questions...

10. As I read some statements, tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree. (READ LIST. ROTATE ORDER.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
While I sometimes don't agree with the way news organizations and journalists operate, I like to keep up with the news.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
It's hard to be a journalist without sometimes doing unpleasant things.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
For all its problems, the press is worth it because it keeps the politicians honest.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
No matter how hard they try, journalists will never succeed in keeping personal biases completely out of their reporting.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
News organizations, like all big organizations, are mostly interested in what they can get from you.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
The trouble with news organizations is that they get the public upset over very little.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
News organizations ought to be more critical of business leaders than they are today.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
So long as news organizations get the facts straight I can put up with the rest of the things they don't do so well.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐
Today's news organizations pay too little attention to the problems of the underprivileged.	1☐	2☐	3☐	4☐	0☐