SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE NEWSROOM:  
A CASE STUDY

THESIS

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The problem of this study is to investigate how news policy in the *Denton Record-Chronicle* is defined and maintained and whether the newspaper staffers tend to conform to or conflict with the newspaper's news policy.

The study suggests that the more experienced the staffer, the more likely he will conflict with the newspaper's news policy, and the less experienced the staffer, the more likely he will conform to the newspaper's news policy.

Social control is in the hand of the newspaper organization. That is, the newspaper tends to control the mechanisms of social control. However, unless the newspaper recognizes the needs of the staffers' participation in its editorial decision, conflict may continue to be an important factor in the newsroom work-setting.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Social control, a central formulation in the origin and development of sociology, has come to reflect increasingly the specialized interests of sociologists concerned with the study of social structure (18, p. 96). Morris Janowitz postulated that social control, as the concept has developed, has supplied an appropriate level of abstraction for the study of social order, social organization, and the development of industrial society (18, pp. 82-101).

Social control has served and continues to serve as a shorthand notation for a complex set of views and viewpoints (18, p. 83). The traditional notion referred to social control as "social adaptation," "social adjustment," "social conformity," "the capacity of a social group to regulate itself," and even "social repression" (18, pp. 82-108).

L. Bernard's Social Control clearly reflected the traditional definition of social control. Bernard stated,

Social control always deals with adjustment and it is for the most part concerned with consciously directed adjustments. Control usually is exercised most easily by a recognized leader possessed of good psychological techniques of control, or by individuals who are under the direction of such a leader (4, p. 13).

Janowitz's study (18) provided a thorough examination of social control as it has been defined by sociologists
concerned with social control in the context of sociological theory. Social control has been defined by Albert Reiss as "the ability of social groups or institutions to make norms or rules effective" (18, pp. 87-88); by George Vincent as "the art of combining social forces so as to give society at least a trend toward an ideal" (18, p. 83); by Parker Follet as an "inherent 'phenomenon' in everyday relationships between members of the group" (18, p. 99); by Barrington Moore as a phenomenon that "involves an element of repression--conscious or unconscious" (18, p. 99); by George Mead as a matter that "depends upon the degree to which individuals in society are able to assume attitudes of others who are involved with them in common endeavors" (18, p. 83); by Kingsley Davis as a means through which "human society regulates the behavior of its members in such a way that they perform activities fulfilling social needs--even, sometimes, at the expense of organic needs" (18, p. 98); and by Robert MacIver as a concept that contains two elements: the institutional mechanisms by which society regulates individual behavior and the way in which patterned and standardized behavior in turn serves to maintain the social organization (18, p. 92).

Contemporary sociologists have come to recognize that social control always is a mutual affair, that the dominant individuals or groups in organizations have limitations in enforcing the desired norms and values that informal groups
have the capacity to modify norms and values and participate in redirecting goals. Social control, then, presents a format of influence based on the notion of mutual relations among groups and provides "some safeguard" against the concept of control by a "superman," for either good and evil purposes (18, p. 96).

George Simmel suggested that the nature of the individual's participation in a social group is unique in modern society. Belonging to a large number of groups, the individual who appears to surrender himself or herself to the group regains his individuality as a result of such patterns of social participation and social control (18, p. 91). Reinhard Bendix and Bennett Berger, following Simmel's formulations, emphasized that social participation in its generic form produces not only "socializing effects," but also "individualizing effects." The individualizing effects "are the root of autonomy, creativity, and problem solving elements consistent with and to some degree essential for a social order and effective for social control" (18, p. 98).

Hence, two elements were added to the traditional view of social control: mutual influence and individualizing effects.

Peter Blau and Robert Merton analyzed the concept of social control in the context of bureaucratization. Blau suggested, "Bureaucracies can be regarded as institutionalized modes of organizing social conduct in order to (a) transform exceptional problems into the routine duties of experts, and
(b) the coordination of specialized tasks" (5, p. 253).

Blau's view reaffirms Merton's similar point: "If the bureaucracy is to operate successfully, it must attain a high degree of conformity with prescribed patterns of behavior" (23, p. 154).

Karl Mannheim and Everett Hughes took an empirical approach in their treatment of the role of institutions (18) in the process of social control in an industrial society. They argued that the central issue of social control is the organization of occupational, especially professional, groups (18, p. 97). Mannheim and Hughes' theoretical and empirical formulations stimulated a considerable body of literature analyzing and assessing processes of social control in skilled groups in modern society (18, p. 97).

News media today seem more solidly integrated within the corporate nexus of the organization of industry: the current trend is toward an increasing centralization in news industry (19, p. 5). News media studies suggested that two thirds of all editorial personnel in the American news media today are employed by organizations connected with groups, chains, or networks, some controlled ultimately by industrial conglomerates whose principal interests and functions lie outside the field of communications altogether (19, pp. 5-6). John Johnston noted, "Any assessment of journalism as an occupation in contemporary 'society' would be shortsighted if it failed to take account of the increasingly centralized and
bureaucratized nature of news industry" (19, p. 5). Editors and reporters today find themselves in large complex, bureaucratized work settings; editing, news processing, editorial supervision, and management are mostly performed inside the organization and hence fall under bureaucratic control (19, pp. 6-7).

Social control in news media organizations has received less attention by comparison with research attention given to other components of news media (43, p. 61). Studies related to the social control of news media, have postulated that social control and communication in large news organizations "flow primarily down the organization ladder," and staffers "participate much less frequently in editorial decision-making" (19, p. 12). Such a general view, which can be said of most any formal organization, has limitations when applied to news media organization, however.

Two basic elements, which tend to contradict each other, can probably be regarded as unique to news media organization: (a) the existence of a covert and indirect news policy set by the publisher and maintained by the editors, and (b) the existence of codes of journalism ethics which are highly valued by professional journalists.

These two elements are important in several ways.

Every news medium has a news policy, admitted or not (7, p. 179). Policy has been defined by Warren Breed as "the more or less consistent orientation shown by the newspaper,
not only in its editorials, but in its news columns and headlines as well, concerning selected issues and events" (7, p. 179). The publisher certainly has much say in both longterm and immediate policy decisions (7, pp. 179-180), e.g., which party to support, whether to feature or bury a story, how much free space to give news and advertisers' activities.

Policy, however, is covert and indirect. Its norms are "not spelled out in coherent, tightly reasoned terms, and the learning of policy norms is subtle, diffuse, and somewhat sporadic." Moreover, policy does "not cover all, or even most, aspects of local politics" (36, p. 143).

Breed postulated that policy is covert and indirect because of the existence of ethical norms of journalism and thus "no executive is willing to risk embarrassment by being accused of open commands to slant a story" (7, p. 180). Rodney Stark argued however, that the policy is not formal and direct because "no policy statement could be reasonably expected to provide specific guidance in all diverse situations occurring in the run of the news" (37, p. 21).

Although policy is covert and indirect, formal mechanisms of social control may be present, particularly at the assignment stage when decisions are made about which topics will be covered and who will cover them, and in the editing process when news stories filter through the organization's gatekeeping apparatus (19, p. 8).
In reference to the second element, codes of journalism ethics, professional journalists tend to value highly the ethics common in journalism literature: responsibility, freedom, independence, sincerity, truthfulness, accuracy, impartiality, fair play, and decency (8). They also appreciate the historical tradition of American journalism. Edward Cheyney has written that the history of American journalism has been that of freedom and of interference with freedom (8, p. 208); there have been many intrusions upon that freedom, but the dominant trend has been that of freedom (8, p. 216).

