1976

Practices and perceptions in school-media relations in the Midwest

Clair Everett Brooks

Iowa State University

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Practices and perceptions in school-media relations in the Midwest

by

Clair Everett Brooks

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Professional Studies
Major: Education (Educational Administration)

Approved:

Signature was redacted for privacy.

In Charge of Major Work

Signature was redacted for privacy.

For the Major Department

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For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1976
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CHAPTER I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

With the gradual demise of the one-room country school of the Midwest came a seemingly abrupt escalation in the scope and complexity of problems in local public education. Where once the major factor in school operation may have been the selection of a teacher capable of building morning fires in stoves and students, instilling certain accepted basics of truth and knowledge, and generally serving as the district's sole required employee, a myriad of potentially troublesome issues confronted the planners and practitioners of the enterprise.

Contemporary problems of local systems of public education include, among the several broad and general categories, curricula, financing, transportation, methods, rights, philosophy, governance, militancy, achievement, and accountability. Complicating the situation is the existence of a number of different publics, a pluralistic society whereby groups of persons with certain commonalities of interests effect further divisions from within the bounds of the district. Pressures in the forms of support and resistance often emanate from such groups, or from the public at large, and accrue to the person serving as the district's chief executive officer -- the superintendent of schools.

The superintendent of schools, by way of the total responsibility befalling the position, is charged with the task of providing for the orderly communication of messages about the school to, and from, the people of the district.

Absent this ongoing exchange, a lack of public understanding,
acceptance, and support perils the function of administration and the progress of the institution. Cutlip and Center (9, p. 570) cautioned of the need:

Educators' influence in improving education rests upon their ability to guide public opinion and to be guided by it in meeting society's needs.

To sustain desired understanding, acceptance, and support, programs of communication between school and community must be effective and continuous. Spaulding, in Miller and Charles (27, pp. v-x), characterized the American public school as "... a marvelous expression of popular faith." He hastened, however, to chide superintendents for the rapidly developing practice of conducting campaigns and drives for the purposes of obtaining financial support and "putting over" bond issues. The Yale scholar offered his thoughts on the virtues of a larger approach to public relations:

What the schools need and what the public will increasingly demand is continuous and reliable publicity, the primary motive of which is not definite and immediate, even spasmodic, action on the part of the public, but rather a sound and adequate comprehension by the people of the institution that they have created and are supporting. Only such comprehension can be relied upon permanently to shape the development and furnish the support that public education must have to render its greatest service.

Efforts by superintendents of schools alone do not ensure success in public or community relations. Techniques and strategies for obtaining the public understanding and support desired are relatively unlimited. However, the dissemination and feedback of information about the local school can be expeditiously accomplished only through the advantages offered by the printed and electronic media. Journalism's long-time excellence and its development to the present state of the art afford
the receiving publics the opportunity to maintain an enhanced awareness of school-related conditions and events.

Two persons in positions to affect success or failure in efforts to communicate the school's story are the editor of the daily newspaper and the news director of the local television station. Each plays a role of prominence in determining the style, content, and extent of coverage of school-related news items and issues.

Miller and Charles (27, pp. 14-15), respectively an administrator in the Cleveland Public Schools and a member of the editorial staff of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, hailed the power of the press in school matters three decades before the advent of television. These pioneers in school-media relations noted the impact in terms of audience potential:

Of all the people among whom school administrators, teachers, and pupils spread word-of-mouth publicity, none are more influential in creating public opinion than the newspaper writers, for the reason that these, through their papers, have direct and immediate access to virtually the entire public.

One can, with some degree of certainty, assume that Miller and Charles would heartily endorse the addition of television news broadcasts to their 1924 statement. The traditional advantage of widespread, in-depth daily newspaper reporting is today augmented by television's capacity for speedy transfer of information from the scene to the screen via its up-to-the-minute coverage.

The relationships between the schools and the media are important. In inseparable tandem, superintendents of schools and chief operating executives of daily newspapers and television news departments bear responsibilities for public dissemination of newsworthy information about the schools. Perceptions held by persons in those capacities
are worthy of investigation. The discovery of new information about school-media relations can lead to greater understandings of mutual problems and concerns.

The Problem

The three-fold problem of this study was (1) to discover the perceived effectiveness of existing practices in school-media relations in the Midwest; (2) to investigate and report upon responsibilities in school-media relations, as perceived by superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors; and (3) to discover the perceived relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news items.

Basic assumptions of this study were:

1. The superintendent of schools is the chief public relations officer of the local school district.
2. School-related news materials are in demand by the media.
3. Public relations activities by superintendents of schools are important aspects of the public image of the school.
4. Interest in the area of school-media relations has been heightened by the atmosphere of stress surrounding the schools. This is particularly true for issues involving finance, personnel administration, and services to students.

Null hypotheses tested in this study were:

1. There are no significant differences among the perceptions of superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and
television news directors regarding the effectiveness of current practices in school-media relations.

2. There are no significant differences in perceptions of the public relations role responsibilities of superintendents of schools between daily newspaper editors and television news directors.

3. Perceptions of the role responsibilities will not differ significantly among and between superintendents of schools, editors of daily newspapers, and news directors of commercial television stations.

4-43. Perceptions of the relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news items will not be significantly different among and between superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors.

The specific practices in school-media relations of interest in this study were classified under four general headings: provisions and procedures for the reporting of school news, planning and cooperation between the school and the media, the role of editorial comment in school-media relations, and the role of the media in executive sessions of the board of education.

Another aspect of interest was the perceived effectiveness of existing practices in school-media relations. The attitude projected by an incumbent to one of the three roles of concern to this study is important to a useful and productive relationship. Miller and Charles (27, p. 110) recognized this factor five decades ago:

Effective cooperation between the press and the schools has often been made possible by the very personality of the educator.
There are advantages to be gained from increased understandings of the responsibilities incumbent to the role of another person. It is also desirable to augment present knowledge of the importance attached to various topics of types of school-related news. When schools are expected to do so much in so many ways, it is entirely logical that the reporting of efforts, conditions, and events in the schools becomes an even greater concern. Estes (11, p. 17), as superintendent of the public school system in Dallas, Texas, addressed the issue of expectations from the schools:

School superintendents live in the midst of what some call 'the expectation explosion.' The promises of the reforms of the 1960's have borne at least one bitter fruit: everyone expects the schools to solve social problems of malnutrition, poverty, drug abuse, disrespect for tradition and authority, and on down the line. Promises were made but not kept, and public schools are now reaping the whirlwind.

These expectations clue the third and final portion of the problem of this study. It involved the perceived relative importance of school-related news items. Superintendents and media persons alike should be aware of the levels of importance associated with various categories of news items about the local public school. The categories of school-related news items, as developed for this study, reflected a range of issues prevalent in recent years. Included were those categories of potential news items and issues that found general applicability to school districts of the Midwest:

1. The district's annual budget
2. The school tax levy
3. Special tax levies
4. The annual budget hearing
5. School board policies
6. Meetings of the board of education
7. Race relations
8. Collective bargaining
9. School bond issue elections and campaigns
10. The employment of new certificated personnel
11. The employment of new noncertificated personnel
12. Dismissal proceedings against personnel
13. Student behavioral problems
14. The school's curriculum
15. Innovations at the building/classroom level
16. Student transportation
17. Hot lunch programs
18. Grading systems
19. Achievement levels in the school
20. Library and media services
21. Information on drop-outs
22. Information on follow-up studies of former students
23. Parent-teacher associations
24. Athletic programs and events
25. Music programs and events
26. Other clubs and activities
27. The school calendar
28. Enrollment information
29. General information comparing the school to others
30. Career education programs
31. Values clarification programs
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and report upon present practices and their perceived effectiveness in school-media relations; perceived responsibilities of executives in the positions of superintendent of schools, daily newspaper editor, and television news director; and the perceived relative importance of certain categories of school-related news items.

From the outset, an important aspect of the purpose of this study was the reporting of useful results with maximum clarity and objectivity. It should be noted that a part of that objectivity was the recognition of the role of persons in the media. One must be ever mindful of the ethics, expectations, and duties placed upon editors and news directors. Two statements held meaning as the aforementioned role and to the subscription of this writer to the thoughts therein contained. The first bonds the schools and the newspapers in a most pragmatic manner and was expressed by Wilfred Woods, in McCloskey (26, p. 439), of the Wenatchee Daily World:
Newspapers and schools have a number of mutual interests. We're both interested in improving our communities. We're both interested in keeping people informed about good schools. And for both selfish and altruistic reasons we are mutually interested in improving schools. Let's look at all three of these common interests.

You administrators and teachers are responsible for educating children and youth. After pupils leave school, we editors are responsible for providing them with current information which helps them make intelligent decisions about a wide range of public and private affairs. For cultural reasons, you educators devote a lot of energy to teaching young people how to build good communities. We editors are equally interested in community improvement, for both cultural and economic reasons. We, too, have a sense of mission; and we also know that as communities improve and grow, so does the sale of our papers.

We're both interested in publicizing good schools. For you, effective publicity creates wider understanding of school services. For us, news about schools is part of our bread and butter. We want real school news because it interests our subscribers.

You educators quite rightly want to improve schools. So do we editors, for two reasons. First, like you, we believe in the values of high-quality schools. Second, many studies have shown us that as levels of education rise, so does newspaper circulation.

From my point of view, those are three good reasons why schools and newspapers should work together.

Excerpts from the considerably more idealistic National Association of Broadcasters' Television Code provide insight to another rationale for close relationships between schools and the media. A 1967 statement of a section of the Code devoted to advancement of education and culture (26, p. 490) yielded the excerpted guidelines:

It is the responsibility of a television broadcaster to call upon such institutions [schools] for counsel and cooperation and to work with them on the best methods of presenting educational and cultural materials by television. It is further the responsibility of stations, networks, advertising agencies and sponsors consciously to seek opportunities for introducing into telecasts factual materials which will aid in the enlightenment of the American public.
The television broadcaster should be thoroughly conversant with the educational and cultural needs and desires of the community served.

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

Definition of Terms

Certain terms are used throughout this study. In the interest of clarity, and as an aid to interpretation, the operational definitions of those terms are stated below:

Superintendent of schools: The person employed by a local board of education as the chief executive officer of the board and who is responsible to the board for the conduct of school operations.

Daily newspaper editor: The person employed by the owner(s) of a daily newspaper to serve as the paper's chief operating executive.

Television news director: The person employed by the owner(s) of a commercial television station to direct the operation and functions of the station's news department.

Editorial: A statement, separate and distinct from news reports, expressing an opinion held by a newspaper or broadcasting station.

News: A factual report of something that is important, interesting, and/or timely.

Executive session: A manner of conducting discussions, during a regular session of the board of education, which allows the exclusion of the public and the press. Executive sessions are normally held only for such purposes as delicate personnel matters and real estate matters.
Role: The composite manner of behavior expected of any person who holds a certain position.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited in scope to superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors in cities with populations of 200,000 or fewer persons, and which are located in a seven-state area of the Midwest: Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. The study was further delimited to those cities served by at least one local daily newspaper and at least one local commercial television station.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

Introduction

"Mr. Printer. Please to insert the following in your next paper."

So began, according to the tentative deduction of Cutlip and Center (9, p. 49), the eras of the press release and of the practice of direct relations between the schools and the media. That succinct request from an unknown person at King's College (now Columbia University), in June of 1758, said it well. An event of interest and importance, the first commencement, had occurred. It was clearly the desire of someone that an account of the occasion be promulgated in a timely manner. Success through the approach cannot be seriously questioned, for Cutlip and Center recounted the presence of identical items in all New York City journals of the day.

If the penning of the first general press release in North America was, in fact, the work of a person in an institution of formal education, that deed served as a precursor to the school's story to be told in this evening's news broadcasts and tomorrow's early editions.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature and research related to the problem of the study. A wealth of materials has appeared since the "Mr. Printer. Please . . ." beginning of pre-Revolutionary times. In particular, the past quarter-century's literature is replete with writings prescribing ways and means of public relations for schools. A substantial portion of that body of work was examined. A quote from a past-president of the National School Public Relations Association adequately summarized the results of that general examination. Sylvia
Ciernik (7, p. 21) alluded to the presence of a good deal of "authoritative literature" in article and book form, but found little in the way of notable research in the area of the superintendent and public relations.

The writer sought writings and investigations relating directly to this study. Therefore, materials reviewed in this chapter represent works selected for value to the problem of this study, and no claim of an exhaustive review of the totality of existing thought and word on school communications and dissemination processes is made.

The writer knows of no study of a like nature.

Early Public Relations: Origins in Education

The role of education in initiating the first general press release was described briefly above. That was not the only "first" attributed to education and the field of school-media relations. Cutlip (8, pp. 269-280) wrote of another when he described the evolution of public relations as a commercial venture. In 1900, the Publicity Bureau opened for business as the first commercial public relations firm in the United States. The first client for this Boston establishment was an institution of education. Harvard University, for a monthly fee of $200, had its formal public relations affairs handled by the Publicity Bureau. It is rather interesting to note that the Bureau continued to do publicity work for Harvard even after the arrangement for financial remuneration had been terminated.

The Harvard experiment came at a time when public relations was being conceived by parental forerunners; chief among these were the press agents, the political empire-builders, and the business scions of the era. Each seemed engrossed in the pursuit of a goal worthy of the most sophisticated
counterpart of the final third of the twentieth century: favorable reports and commentary by the public media.

Early educators were themselves ready and willing to capitalize upon a positive press during important testimony before a committee of the Congress of the United States. The object of the testimony was the establishment of a Cabinet-level department of education. With the initial hearing scarcely underway, a woman representing the National Education Association read into the record favorable editorial comments from nationally prominent newspapers. The 1924 Government Printing Office (16, pp. 70-71) record of the hearings contained references to supportive editorials from the Chicago Evening American and the Washington Herald and other Hearst papers.

In the local schools, efforts and interest were on the ascent. In 1927, Carter Alexander conducted a study generally recognized as the first in the area of school public relations: "Research in Educational Publicity."

It was not until two years later, however, that a work of considerable relevance to the writer's study appeared in print. That study was Farley's, and it was important.

Belmont Mercer Farley

No serious review of the literature in the school public relations field can justifiably proceed beyond this point without pause for the landmark study of Belmont Mercer Farley (12). In 1929, Dr. Farley reported the results of his mammoth research endeavor in "What to Tell
The objectives of Farley's study (12, p. 3) merit full statement in this review. They bear a certain likeness to those of the study upon which this report was based and are prime requisites for complete understanding of the summary to follow later:

1. To discover the relative importance of interests of those to whom educational publicity is directed, in order that more forceful appeals for attention and acceptance can be offered.

2. To learn whether the present practices of newspaper school publicity are making the most effective use of the interests of the readers of school news.

3. To analyze the field of school news into its chief topics, from which selections may be made for the preparation of school news copy, with proper consideration for the more important interests of those who are most vitally concerned with the affairs of the school.

The study consisted of the following: (1) the analysis of data on the relative importance of 13 categories of school news, as reported by 5,067 randomly-selected school patrons in 13 cities; (2) the study of 39,265 column-inches of school news stories drawn from 737 issues of 10 newspapers published in 10 of the 13 cities; and (3) an analysis of "approximately 2,000 school news stories" from newspapers published in other cities.

Farley (12, p. 16) found "Pupil Progress and Achievement" to be the prime topic or category of school news, based on the data from 5,067 responses. That topic, and the 12 remaining can be found, with accompanying data, below:
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<td>49,294</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-curricular Activities</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51,240</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In sharp contrast to the desires of the respondents, as shown above, were Farley's findings of space devoted to school news (12, p. 49). He and associates calculated the percentage of news space devoted to various school news items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage of School News Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extra-curricular Activities</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers and School Officials</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Teachers Association</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Progress and Achievement</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Education and Administration</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses of Study</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Percentage of School News Coverage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Management and Finance</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Building and Building Programs</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health of Students</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of Instruction</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline and Behavior of Pupils</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of Education</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An obvious dichotomy rises from the two summaries. A plausible explanation may exist. First, the 5,067 respondents were parents of children enrolled in fifth grades. Therefore, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that those persons may have been substantially oriented toward elementary school considerations. This may have been the prime factor in placing extra-curricular activities at the nadir. Certainly, one would have anticipated somewhat different results from parents of high school age youngsters. Nonparents or parents of children no longer in school might have also answered differently. Second, and of chief concern for the implications possibly held for the writer's study, is the thought that the percentage of school news space devoted to any particular topic may have been a function of the importance of the topic as perceived by school officials, reporters, and/or editors.

