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Television newsmagazines, negativism, and political discontent

Darlington, Patricia Saint Eugenie, Ph.D.

University of Florida, 1993
TELEVISION NEWSMAGAZINES, NEGATIVISM,  
AND  
POLITICAL DISCONTENT  

By  
PATRICIA S. E. DARLINGTON  

A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
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This study was a comparison of older and younger persons' use of television newsmagazines that, in part, reexamined Michael J. Robinson's "Videomalaise" Hypothesis that television programs with negative content concerning government would foster cynicism and feelings of political inefficacy in viewers and would discourage political participation.

This study used 15 segments of television newsmagazines and documentaries showing government corruption or failure to consider the needs of citizens shown in three separate weeks to two groups of subjects. Undergraduate university students were compared with retired faculty members and their spouses.

Subjects responded to questions concerning their feelings of internal and external political efficacy, feelings about censorship of the media, and voting intention, both before and
after exposure to the segments. Subjects' levels of political
knowledge, need for cognition, perceived relevance of the
segments, motivations for watching television (information and
entertainment), and levels of differentiation (ability to
consider many aspects of the topic) were also evaluated. A
control group was comprised of 40 undergraduate students who
did not see the segments.

A 15-segment exposure to television newsmagazines and
documentaries showing concentrated illustrations of government
nonresponsiveness did not result in a significant decline in
viewers' feelings of internal or external political efficacy.
However, persons low in need for cognition had lower levels of
internal efficacy both before and after seeing the segments.

Older people who customarily watch television
newsmagazines had significantly greater political knowledge,
perceived the issues as more relevant, and were able to list
more specific aspects of a political issue than younger
subjects who watched fewer such programs. Older subjects did
not alter their voting intentions at all following exposure,
and younger subjects did not alter their intentions enough to
provide significance. After viewing these segments, older
people were significantly more opposed to censorship, unlike
the younger viewers who remained relatively more willing to
favor censorship. Older persons noted more instances in which
the visuals for the segments added emotion, clarity, and
reality than did the younger subjects.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

A review of the literature has yielded several studies concerned with the good news/bad news dichotomy and the media. Inherent in these studies is the belief that television is a major source of information for much of the population, a belief that has remained established for several decades.

In discussing television's importance as a major source of information, Berry, Gunter, and Clifford (1981) suggested that "understanding the characteristics of television as an information medium and evaluating its effectiveness as a source of propositional knowledge are matters of considerable practical concern" (p. 171).

A review of the literature has yielded studies in which the researchers have concentrated primarily on television and specifically on television's negative content (Galacian, 1986; Stone, Hartung, & Jensen, 1987). Several researchers have also sought to ascertain, through content analysis, the prevalence of bad news in the media and, more generally, through surveys, audiences' or readers' selection of and/or
attitudes toward good and bad news (Galacian, 1986; Galacian & Vestre, 1987; Haskins & Miller, 1984).

**Purpose of the Study**

Few studies, however, have attempted what this study proposes, which is a reexamination and possible refinement of an idea posited by Michael J. Robinson in 1976. This is the concept of a media effect which Robinson termed "videomalaise" in individuals, as engendered by the negative content inherent in television news. This study will reexamine this concept by evaluating (a) the influence of variables including personal relevance of an issue, need for information, age, and some motivations for viewing on television news audiences' degree of preference for a particular type or format (television newsmagazines and public affairs documentaries, e.g., *60 Minutes*, *FrontLine*), (b) the correlation of these variables with political knowledge, and (c) ultimately, whether the particular type of news format and content preferred has an effect on individuals' belief in their political efficacy, willingness to censor the media, and expressed voting intention.

Generally, then, the research questions to be addressed include the following:

1. Are there differences in the way certain variables influence audience members who along with their consumption of regular television news will seek out the additional
information offered in television newsmagazines or documentaries for more information?

2. What are some differences between those who seek out television news mainly for information and those who seek it out mainly for entertainment?

3. Does increased exposure to information about government corruption result in feelings of powerlessness, cynicism, and distrust of government and government officials?

