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By John P. Robinson

The Press as King-Maker: What Surveys From Last Five Campaigns Show

Even when other factors are taken into account, voters' choices are related to endorsements by newspapers to which they are exposed.

► This is, we are told, the age of television. No other technological innovation in this century has had more impact on how we spend our time. Estimates of the number of life-years spent in front of the television are used to speculate on the quality of life in our society. The public has become so dependent on television that they proclaim it their main news source. The developments in new media technology causing most excitement are adaptations of television—cable television, video cassettes, EVR.¹

The impact of television is also central to recent debates about media coverage of politics. In the last 20 years dominant attention in books, review articles and

journals has been given to topics like the packaging of candidates for television, campaign financing for electronic media coverage, equal time provisions for candidates and the impact of election projections on voting behavior.²

While there is good reason to study the impact of television on politics, because political decision-makers plan their strategy around television, considerable skepticism remains about television's impact on the voter.³ In fact, little evidence exists which shows that television has a demonstrable impact on voting behavior.⁴ Perhaps as Weiss appropriately notes, "the campaign period is of too short a duration and too filled with communication and countercommunication to permit much change." Prior to national election day, television transmits a continual glut of partisan campaign appeals. In contrast to the editorial endorsements of newspapers, however, television seldom offers its own message to the voters on how they

¹See, for example, Walter Weiss, "Effects of the Mass Media of Communication," in Volume 5, *Handbook of Social Psychology*, G. Lindzey and E. Aronson, eds. (Boston: Addison-Wesley, 1970); Ben Bagdikian, *The Information Machines* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

²See, for example, Weiss *op. cit.*; also Harold Mendelsohn and Irving Crespi, *Polls, Television and the New Politics* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1970).

³Angus Campbell, "Has Television Reshaped Politics?" *Columbia Journalism Review*, Vol. 1 (No. 2, 1962) pp. 10-13.

⁴Weiss, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

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ought to cast their ballots. The newspaper endorsement is a direct message, which appears to reduce objectively the confusing arguments of the campaign to a single conclusion. However, research has amply demonstrated that there are few regular readers of the editorial page in the newspaper, and certainly far fewer than the number who follow the election campaign on television, and who apparently regard television with greater credibility than they do newspaper accounts.⁵

That newspaper endorsements can and do influence voter decision in *local* elections seems a well-accepted part of conventional wisdom, and it also has received empirical support.⁶ However, the classic research on voting behavior in *national* elections has so well documented the pervasive influences of personal factors, such as one's political party identification or the political orientations of one's peers,⁷ that the likelihood of newspaper endorsements having any influence has been dismissed almost out of hand.

Nevertheless, research on the 1968 national election uncovered a curious and persistent relation between newspaper endorsements and voting behavior.⁸ While voters were generally confused about or unaware of the partisan stands of reporting in television, radio or magazines, they accurately perceived where their favorite newspaper stood on the election. Moreover, these newspaper endorsements were clearly associated with how people reported they voted on election day, even after such personal factors as party identification and pre-election vote intention were taken into account. However, the highly abnormal character of the 1968 election—with its third-party candidates, resignations and highly divisive internal conflict—made one cautious about generalizing too far from this particular election. The 1972 election, while not entirely free of these elements, might be seen as providing a more normal context in which to examine the possible influence of newspaper endorsements. Indeed, it may be argued that 1972 provided

a rather unexciting presidential campaign, in which most matters were settled long before the newspapers made their endorsements.⁹ Thus, the nature of the campaign could have minimized the possible impact of newspaper endorsements.

Data Bases

As in our 1968 study, the data come from a national probability sample of American adults interviewed by the Center for Political Studies (CPS) of the University of Michigan after the election about their voting behavior and mass media usage *during* the campaign. Of this cross-section of 1,119 adults, which was also interviewed during the campaign about their political attitudes and vote intentions, a total of 501 reported both having voted and having followed the campaign in a newspaper. In general, this sample reported levels of mass media usage similar to that found in earlier CPS election studies,¹⁰ indicating that, if in fact 1972 did provide a relatively unexciting campaign, attention to the media did not seem diminished by it.