Many professional journalists and educators in the field of journalism prefer not to have laws that regulate the press. They suggest that laws always contain exceptions that may interfere with freedom of the press. To them, the First Amendment is the most valuable asset that can guarantee that freedom (8).

James Reston explained that:

The first article of the Bill of Rights was placed there as a pledge of safety to the people. Therefore, the primary obligation of the newspaper in general and of the reporter in particular is to the people .... The reporter does not owe that primary allegiance to the owner of his newspaper, to his managing editor, to his government, or to the sources of his information, he owes it to the people (36, p. 133).

The most common code of journalism ethics is probably embodied in the Canons of Journalism of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The Canons state, among other things, (a) the right of a newspaper to attract and hold readers is
restricted by nothing but consideration of public welfare; (b) freedom should be free from all obligations except that of fidelity to the public interest; (c) partisanship in editorial comments that knowingly departs from the truth does violence to the best spirit of American journalism; in the news columns it is subversive of fundamental principle of the profession; and (d) news reports should be free from opinion or bias of any kind (33, pp. 623-625).

Thus, it is evident that the existence of a covert policy on one hand and journalism ethics on the other may interfere with the process of social control in the newsroom of the newspaper organization.

The few studies that dealt directly or indirectly with social control in the newsroom of the newspaper organization did not clearly define the concept of social control. Social control probably was used as a synonymous concept to that of conformity (7, p. 178) or socialization (7, p. 181).

Classical studies (37) on social control in the newsroom postulated that newspaper staffers tended to conform to the news policy of their newspaper and that relation between staffers and their newspaper is that of newsroom solidarity (7, p. 188). The view presented in classical studies is widely accepted and referred to in sociological and journalism literature.

The main concern of those who first raised the problem of social control in the newsroom was to answer the question of
how news policy of the newspaper organization is maintained; their point of departure in the analysis was that the newspaper staffers have no alternative but to conform to the policy of the newspaper. Hence, they excluded the possibility of mutual control or conflict both within the group of staffers and between the staffers and their newspaper organization (37).

Many researchers (37) have become skeptical about the conclusions of classical studies. Rodney Stark observed that the newsroom probably is "full of 'embittered, estranged, and embattled' reporters in 'open, acrimonious' conflict with the management" (37, p. 142).

Johnston speculated:

The strain which emanates from the conflict between the need of work organizations to regulate their operations and the needs for individual professionals for autonomy and a voice in organizational decision-making is becoming especially acute in American journalism because of increasing centralization in the news industry (19, p. 13).

Hence, classical studies, which followed Breed's formulation, have narrowed their focus to cases of conflict between staffers and their newspaper organization. There is a considerable body of postulations, since Breed published his study, that suggests that conflict is an important factor in the newsroom work-setting.

These conflicts can be expressed in various forms. First, the professional journalist may experience role conflict. As Lee Sigehman has pointed out, the journalist holds dual "citizenship," that is, he is, to a greater or lesser extent,
committed to the norms and goals of both his organization and his profession (37, p. 142). Says Sigehman, "This duality may present a potential for conflict which can be actualized when there is tension between organizational and professional standards" (37, p. 142).

Also, it has been suggested that the professional journalist tends to hold two sets of conceptions of the role the press plays: one set involving him only as a neutral reporter, providing information that enables others to play a part in the fashioning of policy, and another set that defines his active participation in the policy-making process (9, p. 19). The two sets of conceptions have implications for the role the professional journalist plays in the newsroom. Stark distinguished between two types of reporters, the "pros," and the "locals." The "pros" are efficient, but antipolicy, and the "locals" are inefficient, but loyal to the newspaper's policy (37, p. 14). Stark suggested that the "pros" have an arsenal of weapons and defenses that can be viewed as dysfunctional from the point of view of management since the arsenal limits the actual attainment of the goals of policy and efficiency (37, p. 27).

Another source of conflict may be difference in political attitudes. Most studies, including those of Breed and Stark, have concluded that the policy of American newspapers generally is conservative and professional journalists generally are liberal in their political views (7, p. 11;
The professional journalists can be asked "not only to violate the value of their profession, but also their own political attitudes" (7, p. 11).

Evidence of possible conflict between staffers and their newspaper organization is found in these studies: (a) Ruth Flegel found that reporters tend to be strongly directed in their reporting by their own opinion, and the views of their editors were much less influential. Hence, editors, who are responsible for implementing policy, tend to have little control on reporters (13, p. 650); (b) Bernard Cohen suggested that newspaper staffers have an important, though not always apparent, influence on the shape of reality as it is perceived by the publisher (9, p. 113); and (c) Sigehman postulated that the absence of written set policy guidelines may create uncertainty or conflict in the behavior of reporters (36, p. 141).

Marquita Moss and Johnston, studying turnover and satisfaction in the context of bureaucratic organization, suggested that turnover on newspapers was fairly high (25, p. 356), and that newspaper staffers generally were dissatisfied (19, p. 5). They attributed turnover and dissatisfaction to the excessive specialization and the impersonality of the contemporary bureaucracy (25, pp. 356-358; 19, p. 13). Hence, it might be suggested that turnover and dissatisfaction were results of conflict between staffers and their bureaucratic organization.
Thus, the view, presented in classical studies, that "conformity" or "solidarity" is the dominant character of the situation in the newsroom may not be a reliable assumption. The present study is an attempt to offset the neglect of the study of conflict that may occur in the newsroom of the newspaper organization.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study is to analyze how news policy in a middle-size newspaper is defined and maintained, and whether the newspaper staffers tend to conform to or conflict with the newspaper's news policy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine: (a) the formal and informal mechanisms by which news policy is maintained; (b) and the ways by which the newspaper staffers attempt to bypass the newspaper's news policy.

Review of Literature

A review of American Journal of Sociology, British Journal of Sociology, Berkeley Journal of Sociology, Journalism Quarterly, Columbia Journalism Review, and Public Opinion Quarterly from 1960 to 1980 showed that few studies have been done on social control in the newspaper.

The study that probably reflected best the classical view of social control in the newsroom was that of Breed. Breed
(1955) concluded that reporters tended to conform to the newspaper's news policy through the process of socialization and that, instead of adhering to societal and professional ideals, reporters redefined their values to more pragmatic level of the newsroom group (7, pp. 182-194).

Walter Giebert (1956) concluded that policy pressure exerted by the publisher or editorial supervisors generally was not an important factor in the newsroom work-setting (14, p. 432).

Malcolm Warner (1971) concluded that ethical journalistic norms did matter, as did liberal attitudes of the staff vis-a-vis those of the management (41, p. 284).

Lee Sigehman (1973) concluded that decisions in the newspaper organization tended to move from top to bottom by active promotion of attitudes that rendered reporters favorable to newspaper policies and by imposing of policies on reporters by means of hierarchical authority. Conflict arose only when the reporter perceived that he was treated nonprofessionally or when newspaper management became disenchanted with the reporter's output (36, pp. 136-146).

Studies that dealt indirectly with social control in the newsroom can be classified into: studies on reporters, studies on editors, and studies on newspaper organization.

Reporters

Leo Rosten (1937) concluded that reporters tended to develop skills in evaluating and interpreting events in the
manner that would give them the most favorable response from
their supervisors and to adjust themselves upon their work
(30, p. 221).

Charles Swanson (1949) concluded that the editing-
writing group of the newspaper was relatively homogeneous in
its social characteristics and that a consensus to the point
of unanimity prevailed on values about what the newspaper
should be (38, p. 27).

Ithiel de Sola Pool and Shulman Irwin (1959) concluded
that reporters tended to behave in ways that would be approved
by those whom they valued highly: the editors (27, p. 156).