Farley provided a degree of insight into the potential merit of the second line of reasoning by citing John Erle Grinnell's data from the study "Type of school information which 101 weekly and 15 daily editors
of Minnesota believe most apt to have general interest." Grinnell's findings, as cited by Farley (12, p. 57) were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Weekly Editors</th>
<th>Daily Editors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athletics</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Honors</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Board Proceedings</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Notes or Department</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Teacher Association Activities</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Schools</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Policy</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other Categories of School News

The education editor of the *New York Times* wrote, in 1943, of the types of articles that might be considered by persons interested in the public relations aspects of education. Benjamin Fine's list (13, p. 231) of the categories was directed toward colleges, but is of worth for the placement of the various topics:

1. Human interest
2. Student articles
3. Stories with pictures
4. Extra-curricular activities
5. Science stories
6. Educational stories
7. National news
8. Surveys, reports, studies
9. Faculty interviews
10. Scandal stories

McCloskey (26, pp. 457-458) presented a number of possible categories of school news. He separated his total list into two areas for use in the reporting of school-related news. The first grouping below contains those classified as "administrative" and those in the second grouping constituted McCloskey's "school building news subjects:"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative</th>
<th>School Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action on new policies</td>
<td>Adult education programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment trends</td>
<td>Summer school offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgets</td>
<td>American Education Week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost trends</td>
<td>Holiday schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building construction</td>
<td>Administrator's speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum development</td>
<td>Board member's speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff appointments</td>
<td>Annual reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health service developments</td>
<td>Special publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in pupil grading</td>
<td>Safety developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in pupil transportation routes or schedules</td>
<td>Use of school facilities by public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New books</td>
<td>New equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New teaching devices</td>
<td>New student publication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New health services</td>
<td>New school rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual pupil projects</td>
<td>Unusual displays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unusual assembly programs</td>
<td>Honor rolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships</td>
<td>Honors paid teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher authors</td>
<td>Parent visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services provided by citizens</td>
<td>Student elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity clubs, etc.</td>
<td>Safety regulations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trips</td>
<td>Examination schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTA meetings</td>
<td>Public events, concerts, plays, art exhibits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Room Mother&quot; activities</td>
<td>Special programs for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School lunch menus</td>
<td>national holidays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student services to the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Superintendent as Chief Public Relations Officer

Abundant testimony on the vital role of the superintendent as chief public relations officer supports the first basic assumption of this study. In McCloskey's forthright view (26, p. 267):

The superintendent of schools is responsible for the development and administration of all aspects of communication with the public.

While an executive may delegate tasks at will, pass on with assignments commensurate authority to accomplish the mission, and demand a certain amount of accountability from assignees, the responsibility remains untransmitted. A 1952 statement from the Yearbook of the American Association of School Administrators (2, p. 127) addressed the point:

In the process of relating the schools to the public, the superintendent of schools is unavoidably the key person upon whom the responsibilities of a successful program must fall. He may have assistants to handle much of the work, he may share many of the personal contacts interpretation calls for, but he cannot shift the responsibility.

McCloskey (26, p. 295) concurred with the propriety of this decentralization of the task of public relations, and described it as a trend:

In a growing number of school systems, communications specialists work full-time as executives and advisors for administrators and boards. Some have titles reflecting the nature of their work. "Community Relations Director," "Public Information Officer," "Director of Publications," and "Public Relations Director" are examples. Some have one or more full-time or part-time assistants. They have the full confidence of administrators, participate fully in formation of policies, and advise administrators regarding the public communication of policy. Responsible to administrators, they plan and organize broad communications programs and organize staff participation in execution of plans. They prepare or direct preparation of fact sheets, discussion guides, publications, speeches, and news releases. Personally, and in cooperation with associates, they arrange public discussions and speeches. They maintain relationships with press, television, and radio personnel. Their responsibilities are officially defined by written board policies or faculty handbooks.
Gross, Ward, and McEachern (21, pp. 345-348) reported their findings on perceived and actual roles of superintendents and board of education members in the public relations program. They interviewed 105 superintendents and 508 school board members in Massachusetts. Four statements spoke most directly to the issue, and the responses, in terms of that which was expected and that which existed, are indicative of the general acceptance of the superintendent as the prime actor in school public relations:

**Statement One:** The superintendent is responsible for and administers the public relations program.

Persons who expected this to occur:  
- superintendents = 19  
- school board members = 35

Persons who observed this to occur:  
- superintendents = 33  
- school board members = 105

**Statement Two:** The superintendent formulates a public relations program in consultation with the school committee and the superintendent administers the program.

Persons who expected this to occur:  
- superintendents = 78  
- school board members = 364

Persons who observed this to occur:  
- superintendents = 67  
- school board members = 302

**Statement Three:** The school committee formulates a public relations program and the superintendent administers the program.

Persons who expected this to occur:  
- superintendents = 6  
- school board members = 82

Persons who observed this to occur:  
- superintendents = 3  
- school board members = 56

**Statement Four:** The school committee is responsible for and administers the public relations program.

Persons who expected this to occur:  
- superintendents = 0  
- school board members = 20

Persons who observed this to occur:  
- superintendents = 2  
- school board members = 22
The consequences of inadequate public relations efforts by the superintendent of schools can be serious. In his 1961 speeches to regional conventions of the American Association of School Administrators, Kennan (24, p. 2) spoke to the role and its relation to failure in the superintendency:

In 1960, as in 1958, both the State Secretaries and State Superintendents agreed that other than incompetence, the most frequent factor preventing success of superintendents is poor public relations.

One might expect that the essence of Kennan's statement would be manifested by superintendents in self-evaluations of their public relations activities. It would be reasonable to expect high marks to be assigned, and that ratings on the subject by board of education members would be somewhat lower than those by superintendents. Such was not the case in the study by Gross (20, p. 106). He found that superintendents were less likely to score themselves high on public relations efforts than were board members:

Only 18 percent of the superintendents said they did an excellent job of public relations (as compared to 40 percent of the school board members). And furthermore, despite their general tendency to avoid 'fair' and 'poor' categories in rating themselves, in general and in other areas, almost as many superintendents say they did only a 'fair' or 'poor' job of public relations as school board members (27 percent compared to 30 percent).

The Role of the Media

Estes (11), McCloskey (26), and Hollstein (22) were some who discussed reasons why the press has traditionally maintained a keen interest in the schools and school personnel. In 1975, Dave Witke, Managing Editor, Des Moines Register and Tribune, spoke of the "hard eye" of the
press on school boards. His thoughts were presented to members of the Iowa Association of School Boards (23, p. 3):

School boards, school districts and schools are a favorite subject of all types of the press. You school board members and administrators may feel that a harder eye is turned on you than some other people. There are some good reasons for that:

The schools spend more tax money than any other level of our government, except the Federal government.

Everything you do is of intense interest to our readers because what you do touches their families and the things they care about most, their children.

In so many cities and towns the schools and the school district are the primary social institutions influencing the quality of life in the community.

The good things and the bad things, the new developments, the problems, the creative innovations and new solutions that may pop up in one school district are often generalizable to the other school districts of the state. It may have application to them, and what you are doing may help them; or the situation that exists in your district may really be just an example of a trend that may be going on all across the state.

So school boards, school districts and schools get very heavy attention from the press. What kind of attention? I'm sure it is not always the kind of attention that you would like.

The newspapers see their responsibility -- overwhelmingly -- to the public as a whole. We don't see our responsibility as being to people that we are writing about, or who are giving us the information. Our responsibility is to the public who is going to be reading that information. We feel fairly strongly that the more information that is relevant that we can give the people of the state, the better the republican, democratic method of self-government will work. Information is important, if government as we want it to work is to have a chance to work. That includes the bad information as well as the good information.

To a certain extent, a great extent, the press will see itself as a watchdog on the public's behalf, a watchdog of the school board, the school district and the schools themselves. As a result of that, a lot of the publicity you get will seem to you to be negative. There is a good reason for that also -- or what seems like a good reason to us. The public expects good
performance from its public officials. We see our responsibility more in the area of pointing out, to the public, areas in which there are problems that they should be aware of, where they can use their governmental voice to influence policies and decisions.

Secondly we see a responsibility to the communities whom we serve, aside from being a watchdog I think if you look at your local papers, especially, the press acts as just a very good disseminator of information. Often completely neutral information, information that needs to be gotten out to the people of your school districts, and the parents. The press is a major instrument in getting this done.

The electronic media sector was represented at that same Iowa Association of School Boards function by Jim Gritzner, Director of Special News and Public Affairs Programming, KWWL-TV, Waterloo, Iowa. Gritzner (23, p. 5) discussed reportage and the pursuit of truth:

A reporter is a trained individual who probably does a better job of getting toward the truth than the average guy, because he has been trained along these lines. He knows how to sort out those things which are of the greatest importance, how to highlight those things which are of greatest importance. The likelihood is good that he is going to get pretty close to the truth. But he is a human being... he has feelings of his own... he hears things in a certain way... he reacts to certain combinations of words a certain way. So the reporter, a human being, writes it in a way that comes out of his own existence, seeking the truth.

Sensationalism, a complaint of 35 percent of the superintendents in the New England Development Council study (25), was called a characteristic of some reporters. In Gritzner's opinion, such reportorial acts are short-lived:

Let's not make pretensions that reporters are perfect. Let's say some reporters are stupid and try to sensationalize. Just as some members of school boards try to sensationalize and try to hide and act in secret and just as some members of school boards, heaven forbid, are stupid. I don't think there are that many of them, and I don't think there are that many in the news media that are stupid.
About sensationalism — this is a pet peeve of mine. There are sensationalist journalists in the industry but they don't last. The guy that provides himself with the greatest longevity in the news industry is the guy who is able to consistently report good material on good sources with good information and make that best pursuit toward the truth.

Silberman (35, p. 40), in his critical discourse on journalists in general and television in particular, also spoke to the search for truth:

Another unfortunate convention of journalism — a natural outgrowth of an art form that sees the reporter's responsibility as reporting what others say — is the assumption that journalists need no special expertise of their own, that a good reporter can handle any subject. He can't. In more and more areas the journalist needs some of the scholar's expertise and some of his dedication to the search for truth.

Gritzner's remarks on sensationalism noted less extensive problems from the harmful practice than did the American Association of School Administrators (2, p. 263):

In many communities the newspapers wield this influence for good. In many others their sensationalism and featuring of controversy and conflict do serious damage. One school administrator put it thus: 'It is so terribly easy for a newspaper which wants to sell news and makes a profit on news to aid and abet the production of news at a school board meeting where there are nearly always some individuals who like to be on page one. It is distressingly easy for a newspaper to slant the news against the superintendent of schools and his policies, and furthermore to do it with an air of great righteousness and civic nobility.'

The two previous statements fault journalists for the manner in which school news is sometimes interpreted. Interpretation is an especially potent component of the arsenal of the reporter or editor. To abuse or misuse that weapon is akin to blasting with both barrels at evening shadows on the schoolhouse playground. Interpretation is the mainstream and the backbone of true excellence in school news reporting.

Griffiths' (17, p. 77) description of the two-way communications
process cited interpretation as a key to good relations with the community:

Maintaining effective relations with the community involves far more than a mere 'feeding' of information to individuals in the school district. It involves, in fact, a 'two-way' process, for the schools must be interpreted to the community as well.

The task of interpretation rests squarely, according to the American Association of School Administrator's 30th yearbook (2, p. 136), in the hands of the men and women who promulgate the news:

The news gathering agencies in the local community effectively interpret the schools to the community when proper relationships between the schools and news agencies exist.

The AASA (2, p. 147) later reinforced its stand on the relationship and interpretation:

Information is the lifeblood of the system. It is the two-way relationship bringing suggestions to the school system and sending out to all citizens an interpretation of the school's program.

Beyond interpretation lies a pitfall possessed of a power to crumple the soundest foundation of positive school-media relations. It is the handling of major errors in the reporting of school news, and it has two prongs. One is created by school officials when incorrect or misleading information is presented to the media. The other is journalistic processing of school-related information in a manner that causes erroneous news reports to be presented to the citizenry. Either fault can and should be targeted for an early and sudden demise. School officials engaging in any aspect of the practice of providing or embracing misinformation label themselves totally unfit for public faith. Media personnel not willing to forcefully render maximum service in setting aside acknowledged wrong
dim to a flicker the light that their medium should cause to be shed on
the news of the local school.

Editorial writers for the Des Moines Register set forth an admirable
posture on the matter in a discussion of the correctness of a 1975 action
by the Los Angeles Times. Excerpts from the editorial follow (10):

Many newspapers believe they have done their journalistic duty
when there is a dispute over an allegation if they print the
other side in the same story or in subsequent reports. The
Los Angeles Times has gone beyond that minimal step and admitted
it was wrong to have published a story alleging that . . . .

The reader can only guess at the facts when he is confronted
with charges and denials in the same story. A newspaper's
function is to clarify rather than to confuse. We agree with
the Times that it should have checked out the facts more
thoroughly in light of the strong denials.

The press has an ethical obligation to correct its errors.
Merely printing 'both sides' -- the denial along with the
accusation -- does not satisfy that obligation. We commend
the Times for its zeal in pursuing this story and ultimately
setting the record straight.

For a powerful and pure summary of the responsibility and role of the
media, one need only return to the Canons of Journalism adopted in 1923 by
the assembled members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Bird
and Merwin (3, pp. 97-99) reprinted the statements, of which the following
comprised respectively the introductory paragraph, the first definition,
and the concluding statement of the sixth definition:

The primary function of newspapers is to communicate to the
human race what its members do, feel, and think. Journalism,
therefore, demands of its practitioners the widest range of
intelligence, or knowledge, and of experience, as well as
natural and trained powers of observation and reasoning. To
its opportunities as a chronicle are indissolubly linked its
obligations as teacher and interpreter.

Responsibility. -- The right of a newspaper to attract and hold
readers is restricted by nothing but considerations of public
welfare. The use a newspaper makes of the share of public
attention it gains serves to determine its sense of responsibility, which it shares with every member of its staff. A journalist who uses his power for any selfish or otherwise unworthy purpose is faithless to a high trust.

It is the privilege, as it is the duty, of a newspaper to make prompt and complete correction of its own serious mistakes of fact or opinion, whatever their origin.

The summary of the responsibility of the media begun above would be inadequate without Moehlman's eighth "principle" of a school public relations program (28, p. 157):

School public relations is an interpretive activity. It constitutes a process of adult education in the purposes, values, conditions, and needs of public education. The method of school public relations demands the application of the laws of learning and the constant dissemination of information.

The Media and Executive Sessions

Members of the Iowa Association of School Boards also heard a superintendent's comments on working with the media. Stead, in the Iowa School Board Dialogue (23, pp. 9-10), discussed the experiences when media personnel became privileged to executive sessions:

They have been welcome to all meetings including executive sessions. I don't know if it's legal... but we do invite the news media into our executive sessions. This helps reporters get the background information that they're going to need to write that story some day. It also guarantees to the public, that you, the board of education, are not doing things in that executive session that you shouldn't be doing. I can see where reporters do not like these sessions, because if they are invited in, it ties them down from releasing any information discussed during that session.

Witke, in the Iowa School Board Dialogue (23, p. 12), left no doubt of his personal thoughts on reporters in executive sessions:

My feeling about going to executive sessions is this: I think it's a fine gesture on the part of your board to do that, but I feel the press has absolutely no right any member of the
general public does not have. Anything I as a reporter can do, a private citizen can do. The Constitution does not say newsmen have special rights. So my feeling is that if a reporter is admitted, you are drawing a class distinction and any other member of the public ought to be able to come to that executive meeting also.