4. Do such feelings alter expressed voting intentions?

5. Does such content affect willingness to censor the media?

Robinson's "Videomalaise" Hypothesis

In 1976 Robinson conducted a study through which he said he hoped to find whether a linkage existed between an increased television dependence and the decline of political efficacy and trust, or what will be referred to as an increase in political discontent. Specifically, he asked these questions: "Has public affairs television fostered cynicism and feelings of inefficacy? . . . Does television journalism . . . promote a growing American political malaise? Does public affairs television affect the national political ethos? Has it substantially influenced a national election?" (p. 411).

In an effort to answer the questions listed above, Robinson conducted an experiment in which two types of data
were used to test the impact of public affairs television on American public opinion. One set was collected in a laboratory investigation, and an additional set was taken from national election studies conducted by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan between 1952 and 1968.

The first set of experiments was designed to measure the impact of the CBS documentary "The Selling of the Pentagon" upon individuals' opinions about three institutions: the military, the national administration, and the media. The second set of experiments was designed to evaluate the impact of the documentary on the same institutions when the documentary was followed with a set of contradictory remarks, which were referred to as the "coda."

Robinson used a nine-page questionnaire comprising items created specifically for the experiment, plus five items taken from a political efficacy scale designed at the University of Michigan Survey Research Center. This instrument, which was administered as a pretest, assessed the subjects' feelings about their ability to deal with and understand politics. The test tapped opinions about the behavior and credibility of (a) social and political institutions, (b) public officials, (c) private citizens, and (d) news organizations. The final instrument consisted of three questionnaires, two of which were administered in
November and December of 1971 and the third distributed by mail in February of 1972.

In the experiment, subjects were shown "The Selling of the Pentagon," in three different modes: (a) subjects saw only the documentary, 53 minutes long, as presented on CBS in February of 1971; (b) Subjects watched the documentary and one of two codas, one being a 12-minute edited videotape in which F. Edward Hebert, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee; Vice President Spiro Agnew; and the president of CBS News, Richard Salant, presented their interpretations of the program; and (c) subjects saw the documentary and a different coda in which three confederates paraphrased the remarks of Hebert, Agnew, and Salant.

Robinson recruited subjects in such a way that demographic predispositions would show more variation and less "liberalism" than would have been expected had the average college sophomore been used. The group was categorized as middle American and was said to consist of "a more compelling collection of subjects than that usually found in experimental work in social science, especially in political science" (p. 413).

Robinson hypothesized that "The Selling," in its original mode, would "change beliefs (cognitions) about the behavior of the American military, rendering those beliefs less positive and would change affections toward the military, making them less positive as well" (p. 414).
Robinson claimed unqualified support for this hypothesis, noting that these results indicated not just changes in information levels but shifts in beliefs about institutional behavior.

In the years following the Robinson study, however, it has become apparent that Robinson may have been one of the few researchers able to demonstrate the existence of this "videomalaise", and several researchers have questioned its viability. These include Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring (1979), whose criticism of Robinson's study included the observation that

no analysis of the relationship between media exposure (or reliance) and political attitudes can really answer questions about media impact on political efficacy or trust, because such an analysis can only assume, without empirical evidence, that there is something about the media content to which people have been exposed that affects individual attitudes. (p. 68)

They also criticized Robinson for arguing that the content and style of television news in the 1960s were anti-institutional and negative, an argument for which Miller et al. felt that Robinson had no empirical evidence. The late 1970s and 1980s, however, have provided evidence that there is indeed a large and measurable amount of negativism in the media, especially in television news (Galacian, 1986; Haskins, 1984; Stone, Hartung, & Jensen, 1987), making the criticism of Miller et al. open to question.

There are several other possible reasons why Robinson's (1976) hypothesis has defied support and successful
replication. One problem is what seems to have been a leap of faith on the part of Robinson in his statement comparing the effects of a documentary to television news.

If "The Selling," with its dogfight among the Defense Department, CBS, and the Administration, could reduce a viewer's level of political self-confidence, or increase a viewer's sense of cynicism, one could imagine that public affairs television, especially television news, with its own vivid depictions of conflict between social and political institutions, might produce a similar effect. (p. 418)

Despite a suggestion made by Robinson later that "nothing demonstrated to this point implies that these 'effects' are to be attributed directly to the medium," Robinson seems to have failed to consider the vast difference in effect that can be engendered because of differences in the format and the content of the message being presented (p. 425). It seems apparent that Robinson failed to draw a distinction between the possibility of vastly different types of attention, interest, emotion, learning and other cognitive processing that could have occurred during exposure to a documentary such as "The Selling of the Pentagon" versus exposure to a regular newscast.