Robert Judd (1961) concluded that reporters were passive
gatekeepers who merely conformed to the city editor's image of
what reader want and that the climate in the newsroom was more
cooperative than competitive (20, pp. 35-37).

Rodney Stark (1962) concluded that the newsroom did not
represent a homogenous group and that the newsroom contained
groups who engaged in conflict with one another (37, pp. 11-31).

Ruth Flegel and Steven Chaffee (1971) concluded that
reporters were basically directed by their opinions in reporting
news; editors' and readers' views were less influencial. Flegel,
however, challenged the principal of absolute objectivity that
stressed that news should reach the consumer untainted by
personal bias or outside influence that would make it appear
to be anything but what it is. To her, reporters are human and
can never wholly escape the influence of their opinions and
emotions (13, p. 645).
John Johnston (1976) concluded that journalists were oriented as professionals; they placed a high value on service to the public, on professional autonomy, and on independence from supervision; and by comparison tended to de-emphasize the importance of material rewards and benefits. Levels of perceived autonomy seemed fairly high although the majority of reporters recognized formal constraints over the initiation and final acceptance of their work (19, pp. 7-9).

Scott Whitlow (1979) concluded that women in the newsroom tended to conform to the norms of policy rather than to whatever personal beliefs or ethical values they brought to the job (42, p. 380).

Editors

David Bowers (1967) concluded that publisher activity was higher in areas that might affect the revenue of the newspaper directly or indirectly than in social issues. Bowers concluded that the larger the circulation of the newspaper, the less active the publisher in the news direction (6, pp. 1-2).

Gene Gilmore and Robert Root (1976) concluded that managing editors in large dailies were more managers, and those in small dailies functioned more as editors since they were actually directing and helping to produce the news-editorial package (15, p. 745).

Edward Trayers (1978) concluded that managing editors were among those who budgeted and controlled the newsroom
purse strings, had something to say about salaries, participated in allocating news space, planned the news package, assigned responsibilities and tasks, supervised the overall functioning of the newsroom, established priorities, provided staffer leadership and strived for improvement (39, p. 744).

Christine Ogan, Brown Charlene, and David Weaver (1979) concluded that the typical newspaper manager is white, Protestant, married with one child, and a college graduate (26, p. 803).

Susan Holly (1979) concluded that female editors have less control than male editors over hiring, promotion decisions, et cetera (16, p. 815).

**Newspaper Organization**

William Lindely (1958) concluded that a great many newspapers still waited for job candidates to come to them, and tended to hire the person who comes along at the right time (22, p. 474).

Ben Bagdikian (1972) concluded that newspapers under study were overwhelmingly Republican and conservative and that there was a high correlation between editorial policy and news bias (2, p. 9).

Gaye Tuchman (1972) concluded that objectivity may be seen as a strategic ritual protecting reporters from the risks of their trade; Tuchman's formulation supported Everett Hughes' conclusion that occupations develop ritualized procedures to protect themselves from blame (40, pp. 660-676).
Lee Sigehman (1972) concluded that the content of the newspaper was influenced less by the private ideological desires and tastes of the communicator than by the practical necessity to select from among competing stories within the time allocated (36, p. 73).

Harold Shaver (1978) concluded that poorly handled company policy and administration were the most important factors contributing to job dissatisfaction (35, p. 61).

Michael Ryan (1979) concluded that newspapers under study lacked accuracy and fairness in news reporting (31, p. 479).

Paula Renfro (1979) concluded that newspapers under study were biased in selecting letters to editors, that comparison of letters received with letters published showed certain topics more likely than others to get into print (28, pp. 822-826).

Questions

The following questions dealing with social control in the newsroom guided the research and were the basis of data collection:

The first dealt with how news policy is maintained. That is, what are the formal and informal mechanisms of social control in the newsroom of the newspaper organization?
The second dealt with conflict in the newspaper organization. That is, what are the ways by which newspaper staffers attempt to bypass the news policy of the newspaper organization?

Limitations

The daily newspaper used in this study was the Denton Record-Chronicle. The Record-Chronicle was selected because of accessibility and because it is a middle-size newspaper, as defined by Breed, with 10,000 to 100,000 daily circulation (7, p. 181).

The Record-Chronicle is an evening daily newspaper published every day except Saturday. Its daily circulation as of March 31, 1981 was 14,872; its Sunday circulation, 17,240 (42).

The Record-Chronicle probably represents a special, if not a unique, situation. It operates in a city with two universities—North Texas State University (NTSU) and Texas Woman's University (TWU)—that is also part of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex (DFW), one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the nation (11).

The newspapers' market in the DFW metroplex is organized into groups. The northern DFW Metro Group, represented by the Texas Daily Press League, covers an area of 2,000 square miles, including the entire northern region of what is known as the Golden Triangle encompassing the DFW metroplex. Its main cities are Denton, Lewisville and Grapevine.
The northern DFW Metro Group has four newspapers: Denton Record-Chronicle; Lewisville News-Advertiser, published on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays with a circulation of 12,000; Grapevine News-Advertiser, published on Thursdays with a circulation of 8,000; and Grapevine Sun, published on Sundays with a circulation of 2,000. The group includes Metro Guide TV Supplement, published on Sundays with a circulation of 28,500. The four dailies and the TV supplement are owned by the Denton Publishing Company.

The Record-Chronicle's newsroom staff consists of a managing editor, a news editor, three copy editors, an assistant news editor, and associate editor, eight reporters, a sports editor, two sports writers, a chief photographer, and two photographers.

Most reporters have their beats, but they often write on matters that go beyond their specific beats. The editors edit stories, write headlines, and lay out pages of the newspaper. The managing editor writes the editorial columns.

The Record-Chronicle grew out of the merger of two weekly newspapers, the Denton Chronicle, which James Williams established in 1882, and the Denton County Record, which Bill Reilly and Corbin Johnson established in 1897.

Williams was the oldest son of C. Williams, a Denton pioneer who came to Texas in the days of the republic. Several years after establishing the paper, he disposed of it and purchased the Ardmore Daily Chronicle in Indian territory.
The Denton County Record was established in 1897. It was the fifth newspaper in a town of 4,000. The publisher of the Chronicle became discouraged at the outlook and went to the Record's owners with a proposal to sell on any terms. The down payment, as the late W. Edwards recalled in his writing for the Record-Chronicle in 1953, consisted of an old organ the Record had taken on an advertising bill, and the deferred payments were to draw no interest.

By 1901 W. Edwards had purchased the Record and set out to modernize and improve its facilities and equipment. He bought a folding machine, a two-revolution press and a gasoline engine to power the press.

The first daily edition of the Record and Chronicle was published on August 3, 1903. It was a risky venture for the time and one that Edwards admitted could have been a disaster. In 1953 he wrote, "Illustrative of the axiom that 'fools step in where angels dare not read,' I decided Denton was big enough to support a local daily and on August 3, 1903, the first issue of the daily Record and Chronicle came off the press" (12).

Edwards left the Record and Chronicle in 1906 and sold his interest to his brother R. Edwards, Will McGintie and Asbury Abney. Two years later he bought back into the business and from that time until 1945 the Edwards family owned majority stock in the paper.
In 1905 the Record and Chronicle began receiving telegraph wire service from the Scripps-Mcrae organization in Kansas City, Missouri. The paper had tried to gain membership in The Associated Press, but succeeded only after the Dallas Morning News waived its exclusive AP membership rights within a sixty-mile radius of Dallas after 1910.

A fire in 1914 destroyed all equipment including papers dating to 1882. At that time, the plant was on South Elm Street.