A public official who is willing to tell me something as 'background' has always struck me to a certain extent as being unwilling to discharge the public trust that was put on his shoulders when he was put into the job. People ought to be willing to stand behind what they say.

That's kind of a purist approach. Over a period of years I have become more convinced of it:

*Don't say anything to me, any time, that you don't want at least to run the risk of it turning up in the newspaper.*

Discussions in executive session were not, in Gritzner's opinion (23, p. 12), public information:

I think the problem the school board must be realistic about is that the law provides for executive sessions because the law seems to think there are times that it is not wise to have someone other than the board in there to talk about a specific issue. The law talks about all of its citizens in that regard and it includes newsmen.

Many of you have heard about a 'newsman's shield' law. I am not impressed with that idea.

I think we have a Constitutional right to all information that is public information. It's as simple as that. Executive session is not.

When we cannot attribute, I don't think the public owes us any kind of believability at all. If we quote an 'unnamed' source, I think you have no reason whatsoever to believe that information is viable or correct.

Other Studies and Important Literature

Kindred (25) reported on a 1955 study by the New England School Development Council. That investigation queried 113 newspapermen and 100 school administrators of the region. One section (25, p. 55) dealt
with "grievances" voiced by superintendents and with the degree of agreement of newspaper editors on the substance of the grievance. Thirty-five percent of the school officials thought the press overemphasized "bad or sensational" school news. Eleven percent of the editors agreed. Thirty-four percent of the superintendents and 33 percent of the editors agreed that reporters who were assigned to cover school news spent only a small part of their time doing so. One-fourth of the superintendents and 16 percent of the editors said that the press failed to work hard to make significant facts about education into interesting news. Several other grievances were stated by small numbers of superintendents, with correspondingly smaller numbers of editors finding themselves in agreement.

Editors participating in the same study were also afforded an opportunity to state their grievances (25, p. 56). More than one-third (38 percent) said that school officials were "often evasive in interviews with the press;" exactly one-fourth (25 percent) of the superintendents agreed. Thirty-four percent of the editors felt that educators had "no idea" of what made up news, and 17 percent of the superintendents acknowledged agreement. Other minor grievances by editors were in regard to poorly written press releases (27 percent) and the feeling that principals and teachers were not permitted to make statements to reporters. Superintendents agreed with those two items in the forms of affirmative responses of 26 percent and 10 percent, respectively. Several other minor grievances, in terms of percentages, were also stated.

Five key items were presented to participants in the New England study, and were of a nature bearing very directly upon the writer's study. Those five statements (25, p. 57), and the percentages of "yes"
responses from the press and from superintendents, are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Percent of press in agreement</th>
<th>Percent of superintendents in agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A reporter should always clear with the superintendent's office before contacting a teacher or principal with a story.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. An editor should honor a request from the schools to withhold a story.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is legitimate for the press to take an editorial stand on the hiring of school personnel</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A reporter should submit a story to a school superintendent for approval if the superintendent requests it.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A paper should print any newsworthy item about the school regardless of its effect upon the school.</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In his 1964 study at the University of Michigan, Zapytowski (37) investigated the role perceptions and the role expectations of a selected sample of superintendents and weekly newspaper editors. The nicely presented study was limited to subjects in Michigan, with 20 public school superintendents and 20 newspaper editors comprising the sample. Ten of the editors were selected on the basis of "high support" for the schools and the other 10 were categorized as possessing "low support." He found (37, p. 214) that weekly newspaper editors who were purported to maintain a low support posture vis-à-vis the local schools were more likely to "exploit disagreement about and criticism of the schools." The author
held that such a finding "leads one to believe that low support editors tend to hold newspaper interests above school and community interests."

Two of the findings of Zapytowski (37, p. 26) related directly to the current study of school-media relations:

1. School superintendents need to learn more about the ethics and operation of newspapers.

2. The study results imply that the superintendent needs to make and maintain fruitful contact with his editor.

A study that dealt solely with perceptions held by daily newspaper editors and school superintendents was conducted in Kansas by Schmidt (34). The study compared perceptions regarding the "status and improvement" of newspaper treatment of school news. Forty-eight daily newspaper editors and 48 school superintendents from the cities of origin of the daily newspapers were selected.

Eighty percent of the superintendents and 64 percent of the editors (34, p. 239) said that the newspaper should be a "major medium for active support" of programs of public education. More than one-half of the editors met with school personnel to plan for this coverage. In equal responses, 69 percent (34, p. 240) of the superintendents and editors said they found it possible to hold frequent meetings.

Editors participating in Schmidt's study were more critical of superintendents' knowledge of "newspaper techniques" (34, p. 240) than were superintendents of the knowledge generally held by editors about schools.

Schmidt presented 27 findings. Four of these (34, pp. 250–251), although stated in very general terms, held special meaning for consideration by this writer:
1. The perceptions of city editors and school superintendents relating to school-content coverage in the daily newspapers do not differ greatly in the quantitative aspects that were measured in this study.

2. Although the perceptions of city editors and school superintendents relative to the questions posed in this study ranged over wide spectra, the majority of opinions and the ranges tend to coincide.

3. Many of the perceptions appear to be tentative and tractable and therefore amenable to improvement through appropriate communication procedures.

4. Those superintendents who work most closely with editors hold similar views with editors more often than do other superintendents.

Schmidt also noted a factor which seemed to provide superintendents in the area of his study with ample opportunity to develop even closer and more productive ties with daily newspaper editors. The following excerpt (34, p. 165) reflects Schmidt's analysis of the finding:

Evidence from this study would indicate that at least one-third of the city editors of the daily newspapers of Kansas are ready to give space to virtually anyone who has anything to say about the schools. The other two-thirds indicated they would make some judgment as to honesty, sincerity, or validity of the writer and would even check with the school superintendent before including such material in their newspapers. Understandably, editors would, at least publicly, state that they believed strongly in freedom of the press and would thereby retain the right to include any type of content they might choose.

An interesting related finding by Schmidt was reported in the same place and concerned the most often mentioned problem in reporting school news. That problem was "censorship of the news, usually by the superintendent" and was cited by 18 percent of the daily newspaper editors.

One notable finding reported by Frum (14) in the abstract of his 1967 dissertation on the opinions held by superintendents and newspaper editors toward one another was general feeling of satisfaction by both groups.
The editors did criticize superintendents for a general lack of ability in the writing of news releases. Superintendents were, on the other hand, somewhat critical of editors who were "looking for and playing up sensational angles of school news."

Seven years later, Reed (33) used an adaptation of Frum's questionnaire to study the relationship between television managers and school superintendents. This nationally based study compared responses from volunteer participants from the 143 American cities which had only one commercial television station in 1972. Nearly 85 percent of the superintendents who had volunteered participated, as did 74 percent of the television managers. Several findings by Reed were of interest. Twenty-nine percent (33, p. 52) of the superintendents and 9.09 percent of the television managers said that television managers played up sensational angles of school news, while nearly 26 percent (33, p. 60) of the managers felt that superintendents "seldom" provided "facts" pertaining to school matters. Only eight percent of the 100 superintendents agreed with the later assessment. Reed found an especially noteworthy trust for television managers by superintendents. Ninety-one percent (33, p. 104) of the chief administrators stated that television managers could be "trusted" with regard to school news coverage. Very few participants (33, p. 55) viewed incorrect reporting of school matters as a problem (3.9 percent of the television managers and six percent of the superintendents). Nearly one-fifth (19.48 percent) of the television managers felt that executive sessions during board of education meetings were "never justified" (33, p. 86). Only three (three percent) of the superintendents joined in agreement.
Respondents to Reed's study were asked to evaluate the degree of satisfaction felt with coverage of school news by television (33, p. 109). The majority (64.94 percent of the managers and 54 percent of the superintendents) believed coverage to be usually satisfactory. One-third (33 percent) of the superintendents and nearly one-fifth (18.18 percent) of the managers called coverage "always" satisfactory.

One other aspect of Reed's work held important information for this study. More than 80 percent (33, p. 109) of both the superintendents and the managers classified the existing superintendent-manager relationship as either "cordial" or "professional."

A final study noted by the writer was Bryan's (6) 1940 investigation of public relations potentials in small agricultural communities. That Nebraska based work did involve a portion of the geographic area of interest in the present study, but concerned itself with communities of a different type than those selected and studied herein.

The Growth in Importance of School-Media Relations

As the public relations industry grew, an opposite trend developed in one aspect of the newspaper industry. The number of cities in the United States with more than one newspaper declined. Morrison and Commager (29, p. 923) summarized the half-century-long trend:

In 1910 almost 700 cities and towns in the United States had competing daily newspapers; by 1954 the number had fallen to 87, and 18 states were without any local competing newspapers.

The effect of this reduction, from the standpoint of school-media relations, was to channel more information through fewer news outlets. A similar decline occurred later in the number of chief school executives,
as documented by the National School Public Relations Association (31, p. 7):

Between 1960 and 1970 the number of district units dropped from 40,520 to 18,904.

Three factors resulted from the school and newspaper changes noted above. First, in many communities one newspaper became the lone outlet for reaching the public through traditional printed means. Second, a drastic reduction in the school unit numbers placed a correspondingly heavier public relations burden on the remaining superintendents. Finally, school-media relations became the mutual concern of fewer persons, persons whose actions and perceptions affected substantially greater numbers of people.

Summary

Much of the literature cited in this chapter has dealt with the need for public relations programs or efforts in the schools, and with the role responsibilities of persons who occupy certain positions. Newcomb (32, p. 280) has written that a role is something relating behavior to a position, and not to a specific person:

The ways of behaving which are expected of any individual who occupies a certain position constitutes the role . . . it refers to the behavior of the occupants of a position -- not to all of their behavior, as persons, but to what they do as occupants of the position.

The positions of interest in this study were those of the superintendent of schools, the daily newspaper editor, and the television news director. The perceptions of persons in those roles were paramount to the study, and were therefore key ingredients in the review of the literature and related research.
Throughout the planning and execution phases of this study, attention focused on the need for clearer understandings of public relations programs in and for local public school systems. It was granted that the portion of the total public relations effort represented in the study constituted only one aspect -- school-media relations. That concentration, as such, did not in any manner seek to distract from the importance of the total program, nor did it seek to erode the successes of past programs in school public relations. Rather, the concentration found its basis in the need to enhance all programs of school public relations, regardless of the present level of fruition.

More than a dozen years ago, Harvard's Neil Gross (20, p. 107) wrote of the goals of public relations programs then unrealized in schools. His general assessment follows:

The recognized inadequacy of the public relations programs in many school systems deserves, we think, repeated emphasis. A good many superintendents (one out of five) said that community apathy was one of the major obstacles to their carrying out an effective program of public education. Since the community must give its support of the schools if they are to accomplish anything, this is a very serious problem. Why is the community apathetic? One reason could be the inadequacy of the public relations program. The essence of any public-supported enterprise lies in a mutual understanding between those who administer the enterprise and the public. The administrators should know what the public wants, and the public should know what the administrators are doing. The responsibility for this understanding and knowledge is mutual. Complaints that the apathy of the community is a major obstacle in the way of improved educational programs and facilities are confessions that public relations are inadequate.

Gross was right. The responsibility for the exchange of knowledge and understanding, which he called a mutual concern, lies at the very core of relationships between and among superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors. That mutual concern
led to the investigation reported upon in the three remaining chapters of this study.
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The problem of this study was to discover the perceived effectiveness of existing practices in school-media relations; to investigate and report upon role responsibilities in school-media relations, as perceived by superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors; and to discover the perceived relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news items.

This chapter is devoted to descriptions and discussions of the methods and procedures employed in conducting the study. The specific parts of this chapter are: (1) Design of the Study, (2) Selection of the Sample, (3) Development of the Instrument, (4) Testing and Refinement of the Instrument, (5) Collection of the Data, and (6) Treatment of the Data.

Design of the Study

Realities were necessary considerations in designing this study. Seven states, Iowa and the six surrounding Midwestern states, made up the geographic area of interest. Personal interviews, however desirable where appropriate and possible, would have demanded thousands of miles of travel. Such direct contacts might also have posed threats to confidentiality of information. It was determined that the disadvantages of a mailed questionnaire paled in comparison to the costs and uncertainties associated with personal interviews. A case can and has been made for the mailed questionnaire in instances similar to those of this study.
Mouley (30, p. 240) addressed both the quality of spacial coverage and the vital feature of encouraging candid responses:

It [the questionnaire] affords not only wider geographic coverage than any other technique, but it also reaches persons who are difficult to contact. This greater coverage makes for greater validity in the results through promoting the selections of a larger and more representative sample.

Particularly when it does not call for a signature or other means of identification, the questionnaire may, because of its greater impersonality, elicit more candid and more objective replies.

A second consideration narrowed the choice of research design. With the possible exception of situations involving substantial funding and technical assistance, experimental and quasi-experimental research designs did not appear plausible. School-media relations and the products of those endeavors constitute a vital aspect of the task of the superintendent. Of no less an important nature are the assets of high and constant standards to executives in the media establishment. One could not fault a person in either role for seeking to refrain from the uncertainties associated with experimentation.

For the above cited reasons, the research technique characterized generally as survey research was selected and employed in this study.

**Selection of the Sample**

This study was delimited demographically to cities of not more than 200,000 persons in a seven state area of the Midwest. It was also delimited to cities within that classification enjoying at least one daily newspaper of local origin and at least one local commercial television station. Application of limitations as to location, population,
and the available media resulted in a frame of cities from which subjects were drawn. Qualifying cities were arranged into strata by states, and selections of five cities from each state were accomplished by simple random sampling. A table of random numbers (15, pp. 510-512) was used. Those 35 cities constituted the municipalities of the study. The 105 selected subjects included the superintendent of schools, one daily newspaper editor, and one television news director from each of the 35 cities.

A prime factor in the delimitation to cities of not more than 200,000 persons should be noted. Under this condition, the likelihood that subjects would focus on one school, one superintendent, and one or two school-media relationships was great. General responses encompassing practices and perceptions involving several schools, television stations, and daily newspapers in a large metropolitan area were not desired.

Development of the Instrument

A three-part questionnaire was developed by the writer. Part I of the questionnaire consisted of questions on present practices in school-media relations and on the perceived effectiveness of those practices. Part II of the "closed form" questionnaire (4, p. 302) provided statements about certain role responsibilities and practices in school-media relations. Respondents were asked to check one of five possible responses to each statement:

YES: the statement is definitely true (weighted value = 7)
yes: the statement is generally true (weighted value = 5)
? : uncertain, do not wish to take a positive or negative stand (weighted value = 4)
no: the statement is generally untrue (weighted value = 3)
NO: the statement is definitely untrue (weighted value = 1)
Both the response scale above and that detailed below for Part III employed the "certainty method" (36) to assign values to responses at the extremes of the scales. Warren, Klonglan, and Sabri (36, p. 9) discussed the merits of the certainty method for use where it is assumed that extreme responses are more certain than those which lie closer to the traditional "undecided" or "uncertain" areas of scales:

The assignment of numerical values when using the certainty method does not assume equal intervals between response values. Instead, the certainty method of scoring assigns larger values to the end points of the continuum. Intuitively the certainty method assumes that there is a greater difference between a respondent or judge who disagrees with an item with a certainty of 5 and a respondent or judge who disagrees with certainty of 4 than there is between two respondents, one of whom said disagree with a certainty of 1 and the other who said disagree with a certainty of 2. In other words, extreme values are given higher scores than an equal appearing interval would allow.

Part III dealt exclusively with 40 categories of school-related news items, as previously listed in the introductory chapter. The response scale was expanded to provide seven options:

- IMPORTANT NEWS: weighted value = 9
- Important News: weighted value = 7
- Useful News: weighted value = 6
- Average News Value: weighted value = 5
- Barely Useful News: weighted value = 4
- Not Important: weighted value = 3
- NOT IMPORTANT: weighted value = 1

Several factors played key roles in guiding the development of the questionnaire. It was obvious from the beginning that the responses desired would be provided by persons who labor under demanding daily schedules. A simple method for answering or responding to items seemed imperative. The result of this concern was the closed form questionnaire, included herein as Appendix B. One possible deterrent to a high response rate was neutralized by specifically stating that names and background
information were not necessary. An offer to return the original ques-
tionnaire and a summary of the study was made in an effort to encourage participation. Persons desiring such a service were asked to provide return address information. In all other cases, the only data requested were responses to the questions, statements, and categories of school news, as found in Parts I-III.