In contrast to our 1968 study, respondents who read newspapers were not asked about their perceptions of where the newspapers stood but merely the name of the newspaper they read most closely about the campaign. The actual endorsements of these newspapers were then verified through listings in *Editor & Publisher*,¹¹ or by the CPS field staff in cases where a newspaper's endorsement was not reported in *Editor & Publisher*. By

⁵ See, for example, Bagdikian, *op. cit.*

⁶ See, for example, William Mason, "The Impact of Endorsements on Voting," *Sociological Methods and Research*, 1:463-95 (May 1973); Maxwell McCombs, "Editorial Endorsement: A Study of Influence," *Journalism Quarterly* 44:545-8 (Autumn 1967).

⁷ Paul Lazarsfeld, *et al.*, *The People's Choice* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944); Angus Campbell, *et al.*, *The American Voter* (New York: Wiley, 1960).

⁸ John Robinson, "Perceived Media Bias and the 1968 Election: Can the Media Affect Behavior After All?" *Journalism Quarterly* 49:239-46 (Summer 1972).

⁹ Irving Crespi, "1972 and the American Voter," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 37:441-2 (Fall 1973).

¹⁰ John Robinson, *et al.*, *Measures of Political Attitudes* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, 1968), p. 616-21).

¹¹ *Editor & Publisher*, Vol. 105 (Nov. 4, 1972), pp. 9-12.

TABLE 1

Percentages of Voters Voting for the Democratic Candidate by Newspaper Endorsement and Party Identification, 1972

| Voter's Party | Newspaper Endorsement | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Democratic Candidate (N=53) | Neither Candidate (N=197) | Republican Candidate (N=251) |
| Democrat (N=207) | 71 | 61 | 46 |
| Independent (N=152) | 50 | 34 | 26 |
| Republican (N=142) | 0 | 6 | 5 |

Editor & Publisher's calculations, some 93% of newspapers making endorsements in 1972 had endorsed Richard Nixon, with only 7% for George McGovern. Projected by circulation figures, 10 times as many Americans were exposed to a pro-Nixon as a pro-McGovern newspaper, with less than 15% of the readers being exposed to a paper that remained uncommitted.

Results

The results, outlined in Table 1, indicate a basic replication of the results obtained for the 1968 study.¹² Independent voters exposed to a newspaper endorsing McGovern were twice as likely to vote for McGovern (50%) as independent voters exposed to a pro-Nixon newspaper (26%). However, this 24% differential in 1972 was matched by a 25% differential (71% vs. 46%) by newspaper endorsement among voters with Democratic party identification. In 1968, no such differential was found among Democrats, a point

¹² Robinson, *op. cit.* It must be noted that the data are not exactly comparable, since the 1968 data refer to reader perception and the 1972 data refer to the actual editorial stance of the newspaper. See Tables 4 and 5.

¹³ Frank Andrews, *et al.*, *Multiple Classification Analysis* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Survey Research Center, 1967).

¹⁴ Robinson, *op. cit.* p. 244. To the extent that the pre-election intention does represent an "overcontrol," the reader may well feel more comfortable with a figure closer to the overall 15% differential in Table 1 than the 7% differential in Table 2 (or the 6% differential for 1968). The 15% differential does take into account the factor of party identification, which explains most of the variance in vote after the pre-election intention variable is taken into account.

which will be discussed in more detail below. Consistent with the 1968 results, no such differential was found among Republican party-identifiers in Table 1.