Riley Cross bought the paper in 1945. The office was on the corner of Hickory and Cedar streets where the Campus Theatre is. In 1947, it was moved to its present site, 314 East Hickory. The name of the paper was changed from Record and Chronicle to the Denton Record-Chronicle, and a Sunday edition was established.

The Denton Publishing Company, organized in 1947, has owned and operated the paper since that time. Cross was president and publisher until his death in 1970, at which time his wife, Vivian Cross, assumed the position.

In 1962 a major expansion more than doubled the plant's size, adding 7,500 square feet. In 1970 the paper began a conversion to electronic photo typesetting and was an innovator in helping perfect direct printing methods for letterpress equipment.

Under Cross' leadership the paper more than tripled its circulation and was among the first newspapers in the state to install teletypesetter machines.
Other properties of Denton Publishing Company include the Lewisville News-Advertiser and the Grapevine Publishing Company, publisher of Grapevine News-Advertiser and Grapevine Sun. The Sun, established in 1895, was purchased in 1977. The Keelng family had owned and published the paper since 1897.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the following operational definitions were used:

Editors: Individuals who are directly responsible to management for implementing news policy, but have little or no part in deciding the news policy of the newspaper organization. Editors usually edit stories, write headlines, and lay out pages of the newspaper.

Experienced staffers: Individuals who had worked for the Record-Chronicle for more than one year or had worked for other news media organizations prior to joining the Record-Chronicle. Most experienced staffers are editors.

News policy: The more or less consistent orientation shown by the newspaper, not only in its editorials, but in its news columns and headlines as well, concerning selected issues or events.

Newsroom: The physical and the psychological entity where news writing, editing, and editorial supervision take place.
New staffers: Individuals who had been at the Record-Chronicle for less than one year and/or had just graduated from college. Most news staffers are reporters.

Reporters: Individuals who cover and write stories about particular issues or events.

Social control: A concept that refers to the mutual influence between the staffers and their newspaper organization, that is, the mechanisms by which news policy is maintained and the ways by which staffers bypass news policy.

Methodology

The present study is a case study, a comprehensive description and explanation of the many components of a given situation (1, p. 37). The case study method was selected because it permits determination of various components of social control in the newsroom.

Social control was examined in terms of (a) mechanisms by which news policy is maintained and (b) ways by which newspaper staffers attempt to bypass news policy of the newspaper organization.

The two groups of staffers examined in the present study were new and experienced staffers.

The interview was considered more appropriate for the present study than the mailed questionnaire for the following reasons; (a) the interview permits the researcher to rephrase questions to make sure they are understood and to clarify
the meaning of the subject's response; (b) the interview is a more appropriate technique for revealing information concerning complex subjects and for probing beyond public attitudes to the more covert, private sentiments; (c) the interview allows the interviewee to become oriented to the topic under investigation, thus, facilitating recall of relevant material; and (d) more individuals are willing and able to cooperate in a survey where all they have to do is talk (17, pp. 157-160; 24, pp. 84-85).

Literature on survey research suggested that the proportion of return of questionnaires usually is low, varying from 20 to 25 per cent (17, p. 159), whereas a properly designed and executed interview usually achieves a rate of cooperation from 80 to 85 percent (1, p. 171).

Unstructured questions were found to be more appropriate for this type of study. Matilda Riley suggested that the unstructured interview probably is the most difficult to conduct: It is designed to get the most depth and has the least standardization (29, p. 16). Although there are no clear-cut rules for conducting an unstructured interview—a skill which may be acquired through practice—Winston White developed an ingenious adaption of Talcott Parsons' social control paradigm that may serve as a useful model for the unstructured interview (29). The paradigm can be summarized as follows: (a) support—the researcher should guarantee respondent's anonymity; (b) permissiveness—the researcher should encourage
the respondent to express his views and not the views the researcher may expect from him or her; (c) denial of reciprocity--the researcher should neither approve not disapprove of what the respondent says; (d) conditional manipulation of sanctions--the researcher should guide the respondent toward giving a full and consistent report; (e) evaluating the respondent--the researcher should not make up his mind about the respondent from his appearance or that of his surroundings, or from the language he uses, but let the answers speak for themselves; and (f) recording the interview--the researcher should record verbatim as much as possible (29, p. 16).

Furthermore, the interviewer should be able to handle lengthy conversations, often touching upon matters that are highly personal and intimate. In many cases, the arrangement and wording of the questions are determined on the spot by the interviewer who must, in addition, analyze what the respondent say quickly enough so that he can help him express his thoughts and can probe for further information when necessary (29, p. 16).

Since the present study is a descriptive study, inferential statistics are not relevant. Abraham Kaplan suggested that the statistics most often used for the purpose of description are the measures of central tendency: the mode, the median, and the mean (21, p. 234). Percentages and proportions are also commonly used. However, in view of the small number
of subjects used in this study, these measures were not appropriate. Accordingly, the results of the present study were reported in terms of most, when expressing the views of the majority, and few, when expressing the views of the minority.

There is always the possibility that the respondent may misrepresent himself: prevaricate, overstate, pretend, supress, distort, dissimulate, project, and falsify (34, p. 88), but the researcher should try to minimize as many of these threats as possible.

Sonia Wright suggested that any interview usually is somewhere between structured and unstructured, containing some set questions and some discretionary questions to be asked by the interviewer when it appears appropriate (44, p. 51). The format of the questionnaire for the present study consisted of a series of outlines used as a basis for questioning. The interviews of this study were a combination of structured and unstructured questions.
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

FINDINGS

Fifteen staffers of the Record-Chronicle were inter-
viewed from December 1 to December 15, 1981. The staffers con-
sisted of five editors, five reporters, three sports writers,
and two photographers. Six other staff members were not inter-
viewed because they were on assignment during the time of the
interviews. The interviews, scheduled with the help of the
managing editor, were conducted separately in the Record-
Chronicle conference room during working hours.

The staffers' functions follow a system of division of
labor where each staffer plays a role in the production of the
final news package. The reporter usually is assigned a full-time
beat or a combination of related beats: court house, police
station, fire department, public school, et cetera. The
reporter spends a large proportion of the working hours away
from the newsroom covering events and/or contacting news sources.
Editors usually edit stories, write headlines, and lay out pages
of the Record-Chronicle's news section. The managing editor
plays an important role in the Record-Chronicle's newsroom. In
addition to writing the editorial columns, he participates in
allocating news space, plans the news package, assigns
responsibilities and tasks, supervises the overall functioning
of the newsroom, establishes priorities, and provides staff leadership.

Generally, the Record-Chronicle's staffers tend to share similar characteristics: a typical staffer is young, has a college degree, holds liberal attitudes, and comes from middle-class background. However, considerable differences exist among the staffers as to the level of experience. Such differences seem to play an important role in how each staffer perceives the newspaper's news policy.

For the purposes of this study, staffers were divided into two categories: the new staffers and the experienced staffers.

New staffers usually go to the Record-Chronicle through the aid of someone they know at the newspaper. Their job at the Record-Chronicle usually is their first one in the newspaper business and their main aim usually is to gain experience.

Experienced staffers either are recruited from the ranks of the Record-Chronicle's staffers or are hired from outside.

Most new staffers are reporters and most experienced staffers are editors, but because of the relatively small size of the staff and the high turnover, an experienced staffer can be a reporter and rarely a new staffer can be an editor.

Staffers and the Denton Record-Chronicle's News Policy

Most staffers said that they were not aware of the Record-Chronicle's news policy when they joined its staff.
They joined the Record-Chronicle for reasons not related specifically to the news policy, including, in rank order: (a) the Record-Chronicle had a good reputation; (b) the staffer knew someone at the newspaper who helped him get his present position; (c) the newspaper's proximity to the two universities; (d) the Denton area is a good place to live, and (e) personal reasons.