Bases for the questions, statements, and categories making up the questionnaire were found in three principal activities: (1) the review of the literature and related research, (2) an extended observation of school-related news items appearing in the printed media and in television broadcasts, and (3) discussions with school personnel and practicing journalists.

Testing and Refinement of the Instrument

The initial draft of the questionnaire, complete with instructions, was pilot tested in May of 1975. One strategy consisted of providing for the administration of the questionnaire to volunteers in a graduate course in Education at Iowa State University. The writer was not present for the pilot test. The primary purpose of the exercise was to test the clarity of the instructions and the items. Each participant was encouraged to note reactions, problems, and any other comments for consideration during refinement. All information of this nature was noted and considered during that step. The major results of the pilot test were minor changes to certain statements in Part II and a complete redesign of the instructions for completing the ques-
tionnaire.
Following the original pilot test, copies of the revised questionnaire were submitted to the news director of a major television station and the education specialist on the staff of a large daily newspaper. Each person was asked to scrutinize the approach, the questionnaire, and each of the items therein. Communications between the writer and the two media specialists were by telephone and letter. One change was made to Part III, at the suggestion of the cooperating news director. The daily newspaper reporter did not suggest changes, but did caution against expectations of a high return rate from media personnel.

In final form, the questionnaire consisted of six pages, with three variations of the first page. This first page of each questionnaire was personalized via question number one to the three categories of participants. Appendix B contains a complete questionnaire, as well as examples of the three variations of the initial page.

In June of 1975, copies of the final form of the questionnaire were made in preparation for data collection.

Collection of the Data

This writer elected to begin the data collection process in early August of 1975. A letter of transmittal complying with the suggestions of Borg and Gall (4, pp. 204-207) was attached to each questionnaire. A copy of that letter is included in Appendix A. The questionnaire, letter of transmittal, and necessary return materials made up the packet mailed to the selected subjects.

National directories for schools, broadcasting stations, and newspapers provided the names of the persons to whom packets were mailed.
A system for attributing responses to the proper state and city was provided through zip codes and notations on the questionnaires.

Responses to the initial mailing exceeded expectations. Seventy percent of the subjects returned first-round questionnaires. A second mailing was undertaken within the month. Packets received by first mailing nonrespondents included a second questionnaire and a personal letter. An example of the follow-up letters is included in Appendix C. Each of those letters contained a direct reference to the school, television station, or daily newspaper employing the addressee. Eleven responses were received as a result of the second mailing. Of those, two were not complete.

Treatment of the Data

Data obtained from completed responses were coded by the writer and transferred to the appropriate machine cards by personnel at the Iowa State University Computer Center. The Center's computer facilities were employed for all of the original computational work.

Two types of analysis were selected by the writer to test for the presence of significant differences. All tests were made at the 0.05 level. The computer program utilized also provided information on differences which were statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level.

The first type of analysis, chi-square, was applied to certain data in Part I of the questionnaire. Data obtained from that item were "nominal measurement" (15, p. 8) responses. In that instance there were seven possible responses where the expected response was less than five responses per cell. To prevent improper application of the chi-square
technique in that case, data were combined, or collapsed, in such a manner as to include all responses under three response headings. Tests for significance were then applied. The findings were reported in both that form and in the form of the original responses to the item.

The second type of analysis was applied to all data from Part II and Part III of the questionnaire. A one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was employed to determine if at least one significant difference existed among the responses to each item by the three groups of persons. Where significant differences did occur at the 0.05 level, the nature of the difference or differences was determined by Scheffe's test.

Mean scores, as computed from all responses and from responses within each of the three groups, were also analyzed and reported.
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

Introduction

The three-fold purpose of this study was (1) to discover the perceived effectiveness of existing practices in school-media relations in the Midwest; (2) to investigate and report upon responsibilities in school-media relations, as perceived by superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors; and (3) to discover the perceived relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news items.

Participants in this study were selected from a total of 35 cities from seven states in the Midwest. Table 1 contains a listing of the seven states and the mean populations of the five selected cities in each of the states. Individual populations ranged from less than 10,000 persons to more than 175,000 persons. Each city met the established criteria of possessing at least one daily newspaper and at least one local commercial television station. Each was, of course, also served by a local public school system.

Table 1. Mean populations of selected cities from each of the seven states

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number of cities</th>
<th>Mean population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>75,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>53,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dakota</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>32,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aPopulations were determined from 1970 U.S. Census data, using figures rounded to the nearest thousand.
A total of 83 persons (79.04 percent of the 105 superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors in the selected sample) participated in the study. Two responses from television news directors did not contain complete, usable data and were not included in the analysis found in this chapter.

The 81 completed responses originated from the seven states as follows: Illinois, 13; Nebraska, 13; Iowa, 12; Minnesota, 12; Wisconsin, 12; Missouri, 10; and South Dakota, 9. The maximum number of responses possible from each state was 15.

To accomplish the purpose of this study, it was necessary to center investigative and analytical efforts on persons in three prime roles. Table 2 compared data on the response rates for persons in each of the three roles.

Table 2. Response rates for superintendents, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Number selected</th>
<th>Completed responses</th>
<th>Percent return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily newspaper editors</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television news directors</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Incomplete responses were received from two television news directors. Data from those two persons were not coded or considered further in this study.

Only one of the 35 cities was not represented by at least one completed response. That city was the second most-distant geographically from the point of dissemination of the questionnaires.
Findings from this study were presented under seven subheadings which serve as bases for organization of this report of findings and statistical analyses. They were: (1) perceived effectiveness of existing practices in school-media relations, (2) planning and cooperation between the schools and the media, (3) provisions and procedures for the reporting of school news, (4) role of the media in executive sessions of the board of education, (5) role of editorial comment in school-media relations, (6) perceived role responsibilities in school-media relations, and (7) perceived relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news items.

Perceived Effectiveness of Existing Practices in School-Media Relations

Respondents were asked to rate the overall effectiveness of the relationships existing in the local community. Superintendents of schools rated the effectiveness of existing practices in a more optimistic fashion than did daily newspaper editors or television news directors. Table 3 provided information on the percent of responses attributed to each level by each of the three groups of respondents. For statistical analysis, responses were combined to form three cells: the best-excellent, very good-average, and fair-poor-very poor. The data were then subjected to chi-square analysis. Results showed a raw chi-square of 18.72 (with four degrees of freedom; significance of 0.001).

The lowest ratings observed in each of the three groups in Table 3 were identified by the writer as having originated in one city. The effectiveness of practices in school-media relations in that community
was "fair" according to the superintendent, "poor" as reported by the daily newspaper editor, and "very poor" in the view of the news director of the television station. It was also remarkable that only nine persons (11.1 percent) rated the effectiveness of existing practices below "average."

Table 3. Perceived effectiveness of existing practices in school-media relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) 1 = best; 2 = excellent; 3 = very good; 4 = average; 5 = fair; 6 = poor; 7 = very poor.

Table 4 summarized responses of participants regarding the present status of school-media relations at the local level. Respondents classified that characteristic according to a three-part scale: improving—remaining constant—declining. Substantial differences were observed, with superintendents and news directors exhibiting the most striking differences. More superintendents perceived local relations to be improving than did editors or news directors.

Table 4. Perceived status of school-media relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Improving n</th>
<th>Improving %</th>
<th>Remaining constant n</th>
<th>Remaining constant %</th>
<th>Declining n</th>
<th>Declining %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seventy-nine of the 81 persons (97.53 percent) responding rated local school-media relations as "remaining constant" or "improving." Two newspaper editors (2.47 percent of the total response) characterized local relations as "declining."

The responses to questions on the effectiveness of existing practices and on the perceived status of local school-media relations logically lead to an examination of practices of planning and cooperation.

Planning and Cooperation Between the Schools and the Media

All of the newspaper editors, as would be expected, reported that specific assignments for the coverage of school news were made by their agencies. However, responses markedly different from those of the editors were observed for superintendents and news directors. Information relative to that practice is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Respondents indicating that specific assignments for school news reporting had been made

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prime differences were between newspaper editors and both superintendents and news directors. These differences should not be surprising, although the writer did question the value of the data from this item because of the possible diversity of interpretations of the question by
superintendents. Some concern was registered at the number of negative responses by news directors.

Participants were also asked to indicate local actions regarding the practice of meeting at least annually for the purpose of improving coverage of school news. Fifty percent of the superintendents, 33.3 percent of the newspaper editors, and 41.7 percent of the television news directors reported that such meetings occur on at least an annual basis.

Provisions and Procedures for the Reporting of School News

Participants were asked to rate the adequacy of the flow of information from the local school to the media. Responses were summarized in Table 6. Although differences did exist, they were not of an unexpected nature or degree.

Table 6. Perceived adequacy of the flow of information from the schools to the media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Always n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Often n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Occasionally n</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Never n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It seems relatively common for authors and other authorities to urge school officials to encourage media personnel to visit schools often as an aid to reporting and thorough coverage. Participants in this study were asked to respond to a question on the perceived presence of
such invitations. As shown in Table 7, superintendents perceived a higher level of invitations to visit for reporting purposes than did editors; editors, however, perceived a higher level of the presence of such invitations than did news directors. One might logically expect superintendents to perceive a greater degree of encouragement to visit the schools than would either of the groups of media personnel.

Table 7. Perceived levels of school-extended invitations to media personnel to visit the schools for in-depth reporting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One complaint about media coverage of school news, according to some of the literature cited earlier, is that of errors in the reporting and interpretation of school news. The perceived frequency of errors is reported in Table 8.

The data made it apparent that such a complaint was not common to superintendents participating in this study. Editors and news directors also indicated that the issue was not major. Most superintendents (53.3 percent), editors (63.0 percent), and news directors (66.7 percent) felt that such errors occur only "occasionally." Differences in the responses to the questions were not especially notable.
Table 8. Perceived frequency of errors in the reporting of school news

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>63.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another aspect of reporting was the perception of each group regarding the reporting of "unfavorable aspects" of school news along with that type of news generally called "favorable." Responses from the three groups did not differ substantially. Ninety percent of the superintendents, 81.5 percent of the editors, and 91.3 percent of the news directors stated that unfavorable aspects of school news were reported as fully as were the favorable aspects.

The final item presented under this subheading pertained to the perceived importance of the role played by the media in influencing the results of such public issues as school board elections and bond issue elections. The responses from the three groups, as presented in Table 9, contained only minor differences.

Table 9. Perceived frequency by which media personnel play an important role in the outcomes of school bond issue elections, school board elections, and similar public issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Role of the Media in Executive Sessions

One aspect of school-media relations, related closely to the provisions and procedures reported above, dealt with a topic of considerable interest in an era featuring concern with open government. Executive sessions are not uncommon in meetings of boards of education. A continuing debate is heard over the role of the press, participation or exclusion, in such sessions. Participants in this study were asked to respond to two questions on the matter. The first item simply asked if media personnel were invited to sit in on executive sessions. A majority of respondents in each group reported that media personnel were not invited to observe the sessions. Exact data were placed in Table 10. No extreme differences were present.

Table 10. Responses to the question of whether media personnel were invited to observe executive sessions of the board of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second item dealt with attendance at executive sessions when invitations were extended. As in the first item on this topic, no significant differences were found among the responses by the three groups. Table 11 showed the reported attendance by media personnel when invitations to observe executive sessions were extended. Readers
should note that only 46 persons responded to the second item on executive sessions. This was, in the opinion of the writer, a function of the nature of the phrasing of the question. Persons who responded negatively to the first item would likely have omitted item two. Also, some persons who had, at one time, extended or received invitations to attend and observe executive sessions may have responded to item two with that thought or experience in mind.

Table 11. Frequency of attendance at executive sessions by media personnel when invitations were extended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Role of Editorial Comment on School Matters

One item on Part I of the questionnaire used in this study investigated perceptions as to the frequency of editorial comment on local school matters. As shown in Table 12, substantial differences were present in the responses from the three groups of participants.

Caution should be observed in the study of the data in Table 12. It is possible that superintendents responded in terms of editorial opinions appearing in both the printed and electronic media, while editors and news directors may have concerned themselves only with editorial comment in the medium through which they function.
Table 12. Perceived frequency of editorial comment on school matters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Seldom</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper editors</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>News directors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data in Table 12 did show that a significant difference did exist between superintendents and news directors and, also, between newspaper editors and news directors on the matter of the frequency of editorial comment on school matters.

Perceived Role Responsibilities in School-Media Relations

Data pertaining to role responsibilities in school-media relations, as perceived by school superintendents, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors, were summarized in Table 13. Mean responses ranged from a low of 3.769 (daily newspaper editors responding to statement five) to a high of 6.926 (daily newspaper editors responding to statement ten). The maximum possible mean score for any group's responses to any one statement was 7.000, and would have indicated total and strongest agreement with the statement. The minimum possible mean score, 1.000, would have indicated total and strongest disagreement with a statement.

Significant differences were found for responses to statements four (F-value of 13.854), five (F-value of 11.691), six (F-value of 7.627),
Table 13. Mean responses to 12 statements regarding role responsibilities in school-media relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean responses&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The superintendent of schools is responsible for the district's program of community/public relations.</td>
<td>5.733</td>
<td>5.482</td>
<td>5.250</td>
<td>1.143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Media personnel play an important role as &quot;watchdogs&quot; regarding the operation and financing of the public schools.</td>
<td>5.233</td>
<td>5.741</td>
<td>5.375</td>
<td>0.931</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reporters should have access to all information and documents in the public schools, with the exception of certain personnel records.</td>
<td>5.900</td>
<td>6.333</td>
<td>6.375</td>
<td>1.115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The superintendent should provide for a calendarized flow of news releases and/or information on possible news items to all media agencies in the community.</td>
<td>5.100</td>
<td>4.769</td>
<td>6.417</td>
<td>13.854**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reporters should call back on news stories to ensure accuracy prior to printing or broadcast.</td>
<td>5.600</td>
<td>3.769</td>
<td>5.792</td>
<td>11.691**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. The school's management team should invite the media to attend executive sessions of the board of education as an aid to complete background information in later reporting.</td>
<td>4.067</td>
<td>4.593</td>
<td>6.042</td>
<td>7.627**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. It is necessary that a strong positive relationship be maintained between the office of the superintendent of schools and the media representatives of the area.</td>
<td>6.867</td>
<td>5.889</td>
<td>5.667</td>
<td>6.750**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Mean responses include Superintendents, Editors, Directors, and F-values.
8. Reporters should seek in-depth news materials from teachers, students, and other persons associated directly with the school.  

9. The relationship between the superintendent of schools and the media representatives of the community will become increasingly more important over the next decade.  

10. Major errors in the reporting of school news should be corrected, in the most forthright and expeditious public manner possible, by the person or persons responsible for the errors.  

11. The superintendent of schools bears the responsibility for providing information and/or news releases to all news outlets in the community.  

12. Editorial comment is one method of providing the public with timely and important information on public school matters.  

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.533</td>
<td>6.125</td>
<td>6.148</td>
<td>2.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.233</td>
<td>5.704</td>
<td>5.875</td>
<td>1.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.133</td>
<td>6.926</td>
<td>6.792</td>
<td>7.524**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.100</td>
<td>4.815</td>
<td>5.875</td>
<td>3.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.967</td>
<td>6.185</td>
<td>5.167</td>
<td>4.918*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^Definitely true = 7; generally true = 5; uncertain = 4; generally untrue = 3; definitely untrue = 1.

*Significant at the 0.05 level.

**Significant beyond the 0.05 level.
seven (F-value of 6.750), ten (F-value of 7.524), and twelve (F-value of 4.918). The degrees of freedom was 79 for items four and five, and 80 for all others.

Discussions of those differences and the other findings relative to the 12 statements were organized into 12 subsections, each headed by the statement under discussion.