What, indeed, may have occurred, and what this study proposes to examine, is that the resultant political malaise observed by Robinson in his study could well have been the result of the type and extent of cognitive processing facilitated by characteristics of the particular individual
attending to the message, the content of the message, the relevance of the information to the viewer, the reactions to the message, and, more specifically, the format of the presentation, rather than the particular medium—television—through which the presentation was made. This idea is supported by Reeves, Newhagen, Maibach, Basil, and Kurz, (in press) in their observation that

reactions to television depend on discretionary mental effort. We watch what we want, allocating attention according to our interests and goals. However, in addition to conscious selection, compelling features of the information we remember and changes in psychological states during processing are also important. Some messages command attention and cause involuntary reactions that influence processing. (p. 1)

This study, therefore, will seek to offer the following refinements to the "videomalaise" hypothesis:

1. That different subgroups within society seek out and attend to particular types of media formats—specifically that certain individuals, based on variables such as personality traits, may prefer to seek out, attend to, and even rely on the scarcer but perhaps more in-depth and less superficial television newsmagazines and documentaries, along with regular newscasts for information.

2. That there are differences in the way different types of television news formats are processed and, hence, in the resultant effect created by these different formats—specifically that there are differences in the way programs such as television newsmagazines and documentaries are
attended to and cognitively processed and the way regular television news is attended to and processed. It is suggested that it is the differences in format, one of which may engender the type of processing that could result in the "videomalaise" effect, rather than the medium in and of itself creating the effect.

3. That how an individual is affected by a particular message and the resultant attitudes formed may be influenced by variables such as personality, relevance of the information, level of cognitive processing, and level of political knowledge rather than being a general societal effect created by mere exposure to a medium or to a particular piece of information.

4. That age, education, and motivation for viewing can influence the willingness to censor information concerning government corruption.

5. And, finally, that the effect noted by Robinson—"videomalaise"—may indeed be a viable concept if the above factors are considered.

These suggestions are dealt with in part by Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring (1979) in response to their question, "Does the reporting of news in a critical or negative style by the media taint the audiences' confidence in government and their feelings about the political system in general?" (p. 68). The apparent decline in voter turnout in the United States seems to indicate that some factor is
at work in the system, and much concern has been expressed. Most of the concern has dealt with a group less likely to vote: young people. However, the more educated and older groups seem to remain steadfast in their voting behavior (Kinder and Sears, 1985). This study raises the question: Do the programs that reveal government corruption and lack of concern for the public erode the voting intentions even of those persons who in the past have continued to perform their duties in a democracy?

It would seem apparent that the fact that the media do indeed have an impact is not in question. What is in question, however, and what this research project is an attempt to define, is what this impact may be and how this impact, if it indeed turns out to be the negative one suggested by Robinson, affects audiences' behavior and feelings toward government and government officials.

If the research results do indicate that "videomalaise" is indeed a possibility, it then becomes necessary to give serious consideration to some alternative means of determining news value and determining methods of presentation that may mediate the impact of the negative information in the media.

Willis (1990) suggested that one reason journalists give for placing a value on reporting bad news is that it is the media's job to act as a watchdog and to report when someone breaks the rules. In addition, journalists contend
that "a problem must first be exposed in order for society to realize that it exists as a problem and then work to solve it" (p. 144).

Elliot (1989) offered three basic obligations for the news media to observe in carrying out their ultimate obligation to keep the public informed. These include

1. News media should give readers and viewers information that tells them what they need to function effectively in society.
2. This information should be given without causing harm.
3. News media should make every attempt to provide accurate, complete, balanced, and relevant information. (p. 163)

Elliot, however, suggested that the media often are placed in conflict when attempting to carry out their obligation to keep the public informed. These conflicts can arise when, for example, the media are faced with the responsibility of informing the public of incidents of governmental corruption, information which, according to Elliot, the public needs to know in order to make informed decisions. This raises the question: Should the media carry out these duties if presentation of such information causes a feeling of political inefficacy that leads people to fail to vote? Can media carry out the duty to inform without harming?