That the news policy was not a major factor in the staffers' selection of the Record-Chronicle may suggest that staffers do not actually exercise self selection, and thus self control, by gravitating to only those newspapers that have news policies they agree with.

The Record-Chronicle is dependent partially on voluntary applications in filling its positions. However, it may solicit applicants, and thus exercise organizational control in the process of recruitment. Many new staffers go to the Record-Chronicle through someone they knew at the newspaper, usually the managing editor (The managing editor used to be a faculty member at NTSU. He had the opportunity to know students whom he considers qualified for the job at the Record-Chronicle). Thus, the managing editor may be most likely to hire those who can perform the job according to the newspaper's expectations.

The staffer is hired on a ninety-day probationary period. During this period, he is "expected to demonstrate his ability to perform his work to the Record-Chronicle's expectation." In the event the Record-Chronicle is dissatisfied with the staffer's performance, the staffer is terminated during or at the end of the ninety-day period (1, p. 22).
The Record-Chronicle's expectations are not defined clearly. However, the Denton Publishing Company's booklet, provided to the new staffers, states that the company "hires personnel on the basis of their abilities, experience, and attitudes. An individual's personality and character are also considered to assure a harmonious working atmosphere for all employees" (1, p. 17).

Most staffers said the Record-Chronicle had a news policy, but few could define it without difficulty. Although the news policy may mean different things to different individuals, there is a clear distinction between the new and the experienced staffers as to what the news policy is predominantly concerned with.

To the news staffer, the dominant news policy issue centers upon the idea of whether the Record-Chronicle emphasizes local news or national and international news. To the experienced staffer, the issue is whether the Record-Chronicle plays a passive or an aggressive role in the community.

Although the Record-Chronicle's news policy is not clearly stated, the booklet of the Denton Publishing Company provided to new staffers states,

This is a people-oriented organization engaged in a people-oriented business. Our role is to communicate. We report on and comment about people and the things they do and say. We serve as an essential communications link between businessmen, their customers and potential customers. We provide people with helpful information about new products, new developments and special prices to help them have a better life at a lower cost. We bring the
news of the day to the homes of people of all ages, colors and creeds (1, p. 1).

Such statements, however, tend to emphasize the business aspect of the newspaper. To the managing editor, the Record-Chronicle is not a partisan newspaper. "We support the city government and the school system, but we feel free to criticize them," he said.

How Do Staffers Learn News Policy

Most staffers said that learning news policy is a process that takes place over time. "You learn it just by being around," one staffer said. That is, the staffer tends to learn news policy through the informal processes of socialization.

When a new staffer is hired, he usually is not told what the news policy is, nor is he ever told. Nonetheless, the staffer learns the news policy gradually and indirectly through various means.

The Record-Chronicle, like most newspapers, does not have a complete written news policy that can serve as a guide in diverse situations of news coverage. Some aspects of the Record-Chronicle's news policy are spelled out in a number of brochures provided to staffers, but the content of these brochures tends to emphasize more the technical aspects of the news policy than the news policy itself.

For example, one brochure tells the staffers how to handle straight-news writing:
Keep leads short. Three typewritten lines is a good maxium; keep sentences short. Many studies have shown that short sentences are more easily understood than long ones; vary short sentences with an occasional long one to prevent monotony; use mainly simple declarative sentences: subject, verb and direct subject; use strong, active verbs. The verb is the key word in most sentences; use adjectives and adverbs sparingly. They often weaken writing; and use plenty of quotations. It is better to start paragraphs with quoted material rather than to bury the quotes in the middle of paragraphs (5, p. 10).

Another example is one which tells the staffer how to write a paragraph with dimensions:

Dimensions always take numerals, whether dimensions of buildings, people or space. The man is 5 feet 10 inches tall, and his 5-foot 7 wife (or his 5-foot-7-inch wife -- AP says both are acceptable) accompanied him as they entered the 20-by-40 square-foot room. They were launched 300 miles into space (5, p. 1).

Although most of these brochures tend to emphasize the technical aspects of news policy, some of these technical aspects can gradually lead the staffer to become familiar with many aspects of the news policy itself. For example, one brochure tells the staffer how to "build contact" with news sources: be "considerate," be "helpful," "trust nothing," "not fear anger," be "fair," and "capitalize and bargain" (5, pp. 3-4). The brochure instructs the staffer not to featurize leads:

A news lead should be straightforward, summarizing in brief the main theme of the story. This does not mean that the lead will be uninteresting. It just means that rhetoric for the sake of color does not make it more interesting, only more difficult to read (5, p. 1).

The brochure contains a list of "Do's and Don'ts" for staffers. Under the "Do's" list, it states, "Do you know the
problems of your news sources well enough to sit down and talk policy with them—whether it's hospitals, mental health, fund-raising, education, labor, business expansion or whatever?" "Do you report with your eyes as well as your ears? When you see something that people talk about or chuckle over, do you just tell somebody about it or do you write it?" "Are you a telephone reporter or do you get out and talk with the news sources?" "Remember that the best stories affect or interest the greater number. A story about insurance men interests insurance men and friends. A story about insurance can interest anyone who buys it." "Watch for trends. The easiest way to get on Page One is to notice a change in our society, an item that will interest a lot of people such as 'church suppers are on the way out,' 'students are getting out of college younger,' 'mustaches are coming back,' 'kids don't go to Grandma's any more for Christmas, Grandma goes to the kids'" (5, pp. 4-6).

By giving examples of the kinds of stories that might get on Page One, the newspaper probably is telling the staffer the kinds of story that fit its news policy. In other words, such examples may serve as a guide for the kinds of story the staffer is expected to seek.

In spite of the fact the content of these brochures tend to emphasize the technical aspect of the news policy, the brochures include the newspaper's specific news policy concerning
several areas, such as election coverage, court coverage and the blotter.

The election coverage brochure states,

To insure fairness, equal-paralleled treatment must be given to all candidates .... A strict policy will be to cut off partisan political stories 48 hours prior to election dates. This is to cut down the possibility that an unscrupulous candidate will level 11th hour charges that cannot be responded to. Policy is strict but not rigid, we will not use statements by campaign managers or other aides unless they are of special news significance (4, pp. 16-18).

The brochure suggests that these are general guidelines and any questions or special considerations should be taken to the appropriate editor in the newsroom (4, p. 18).

The court coverage brochure states,

We will have a story on civil suits filed and/or civil judgments where the amount of money or property in question is $100,000 or more; where it involves a public official, when it involves government entity or whenever the public might possibly be concerned with the outcome of a suit as in the filing of an injunction by one party against another who is attempting to fence off a public road, or such (3, p. 1).

The blotter brochure states,

In writing about rapes, indecency, child molesting, etc., don't be too graphic. A brief, straightforward account will do. Description of how it was done and how many times only causes the victim additional pain, angers readers and hampers the possible defendant's chance of a fair trial. Do not mention the race of either complainants or suspects unless it is material to the story. An example of this is a description of a suspect who is still at large and may likely commit another alleged crime or who might be recognized by someone who could assist in the apprehension, as in a robbery or a murder or a child molesting, et cetera (2, pp. 2-3).
Such news policy guidelines, whether general or specific, may serve as a guide as to the newspaper's news policy.