**Statement No. 1**: The superintendent of schools is responsible for the district's program of community/public relations.

Responses by the three groups of persons did not differ significantly (F-value was 1.143). Mean responses of 5.733, 5.482, and 5.250, respectively from superintendents, daily newspaper editors, and news directors, indicated that respondents were in general agreement with the statement. Such findings were in accord with those of Gross, Ward, and McEachern (21, pp. 345-348) in their Massachusetts study and with the uncompromising statement by McCloskey (26, p. 267).

**Statement No. 2**: Media personnel play an important role as "watchdogs" regarding the operation and financing of public schools.

Daily newspaper editors indicated slightly greater agreement with the statement ($\bar{X} = 5.741$) than did superintendents ($\bar{X} = 5.233$) or news directors ($\bar{X} = 5.375$). Differences were not, however, statistically significant, as evidenced by the F-value of 0.931. In view of statements on the matter cited earlier, and Hollstein's (22) general finding that media personnel generally felt such a responsibility toward local governmental functions, this finding should not have been unexpected.

**Statement No. 3**: Reporters should have access to all information and documents in the public schools, with the exception of certain personnel records.

Two factors cast a significant shadow of uncertainty over findings
under this statement. One was the general and admittedly ambiguous language comprising the statement. It would have been relatively easy for respondents to place differing interpretations as to intent. Also, trends in privacy of records and confidentiality of information may have been instrumental in causing responses other than those which might have been received from similar questioning in previous years.

Means responses from the three groups did not differ significantly. While agreeing generally with the statement, superintendents ($\overline{X} = 5.900$) were less certain in their sentiments than were editors ($\overline{X} = 6.333$) and news directors ($\overline{X} = 6.375$).

**Statement No. 4:** The superintendent should provide a calendarized flow of news releases and/or information on possible news items to all media agencies in the community.

Responses by superintendents ($\overline{X} = 5.100$) and editors ($\overline{X} = 4.769$) were significantly different beyond the 0.05 level ($F$-value of 13.854) from those by news directors ($\overline{X} = 6.417$). Several thoughts can be posed as plausible explanations or factors which may have contributed to the differences. The lowest mean score, by editors, would appear to reflect a reportorial attitude that a function of newspaper reporting is to "dig out" and report upon news items. It would then be logical for persons associated with daily newspapers to feel that the role of the superintendent would not include behaviors expressed in the statement. Superintendents, while generally agreeing with the statement, would also have been expected by this researcher to hold reservations about premeditated and automatic release of information, absent knowledge of the specific nature of the information. News directors, on the other hand, might well have responded via their significantly higher mean score of 6.417 because
of a desire to be informed of items which could have been readily transformed into concise news reports. This finding of significantly stronger agreement on the statement by news directors may have resulted also from a possibly greater interest by superintendents and editors in more expansive or detailed reports on school news items. Generally, such reports would require more vigorous investigations than the receipt of a press release or a news tip.

Statement No. 5: Reporters should call back on news stories to ensure accuracy prior to printing or broadcast.

Superintendents and news directors indicated general agreement, with mean responses of 5.600 and 5.792, respectively. It is quite understandable that superintendents of schools would desire such opportunities to preview news items, offer comments on content and intent, and perhaps refute the substance of the budding story. The rationale for agreement by news directors remained more difficult to explain.

Daily newspaper editors differed significantly (F-value of 11.691; statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level) in their mean response, a response which indicated general disagreement with the statement. One would normally expect many newspaper persons to abhor the thought of submitting reportorial products to a scrutiny not far removed from the theoretical base of censorship.

The 3.769 mean response by editors was the lowest mean score calculated, and therefore represented the strongest disagreement by any group with any statement.

Statement No. 6: The school's management team should invite the media to attend executive sessions of the board of education as an aid to complete background information in later reporting.
Earlier cited comments in the Iowa School Board Dialogue (23, p. 12) showed agreement between a news department official of a television station and a newspaper executive on the question of media presence in executive sessions. That agreement did not hold true in the findings relative to statement six. Mean response by editors was 4.593, while news directors were in strong agreement with the statement ($\bar{X} = 6.042$). Superintendents answered with a mean score of 4.067.

The data here indicated four general findings: (1) superintendents, while uncertain on the whole, were least agreeable to the thought of media personnel in executive sessions of the board of education; (2) editors held about the same feelings as superintendents; (3) news directors strongly agreed with the statement; and (4) the mean response from news directors differed significantly from those by superintendents and editors.

**Statement No. 7:** It is necessary that a strong positive relationship be maintained between the office of the superintendent of schools and media representatives of the area.

Superintendents ($\bar{X} = 6.867$) were in strong agreement with this statement, while editors ($\bar{X} = 5.889$) and news directors ($\bar{X} = 5.667$) agreed generally. The difference between responses by the superintendents and by others was statistically significant (F-value of 6.750) beyond the 0.05 level. The writer here espouses the thought that the elevation in number and complexity of problems in local public education has had the effect of causing superintendents to seek out the most forceful and forthright methods of increasing community awareness and empathy. This statement may have connoted some degree of control over school news
by superintendents, and lower mean scores by editors and news directors may have resulted from that possible interpretation.

**Statement No. 8:** Reporters should seek in-depth news materials from teachers, students, and other persons associated directly with the school.

Although superintendents responded with a lower mean score ($\bar{X} = 5.533$) than did editors ($\bar{X} = 6.125$) or news directors ($\bar{X} = 6.148$), the differences were not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The findings offered some support to the earlier study by the New England Development Council, in Kindred (25, p. 57), on the subject of media personnel by-passing the superintendent in ferreting out school news.

**Statement No. 9:** The relationship between the superintendent of schools and the media representatives of the community will become increasingly more important over the next decade.

While not significantly different statistically, the mean response by superintendents ($\bar{X} = 6.233$) was in stronger agreement with the statement than were those by editors ($\bar{X} = 5.704$) or news directors ($\bar{X} = 5.875$), a pattern which was also present in findings under the related statements one and seven. The chief finding was the fact that all three groups agreed with the statement.

**Statement No. 10:** Major errors in the reporting of school news should be corrected, in the most forthright and expeditious public manner possible, by the person or persons responsible for the errors.

Each group was in strong agreement with the statement. However, the mean response by superintendents ($\bar{X} = 6.133$) was significantly different from those by editors ($\bar{X} = 6.926$) and news directors ($\bar{X} = 6.792$).

The researcher considered, as possible bases for these differences, the perceived effects of such corrections. Editors and news directors
may have felt a professional, ethical obligation to ensure corrections to earlier errors. Superintendents may have pragmatically accepted a belief that the damage or misinformation created by errors in the process of reporting school news would not be substantially altered by corrections.

Despite the fact that a significant difference was present, this researcher maintained that the major finding in responses to this statement was the fact that all three groups agreed strongly with the statement.

**Statement No. 11:** The superintendent of schools bears the responsibility for providing information and/or news releases to all news outlets in the community.

The intent of the statement's use was to determine if persons in the three groups held different perceptions of the superintendent's role responsibility in this matter. Superintendents ($\bar{x} = 5.100$) generally agreed. The intriguing difference was between editors ($\bar{x} = 4.815$) and news directors ($\bar{x} = 5.875$). Apparently editors participating in the study were more prone to feel that the responsibility for news gathering resided with the media. News directors were in strongest agreement with the statement, a fact which provided further credibility to the related findings under statement four. It would appear that news directors are more receptive to overt actions by school officials to assist reporting than are editors. Differences noted in responses to this statement were not, however, significantly different.

**Statement No. 12:** Editorial comment is one method of providing the public with timely and important information on public school matters.

One significant difference was found among responses to statement 12, a difference statistically significant at the 0.05 level; editors, with a
mean response of 6.185, were in significantly stronger agreement with the statement than were superintendents ($\bar{X} = 4.967$). This difference was far from alarming, or enlightening, as one should expect newspaper personnel to favor and even defend editorial comment as a legitimate exercise.

News directors also agreed with the statement, but their mean response was not significantly different from either that of superintendents or of editors.

The Perceived Relative Importance of 40 Categories of School-Related News Items

Part III of the questionnaire completed by respondents presented 40 categories of school-related news. Each person was asked to rate each category of news on the basis of the perceived relative importance of the item. Mean scores for each of the 40 categories were calculated for each group of respondents and were presented in Table 14.

The maximum possible mean score for any category, as perceived by any group, was 9.000. Such a score would have indicated unanimous agreement that the category so rated was assigned the greatest importance possible. A score of 1.000 would have been the lowest possible score, and would have indicated unanimity in assigning the minimum level of importance to the category.

Mean responses, as found in Table 14, ranged from a high of 8.778 (special tax levies, as rated by daily newspaper editors) to lows of 4.348 (assigned by television news directors to (1) values clarification programs and (2) clubs and activities other than athletics or music).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Overall Rank</th>
<th>Overall Mean</th>
<th>Superintendent Rank</th>
<th>Superintendent Mean</th>
<th>Editors Rank</th>
<th>Editors Mean</th>
<th>News directors Rank</th>
<th>News directors Mean</th>
<th>F-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The district's annual budget</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.481</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.300</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.556</td>
<td>1 (T)</td>
<td>8.625</td>
<td>0.735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school tax levy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.333</td>
<td>3 (T)</td>
<td>7.867</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.593</td>
<td>1 (T)</td>
<td>8.625</td>
<td>4.434*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond issue elections &amp; campaigns</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.291</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.172</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.407</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.304</td>
<td>0.381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special tax levies</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.225</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.690</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.778</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.250</td>
<td>4.056*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The annual budget hearing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.580</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.567</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.704</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.583</td>
<td>0.203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective bargaining</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.481</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.300</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.520</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.667</td>
<td>0.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings of board of education</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.346</td>
<td>3 (T)</td>
<td>7.867</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.556</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.458</td>
<td>8.211**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School board policies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.137</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.931</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.407</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.083</td>
<td>0.723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovations - classroom/building</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.753</td>
<td>10 (T)</td>
<td>7.133</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.148</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5.833</td>
<td>8.142**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race relations</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.724</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.778</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.520</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.875</td>
<td>0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment information</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.658</td>
<td>10 (T)</td>
<td>7.133</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.192</td>
<td>20 (T)</td>
<td>5.435</td>
<td>14.528**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic programs and events</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.570</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.300</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.435</td>
<td>2.349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug education programs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.506</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.467</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.692</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.348</td>
<td>0.402</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dismissal proceedings against personnel</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6.468</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7.077</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.375</td>
<td>2.528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education programs</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.321</td>
<td>14 (T)</td>
<td>6.667</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6.577</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.546</td>
<td>5.579**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex education programs</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.295</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.276</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.500</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.087</td>
<td>0.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement levels in the school</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.284</td>
<td>14 (T)</td>
<td>6.667</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.482</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>Category</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>Note</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The school calendar</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.035</td>
<td><strong>22.103</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature material about superintendent</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5.975</td>
<td><strong>8.043</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feature material about members of the board of education</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5.925</td>
<td><strong>8.949</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feature material about students</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5.912</td>
<td><strong>16.236</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student transportation</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>5.862</td>
<td>1.256</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature material about teachers</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5.850</td>
<td>14.230**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information comparing school to others</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.837</td>
<td><em>4.071</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Music programs and events</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.823</td>
<td><strong>8.072</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information on drop-outs</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5.797</td>
<td>1.765</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Career education programs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.782</td>
<td><strong>9.594</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feature material about principals</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.775</td>
<td><strong>10.244</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature material about counselors</td>
<td>31(T)</td>
<td>5.675</td>
<td><strong>14.412</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading systems</td>
<td>31(T)</td>
<td>5.675</td>
<td><strong>10.089</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hot lunch programs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.537</td>
<td>1.038</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Values clarification programs</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.410</td>
<td><strong>8.545</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up studies on former students</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.329</td>
<td><strong>8.891</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library and media services</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5.262</td>
<td><strong>8.596</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empl. of new certificated personnel</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.241</td>
<td>3.131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other clubs and activities (not athletics or music)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>5.101</td>
<td><strong>9.840</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent-teacher associations</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.974</td>
<td>3.274</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empl. of new noncertificated personnel</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.654</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at the 0.05 level; **Significant beyond the 0.05 level.
In addition to the mean scores computed for each category from responses by each group, Table 14 contains a rank-ordering of the 40 categories of school-related news. A rank-ordering of the mean scores computed from all responses was also included in Table 14.

Significant differences were found among mean scores of the groups of respondents for 22 of the 40 categories. Three of the 22 differences were significantly different only at the 0.05 level. All other differences were statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level.

Table 14 served as a vehicle for displaying all of the findings regarding the perceived relative importance of the 40 categories of school-related news items. It was deemed appropriate to present data in such a manner as an aid to readers in making comparisons of ranks and mean scores. Table 14 was later divided into Tables 15-18 for the purpose of more detailed discussions of the findings.

Upon first study, the data in Table 14 revealed several interesting general comparisons with works of earlier researchers. Broderick's (5) general finding of high interest by media personnel in finance-related news items was mirrored in this study. The six categories of school news, by composite ranking, were all directly related to the financial aspects of public education.

Both sharp contrasts and marked similarities to findings of Farley (12) were present. Pupil progress, methods of instruction, and curriculum, rated high by parents in that study, did not enjoy such esteem in the current study; they, or counterpart categories, were generally in the "second ten" of the 40 categories of this study. Parent teacher
associations, second from the bottom in the 1929 survey, held that exact position.

Continued general examination of the data in Table 14 disclosed several startling differences in the rank-orderings of mean scores from each of the three groups. The school calendar, an important item to superintendents (9th), was of relatively little interest to editors (ranked 32nd) and news directors (ranked 36th). Athletic programs and events, a category of school news which commanded nearly half of the newspaper space devoted to schools at the time of Farley's study (12), was ranked in the top ten by news directors, but was ranked much lower (22nd) by superintendents. Dismissal proceedings against personnel, as a category of school news, held position number 11 in the rank-orderings of mean scores by editors and news directors, but was number 28 in the ordering of superintendents' mean scores. In every instance, feature materials were higher in the rank-ordering of mean scores from superintendents than from those of editors and news directors.

Two categories of school news relating to the employment of new personnel were of minimal consequence to respondents. The category dealing with certificated personnel was near the bottom of each rank-ordering, while the similar category on noncertificated personnel was a near-unanimous last place entry.

Casual observation of Table 14, centering on mean responses which were less than 5.000, led to a general finding that superintendents and editors tend to place greater importance on many categories of school-related news than do television news directors. Only one of the 40 categories received such a mean score from superintendents. Two
categories were so rated by editors of daily newspapers. Television news directors, however, responded in a manner that resulted in 15 categories of school-related news with mean scores of less than 5.000. Those same news directors lavished their highest mean scores recorded (8.625 for both the district's annual budget and the school tax levy) to the categories rank-ordered in first and second places on the basis of responses by all participants. Based on the evidence available, it seems likely that television news directors view many types of school-related news with less favor than do either superintendents of schools or editors of daily newspapers.

The above general observations fail to examine differences, similarities, and trends in a thorough manner. To perform that task in an appropriate manner, one must look closely at each category of school-related news and at the related statistical evidence gathered from the participants. Therefore, the following portion of this chapter was developed for the purpose of analyzing the information in Table 14 on an item-by-item basis. To accomplish this, that information was presented in Tables 15-18, with more precise information on the level of significance of each difference observed.

Table 15 presented information on those 10 categories of school-related news which were ranked 1-10 on the basis of mean scores computed from responses by all participants.

It has not been totally uncommon in recent years for national news agencies to report upon the budgetary woes of public school districts. Court rulings have shed new light on contemporary interpretations of equality of educational opportunity, and local district patrons have
raised serious concerns over the taxation of property and the use of such public monies. One should expect annual budgets of local school districts to be a prime topic of discussions, both private and in the public media. In the case of this study, the district's annual budget was the single most important item of school news, as presented in Table 15. Furthermore, while daily newspaper editors alone did not rate the topic at the very top, responses from the three groups did not differ significantly. The mean score from superintendents (8.300) was exceeded by editors (8.556) and news directors (8.625), but the F-value of 0.735 did not provide evidence of the existence of statistically significant differences. The findings here suggest that superintendents and media personnel do view the annual budget as a chief topic for school-related news reports.