One suggestion that may well be made to journalists is to follow the example employed by Robinson in his experiment, of appending a coda to the information being presented. His results indicated that beliefs were less
easily altered when a coda was shown and suggested that the coda may have had a dissipating effect on the negative information.

The evidence that follow-up information can mediate changes in beliefs is supported by Weinberger, Allen, and Dillon (1984) who, in their study dealing with good news/bad news on television, demonstrated that although the negative stories on television often were believed by the viewers, inclusion of a reply from the opposite side in the news controversy apparently reduced the chances that the viewer would believe the accusations.

Another suggestion to the producers of the information may involve Haskins' (1973) offer of a "silver lining" approach, in which reports containing negative information are supplemented by some indication of a possibility of a positive outcome.

Suggestions for action also may be made to the viewing audience, suggestions which could be used to empower the audience to use the information and knowledge being obtained from these programs as a means of generating efforts aimed at reform within the government. These programs could, in turn, be aimed at enlightening the audience to the fact that, instead of turning away from their government, they do have the power to create changes and are in fact not helpless but better equipped because of their exposure to the information.
On the other hand, government officials, having been made aware that extensive coverage and attention paid by the news media to reports of wrongdoing on their part indeed can translate into negative reactions toward them by voters, may make increased effort to avoid taking the public and the public's attitude for granted. This could mean that government officials may become more careful in involving themselves in any action that may be reported which could cause the public to judge them reprehensible or unworthy of trust. Lau (1985) suggested that if trust in government remains at its current low levels (or sinks even lower), we very well could see a succession of very "pure" (perhaps very religious or moral) candidates who would stand out in the negative context of American politics. Certainly newcomers to politics, or at least newcomers to national politics, would stand out as relatively "untainted." Indeed if trust in government sinks low enough, then sometime in the future we could be writing about the "positivity effect" in political perception. (p. 137)
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Role of the Media in Government and Politics

Neuman (1986) suggested that there is a strong belief in the political power of the mass media in general and of television in particular. Neuman also suggested that the media may have contributed to the ills of mass democracy. His statement was in response to Robinson's 1975 and 1976 studies, which claimed that television has stimulated the growth of political malaise. Robinson's claim was further substantiated by Becker and Whitney (1980), who also conducted studies which demonstrated that television dependency may be related to political cynicism, feelings of inefficacy, misperceptions of candidate strength, and negative attitudes toward the government.

In her discussion of the role of the media, Graber (1989) suggested that political socialization—the learning and internalizing of customs, rules, structures, and environmental factors governing political life—is important because it affects the quality of interactions between citizens and their government. Political systems do not operate smoothly without the support of their citizens, who must be willing to abide by the laws and to support government through paying taxes or performing other duties such as military service.
Support is most readily obtained if citizens are convinced of the legitimacy and capability of their government and if they feel strong emotional ties to it. If political socialization fails to instill such attitudes ..., if citizens hold government in contempt or regard it as illegitimate, the result may be political apathy, civil disobedience, revolution, or civil war. (p. 150)

Despite the views and evidence that negative political information in the media can lead to such strong reactions in the public, Neuman (1976) pointed out that, particularly during campaigns, hard information about political issues and events remained a small fraction of the overall information flow and that campaign hoopla—the descriptions of the candidates' travel schedules, the handshaking, and the motorcades—dominated campaign coverage. Furthermore, Neuman suggested that when audiences did encounter any hard information, there were invariably barriers to communication which include the fact that audiences (whether of television, newspapers, or magazines) tended to remember very little of that they saw or read. He further stated that viewers of network news spontaneously recalled only 5% of the stories they had seen; political analysis and commentaries had the lowest rate of recall of all news categories.

Neuman (1986), however, went on to point out the exception to this rule, stating that regular programs, such as "Sixty Minutes," and special events, such as presidential debates and the Watergate hearings, do attract a relatively large and attentive audience. But this may be in
spite of rather than because of the political content involved. In each of these cases there is a dramatic confrontation, in which someone will presumably win and someone will lose. The excitement generated in these circumstances, as television writers have known for years, helps to keep heads in front of television sets. (p. 137)

Despite evidence of the apparent influence of the media on viewers, there seems to be a consensus among researchers that the most important influence of the media on voters is not a change in voting habits but a reinforcing of established habits and an influencing of the initial selection of candidates (Graber, 1989).