The Record-Chronicle also does not have a special training program for the staffers. Most staffers have either a college degree or newspaper experience or both. However, most new staffers were involved in what is called on-the-job-training, whereby a new staffer is put under the supervision of an experienced one. During that period, the new staffer is socialized to various aspects of the newspaper's work. Most new staffers said that what they learned during that period was more related to the technical aspects of the news policy than to the news policy itself. For example, the new staffer learned what a typical news lead should be like and that a news story should be written in an inverted pyramid order where the more important facts precede the less important ones, so that when the paragraph is cut for lack of space the story is not affected. Some new staffers were trained to use the computer terminals (VDT system) that speeds the process of writing and facilitates access to national stories, but this is not done frequently since most staffers who use the computer terminals are editors.

Although the process of on-the-job training tends to focus on the technical aspects of the newspaper work, the process itself serves as an opportunity for the news staffers to meet and know other staffers, and, thus, to be exposed to various aspects of the news policy. "You observe and learn
certain conventions and you know what is expected from you," a new staffer said.

Another way by which staffers learn news policy is by reading the newspaper. Most staffers said they read the Record-Chronicle on almost a daily basis. Most read the section they write for. In many cases, the staffer starts by reading the article he wrote, then the section his is in, then the general headlines or stories on Page One. Most staffers said they read the editorial page only occasionally.

Reading stories on Page One and the editorial page may serve as a guide to the staffer as to the newspaper's news policy. The staffer learns which stories received more attention (on Page One) and which stories received less attention (inside the newspaper). He learns the newspaper's position on various issues through the editorial.

Also, the Record Chronicle often holds staff meetings in which most staffers participate. A staff meeting may involve two staffers or all staffers, depending on the importance of the issue. However, staff meetings that involve all staffers are very rare, once or twice a year. Most of the other meetings are informal, usually involving two staffers (reporter and editor, reporter and managing editor, editor and managing editor). Discussions in these meetings usually focus on such issues as assignment deadlines, stories to be covered, simplification of complicated stories, using an
active verb in a headline, generating more stories during holiday seasons, and similar matters.

The Record-Chronicle occasionally holds meetings that involve the staffers and the publisher. Most staffers said that meetings with the publisher tend to focus on technical matters. In two meetings, the discussion was about the use of the VDT system and the question of overtime; staffers were given guidelines on the use of the VDT system and were asked not to work overtime. This may suggest that the publisher is more active when the issue is directly related to the newspaper's revenue than when it is related to other aspects of news policy. The publisher tends to hand to the managing editor and other editors the responsibility of implementing the news policy. This may insure implementation of news policy and prevent the publisher from direct criticism.

The Record-Chronicle holds meetings once a year that involve the staffers and the newspaper's attorney. The attorney usually discusses how to handle controversial stories to help the newspaper prevent a law suit for libel.

These staff meetings, whether involving the managing editor, the publisher, or the attorney, serve as a forum through which the staffer becomes familiar with the newspaper's news policy.

The Record-Chronicle is a member of The Associated Press (AP). Most national and international stories printed in the Record-Chronicle are AP stories. Most staffers said they
value the AP highly for the reputation it established for the newspaper in covering national and international news. In general, the staffers do not question the reliability of AP stories.

The AP may serve as a guide as to the types of story that needs to be covered. The AP reports on state, national and international news, but the staffers may give a local angle to the stories. For example, if the AP reports a national story concerning high turnover in high schools, the Record-Chronicle's staffer may write a story on turnover in Denton high schools and combine his story with the AP story.

Thus, learning news policy is a gradual process that tends to be diffuse and informal.

How the Record-Chronicle's News Policy is Maintained

Although learning news policy usually takes place through informal processes of socialization, the newspaper usually needs both informal and formal mechanisms by which it can maintain its news policy. Such mechanisms can range from the process of scolding the staffer or blue penciling the staffer's story to the last resort of firing.

Informal mechanisms.--To the newspaper, informal mechanisms may be more efficient than formal ones; informal mechanisms enable the newspaper to maintain its policy without being vulnerable to direct criticism.
The staffers' functions at the Record-Chronicle tend to follow a system of hierarchy. In general, the new staffer is put under the supervision of an experienced one.

Most beat reporters are under the supervision of the associate editor who is under the supervision of the managing editor. The same situation applies to other sections of the newspaper: the sports writer is under the supervision of the sports editor, and the photographer is under the supervision of the chief photographer; both the sports editor and chief photographer are under the supervision of the managing editor. The managing editor is directly responsible to the publisher for implementing news policy. Thus, supervision carried out by the editors and the managing editors serves as a mechanism by which the newspaper maintains its news policy.

Another control mechanism is beat assignment, which also follow a hierarchial pattern. A new staffer usually is assigned the least important beat. For example, a new staffer, may be assigned the beat of police station, or the Denton Independent School Distrist (DISD). The beats of North Texas State University (NTSU) and Texas Woman's University (TWU) usually are assigned to an experienced staffer. The beat of city government usually is assigned to the associate editor whose function also is to supervise the new staffers. The same situation applies to other sections of the newspaper. For example, the new sports writer usually is assigned the beats of DISD and TWU (sports at TWU is
considered less important than at NTSU). The beat of NTSU usually is assigned to the experienced sports writer or to the sports editor.

Thus, the new staffer is likely to perform functions that are not critical to the newspaper's news policy.

Most staffers said that the beats are very specialized and consume most of their time. Specialization may permit the staffer to know well his particular beat, but it also may cause the staffer to lose sight of how events in his particular beat are related to the general events in the community. Many new staffers said some of their stories are about uninteresting events and lack perspective. Furthermore, most staffers said they could not write on issues outside their particular beats because of lack of time.

Thus, specialization and lack of time may help the newspaper maintain its news policy; the staffers are given little chance to write on issues other than those designated by the newspaper.

Although the beats are specialized, the beat reporter can be assigned to cover an event that falls outside his particular beat. Such stories usually are assigned by the managing editor. The managing editor can assign a story to the staffer who is likely to cover the event according to the Record-Chronicle's news policy; controversial stories, which are rare, usually are assigned to the more experienced staffers.
Hence, the newspaper determines not only which events to cover, but also who will cover them.

Since pages one, two and five are considered the most important pages of the newspaper, it usually is the news editor and/or his assistant who lay out these pages. The lay-out process involves a set of techniques that make a page more appealing to the reader. However, the process itself involves self judgment as to what types of story should be placed on page one, what type of headline should be written, and so on.

The lay-out of other pages usually is assigned to copy editors under the supervision of the managing editor. The editorial page is considered important, but its lay-out is mostly the same. The page usually is laid out by the copy editor.

Most staffers said their stories usually are edited. A story can be edited for style as well as for content. However, since most staffers' stories are not controversial, they usually are edited mainly for style. "Stories are edited for content only if they are not clear or contain contradictory statements," an editor said.

**Formal mechanisms.**--Formal mechanisms can involve both rewards and sanctions.

Editors usually are recruited from the ranks of reporters. Thus, the Record-Chronicle is likely to promote staffers who can perform their jobs according to its expectation. However,
since turnover at the newspaper is fairly high, many staffers were promoted because of lack of sufficient staffers.

Staffers, through the process of socialization, usually are conditioned to write stores that do not conflict with the newspaper's news policy. However, some staffers reported having tried to write controversial stories that probably contradicted the newspaper's news policy. Such stories usually were rejected and were not printed. Thus, rejection of stories is another mechanism by which news policy is maintained. This mechanism, however, rarely is used since most staffers exercise self control and rarely write stories they think might be rejected.

Firing is a rare phenomenon at the Record-Chronicle. Firing, when it occurs, usually is not related to the news policy, but to a personal matter, such as absenteeism. Nonetheless, turnover at the Record-Chronicle is fairly high. Thus, it is possible that some staffers exercise self control by resigning and taking better-paid jobs elsewhere, usually in the public relation or advertising industry.