The second category, the school tax levy, was also scored highly by the three groups of respondents. In evaluating the data, it should be noted that while each group's rank-ordering resulted in prominence for the item, a significant difference was present. Superintendents of schools assigned a significantly lower set of scores than did either editors or news directors.

Findings relative to the two categories discussed above suggested that there are three major factors which are valued as news material: (1) the amount of funds to be/being expended, (2) the allocations of those resources within the budget, and (3) sources of funds for school operation. Local tax levies would, of course, be a vital part of the third factor.
Table 15. Mean responses and ranks by superintendents, editors, and news directors to the categories of school news ranked 1-10 by all respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Superintendents</th>
<th>Editors</th>
<th>News directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rank mean</td>
<td>rank mean</td>
<td>rank mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The district's annual budget</td>
<td>1 8.300</td>
<td>3 8.556</td>
<td>1(T) 8.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The school tax levy</td>
<td>3(T) 7.867</td>
<td>2 8.593</td>
<td>1(T) 8.625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bond issue elections and campaigns</td>
<td>2 8.172</td>
<td>4 8.407</td>
<td>3 8.304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Special tax levies</td>
<td>5 7.690</td>
<td>1 8.778</td>
<td>4 8.250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The annual budget hearing</td>
<td>6 7.567</td>
<td>5 7.704</td>
<td>6 7.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Collective bargaining</td>
<td>8 7.300</td>
<td>7 7.520</td>
<td>5 7.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Meetings of the board of education</td>
<td>3(T) 7.867</td>
<td>6 7.556</td>
<td>9 6.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. School board policies</td>
<td>12 6.931</td>
<td>8 7.407</td>
<td>7 7.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Innovations - classroom/building</td>
<td>10(T) 7.133</td>
<td>10 7.148</td>
<td>14(T) 5.833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Race relations</td>
<td>13 6.778</td>
<td>17 6.520</td>
<td>8 6.875</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another issue involving the financial aspect of education, bond issue elections and campaigns, was the third most important category according to participants in this study. Superintendents produced a mean score of 8.172, while scores for editors and news directors were 8.407 and 8.304, respectively. There were no significant differences present.
Special tax levies, as a category of school news, produced one significant difference after analysis of the data. News directors, with a mean score of 8.778, were not different from superintendents or from editors. Superintendents did, however, produce a mean score (7.690) which was significantly different from that of newspaper editors (8.778). This difference was statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

Very little difference was found on examination of the perceived relative importance of the annual budget hearing as a topic or category of school news. Mean scores of 7.567, 7.704, and 7.583, respectively from superintendents, newspaper editors, and news directors, were not significantly different. That topic also held either fifth or sixth place in each of the rank-orderings of categories.

Collective bargaining was also scored as a category of school news of substantial importance. News directors produced a mean score of 7.667. Mean scores from newspaper editors (7.520) and superintendents (7.300) were lower, but were not significantly different from each other or from that of news directors (F-value of 0.525).

A significant difference was observed upon study of responses relative to meetings of the board of education. The mean response from news directors (6.458) was significantly different from those by newspaper editors (7.556) and superintendents (7.867), significant beyond the 0.05 level. This evidence suggested that, while all three groups considered the category of school news to be an important one, persons most likely to be concerned with the more detailed aspects of board of education meetings placed a higher value on resultant news potential. It may also suggest that normally routine board of education meetings are better
reported in the printed media than through the limited resource of television news time.

One of the interesting findings reported in Table 15 was that of responses to the category entitled as school board policies. Superintendents, who generally have an immense stake in policies of the board of education, rated the item lower than others. Mean responses by newspaper editors (7.407) and news directors (7.083) were higher than that by superintendents (6.931), but the differences did not possess the quality of statistical significance at the 0.05 level.

The ninth ranked category of school-related news, innovations at the classroom and/or building levels, produced both striking difference and somewhat unusual similarity. Newspaper editors and superintendents showed mean scores which were nearly identical (7.148 and 7.133, respectively) and the rank-ordering in each case resulted in the category assuming position number 10. News directors produced a mean score (5.833) which was significantly different at the 0.05 level, but the appropriate rank-ordering (tied for position number 14) was little different from the other two groups. It was clearly evident that superintendents and newspaper editors participating in this study held classroom/building level innovations in considerably greater regard as news materials than did news directors. It was also clearly suggested that newspaper editors constitute a more receptive market for news accounts based on items of the category than do news directors.

Race relations was the category of school-related news completing the first 10 items in the rank-ordering by composite mean scores. The eighth most important category as perceived by news directors, race
relations, rated in positions 13 and 17, respectively, for superintendents and newspaper editors. Furthermore, the minute differences among mean scores were not statistically significant. Such evidence suggested very little disagreement among superintendents, newspaper editors, and news directors regarding the perceived relative importance of race relations as a category of school-related news.

Readers should exercise extreme care in accepting the above-cited finding if the intent should be to apply the result to any area of the United States other than the area from which the sample was drawn. It would be totally inappropriate to do so since issues falling into the category of race relations often constitute major news stories of national reporting services and agencies. Notations on margins of several questionnaires carried the message that the relative importance assigned by the respondent represented only the perceived relative importance at that time in one locality, and that a different level of importance would likely be in order if responding to the item from another basis.

Table 16 contained information on the categories of school-related news rank-ordered 11-20 according to the mean scores of all respondents. A greater variety of categories, by type of category, appeared in the listing than in the listing of categories rank-order 1-10.

One significant difference was present in the data relating to the school's curriculum as a category of school-related news. This difference, between the mean score from superintendents (7.379) and the mean score from news directors (5.750), was statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level. The mean score from newspaper editors (6.778) was not significantly different from scores from either of the other groups.
Table 16. Mean responses and ranks by superintendents, editors, and news directors to the categories of school news ranked 11-20 by all respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Superintendents</th>
<th>Editors</th>
<th>News directors</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rank mean</td>
<td>rank mean</td>
<td>rank mean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The school's curriculum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.285</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.379</td>
<td>6.778</td>
<td>5.750</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Enrollment information</td>
<td>10(T)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20(T)</td>
<td>14.528</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.133</td>
<td>7.192</td>
<td>5.435</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Athletic programs and events</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.349</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.300</td>
<td>7.000</td>
<td>6.435</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Drug education programs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td>0.654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.467</td>
<td>6.692</td>
<td>6.348</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Dismissal proceedings</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.528</td>
<td>0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.000</td>
<td>7.077</td>
<td>6.375</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Special education programs</td>
<td>14(T)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.579</td>
<td>0.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.667</td>
<td>6.577</td>
<td>5.546</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Sex education programs</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>0.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.276</td>
<td>6.500</td>
<td>6.087</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Achievement levels in the school</td>
<td>14(T)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2.856</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.667</td>
<td>6.482</td>
<td>5.583</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Student behavior problems</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14(T)</td>
<td>2.158</td>
<td>0.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.133</td>
<td>6.680</td>
<td>5.833</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. The school calendar</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22.103</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.233</td>
<td>5.962</td>
<td>4.478</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The category of school-related news holding position 12 consisted of enrollment information. In that case, it was again interesting to note the substantial differences between the mean score of superintendents (7.133) and news directors (5.435), and between the news directors and newspaper editors (7.192). As with the case of innovations at the
classroom/building level, superintendents and newspaper editors produced nearly identical scores. The data suggested that enrollment information would be less likely to receive banner treatment from news directors than would nearly 20 other categories of school-related news. These differences, between superintendents and news directors and between newspaper editors and news directors, were statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level.

Earlier, it was noted that Farley (12) had found that nearly one-half of the newspaper space devoted to school matters was consumed by accounts or features on athletics. In this study, it was found that athletic programs and events, as a category of school-related news, was scored by all groups as far less important than the very top categories in the rank-ordering by mean scores from all respondents. Newspaper editors produced a mean score of 7.000, which was greater than that from superintendents (6.300) or news directors (6.435). These differences were not, however, significantly different at the 0.05 level.

Responses to drug education programs as a category of school-related news produced mean scores of 6.692 from newspaper editors, 6.467 from superintendents, and 6.348 from news directors. These relatively minor differences were not, upon analysis, statistically significant. Farley's (12) earlier ranking of 13 categories of school news contained an item, "health of pupils," which closely resembled the item under discussion. In that instance, the category was afforded third place in the ranking of the 13 categories. However, it should be recalled that the ranking in Farley's study resulted from data collected from parents of fifth grade youngsters. Close parallels would, therefore, be drawn only at high risk.
The category of school-related news dealing with dismissal proceedings against personnel did not produce significant differences but did reveal that the rank-orderings resulting from the mean scores of the three groups were somewhat dissimilar. The nonsignificant differences occurred among mean scores from superintendents (6.000), news directors (6.348), and newspaper editors (7.077). While the first of these means resulted in the category becoming the occupant of position number 28 in the rank-ordering by superintendents, the latter two caused dismissal proceedings against personnel to hold position number 11 the rank-orderings by both newspaper editors and news directors. The second observation suggested that media personnel perhaps do find news merit in such proceedings, while superintendents consider actions of the type implied to be of a lesser value for public printing or broadcast.

The categories in positions 16 and 17 of Table 16 were specific programs which have developed to present form in the relatively recent past. One was found to be perceived in nearly the same manner by respondents as a category of school-related news, while the other was viewed in a different light by one of the three groups.

Special education programs contained that significant difference. Superintendents' responses produced a mean score of 6.667, which was not different statistically from the 6.577 mean response from newspaper editors. Both of those mean scores were significantly different at the 0.05 level from the 5.546 mean score from responding news directors. In view of the rank-order position of the individual mean scores (positions 14(T), 16, and 18, respectively for superintendents, newspaper editors, and news directors), this writer could only conclude that the
significantly lower score from news directors was likely a function of a generally lower importance attached by news directors to many of the categories of school-related news. It was difficult to explain why a category such as special education programs was included in the group of categories receiving the lower value as news material.

The next category, sex education programs, was perceived by respondents at relative importance levels which were not significantly different. Newspaper editors did have a higher mean score (6.500) than superintendents (6.276) or news directors (6.087). It did not seem unusual for such results to be forthcoming, as sex education programs have not received long time emphasis or been subject to extensive media reporting. It was also logical to interpret responses by media personnel as an indicator that accounts of such program experiences would provide interesting, important, and timely information to readers and viewers. Superintendents scored the category in a manner that resulted in a ranking at position 25 of the 40-category rank-ordering. It was apparent that those officials did not generally view sex education programs as among the most important categories of school-related news.

Recent public debate on the supposed decline of student achievement scores on standardized tests might have led one to expect a high order of importance for the category on achievement levels in the local school. This was definitely not the case in this study, as both the mean scores and resultant rank-order positions for the three groups were much in concert. Superintendents produced a mean score (6.667) higher than that of editors (6.482) and news directors (5.583). Analysis of the responses indicated that the differences were not statistically significant at the
0.05 level. Another indicator of the perceived relative importance of achievement levels in the schools was the fact that all three groups held the school's curriculum in greater esteem as a topic of school-related news. It was entirely possible that one reason for such a finding could have been difficulties in properly reporting and interpreting achievement information. There existed, also, a major contrast to the findings of Dr. Farley (12) in his study of half a century ago. On that occasion, he found that "pupil progress and achievement" held the lead position on his listing of 13 categories of school news. Once again, it should be remembered that respondents to that study were parents of youngsters in elementary schools, and were not likely to have been highly concerned with the needs and preferences of large numbers of school patrons or a large scale media audience.

No significant differences were observed regarding student behavior problems as a category of school-related news. Newspaper editors, with a mean score of 6.680, expressed a higher perceived importance than did superintendents or news directors. Mean scores for the latter two groups were 6.133 and 5.833, respectively.

The data pertaining to student behavior problems contained an unexpected development. It was difficult to envision superintendents of schools as perceiving the news items of the category at a higher value than news directors. The very nature of many types of behavioral problems of students would have suggested prime material for television news reports. As suggested by the evidence, that did not appear to be the case.

It was not until examination of results of the perceived relative
importance of the school calendar as a topic or category of school-related news that the most astounding finding of the study became evident. In that instance, the final category contained in Table 16, an F-value of 22.103 indicated major differences were present. Scheffe's test showed, additionally, that each of the mean scores were significantly different from each of the others. The mean score produced by superintendents (7.233) was significantly different from that of newspaper editors (5.962), and the mean score of television news directors (4.478) was significantly different from each of the first two. Furthermore, while superintendents perceived only eight categories of school-related news to be of greater importance than news concerning the school calendar, newspaper editors perceived only eight categories to be of lesser importance. News directors held the school calendar, as a category, only three places from the very bottom of the rank-ordering, according to the mean scores of the 40 categories.

It was most difficult to construct plausible explanations of the findings regarding the school calendar. Certainly one would have had to anticipate a substantial importance to be reflected by responses from superintendents. The school calendar, while often similar to its previous edition, still merited some consideration in the opinion of this writer, consideration because of the large number of persons who are affected by it. It was possible that media personnel responded to the category as persons who annually, or perhaps more often, treated the resulting accounts as traditional and very routine information. That sentiment, if it did exist, was obviously not shared by the group of superintendents responding.
Four of the first five categories of school-related news contained in Table 17 dealt with feature materials. That table listed information for categories rank-ordered 21-30 on the basis of mean scores from all respondents.

Table 17. Mean responses and ranks by superintendents, editors, and news directors to the categories of school news ranked 21-30 by all respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Superintendents</th>
<th>Editors</th>
<th>News directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rank</td>
<td>mean</td>
<td>rank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Feature material on superintendent</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.400</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Feature material on board members</td>
<td>16(T)</td>
<td>6.567</td>
<td>22(T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Feature material on students</td>
<td>16(T)</td>
<td>6.567</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Student transportation</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.800</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Feature material on teachers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.433</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Information comparing school to others</td>
<td>29(T)</td>
<td>5.967</td>
<td>22(T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Music programs and events</td>
<td>29(T)</td>
<td>5.967</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Information on drop-outs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.833</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Career education programs</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6.310</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Feature material on principals</td>
<td>22(T)</td>
<td>6.300</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feature material on the superintendent was afforded mean scores of 6.400 by the superintendents, 6.333 by newspaper editors, and 5.000 by television news directors. The mean score of the news directors was significantly different, beyond the 0.05 level, from those by superintendents and newspaper editors. Feature material on members of the board of education followed, with only the superintendents' mean score showing an increase over the previous category. Mean scores from superintendents (6.567) and newspaper editors (6.296) were again significantly different from that of news directors (4.783).

Students, as subjects of feature reports, did not receive greater support than either superintendents or board of education. Once again, mean scores from superintendents (6.567) and newspaper editors (6.111) were significantly different from that of news directors (4.826). In that case, the F-value was 16.236, a value exceeded only one time in the results of this study. The differences observed were statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level.

Mean responses to student transportation as a category of school-related news (6.231, 5.800, and 5.542, respectively from newspaper editors, superintendents, and television news directors) were not significantly different at the 0.05 level. The writer acknowledged a wide margin of interpretation of the terminology employed, and was cognizant of the possibility that some persons may have interpreted the category as implying bussing for racial balance. Others may have, as was intended, responded according to the local situation and its characteristics alone.
Feature material on teachers, as a category of school-related news, was the fourth of six categories on feature items. Responses from the three groups did contain significant differences between mean scores of superintendents (6.433) and news directors (4.826), and between the news directors and newspaper editors (6.074). These differences were statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level. It was noted that the pattern of responses was generally similar for all feature material categories; scores by superintendents and by newspaper editors were significantly different from those by television news directors.

Mean responses to the categories numbered 26 and 27 in Table 17 were remarkably similar in nature, yet the substance of the categories could not be said to have a close relationship. The first, information comparing the local school to others, showed mean responses from newspaper editors (6.296), superintendents (5.967), and news directors (5.130), the last of which was significantly different from each of the first two. The second of those two categories, music programs and events, showed mean scores from newspaper editors and television news directors which were nearly the same for the previous category, and a mean score from superintendents that was identical to the measure for that first item.