This study then will not only seek to reexamine what at one time seemed fairly evident (an apparent, small media influence on voting behavior) but also will seek to isolate and analyze a specific aspect of a particular medium that may be influencing expressed voting intentions and attitudes of a selected group of individuals and creating negative feelings toward its government or government officials.

The study is not an attempt to demonstrate these effects as resulting from television as a whole. Rather, it is to a particular genre of program and programming format, specifically television newsmagazines and documentaries, that we look for evidence of culpability in engendering these effects.
Role of News in Politics

According to Robinson and Levy (1986), news plays an extremely important role in the everyday lives of the audiences who are exposed to it: "News stories do far more than tell us what is important; they tell us who is important, where important things happen, when to expect specific things, and why to think about these things" (p. 45). Robinson and Levy add,

the existence of such wide-ranging cognitive effects assumes that media can influence our orientation to the social environment in quite subtle ways, without directly conveying specific information or promoting specific opinions or attitudes. Thus the mere fact of coverage conveys an important message: It asserts that something is worthy of attention and it implies why the attention is necessary. (p. 45)

The authors further suggest that for social scientists in the 1950s, the appearance of television news should have raised new questions about the diffusion of certain forms of information to mass audiences but that social researchers were slow to recognize the growing popularity of television as a medium for information and to gather data concerning the power of this news medium to diffuse information effectively.

The criticism may have been somewhat justified as far as certain aspects of research are concerned; however, many researchers have explored the prevalence and impact of political information in the media and have provided evidence that the media in general, using commercials,
In discussing the role of the media, Robinson (1981) suggested that rapid diffusion of certain stories at a time when the public and politicians are vulnerable can result in extraordinary weight being given to these stories. He refers to these features as "medialities"—"events, developments, or situations to which the media have given importance by emphasizing, expanding, or featuring them in such a way that their real significance has been modified, distorted, or obscured" (p. 191).

That the media play a major role in providing a means through which the climate of opinion is made evident to society is a notion that is strongly supported by Noelle-Neumann (1984), along with Iyengar and Kinder (1987), who suggested that the way in which Americans view their society is a direct reflection of the way in which stories are presented in the evening news.

This suggestion is supported by Fan and Tims (1989), who used ideodynamics, a mathematical model, to predict time trends of public opinion based on information in the mass
media. Their results indicated that changes in the characteristics of the news environment could be analyzed to make accurate predictions of changes in the aggregate distribution of opinion about presidential candidates during the course of an election campaign.

This research evidence, demonstrating the importance of the news media in determining public political opinion, along with the research findings on the preponderance and influence of negative information in the news media, helps to suggest the need to examine this issue for its possible repercussions.

Before even deciding whether an examination of this effect is warranted, however, it seems necessary to determine if the public even pays attention to television news and the information being examined. Does the public attend and respond differently to television news and to daily newspapers?

Newspapers Versus Television as Sources of Information

Bogart's (1984) national survey of the public's use and perception of newspapers indicated that equal proportions of the population read newspapers and watch television news on a typical weekday. Of significant interest, however, are the research findings of McDonald and Reese (1987), which demonstrated that those individuals who rely on newspapers tend to exercise greater selectivity in their viewing of local television news programs, and made more choices such
as "The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour" and fewer "PM Magazine" type programs.

Despite research findings demonstrating that audiences appear to absorb more facts about news and current affairs from newspapers than from broadcast news (Benton & Frazier, 1976; McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the majority of the evidence seems to indicate that many individuals consider television their main source of information (Robinson & Levy, 1986).

In support of this notion, Robinson and Davis (1989) pointed out that when television was introduced, some observers argued that the medium might make literacy largely unnecessary. The relative ease with which important events could be shown with "eyewitness" pictures added to the already familiar radio format suggested that television might soon render print obsolete. They suggested that, by several measures, television has come close to realizing that potential:

First, there is a great deal of news on American television. Each network has dramatically expanded its regular news programming, and in some major TV markets, three or more hours of local newscasts are not uncommon. Indeed news stories now intrude on viewers in the form of "special" reports or in capsule "updates" sandwiched between entertainment programs.