Table 1, of course, fails to take into account the several other factors beyond party identification that predict the vote and which may also lie behind the predictive power of exposure to newspapers of differing endorsements. Table 2 presents the voting differentials obtained after 12 such predictors are taken into account, predictors such as opinion giving, interest in the campaign, feelings of political efficacy, as well as age, education, region, urbanicity and sex. Also included as a control variable in Table 2 is vote intention expressed in the pre-election interview, a variable that may be considered an "overcontrol" since its correlation (.84) with actual reported vote in the post-election interview approaches unity. The combined statistical effects of these variables in Table 2 has been assessed by Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA), a computer program that provides estimates of the effects of single variables simultaneously controlled for the effects of several other variables.¹³

Table 2 indicates that introduction of these 12 variables does indeed substantially reduce the differentials in Table 1. Instead of 25% differentials, Table 2 indicates newspaper endorsements contribute a 7% difference (40% vs. 33%) in voting behavior after the other variables have been controlled. This is practically identical to the 6% differential found after a parallel MCA run was performed on the 1968 election data.¹⁴ Such a finding is but one piece of evidence supporting the persistence of the newspaper endorsement effect that we shall encounter.

MCA is strictly a linear model and cannot detect differentials in which strong interaction effects among variables are present. We suspected a strong interaction effect would occur for the variable of region, particularly for the difference between voters in the South compared to those in the rest of the country. Thus, the traditional Democratic loyalties of

TABLE 2

Percentages of Voters Voting for the Democratic Candidate by Newspaper Endorsement, 1972 (after correction for 12 leading explanatory factors, including party identification)

| | <i>Newspaper Endorsement</i> | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | <i>Democratic Candidate</i> | <i>Neither Candidate</i> | <i>Republican Candidate</i> |
| All voters (N = 501) | 40 | 36 | 33 |
| South (N = 140) | 37 | 31 | 30 |
| (Dems & Indeps only) (N = 102) | 57 | 43 | 42 |
| Non-South (N = 361) | 45 | 38 | 35 |
| (Dems & Indeps only) (N = 257) | 69 | 63 | 60 |

Nixon-voting Southerners (who were overwhelmingly exposed to pro-Nixon newspapers) might very well lie behind the differentials noted thus far. In other words, one might well expect Southerners to defect from the Democratic party candidate whether any stimulus from the mass media was present or not.

However, the figures at the bottom of Table 2 show that the differential holds almost as well in the South as it does in the rest of the country. Moreover, among Democratic and Independent voters (for whom the differential is at a maximum in Table 1), the newspaper endorsement "effect" is even stronger in the South than elsewhere. This provides a second support for the presence of a real difference in voting behavior attributable simply to exposure to newspapers of different political orientation.

A third feature of the data in Tables 1 and 2 that bolsters confidence in this conclusion is the voting behavior of individuals exposed to uncommitted newspapers whose endorsement was unknown or could not be ascertained (i.e. the "neither"

category of Table 1 and 2). To be consistent with the results thus far, these voters should exhibit voting behavior that falls somewhere between readers of pro-McGovern newspapers and readers of pro-Nixon newspapers. While voters exposed to uncommitted or unknown newspapers do not generally fall at the expected midway point in the Table 1 and Table 2 calculations (except for the most important row for all voters at the top of Table 2), their voting behavior does not fall outside the interval defined by readers of pro-McGovern and pro-Nixon newspapers.

Moreover, this middle position is maintained when the "neither" group is decomposed in Table 3, which contrasts readers exposed to an uncommitted newspaper with readers exposed to a newspaper whose allegiance was unknown or could not be ascertained. More powerful corroborative evidence is provided by the "non-readers" category in Table 3, which may be more akin to a "control group" than the neither group. As such, this group should also maintain a middle position. In fact, Table 3 shows their voting patterns to be practically identical to that of the total neither group.¹⁵ In brief, the basic rank order of voting behavior, running from exposure to pro-McGovern endorsements to exposure to "neutral" or no messages to exposure to pro-Nixon endorsements, is impressively preserved when rather subtle distinctions are drawn within the middle of these three groups.

Results in Previous Elections

One could get carried away with these results and perform the sort of statistical gerrymandering so popular in sports reporting by pointing out that in overall terms newspaper endorsements have predicted five out of the last six presidential elections. The only exception has been Kennedy's extremely close victory over Nixon in 1960, where Nixon was endorsed by more than four times as many newspapers as was Kennedy.