No significant differences were present among mean scores computed regarding the category on information about students who had dropped out of school. The mean scores (6.077, 5.833, and 5.435, respectively from newspaper editors, superintendents, and television news directors) were somewhat surprising in that the professional educators, as a group, affixed a lower level of importance to the category than did newspaper editors.
Responses to the category of school-related news dealing with career education programs produced differences significant beyond the 0.05 level. Mean responses from superintendents and newspaper editors, as shown in Table 17, were significantly different from the 4.826 mean for television news directors. The writer was unable to explain the low mean score from the news directors.

The final category on the Table 17 listing of categories of school-related news was feature material on school principals. As in the earlier instances involving the perceived relative importance of feature material, mean scores produced by superintendents and newspaper editors (in that case 6.300 and 6.037, respectively) were significantly different, beyond the 0.05 level, from the mean score of television news directors.

Table 18 contained information relating to those categories of school-related news which were rank-ordered 31-40, on the basis of mean responses computed from all responses. Feature material on counselors, the item which appeared first in the Table 18 listing, was the final and lowest ranking of the categories dealing with feature materials. As in all six categories on feature material, television news directors scored the category in a significantly different manner (mean score of 4.522 vis-à-vis 6.300 by superintendents and 5.963 by newspaper editors) than did the other two groups of respondents. The differences were statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level.

Earlier in this chapter, it was reported that achievement levels in the local school, as a category of school-related news, did not produce significant differences among or between groups. As shown in Table 18, respondents did differ in a statistically significant manner when
responding to the category on grading systems in the local school. Mean scores ranged from 6.267 (superintendents) to 4.583 (television news directors). Daily newspaper editors produced a mean score of exactly 6.000.

Table 18. Mean responses and ranks by superintendents, editors, and news directors to the categories of school news ranked 31-40 by all respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Superintendents</th>
<th>Editors</th>
<th>News directors</th>
<th>F-value</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. Feature material on counselors</td>
<td>22(T) rank 22</td>
<td>31 rank 31</td>
<td>34(T) rank 34</td>
<td>14.412</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Grading systems</td>
<td>26 rank 26</td>
<td>30 rank 30</td>
<td>33 rank 33</td>
<td>10.089</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. Hot lunch programs</td>
<td>36 rank 36</td>
<td>34 rank 34</td>
<td>22 rank 22</td>
<td>1.038</td>
<td>0.360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. Values clarification programs</td>
<td>29(T) rank 29</td>
<td>33 rank 33</td>
<td>39(T) rank 39</td>
<td>8.545</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. Follow-up studies on former students</td>
<td>29(T) rank 29</td>
<td>37 rank 37</td>
<td>34(T) rank 34</td>
<td>8.891</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. Library and media services</td>
<td>35 rank 35</td>
<td>35 rank 35</td>
<td>37(T) rank 37</td>
<td>8.596</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. Employment of new certificated personnel</td>
<td>37(T) rank 37</td>
<td>36 rank 36</td>
<td>32 rank 32</td>
<td>3.131</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. Nonathletic clubs and activities</td>
<td>37(T) rank 37</td>
<td>38 rank 38</td>
<td>39(T) rank 39</td>
<td>9.840</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. Parent-teacher associations</td>
<td>39 rank 39</td>
<td>39 rank 39</td>
<td>31 rank 31</td>
<td>3.274</td>
<td>0.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. Employment of new non-certificate personnel</td>
<td>40 rank 40</td>
<td>40 rank 40</td>
<td>37(T) rank 37</td>
<td>0.427</td>
<td>0.643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
No significant differences were present among scores listed for the category of school-related news identified as hot lunch programs. Mean scores of superintendents (5.667) and editors of daily newspapers (5.692) were nearly identical. That of television news directors was lower (5.208), but not significantly so, as evidenced by the F-value of 1.038. The most interesting aspect of findings related to this item was found upon examination of the placements resulting from rank-orderings of the three sets of mean scores. Superintendents and daily newspaper editors did not evidence a high regard for the category, as was clearly demonstrated through the respective ranks of 36 and 34. Indeed, few categories were of lesser importance to respondents in those groups. Television news directors, however, produced data which implied a different attitude. Hot lunch programs enjoyed position 22 in that rank-ordering. The writer was unable to discern a plausible explanation for that finding. Attempts to do so were confounded by the mean score and resultant rank-order position found for category from responses of editors of daily newspapers.

Values clarification programs were included in the questionnaire as a category of school-related news. The writer later acknowledged the error of that action, for the original intent had been to suggest school programs which have acquired the general descriptor of "moral education." That term would have been substantially more appropriate. The possibility that the employed terminology was misleading to the respondents cannot be totally discounted. The writer would have elected to declare the finding void except for the fact that a significant difference was suggested by the data. Without the rationale for possible misinterpretation as to what the terminology conveyed to the respondents, it would
have been most difficult to intelligently comment upon the extremely low mean score noted for television news directors.

Respondents assigned lower mean scores than one might have expected to the category on follow-up studies of former students. Activities and data which might have made up school-related news of the category were not far removed from several of the functions associated with the recently popular "accountability" emphasis. In retrospect, one might easily have expected news directors and editors to have expressed a high regard for the category's seemingly newsworthy material. Superintendents could also have been expected to show a greater interest than evidenced in Table 18. Nevertheless, the category received mean scores of only 5.967 from superintendents, 5.308 from daily newspaper editors, and the low 4.348 from television news directors. The responses by news directors did differ significantly from those of superintendents and daily newspaper editors. The F-value of 8.891 indicated significance beyond the 0.05 level.

Library and media services, as a category of school-related news, also presented a difference statistically significant beyond the 0.05 level. Television news directors expressed minimal interest in the topic, affording it the second lowest score assigned (4.417). The significant difference occurred between that score and those of superintendents (5.767) and editors of daily newspapers (5.462).

It should be noted that, while the F-value in Table 18 for the category dealing with the employment of new certificated personnel did indicate a difference significant at the 0.05 level, Scheffe's test did not divulge such a difference. Therefore, that finding was not treated by the writer as possessing statistical significance. Mean scores from
superintendents (5.567), editors of daily newspapers (5.440), and news
directors of television stations (4.625) provided little evidence of
perceived newsworthiness of the category.

Nonathletic clubs and activities presented the final category of
school-related news upon which the groups of respondents differed sig­
nificantly. Superintendents, with a mean score of 5.567, joined the
daily newspaper editors (5.231) in differing in a statistically signifi­
cant manner from the television news directors (4.348). Such a low
value, and therefore a low perception of the category of school-related
news, by news directors appeared to reflect their general tendency to
hold nonfinance school-related news in relatively low regard.

Parent teacher associations did not do well as a category of school-
related news. Much as the case of Farley's (12) study, the category was
not perceived to be of substantial importance. Based on rank-order
positions within each of the three groups, it could have been said that
this category found relatively more support from television news direc­
tors than did many others. In this particular case, the F-value did
indicate a difference significant at the 0.05 level. Scheffe's test
failed, however, to substantiate that finding. For that reason, this
writer elected to declare the difference one of nonsignificance.

The category of school-related news comprising the category of the
lowest perceived relative importance was that of the employment of new
nontcertificated personnel. In addition to the low esteem exhibited for
school news of that type, the three groups were remarkably uniform in
their separate perceptions. An indicator of that characteristic was the
nonsignificant F-value of 0.427.
Mean scores produced by superintendents (4.733) and editors of daily newspapers (4.778) were not substantially removed from that produced by television news directors (4.417).

All further discussions of the findings presented in this chapter were reserved for Chapter V. Tests of the hypotheses were also discussed in that chapter.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the course of examining the nature of the results of this study, several of the findings appeared to warrant additional discussion. It was also necessary to finalize the findings through statements of disposition of the null hypotheses tested. Of importance also were the general conclusions reached after study of the evidence produced and recommendations of the writer for further research in the area of school-media relations.

Findings

This study was designed in three parts. Part I examined current practices in school-media relations and the perceived effectiveness of those existing practices. Summary information from that part is presented in the first subsection below. The second subsection summarizes Part II findings relative to role responsibilities as perceived by superintendents of schools, editors of daily newspapers, and news directors of commercial television stations. Part III consisted of an examination of the perceived levels of importance for each of 40 categories of school-related news and is summarized in the third subsection.

Present practices and perceived effectiveness

Null Hypothesis 1 stated that there were no significant differences among the perceptions of superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors regarding the effectiveness of current practices in school-media relations. That hypothesis was rejected. Differences were significant at the 0.001 level.
Several findings were reported with regard to existing practices in school-media relations. All of the daily newspaper editors, 75 percent of the television news directors, and 80 percent of the school superintendents reported that specific assignments for the reporting of school news were made within their respective organizations. One-half of the superintendents, one-third of the daily newspaper editors, and 41.7 percent of the television news directors indicated that local meetings between media personnel and educators are held, at least annually, to discuss the general topic of the coverage of school news.

Respondents from the seven state area of the Midwest did not perceive the flow of information from schools to the media to be totally satisfactory. Approximately one-third of the superintendents and television news directors (36.6 percent and 29.9 percent, respectively) believed that the flow was "always" adequate. Only 11.1 percent of the editors of daily newspapers responded in a like manner.

Participants were asked to indicate if reporters were encouraged to visit the schools often for the purpose of in-depth reporting. A substantial difference in the responses to the "always" option indicated that the groups did not agree. More than three-fourths (76.7 percent) of the superintendents viewed such invitations as being "always" present, while only 37.0 percent of the newspaper editors and 25.0 percent of the news directors responded in that manner.

A majority (more than 80.0 percent in all three groups) believed that "unfavorable" aspects of school news were reported as fully as were the more favorable types of school news.

Most of the respondents in each group (53.3 percent of the
superintendents, 63.0 percent of the daily newspaper editors, and 66.7 percent of the television news directors) indicated that errors in the reporting of school news occurred only "occasionally."

One other practice investigated was that of extending invitations to reporters to observe executive sessions of the board of education. It was found that, in most instances, such invitations were not extended. One-third (33.3 percent) of the television news directors and 40.0 percent of the daily newspaper editors indicated that their reporters were invited to observe executive sessions. More than one-half of the newspaper editors (55.5 percent) and news directors (53.9 percent) indicated that reporters accepted such invitations "always" or "often."

A majority of the superintendents (90.0 percent) and the daily newspaper editors (92.5 percent) expressed the view that editorial comments on school matters occur "often" or "occasionally," while only half (50.0 percent) of the television news directors responded in those categories.

Seventy-nine of the 81 respondents (97.53 percent) believed that local school-media relations were either improving in status or remaining at a constant level. Only two respondents reported that local school-media relations were declining.

Perceived role responsibilities

Null Hypothesis 2 stated that there were no significant differences in perceptions of the public relations role responsibilities of the superintendent of schools between daily newspaper editors and television news directors. That hypothesis was rejected. Daily newspaper editors and television news directors differed in a statistically significant
manner over the responsibility of the superintendent to provide a 
calendarized flow of information on school matters. News directors 
strongly supported that function as a responsibility of the superin-
tendent of schools, while the mean score of 4.769 for newspaper editors 
indicated some uncertainty over the matter. The mean score for news 
directors (6.417) was very close to the 7.000 maximum which would have 
indicated the strongest and total agreement.

All other differences between daily newspaper editors and television 
news directors regarding the perceived role responsibilities of the 
superintendent of schools were not statistically significant.

Null Hypothesis 3 stated that perceptions of role responsibilities 
would not differ significantly among and between superintendents of 
schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors. That 
hypothesis was rejected. Six of the 12 statements in Table 13 were 
scored by respondents in manners which resulted in the presence of sig-
nificant differences among or between mean scores. The first of those 
significant differences was partially reported above under the second 
null hypothesis. In addition to the difference between the groups of 
media personnel, a significant difference was noted between superin-
tendents and television news directors. Daily newspaper editors 
responded negatively to the statement suggesting that it was the respon-
sibility of reporters to verify news stories before printing or broad-
cast. That mean score (3.769) was significantly lower than mean scores 
from each of the other groups.

Television news directors differed significantly from superin-
tendents and daily newspaper editors on the question of inviting
reporters to observe executive sessions of the board of education. The news directors' mean score of 6.042 indicated that they believed that it was a responsibility of the school's management team to extend such invitations. Superintendents and editors of daily newspapers did not indicate agreement with that sentiment.

Daily newspaper editors and television news directors were in significantly stronger agreement with the statement on public correction of major errors in the reporting of school-related news than were superintendents. It was apparent that the media personnel participating in the study held that responsibility in high regard.

Statement 12 in Table 13 implied a responsibility to provide the public with editorial comment on school matters. Only one significant difference was observed among the responses by the three groups. That difference existed between superintendents of schools and editors of daily newspapers, with the superintendents perceiving a lower level of responsibility for the provision of editorial comment.

**Perceived relative importance of categories of school-related news**

Null Hypotheses 4-43 stated generally that perceptions of the relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news would not be significantly different between and among superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors. Twenty-two of those null hypotheses were rejected. On the basis of the findings, the writer failed to reject the remaining 18 null hypotheses.

Significant differences were observed in responses by the three groups to the following 22 categories of school-related news items.
Tables 14-18 provided more complete information on the nature of the differences: the school calendar, feature materials about students, enrollment information, feature material about counselors, feature material about teachers, feature material about principals, grading systems, clubs and activities other than athletics or music, career education programs, feature materials about members of the board of education, follow-up studies on former students, library and media services, values clarification programs, meeting of the board of education, innovations at the classroom/building levels, music programs and events, feature material about the superintendent, the school's curriculum, special education programs, the school tax levy, information comparing the school to others, and special tax levies.

Tables 14-18 also contained information on those categories of school-related news which did not receive significantly different mean scores.

Conclusions

Conclusions reached after the completion of a study require that they be based on the actual findings and that they be viewed in light of the problem of the study. The problem of this study, as stated earlier, consisted of three parts: (1) to discover the perceived effectiveness of existing practices in school-media relations in the Midwest; (2) to investigate and report upon responsibilities in school-media relations as perceived by superintendents of schools, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors; and (3) to discover the perceived relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news items. On the
basis of 81 completed responses from 105 questionnaires mailed to appropriate persons, the findings of this study justified the following major conclusions:

1. Nearly nine out of ten respondents (88.9 percent) perceived existing practices in school-media relations to be of "average" or greater effectiveness.

2. Seventy-nine (97.53 percent) of the persons from the seven-state area of the Midwest responding to the study perceived local school-media relations to be either "remaining constant" or "improving."

3. More than one-half (60.49 percent) of the persons from the seven-state area of the Midwest responding to the study believed that errors in the reporting of school news occur only occasionally.

4. Invitations to reporters to observe executive sessions of the board of education were indicated by 32 (39.51 percent) of the 81 superintendents, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors from the seven-state area of the Midwest.

5. The superintendent of schools is viewed by persons in all three groups of respondents from the seven-state area of the Midwest as the person responsible for the community/public relations program of the district.

6. Media personnel are viewed by persons in all three groups of respondents from the seven-state area of the Midwest as playing an important role as "watchdogs" over public school operation and finance.
7. The most important categories of school-related news, as perceived by persons in all three groups of respondents from the seven-state area of the Midwest, involve the expenditure of public monies.

8. With the exception of categories of school news related directly to financial matters, television news directors from the seven-state area of the Midwest perceive school news items to be of lesser importance than do superintendents of schools or editors of daily newspapers.

9. The greatest differences among superintendents of schools, editors of daily newspapers, and directors of television news departments from the seven-state area of the Midwest occurred over the perceived relative importance of the school calendar as a category of school-related news.

Discussion

In Chapter IV, several comparisons to the findings of earlier researchers were discussed. The writer elected to augment those statements here and to expand discussion to a more general level. Also, this section provided an opportunity to comment upon certain nonspecific factors which were brought to the writer's attention in the course of the investigation.