Second, TV news "gatekeepers" take great pains to add visual appeal to their stories. They continually seek to maximize television's capacity to bring news to the viewer instantaneously and to make viewers feel they are a part of the event itself. . . . TV simultaneously engages both the eye and the ear, the same sense modalities that most people use to learn naturally from their own environment and experiences. (p. 3)
Along with the expanded regular news programming and increased dramatization of regular newscasts has come the in-depth, dramatic, and sometimes quite intimate coverage provided by television newsmagazines and documentaries. This news format now seems to provide a challenge to the results of research concerning learning from television.

Regular Television News Versus Television Newsmagazines and Documentaries

A review of the literature has produced many studies with a varied array of results concerning the effects of television news. The evidence seems overwhelming in favor of the fact that learning from television news is extremely limited (Berry, 1983; Katz, Adoni, & Parness, 1977; Neuman, 1976). There has been, however, evidence to demonstrate that there seems to be a distinct difference in the levels of learning that result from exposure to regular television news and exposure to other news formats such as documentaries.

Berry, Gunter, and Clifford (1981) reviewed several approaches to variations in memory for informational television. They suggested that evidence from educational television research offered promising results when factors, such as the detailed ways in which information is organized within programs and individual differences, are effectively studied. They suggested that future research examine specific interest factors, individual learning, and processing strategies, keeping in mind that recall is
influenced by many factors and that there are huge individual differences.

Also included in the list of researchers who have looked at learning from television are Fitzsimmons and Osburn (1968), who, while making no comparison with regular television news in their study, sought to determine the effects of television news documentaries on the viewers' knowledge levels, attitudes, and attitude dimensions and potential for changing certain behaviors. The study was conducted by examining and comparing the changes that occurred following exposure to television documentaries. These documentaries dealt with five separate topics, and the variables examined included the role of initial position in mediating change, the interrelationship among changes, and the personality variables "openmindedness" and "intelligence."

The authors sought answers to four questions, two of which are relevant to this study. The first question of interest was: "What learning takes place?" The basic concern of this question was whether or not people absorbed and retained information about social issues. The second question of interest was: "What impact does exposure have on the various dimensions of people's attitudes (e.g., their certainty of opinion, amount of closure on a position, and intensity of feelings)"
The study tested several hypotheses, with the results of two being relevant to this study. The hypotheses were:

1. Exposure to SIPA (social issues and public affairs) information on a particular topic produces a significant gain in information about that topic, a significant change in topic-related attitudes and attitude dimensions, and changes in topic-related potential behavior. Many of these changes will be consistent across topics.

2. Changes in information level as a function of exposure to SIPA documentaries will result in corresponding changes in topic-related attitudes, attitude dimensions, and potential behavior.

Results indicated that the two hypotheses were supported, with exposure to SIPA information on a particular topic producing significant gains in information about that topic and a significant change in topic-related attitudes and attitude dimensions. This finding is indeed consistent with Robinson's later (1981) study.

This finding is significant in light of the fact that the personality variable to be examined in this study, need for cognition, has been demonstrated to correlate positively with intelligence (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982; Osberg, 1987). Although not providing much in the way of a strong theoretical explanation for their results, Fitzsimmons and Osburn (1968) concluded that "SIPA information is readily learned and retained by intelligent subjects and that
changes in attitudes which occur relate to the information increase" (p. 395).

Observations concerning the possibility of influence of format and research findings such as those outlined above have pointed to the fact that there may be a difference in learning by those individuals exposed to regular newscasts compared with those exposed to newsmagazines or documentaries.

One important question which needs to be answered is as follows: What are some of the factors which can influence what and how much is learned?

**Bad News Versus Good News**

With the realization of the importance of news to individuals in society has come evidence that the news being submitted for consumption by the public may be more heavily laden with negative than with positive information.

Stone, Hartung, and Jensen (1987) wrote that journalists have continued to supply information on the unhappy and bizarre machinations of mankind. Bad news has made money and hyped audience attention at least since the penny press days, suggesting that bad news may be journalists' good news. (p. 37)

A steadily growing number of studies has indicated that Stone et al. were correct in their assessment of the role played by the media in supplying audiences with an abundance of bad news. The research findings have implicated newspapers and, to a greater extent, television in the proliferation of bad news. Researchers whose findings have
confirmed that network television is a bad-news bearer
include Stone and Grusin (1984), whose findings indicated
that NBC, CBS, and ABC placed a heavy emphasis on bad news
in the week-night early newscasts. Their findings also
showed that a growing number of audience members believe the
media provide too much bad news.