Conformity and Conflict

Considerable differences exist between new and experienced staffers as to what the Record-Chronicle's news policy is perceived to be, and most interestingly, what they think it should be.
New staffers.--To new staffers, the dominant news policy issue centers around the idea of whether the Record-Chronicle focuses upon local or national and international news. They suggested that the Record-Chronicle emphasizes local news.

New staffers rarely question the newspaper's news policy. To them, the newspaper, by focusing on local news, plays an important role in informing its readers on what is going on in the community.

Most new staffers said that the Record-Chronicle is a good newspaper for its size; it focuses on local news; it has won a number of awards; it has a good reputation for the excellence of its photography department; it has a good design; and it is appealing to its readers. Most new staffers said they value highly the managing editor and have good communication with most of the experienced staffers. In addition, most new staffers said they were satisfied with their overall job at the Record-Chronicle.

Nonetheless, most new staffers complained about various aspects of the Record-Chronicle's news policy, mostly about the technical aspects of the newspaper's work. They suggested that functions within the newsroom are not clearly defined. In many cases, there is a lack of coordination among staffers; for example, the Record-Chronicle, unlike most newspapers, does not have a city editor who can coordinate the staffers' functions.
Generally, new staffers tend to conform to the newspaper's news policy. However, several factors may induce the new staffer to conform: (a) The new staffer's aim at the Record-Chronicle basically is to get experience. The new staffer does not look upon his job as permanent. "The newspaper is the right size for my career and anybody's goal is to move to a larger newspaper," a new staffer said. Thus, the new staffer is likely to be more concerned with the immediate details of his job than with the general news policy of the newspaper. (b) The new staffer has a sense of obligation and esteem for supervisors. Most new staffers were hired through someone they know at the newspaper, and thus, they are likely to perform their function according to the Record-Chronicle's expectation. (c) Although most new staffers said their goal is to move to a larger newspaper, many expressed a desire for mobility within the Record-Chronicle. Thus, the new staffer seeking promotion is likely not to function counter to the newspaper's news policy. (d) Most new staffers like to see their stories on Page One (which may be a good tactic for mobility). Thus, the new staffer is likely to report on stories he thinks may be on Page One, which means stories that fit the newspaper's news policy. (e) Many new staffers referred to the pleasant nature of their activities. "It is a lot of work and a lot of fun," a new staffer said. (f) The fact is that news becomes a value, that is, stories have to be written even though nothing much has happened. Thus, much
of the staffer's energy is channeled into getting news, and thus, he devotes little time to questioning the newspaper's news policy.

Experienced staffers.--To experienced staffers, the dominant news policy issue relates to whether the Record-Chronicle plays a passive or an aggressive role in the community. They suggested that the newspaper plays a passive role in the community.

Most experienced staffers suggested that the newspaper's news policy is poorly defined and is contingent upon the moment. If there is a general news policy, they suggested, it is to play down negative events in the community. "We play a passive and marginal role in the community, and the newspaper's goal is not defined. It is a frustrating situation for me," an experienced staffer said.

Many experienced staffers said the Record-Chronicle seems to think it does not have competition from other newspapers whereas actually, they suggest, it does. Denton readers are as much interested in the Dallas newspapers as in the Record-Chronicle. The Record-Chronicle's perception that it does not have competition, they argue, makes the Record-Chronicle less competent and less motivated.

Because the Record-Chronicle has a high turnover, experienced staffers suggest, the Record-Chronicle does not have an adequate staff. They complained that new staffers are less
competent and less motivated, "Reporters are younger, less experienced, not motivated; they do have a grasp of language and they think even worse," an experienced staffer said.

Most experienced staffers said that technically, the Record-Chronicle is a good newspaper, but it is below average in terms of content. Like new staffers, they complained about lack of coordination within the newsroom. In many cases, they argue, responsibilities are not defined.

Ways by Which Experienced Staffers Attempt to Bypass News Policy

There are various ways by which experienced staffers attempt to bypass the Record-Chronicle's news policy: (a) Many experienced staffers admitted they hand off material to other newspapers. A typical example is a staffer who reports on an event and discovers that the event contains angles that may interest other newspapers. In some cases, the Record-Chronicle is aware of that phenomenon, but it seems the newspaper does not object to writing to other newspapers. However, most experienced staffers said they hand off stories to other newspapers for financial reasons and news policy has little to do with their writing for other newspapers. (b) Most experienced staffers said they do not try consciously to keep out material consistent with the newspaper's news policy; they usually write according to what is expected of them. "You learn their conventions and you play by their rules," an experienced staffer said.
(c) The experienced staffers may follow a tension-avoidance process by which they perform their jobs as long as it does not compromise their professional ethics. "As long as I get paid and perform my job as I want, I am staying," an experienced staff said. (d) Finally, although experienced staffers tend not to challenge the newspaper's news policy directly, resignation probably is the most effective way by which they can bypass news policy.

Several factors may induce the experienced staffer to conflict with the newspaper's news policy: (a) Experienced staffers are expected to participate in implementing news policy, but they play little role in making it. "The editor has a lot to say, but the last saying is up to the owners," an experienced staffer said. (b) Many experienced staffers suggested that the staffer's power in the community is a reflection of his newspaper's power. Because the Record-Chronicle plays a passive role in the community, they argue, it has little power, and thus, its staffers have little power.

The Editorial Column and the Editorial Page

Both new and experienced staffers said they do not read the editorial column and the editorial page except occasionally, but for different reasons. New staffers said they lack time to read editorial columns; experienced staffers said the section is uninteresting.
Both new and experienced staffers suggested that the editorial page (with exception of the editorial column) is balanced. It includes columns from both conservative and liberal columnists, including columns by Ellen Goodman, Art Buchwald, Richard Reeves (liberals) and William Safire and William Buckley (conservatives).

However, new and experienced staffers have different views as to the editorial column. Although new staffers did not question it, experienced staffers suggested that it usually is about uninteresting things, such as trees, traffic, safety and the like. "The editorial column is poorly reasoned, not intellectually stimulating, and about uninteresting subjects," an experienced staffer said. Another experienced staffer said, "The editorial column is not persuasive. It has a lot of ambiguity and it uses a very carefully couched language to impress readers." Thus, new and experienced staffers differ as to the news policy expressed in the newspaper's news column.

New and Experienced Staffers' Perspectives

The difference between new and experienced staffers as to the Record-Chronicle's news policy may represent two different perspectives.

New staffers' perspective.—New staffers argue that the newspaper tends to emphasize local news, that only when nothing much is happening in the community does the newspaper
turn to national and international news. They suggested that the *Record-Chronicle* is a feature-oriented newspaper, emphasizing human interest stories and playing down negative and sensational stories. This, they argued, probably is a trend in the newspaper's plan to move away from sensational toward human interest stories.

**Experienced staffers' perspective.**—Experienced staffers argued that the newspaper does not emphasize local news. In many cases, they suggested, the newspaper carries no Denton stories on Page One.

Experienced staffers suggested that the newspaper actually has two news policies: one local and one national. The local one is passive and the national one tends to carry what AP sends.

They argued that the *Record-Chronicle*’s news policy is inconsistent: passive on local events and not passive on national events. For example, the newspaper endorses state and national candidates, but not locals.

Experienced staffers suggested that the newspaper tends not to be passive on national events because such events already were reported through the AP and the news media in general. Thus, the *Record-Chronicle* does not have a risk of being accused of anything when printing controversial national news.
To experienced staffers, the newspaper should be aggressive and should be involved and participate in what is going on in the community. "The newspaper should establish its identity and its reputation by playing an aggressive role in its community and not by being a public relations-oriented newspaper," an experienced staffer said.