Farley's (12) study was often cited. It was an important study for the similarities to this study and for the results provided. Dr. Farley discussed the perceived relative importance of 13 categories of school-related news. His work is now fully half of a century old, and the
contrast to the perceived relative importance of the 40 categories of school-related news is clear. Finance-related items rank as much greater in importance than in the earlier work. Pupil progress and achievement rated a greater relative importance 50 years ago than do the comparable categories of the present. It might be generally stated that the plethora of problems in public education have taken a toll of the focus once reserved for students. Again, however, readers must recall that the participants in Dr. Farley's study were parents of young persons enrolled in fifth grade classes. In the present study, participants were either superintendents or media executives.

The writer found no real change in the role of the superintendent in the public relations program of the district. Gross, Ward, and McEachern's (21) findings on this matter appear to apply.

One especially important finding was that of the greater similarity between superintendents and daily newspaper editors than between superintendents and news directors. This finding was in regard to the perceived relative importance of each of 40 categories of school-related news. Schmidt (34) had earlier found that superintendents who work most closely with editors tend to hold views more like those of the editors than are those who do not share a close professional relationship. This factor might aid in explaining the differences noted in Chapter IV concerning television news directors and their tendency to assign lower values to many categories of school-related news.

Levels of satisfaction regarding present school news coverage appeared little changed from the 1972 study by Reed (33) on television managers and superintendents. Despite the fact that a number of
significant differences were discovered by this study, it seems generally true that superintendents of schools and media executives remain largely satisfied with the relationships which exist at the local level.

Some indicators obtained while conducting the study did not appear in the data. Notations, margin comments, and emphasis added to responses are worthy of note. One such indicator appeared from time to time in various forms and said, generally, that media personnel do not view prepared press releases as a legitimate source for news. The feeling was that responsible reporters should "dig out" the news. That sentiment was expressed by newspaper editors, however, and did not appear to represent the views of television news directors. School officials would, on the basis of evidence gathered in this study, do well to provide news releases and information to television news personnel.

The writer found two other factors to be notable. First, the rate of participation by media executives was greater than had been expected. Also, with the exception of the two incomplete responses, the writer believed that responses did represent carefully considered thoughts.

It was also enlightening to note the several participant requests for summary information at the close of the study. It was gratifying to receive expressions of interest from persons not directly associated with public education.

Recommendations

Recommendations were developed by the investigator for three purposes: (1) to promulgate guidelines for use of the findings, (2) to convey certain limitations inherent to the study and its findings, and
(3) to suggest several topics for additional research in the area of school-media relations.

Use of the findings

This study was intended to provide new information on practices and perceptions in school-media relations in the Midwest. Findings should be utilized, if found by readers to be of value, in manners which will enhance relationships and/or contribute to the development of mutually beneficial understandings between school officials and media personnel.

Both educators and media representatives enjoy certain rights and bear certain responsibilities. Findings herein contained did not purport to erode either the rights or the responsibilities. Where questions or statements may have appeared to lend emphasis to one standpoint or another, the intent remained solely that of clarification. Results of this study consisted of evidence gathered in the course of the investigation and an analysis of that evidence.

It is extremely important that readers recall the conditions under which persons were selected for the sample. Of all the communities in the seven states of the Midwest from which data were drawn, only those communities possessing a local public school system, a local daily newspaper, and a local commercial television station were considered. Therefore, any attempt to generalize findings to communities, schools, or media agencies other than those qualifying in every respect would be most inappropriate.

National trends and acts by legislative bodies or the courts may render some of the findings valueless or even cause them to appear
misleading. All use of these findings should, therefore, be made with full knowledge of the conditions prevalent at the time of the study.

The results have, assuming some meritorious qualities for the study, contributed to the knowledge of certain aspects of school-media relations. This characteristic served as the initial reward to the writer. To have the findings applied in an appropriate manner shall be the final enjoyment of the work.

Limitations

A number of factors limited the study. Among the several constraining features were the rate of return, the method of obtaining data, the prescriptive nature of the closed form questionnaire, and the arbitrary exclusion of otherwise qualifying communities where the 1970 populations exceeded 200,000 persons.

All findings reported were the result of the return of approximately 80 percent of the questionnaires mailed. It was possible that non-respondents may have held perceptions considerably different than those of persons who did respond. However, it was assumed that the perceptions of those who did not return questionnaires were similar to the participants.

All data utilized resulted from responses to mailed questionnaires. Support for this data technique was cited earlier, as were the writer's reasons for electing the approach over personal interviews. Another researcher might find different results by employing alternative means of procuring data. It was also possible that a higher rate of participation would have resulted if personal interviews had been utilized.
Each of the items that appeared on the data collection instrument limited responses to those specific options presented. It was entirely possible that persons who participated may have desired to respond in a manner not provided for by the options.

Readers are also cautioned of the possible effects of the above-cited exclusion of large cities. Localities served by several immediate-area daily newspapers and television stations, and those served by many large public school systems of a metropolitan area, were not part of the sample. The principal advantage of that exclusion was the focusing of perceptions and interests on specific relationships and conditions. Ensuing information was thereby limited with respect to applicability to large metropolitan communities.

Other limiting factors may have existed, but would have been most evident when viewed with particular concerns or specific examples in mind.

Additional research

The process of completing a research endeavor invariably brings forth ideas and concerns which suggest additional research in the topic area of the work just completed. This has been one of the benefits related to investigations designed to produce new knowledge. It is logical and advantageous for new information to include new questions to be answered and new evidence to be tested by other persons under the same or other conditions.

The findings of this study appeared to indicate that there would be merit to an expanded scope of a similar study. One possible approach
would be to include each of the 50 states in another investigation of a like nature. A second approach, and one that could be combined with the aforementioned expanded study, would be to include other groups of persons in the study. Among those other groups that should be considered are school board members, teachers, students, legislators, and a cross-section of residents from selected communities.

A replication of the study completed by Farley (12) should provide excellent information for comparisons with both the original endeavor and with this study. The second aspect would be especially enhanced if Farley's technique could be adapted to include television news broadcasts as well as newspaper reports.

Another intriguing possibility for further research would be conversion of this study's questionnaire to the interview technique and careful analysis of correlations among responses of superintendents of schools, editors of daily newspapers, and directors of television news departments.

Important information might be gained by replicating this study after five or ten years have passed. Such a replication could provide vital evidence of what changes and trends had developed during the interlude.

The most exciting research possibility, in the opinion of the writer, is in the area of experimental design research in school-media relations. Given the required assistance, materials, and controls, it might be possible to obtain information of effect of certain practices on understanding and acceptance by media personnel and by persons from the various publics. Such research would also provide an opportunity to study the effect of various media interpretations of school-related news on the receiving publics.
LITERATURE CITED


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This small study of one aspect of the enterprise of education represents, by way of its product, a minor contribution. The occasion of its completion does, however, afford an opportunity to convey some thoughts on the experiences and associations gained during graduate study and employment at Iowa State University.

Members of my graduate examining committee, each a particular example of excellence in a professional specialty, have rendered invaluable service in various roles as mentors, advisors, and employers.

Employment with the "Models for Career Education in Iowa" project provided a wealth of experiences in the planning and practice of education. For that duty, and pleasure, I am indebted to Dr. Alan Kahler.

Two other persons contributed much to the process of completing graduate work. Dr. Ross Engel's guidance and assistance far exceeded that normally expected from a major professor. I am most grateful for his direction and aid. The second person is my wife, Sandra. Her encouragement and assistance had a major effect upon the completion of the program of studies and were of prime importance in the existence of the graduate work.
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL
The increasingly complex nature of operating systems of public education has had an effect upon, and is perhaps affected by, the relationship which exists between local school and both the printed and electronic media. For this reason, we are conducting a study of school-media relations in seven Midwestern states.

You are one of a few selected executives being asked to provide opinions and general information regarding school-media relationships and the general topic of school news reporting.

Enclosed is a questionnaire which will require only a moment of your time. We ask only that you check one of the options provided for each item. If another person in your organization can better provide the needed information, please pass these materials on to him or her.

Complete confidentiality of all responses is, of course, guaranteed. We need only know the state in which you live, and that notation has been made on the enclosed questionnaire.

We believe that this is a potentially meritorious study, and because of this it will be our pleasure to return both your original response and a summary of responses from all others upon completion of the work.

Your opinions are valued. Please accept, in advance, our sincere appreciation for taking a moment to assist in this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Ross A. Engel
Ross A. Engel, Professor
Educational Administration
Iowa State University

Sincerely,

/s/ Clair E. Brooks
Clair E. Brooks
Graduate Student
Iowa State University
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE
PRACTICES AND PERCEPTIONS
IN SCHOOL-MEDIA RELATIONS

Instructions: This study deals with three aspects of school-media relations. Response scales have been developed to provide for ease and clarity in responding. Please mark the answer which best communicates your response to the question or issue presented.

Upon completion, please return the questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. At the close of the study, I will return your original questionnaire and a summary of the findings and conclusions so that you may compare your responses with those of other persons in the seven-state area included in the sample.

Again, thank you for your kind cooperation.

* * * * * * *

PART I: PRESENT PRACTICES AND THEIR PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS

1. Does your school have a person (or a group of persons) assigned to deal specifically with the reporting of school news?
   
   _____Yes
   _____No

2. Do media personnel and school personnel in your community meet at least once each year to discuss the general topic of coverage of school news?
   
   _____Yes
   _____No

3. Local school issues are the subjects of editorial comment in your community:
   
   _____Often
   _____Seldom
   _____Occasionally
   _____Never

4. School-media relations in your community are:
   
   _____Improving
   _____Declining
   _____Remaining constant

5. Are media personnel in your community invited to observe executive sessions of the board of education?
   
   _____Yes
   _____No
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Again, thank you for your kind cooperation.

* * * * * * *

PART I: PRESENT PRACTICES AND THEIR PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS

1. Does your newspaper have a person (or a group of persons) who is responsible for the reporting of school news?
   _____Yes   _____No

2. Do media personnel and school personnel in your community meet at least once each year to discuss the general topic of coverage of school news?
   _____Yes   _____No

3. Local school issues are the subjects of editorial comment in your newspaper:
   _____Often   _____Seldom
   _____Occasionally   _____Never

4. School-media relations in your community are:
   _____Improving
   _____Declining
   _____Remaining constant

5. Are media personnel in your community invited to observe executive sessions of the board of education?
   _____Yes   _____No
Instructions: This study deals with three aspects of school-media relations. Response scales have been developed to provide for ease and clarity in responding. Please mark the answer which best communicates your response to the question or issue presented.

Upon completion, please return the questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope. At the close of the study, I will return your original questionnaire and a summary of the findings and conclusions so that you may compare your responses with those of other persons in the seven-state area included in the sample.

Again, thank you for your kind cooperation.

* * * * * * *

PART I: PRESENT PRACTICES AND THEIR PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS

1. Does your television station have a person (or a group of persons) who is responsible for the reporting of school news?
   
   _____Yes  _____No

2. Do media personnel and school personnel in your community meet at least once each year to discuss the general topic of coverage of school news?
   
   _____Yes  _____No

3. Local school issues are the subjects of editorial comment by your station:
   
   _____Often  _____Seldom
   _____Occasionally  _____Never

4. School-media relations in your community are:
   
   _____Improving
   _____Declining
   _____Remaining constant

5. Are media personnel in your community invited to observe executive sessions of the board of education?
   
   _____Yes  _____No
6. If invitations to observe executive sessions are extended, do reporters accept?

_____ Always  _____ Occasionally
_____ Often    _____ Never

7. Is the flow of information from the public schools to the local media adequate for thorough coverage?

_____ Always  _____ Occasionally
_____ Often    _____ Never

8. Are media personnel in your community encouraged to visit the schools and school activities for in-depth reporting?

_____ Always  _____ Occasionally
_____ Often    _____ Never

9. How frequently do errors in the reporting of school news occur in your community?

_____ Often    _____ Seldom
_____ Occasionally  _____ Never

10. Are the "unfavorable aspects" of school news reported as fully as the "favorable aspects" of the school news in your community?

_____ Yes    _____ No

11. Do media personnel in your community appear to play an important role in the outcomes of school bond issue elections, school board elections, and other similar public issues?

_____ Always  _____ Often  _____ Occasionally  _____ Seldom  _____ Never

12. Please rate the overall effectiveness of school-media relations in your community.

_____ The best
_____ Excellent
_____ Very good
_____ Average
_____ Fair
_____ Poor
_____ Very poor
PART II: PERCEIVED ROLE RESPONSIBILITIES

Please respond to the following twelve questions by using the following scale:

YES: Indicates this statement is definitely true.
yes: Indicates this statement is generally true.
? : Uncertain, you do not wish to take a positive or negative stand.
no : Indicates this statement is generally untrue.
NO : Indicates this statement is definitely untrue.

* * * * * * *

1. The superintendent of schools is responsible for the district's program of community/public relations.

2. Media personnel play an important role as "watchdogs" regarding the operation and financing of the public schools.

3. Reporters should have access to all information and documents in the public schools, with the exception of certain personnel records.

4. The superintendent should provide for a calendarized flow of news releases and/or information on possible news items to all media agencies in the community.

5. Reporters should call back on news stories to ensure accuracy prior to printing or broadcast.

6. The school's management team should invite the media to attend executive sessions of the board of education as an aid to complete background information in later reporting.

7. It is necessary that a strong positive relationship be maintained between the office of the superintendent of schools and the media representatives of the area.
8. Reporters should seek in-depth news materials from teachers, students, and other persons associated directly with the school.

   YES yes ? no NO

9. The relationship between the superintendent of schools and the media representatives of the community will become increasingly more important over the next decade.

   YES yes ? no NO

10. Major errors in the reporting of school news should be corrected, in the most forthright and expeditious public manner possible by the person or persons responsible for the errors.

    YES yes ? no NO

11. The superintendent of schools bears the responsibility for providing information and/or news releases to all news outlets in the community.

    YES yes ? no NO

12. Editorial comment is one method of providing the public with timely and important information on public school matters.

    YES yes ? no NO

PART III: PERCEIVED RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF CATEGORIES OF SCHOOL-RELATED NEWS

For this final section, please respond according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Weighted Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IMPORTANT NEWS</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important News</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful News</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average News Value</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barely Useful News</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOT IMPORTANT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(1) the district's annual budget
(2) the school tax levy
(3) special tax levies
(4) the annual budget hearing
(5) school board policies
(6) meetings of the board of education
(7) race relations
(8) collective bargaining
(9) school bond issue elections and campaigns
(10) the employment of new certificated personnel
(11) the employment of new non-certificated personnel
(12) dismissal proceedings against personnel
(13) student behavior problems
(14) the school's curriculum
(15) innovations at the classroom/building levels
(16) student transportation
(17) hot lunch programs
(18) grading systems
(19) achievement levels in the school
(20) library and media services
(21) information on drop-outs  
(22) information on follow-up studies of former students  
(23) parent-teacher associations  
(24) athletic programs and events  
(25) music programs and events  
(26) other clubs and activities  
(27) the school calendar  
(28) enrollment information  
(29) general information comparing the school to others  
(30) career education programs  
(31) values clarification programs  
(32) special education programs  
(33) drug education programs  
(34) sex education programs  
(35) feature material about students  
(36) feature material about teachers  
(37) feature material about counselors  
(38) feature material about principals  
(39) feature material about the superintendent  
(40) feature material about members of the board of education
APPENDIX C: FOLLOW-UP LETTER
David L. Moorhead, Supt.
Ames Community School District
120 S. Kellogg
Ames, IA 50010

Dear Superintendent Moorhead:

In mid-August, you were one of a number of chief executives who received a copy of an instrument requesting your opinions and perceptions regarding school-media relations. Dozens of superintendents, daily newspaper editors, and television news directors from seven states responded to initial requests. As of this date, I find that I need only your response to complete information from the Iowa educators in the random sample.

Enclosed is a copy of the survey form. No background data is necessary. I ask only that you, or the person who normally handles media matters in the Ames schools, check a response to each item and return the form in the attached envelope.

Confidentiality is guaranteed. After completion of the study, I will return your original responses and a summary of the results from all participants.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

/s/ Clair E. Brooks

Clair E. Brooks
2514 Alameda
Cedar Falls, IA 50613

Encl.