Haskins, Ringo, and Doyle (1982) showed that bad news
is more prevalent in television newscasts than in
newspapers, that the amount appears to be growing, and that
bad news is displayed more prominently with up-front
placement, more time, and more visuals.

Lowry (1971) also presented evidence of television's
tendency to present a preponderance of bad news. The bad
news, he found, is generally placed at the beginning of the
newscasts and accompanied by more visuals which adds to its
emphasis.

Galacian and Pasternack (1987), in discussing the
suggestion that journalists may actually prefer to present
bad news to the audience, quoted a media critic's quip that
"the news media seem to use three criteria in judging
stories: Bad news is big news. Good news is no news. And,
no news is bad news" (p. 82).

Galacian (1986) and Paterson (1979) supported this
notion by suggesting that media gatekeepers actually may
lean toward the presentation of more bad news. Furthermore,
Galacian and Pasternack (1987) contended that despite the
fact that working journalists seldom refer to "badness" as a news value, research has shown that journalists over-select negative events and display them more prominently. According to the authors, "while equating conflict, violence, and misfortune with importance, reporters often present a negatively distorted view of reality which can distort audience perceptions about reality" (p. 82).

McNulty (1988), citing the results of a poll, wrote that editors felt that bad news was necessary:

Editors sometimes see themselves as parents forcing unwilling children--readers, that is--to take bad-tasting medicine. Left to themselves, these editors argue, some people would prefer to turn their backs on AIDS, rape, suicide and other unpleasant realities. (p. 9)

These findings would seem to indicate that some effort must be made not only to define what is being perceived as negative or bad news versus positive or good news but also to determine what influence or effect, if any, bad news may have on individuals in our society.

Weinberger, Allen, and Dillon (1981) suggested that since it is possible that individuals differ in the way in which they receive negative information, a useful program of research may involve isolating variables that are effective for identifying individuals who may be more or less receptive to negative information.

How Do Viewers Feel About Bad News?

Are the media solely to be blamed for this preponderance of bad news? Galacian (1986) suggested that
the media might not be. She contended that "although the public demands more positive, uplifting, optimistic, upbeat, good news, viewers may well privately prefer bad news, which—with its element of conflict—often seems more interesting than good news" (p. 53).

While there are suggestions that some individuals may prefer negative information over positive information, a crucial question that needs to be answered is whether the information to which they are exposed is remembered and, if so, what the result of this negative information stored in memory may be.

**Effects of Bad News**

Stone and Grusin (1984) suggested that "too much bad news may be responsible for the decline in public confidence in most institutions and for the low level of interest in government news and politics" (p. 517).

A review of the literature from the fields of psychology, consumer research, and sociology has suggested many other reasons why journalists need to be concerned about the apparent preponderance of bad news in the media. Cusumano and Richey (1970) and Gray-Little (1973) suggested that negative information is more likely than positive information to have an enduring effect.

In examining people's judgments of others based on an apparent negativity bias, Kanouse and Hanson (1972) indicated that people tend to weigh negative information
more heavily than positive information, suggesting that impressions based on a combination of positive and negative traits are more negative than would be predicted from the values of the traits considered separately. Birnbaum (1972) demonstrated similar effects when analyzing tasks that required integration of information about specific behaviors rather than traits. According to Kanouse (1984), all findings are "consistent with the notion that when people combine information, they weigh negative information more heavily than positive, i.e., that the whole is evaluated more negatively than the average of its parts" (p. 703).

In a study evaluating good news/bad news and interpersonal effects, Veitch and Griffitt (1976) showed "good news" and "bad news" broadcasts to subjects who were then asked to evaluate anonymous others. Results indicated that the newscasts elicited both positive and negative responses and did affect the evaluation of others. Furthermore, reported affect appeared to be positively related to the evaluations made of anonymous others; that is, the more negative the affective state of the individual, the more negative were his interpersonal evaluations.