¹⁵The middle position of this group is also maintained after application of MCA.

TABLE 3

Percentages of Voters in the 'Neither' Category of Table 1, and of Voters Who Did Not Read Newspapers, Voting for the Democratic Candidate by Party Identification, 1972

| Voter's Party ID | Readers in Neither Category | | | Non-readers (N=277) |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| | Total Neither (N=197) | Newspaper Uncommitted (N=74) | Newspaper NA or DK (N=123) | |
| Democrats (N=87) | 61 | 67 | 63 | 60 |
| Independents (N=61) | 34 | 31 | 40 | 33 |
| Republicans (N=49) | 6 | 5 | 0 | 8 |

This argument of course fails to take into account the *margins* of victory in each campaign. Can, then, one predict the margin of electoral victory by some function of the proportion of newspapers endorsing the candidate? For the three presidential elections (1960, 1968, 1972) in which Richard Nixon was involved, the answer seems to be positive. In 1960 and 1968, when he received the endorsements of eight out of every 10 endorsing newspapers, the election was extremely close. In 1972, when he was endorsed at a nine out of 10 rate, he won by a landslide. On the other hand, Eisenhower won landslide victories in 1952 and 1956 with roughly the eight out of 10 ratio of support that Nixon enjoyed in 1960 and 1968. Moreover, it took a seven out of 10 support ratio for Johnson to win a landslide Democratic victory in 1964. And we have yet to consider the Roosevelt and Truman victories of the 1930s and 1940s in the face of overwhelming newspaper opposition. Thus, while there is some consistency in this pattern of victory margins and newspaper endorsements, it is hard to argue for anything resembling a lawful relation between the two.

¹⁶ W.S. Robinson, "Ecological Correlations and the Behavior of Individuals," *American Sociological Review*, 15:351-7 (June 1950). For a more recent attempt to explicate conditions under which the fallacy does or does not hold, see John Hammond, "Two Sources of Error in Ecological Correlations," *American Sociological Review* 38:764-77 (December 1973).

¹⁷ Weiss, *op. cit.* For a more skeptical view of the prevalence of this phenomenon, see David Sears and Jonathan Freedman, "Selective Exposure to Information: A Critical Review," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 31:194-213 (Summer 1967).

This unpromising pattern of "ecological" correlations does not necessarily rule out the possibility of relations holding at the individual level of analysis that we have employed in Tables 1 and 2. Thus, we appear to have encountered a classic case of the "ecological fallacy" in the present data, as Table 4 confirms. Such a discrepancy, of course, has long been familiar in sociology.¹⁶

Table 4 indicates a highly consistent relation between individual voting behavior and exposure to newspaper endorsements over the last five national elections (which are as far back as University of Michigan election study data on newspaper exposure are available). The overall voting differential between exposure to Democratic and Republican newspapers, as noted in the last column of Table 4, varies only between 14% and 24%, indicating a rather consistent and pervasive association. Those in the non-exposed or neutral endorsement categories continue to fall at some point between the two extremes (although not near the midpoints). As before, we are faced with a host of rival explanations of this set of results. In Table 4, not even the effects of party identification are controlled, and one would certainly expect the factor of selective exposure to be at work in Table 4. De facto selective exposure, the tendency for people to expose themselves to communications most congenial with their existing attitudes, is a well-known political phenomenon.¹⁷ How-

TABLE 4

Percentages of Voters Voting for the Democratic Candidate by
Newspaper Endorsement, 1956-1972

| Year | Newspaper Endorsement | | | Dem. - Rep. Δ % |
|------------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| | Democratic Candidate | Neither Candidate and Non-readers | Republican Candidate | |
| 1956 (N=969) | 58 | 38 | 38 | +20 |
| 1960 (N=451) | 60 | 46 | 45 | +15 |
| 1964 (N=972) | 74 | 71 | 50 | +24 |
| 1968 (N=939)* | 40 | 30 | 26 | +14 |
| 1972 (N=778) | 45 | 36 | 27 | +18 |

*Perceived newspaper endorsement, white voters only.

ever, few Americans enjoy the luxury of choice in the matter of subscribing to newspapers which match their political loyalties. Nevertheless, some tendency does emerge in these national samples for Democrats to read more pro-Democratic newspapers and Republicans more pro-Republican newspapers. It is therefore necessary to introduce a control for party identification in Table 4, and this is provided in Table 5.