Most new staffers said they have good communication with experienced staffers. However, most experienced staffers said new staffers are not competent and not motivated, and that the Record-Chronicle, by being passive on local events, creates an atmosphere that makes new staffers passive, too. "New staffers are not curious of anything and they take things for granted. In fact, they are not encouraged to do anything," an experienced staffer said. Another said, "New staffers can be pushed or guided to do something, but that is not happening. We have a bunch of people with potential, but they are not used." Those who are motivated, they said, are self-motivated and usually do not stay at the newspaper very long.

Thus, both new and experienced staffers have different perspectives as to what the newspaper's news policy is and what it should be. New staffers tend to conform to the newspaper's news policy and the experienced staffers tend to be critical of and conflict with the newspaper's news policy.

News and Objectivity

The concepts of news and objectivity probably are the most common concepts in the field of journalism. Most new
and experienced staffers said news and objectivity are the essence of their job.

What is news may be determined by the newspaper (e.g. through assignment). However, the staffers suggested that knowing what news is, is something one develops by being in the profession of journalism. To new and experienced staffers, news is easier to recognize than it is to define. The complexity of trying to pin down a tight description of news can be seen in the following definitions offered by the staffers: News is what people are interested in; news is what affects a large number of people; news is what affects the community and the taxpayers; news is what comes in; news is what people need to know in relation to their government, what they need to know, what affects them and what they enjoy reading about; and news is what informs, inspires or warns people.

New and experienced staffers said they may make a judgment as to what news is. They argued that a journalist may create what people want, that what people want probably is what the journalist wants them to want. However, the process of informing people, they suggested, is a two-way street: A journalist may create what people want and he responds to the changes that occur in the community.

In spite of the presence of formal and informal mechanisms by which news policy is maintained, staffers suggested that objectivity is something one should strive for in reporting.
New and experienced staffers had little difficulty defining objectivity: the staffer's ability to detach himself from that which he reports. However, new staffers said one can achieve objectivity, whereas experienced staffers said one never can achieve objectivity.

To new staffers, basic procedures enable the staffer to achieve objectivity: presenting both sides of a controversy; presenting supporting evidence; judicious use of quotation marks; and structuring information in an appropriate order.

To experienced staffers, objectivity cannot be achieved regardless of the procedures one follows. For them, the question of objectivity starts from the moment the staffer selects a topic. They said one can ask why such a particular topic was selected in the first place.

The basic procedures to achieve objectivity may be seen by Gay Tuchman's view of ritualistic procedures. Tuchman said, "The newspapermen invoke ritualistic procedures in order to deflect potential criticism," that is, "objectivity may be seen as a strategic ritual protecting newspapermen from the risk of their trade" (6, pp. 660-662). Similarly Everett Hughes said, "Occupations develop ritualized procedures to protect themselves from blame" (6, p. 676). Dealing with the same issue, C. Wright Mills said, "Objectivity simply means that an individual has described his procedures with such explicitness that others employing them on the same problem will come to the same conclusion" (6, p. 677).
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CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The central purpose of this study was to investigate how news policy in a middle-size newspaper, the Denton Record-Chronicle, is maintained. The study dealt basically with issues of how newspaper staffers learn news policy; the formal and the informal mechanisms by which news policy is maintained; whether newspaper staffers conform to or conflict with the newspaper's news policy; the ways by which newspaper staffers attempt to bypass the newspaper's news policy; and how newspaper staffers perceive the concept of news and objectivity.

The study suggests that newspaper staffers learn the newspaper's news policy through the informal processes of socialization (through on-the-job training, staff meetings, reading the newspaper itself, and so so).

Yet formal and informal mechanisms exist by which the newspaper maintains its news policy. Informal mechanisms include supervision, assignment of who will cover an event, assignment of which event to cover, and so on. Formal mechanisms include promotion, rejection of stories, firing, and so on.
Traditional studies suggested that newspaper staffers tend to conform to the newspaper's news policy and that the relationship between the newspaper and its staffers is that of newsroom solidarity (1, p. 188). In this study, newspaper staffers were classified into two main categories: new and experienced staffers. Most new staffers were reporters and most experienced staffers were editors. The two groups differed as to what the newspaper's news policy is and what it should be.

To new staffers, the dominant news policy issue centers upon the idea of whether the newspaper emphasizes local or national and international news. They suggested that the newspaper emphasizes local news.

To experienced staffers, the issue relates to whether the newspaper plays a passive or an aggressive role in the community. They suggested that the newspaper plays a passive role in the community.

Experienced staffers attempt to bypass the newspaper's news policy in several ways; handing off materials to other newspapers, not writing on events they consider consistent with the newspaper's policy, following a tension-avoidance process by which they can perform their jobs without compromising their ethics, and resigning.

Thus, whereas news staffers tend to conform to the newspaper's news policy, experienced staffers tend to conflict with the newspaper's news policy.
Robert Merton suggested that the intellectual has limited alternatives: He can accommodate his own value and special knowledge to those of this organization; he can alter the prevailing policy; or he can respond in terms of a schizoid dissociation between his own values and those of his organization by regarding his function as purely technical and without value-implication (2, p. 172). New staffers tended to respond by conforming to the newspaper's news policy; experienced staffers tended to respond by conflicting with the newspaper's news policy.

Hence, the more experienced the staffer, the more likely he will conflict with the newspaper's news policy, and the less experienced the staffer, the more likely he will conform to the newspaper's news policy.

Conclusion

The present study has limitations: it was based on a relatively small newspaper whose staff is relatively small. Hence, the findings of this study may be peculiar to the case of the Denton Record-Chronicle. Nonetheless, the study suggested that the newspaper, through informal and formal mechanisms of social control, tended to control various aspects of newsroom work-setting. The study also suggested that, although the newspaper has its mechanisms of social control, conflict is still an important factor in the newsroom work-setting.
This conflict between experienced staffers and newspaper organization may reflect a modern trend that, according to Richard Hall, characterizes relations between professionals and their organization. "As a group becomes more professionalized, conflict may increase," Hall said. The relationship between the employing organization and the professional is "typically viewed as one of conflict, with the assumption that organizational and professional norms and values are inherently incompatible," Hall concluded (1, pp. 461-462).

Such conflict basically is due to the staffers' lack of participation in the editorial decisions. Experienced staffers have little voice in organizational decision-making and their autonomy consists of little more than their freedom to maneuver within the constraining bounds of their assignments.

There are ways by which experienced staffers attempt to bypass the newspaper's news policy, but these are limited. Indeed, resignation probably is the most effective way, but also the most drastic way, by which a staffer can bypass the newspaper's news policy.

To the quality of journalism, such conflict may be dysfunctional. High turnover may lead the newspaper to hire inadequate staff. In addition, staffers who leave the Record-Chronicle often go to public relations and advertising industry and not to larger newspapers.
To experienced staffers, such conflict is dysfunctional. To them, the newspaper should allow its staffers to participate in its editorial decision, and thus, permit them to play an important role in the community.

To the newspaper, the existence of these two groups of staffers (new and experienced) meets the newspaper's need for both loyalty, and expertise. New staffers can fulfill the need for loyalty and experienced staffers can fulfill the need for expertise. Hence, this may be functional for the newspaper organization.

Social control is in the hand of the newspaper organization. That is, the newspaper tended to control the mechanisms of social control. However, unless the newspaper recognizes the needs of staffers' participation in its editorial decisions, conflict may continue to be an important factor in the newsroom work-setting.
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