Table 5 presents a far more confusing picture than Table 4. In several cells, differentials by newspaper endorsement disappear or even take on negative values (indicating that readers of pro-Republican papers vote more Democratic than readers of pro-Democratic papers). Differences of the magnitude encountered in Tables 1 and 4 appear only in 1956 and 1972 for Democratic party identifiers, 1964 for Republican party identifiers and in 1960, 1964, 1968 and 1972 for Independents. The results of Table 5, at first glance then, do not fit into any simple pattern. On closer inspection, however, two themes can be detected:

1) In close elections (1960 and 1968), voting differentials by newspaper endorsements are confined to Independents.

2) In landslide elections (1956, 1964, 1972), voting differentials by newspaper endorsement extend to members of the losing party as well as to Independents.

While there are exceptions to these two themes in Table 5 and the differentials vary more than one would need to proclaim these as lawful relations, they could provide convenient guidelines to examine the impact of newspapers in past and future elections.

Summary and Conclusions

In the climate of self-congratulation within the press following its exposure of the Watergate affair and consequent humbling of the powers of President Nixon, the other side of the coin has been forgotten. In the election of 1972, 93% of newspapers making endorsements had supported President Nixon's re-election bid.

Outside of the magnitude of the difference, the fact that newspapers overwhelmingly endorsed a Republican presidential candidate seems hardly noteworthy or even newsworthy. With the exception of 1964, newspapers historically have endorsed Republican presidential candidates. Moreover, research on the reader-

TABLE 5

Percentages of Voters Voting for the Democratic Presidential Candidate by Newspaper Endorsement and by Party Identification, 1956-1972

| Year | Party ID | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------|------|------------|-----------------------|---------|------|------------|-----------------------|---------|------|------------|
| | Democrats | | | | Independents | | | | Republicans | | | |
| | Newspaper Endorsement | | | Diff. | Newspaper Endorsement | | | Diff. | Newspaper Endorsement | | | Diff. |
| | Dem | Neither | Rep. | D-R Δ % | Dem | Neither | Rep. | D-R Δ % | Dem | Neither | Rep. | D-R Δ % |
| 1956 (N=969) | 84 | 74 | 73 | +11 | 27 | 22 | 28 | -1 | 0 | 4 | 5 | -5 |
| 1960 (N=451) | 79 | 79 | 80 | -1 | 61 | — | 48 | +13 | 8 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| 1964 (N=972) | 91 | 89 | 87 | +4 | 70 | 71 | 35 | +35 | 28 | 32 | 13 | +15 |
| 1968 (N=939*) | 62 | 65 | 69 | -7 | 40 | 35 | 12 | +28 | 12 | 4 | 8 | +4 |
| 1972 (N=778) | 71 | 61 | 46 | +25 | 50 | 34 | 26 | +24 | 0 | 6 | 5 | -5 |

—Less than 10 respondents

*Perceived newspaper endorsement, White voters only

ship of editorial pages would hardly lead one to expect such content to have much impact on something as major as a presidential election.

Nevertheless, as in a parallel 1968 national survey, these endorsements were associated with clear differentials in voting behavior on the part of voters exposed to these endorsements. Confidence in the linkage between newspaper endorsements and presidential voting behavior was bolstered by the following empirical findings:

1) The differential remained after controls were applied for party identification.

¹⁸The question of the reverse flow of causality, that is from the public to the newspaper, looks unresolvable at this time without an extremely sophisticated research design. While there can be little doubt that newspapers in many senses must conform to local norms in order to survive financially, mechanisms whereby public reaction can influence newspaper editorial endorsements for the race for the Presidency do not seem plausible. Moreover, the types of effects described here occur primarily within the undecided bloc of voters and it is even more implausible to suspect that these voters hold sway over newspaper editors in any direct sense. The remaining possibility is that both the voters and the editorial staffs are influenced by some as yet unspecified third variable; this seems the most plausible explanation given the lack of data, but the third variable in question would have to predict community-wide variation in voting. Our leaning toward newspaper endorsements as the causal agent rests in large degree on the voting behavior of those not exposed to newspaper endorsements in Table 3.

2) The differential remained after controls were applied for 11 other predictors of voting behavior.

3) The differential remained after controls were applied for possible interaction effects due to region.

4) The differential after these controls were applied on the 1972 voting data was almost identical to the $\pm 3\%$ differential obtained when a parallel analysis had been performed for 1968 voting data.

5) The voting behavior of individuals exposed to uncommitted newspapers, or newspapers for which endorsement information was not available, tended to fall between individuals exposed to pro-McGovern newspapers and pro-Nixon newspapers.

6) The voting behavior of individuals not exposed to newspapers tended to fall between individuals exposed to pro-McGovern newspapers and pro-Nixon newspapers.

While more elaborate tests are needed to establish firmer, or cause-and-effect, relations between newspaper endorsements and voting, on the whole these findings certainly provide sufficient reason to launch further inquiry which can test for such relations.¹⁸

These results, of course, do not square well with conventional wisdom or with other bodies of data. Several communities in which the newspaper took a Democratic stance can undoubtedly be found in which the aggregate vote was overwhelmingly pro-Republican, and vice-versa. Nor have we found very convincing evidence in this paper for overall newspaper support to be predictive of the *margin* of victory in elections. Thus, reasonable explanations for these "ecological" discrepancies need to be advanced.

To the extent that these results do hold up under further scrutiny, they further the "return to the concept of the powerful mass media" that Noelle-Neumann has expressed. Reviewing the results of several field studies of media impact she conducted in West Germany and Switzerland, Noelle-Neumann concludes:

The thesis that mass media do not change attitudes but only reinforce them cannot be upheld under conditions of consonance and cumulation. Our data point in this direction. It is true there exists a tendency to protect attitudes through selective perception. Yet the more selective perception is being restricted—by consonance of reporting and editorial comment, reinforced by cumulation of periodical repetition in the media—the more attitudes can be influenced or molded by the mass media.¹⁹

The present results draw our research attention back to the printed media, which seem to have lost their glamor in the age of television. As in 1968, the voting differentials by newspaper dwarf those associated with television—a not surprising conclusion given television's reluctance to clearly endorse candidates.²⁰ Given the pervasive influences of the newspaper that have recently been isolated in the present data—and by Noelle-Neumann, Stempel, Stokes and Butler, and Mason²¹ the time seems ripe for both research investigators and decision-makers to reconsider their disregard of the printed media.²²

Future work ought to isolate the mechanisms of communications behavior at work in the present phenomenon. We have advanced the hypothesis that the newspa-

per editorial is the one clear direct message emanating during the campaign. Is this in fact how the editorial is perceived by the audience? Do factors such as perceived partisanship or credibility of the newspaper affect in any way the reception of this message? Is information about the newspaper editorial stance conveyed directly or relayed by word-of-mouth through the community?

Investigations into the impact of newspapers should not be confined to voting behavior, despite the ideal behavioral criterion that elections provide to the researcher. The research of Noelle-Neumann and Stempel prompt several intriguing hypotheses about how the newspaper structures the public's view of the world. Our findings about the impact of differential editorial content raises the issue of whether these editorial stances may be further reflected in the newspaper's selection and placement of wire copy (the innovation initially associated with raised levels of newspaper objectivity).

Watergate has refocused the nation's attention on the role our press can play as a "king-breaker." However, following Noelle-Neumann, the question may be asked why there was not greater newspaper investigation and exposure of Watergate prior to the election. Could it be that
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¹⁹ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, "Return to the Concept of the Powerful Mass Media," in H. Eguchi and K. Sata, eds. *Studies of Broadcasting*, No. 9:67-112 (1973), p. 109.

²⁰ One comment is in order about those differential voting patterns by television exposure that do obtain in the 1972 campaign. In 1968, some tendency was found for voters with heavier exposure to television coverage of the campaign to vote Democratic. In contrast, heavier users of television for politics in 1972 were more likely to have voted Republican than were less frequent users of television. While the magnitude of these differences is too small to warrant extended speculation, it is interesting to note that they do favor the party in power.

²¹ Noelle-Neumann, *op. cit.*; Guido H. Stempel III, "Effects on Performance of a Cross-Media Monopoly," *Journalism Monographs* No. 29 (1973); Donald Stokes and David Butler, *Political Change in Britain* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969); Mason, *op. cit.*

²² At the same time, several studies documenting various dimensions of the effects of the broadcast media are emerging. See, for example, Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure, "Political Advertising: Voter Reaction," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 37:447-8 (Fall 1973); Eiji Rubinstein, *et al.*, *Television and Social Behavior* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Mental Health, 1972); John Robinson, "Rock Music and Drug Use," paper presented at the annual meetings of the American Psychological Association, September 1972.

press releases, one from the editor's own knowledge, one from the sales department, and none from a reporter. So, a typical newscast in the small markets might be 37% wire copy, 21% beat copy, 17% from a newspaper, 16% gathered by telephone, and 7% from news releases.

Of the 201 stories in the medium market editors' newscasts, 137 came from AP or UPI, 24 each from telephone calls and beat coverage, six from the daily newspapers, three from news releases, five from reporters, and two were created by the editors from their own backgrounds. A typical newscast in the medium-sized communities might have 68% of its content in wire copy, 12% from beat coverage, 12% from telephone calls, 3% from the newspaper, 2% resulting from reporters' work, 1% from news releases, and 1% from the editor's own knowledge of what is happening.

Of the 274 news items selected for use by the big city gatekeepers, 94 originated with the wire services, 22 from reporters, 11 from beats, seven from telephone calls, and one from a news release. No stories in the big city newscasts originated with newspapers. The typical newscast in the large cities in this study might contain 70% wire copy (again rewritten, reworked or severely edited), 16% from reporters, 8% from beat coverage, and 5% gathered from telephone calls.

Summary and Conclusions

There were three basic types of news operations. Some stations simply required or expected their newscasters to read copy taken directly off the UPI or AP wire service machines. These sta-

tions (7 of 29) can be called "rip and read" news operations. Two stations were strictly rewrite operations, with no newsgathering or very little actual reporting, but no straight wire copy either, except for deadline pressure when pencil-edited wire copy was permitted. The other stations, including those where more than one editor was studied, would use wire copy, either rewritten or "rip and read," along with the original material gathered by the news staff from beats, general assignments, telephone calls, etc.

This study offers the proposition that radio news editors are not particularly enamored of wire service stories (neither are they repelled by them), but there is so much of it in their input that they can't escape it. The importance of the wire stories to the editor depends on the size of the market and is related to how "local" the wire stories are for that market. The wire stories are favored more by those editors in large cities where AP and UPI are more likely to have local bureaus. The small and medium markets are less likely to have the kind of local copy an editor needs on the wire machines.

Charges of "rip and read" news programming are not supported by these editors' habits. With some exceptions, these editors tend to use the wire service stories as tips to start them checking on more about them, localizing them when they almost apply to the community, and updating them with newer information or at least fresh leads. More often than not the editors rewrite wire copy or assign someone to rewrite or revise the original story for them.

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McGovern's having been written off by the press (not only by "conservative" editors and publishers, but by the "liberal" Washington press corps) created an atmosphere within which Watergate was too uncomfortable or too threaten-

ing to report on more thoroughly? If so, the newspaper's role as king-maker extends well beyond the possible effects isolated in the present study; indeed, it becomes as significant as its role of king-breaker.