Results of the study also indicated that the news broadcasts did affect subjects' evaluation of others, with subjects who had just listened to "bad news" items rating others as less desirable than subjects who had listened to "good news" items. These results generally support the
findings from Robinson's 1976 study, which indicated an obvious change of beliefs and feelings toward the government following exposure to negative information concerning it.

Lau (1985), in evaluating the effects of negative information on political behavior, suggested that there was strong evidence that evaluations of Democratic and Republican presidential candidates in 1968, 1972, and 1980 were shaped more strongly by negative information about the candidates than by positive information. This evidence, he pointed out, suggests that negative information seemed to be much more influential than comparable positive information in certain cognitive processing tasks.

Despite the fact that several studies in areas such as comparative advertising seem replete with suggestions and evidence to support the idea that too much negative information can have harmful effects (Lutz, 1975; Weinberger, Allen, & Dillon, 1981), Galacian and Vestre (1987) suggested that little is known about the effects of good news and bad news in the media. However, in an experimental study on the effects of good news and bad news on newscast image and community image, they discovered that bad news created negative perceptions of the community and good news created significantly more positive perceptions.

Galacian (1986) also provided survey results which suggested that television news audiences believed that a preponderance of bad news had the undesired effect of
leaving viewers feeling more depressed, anxious, angry, and more helpless than those who viewed a neutral or good-news newscast. It also was demonstrated, in research results from a cross-media (newspaper and television) study by Galacian and Vestre (1987), that the effects of good/bad news on image hold across media.

This study is concerned with some effects of one form of bad news—stories dealing with government corruption—from a particular type of television programs (newsmagazines and documentaries).
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) suggested that "the task of assessing the nature and influence of mass communication is obviously one with a host of important dimensions" (p. 28). They offer three crucial questions upon which this task centers, the third of which is, "What does exposure to mass communication do to people? How does it influence them psychologically, socially and culturally?" (p. 29).

One viable means of beginning to assess this influence of mass communication would be to examine the influence of the various media systems on individuals, a task for which the cognitive paradigm seems well suited. This paradigm addresses concepts such as attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, needs, and gratifications, and stresses processes that are said to be a part of the personality structure of all human beings.

Defleur and Ball-Rokeach summarized the basic assumptions of the cognitive approach in the following manner:

1. Individual members of a society can best be thought of as active receivers of sensory input, whose behavioral responses to such
stimuli are shaped by inner mental (cognitive) processes.

2. Cognitive processes enable individuals to transform sensory input in various ways; code it, store it, interpret it selectively, distort it, and retrieve it for later use in decisions about behavior.

3. The cognitive processes that play key parts in shaping an individual's behavior include perception, imagery, belief systems, attitudes, values, tendencies toward balance in such factors, plus remembering, thinking, and numerous other mental activities.

4. The cognitive components of a given individual's mental organization are products of his or her prior learning experiences, which may have been either deliberate, accidental, social, or solitary. (p. 40)

They further suggested that the cognitive approach has wide uses in the study of communication effects since, while operating on a micro level—using the individual as the target of interest—rather than a macro (societal) level, this approach allows researchers to focus on the way individuals' needs, attitudes, values, and interests affect the way they selectively expose themselves to media, perceive message content, and retain information.

With the understanding that each individual does have a different cognitive structure of needs, attitudes, etc., psychology has provided a means of looking at individual differences based on certain factors. One aspect of the study of individual differences lies in the manner in which different individuals process information, a process which involves at least three steps, including attention, perception and the recall of information, and which,
according to Woodall (1986), referring specifically to the processing of TV news, is "an amalgam of cognitive processes that are only beginning to be understood" (p. 139).

As mentioned earlier, Robinson and Levy (1986) suggested that the existence of wide-ranging cognitive effects of media is, indeed, plausible, and media can influence our orientation to the social environment in quite subtle ways. If this idea is, indeed, a viable one, it becomes imperative that media professionals take extreme care to monitor adequately the information that is being diffused to the public. Furthermore, if, as Robinson and Levy's information-flow process seems to indicate, information from the media is comprehended by the audience and goes on to provide fodder for interpersonal networks, discussion, and behavior as citizens, then it becomes imperative that attention be paid to the type and quality of information being given to the public and to the manner in which different individuals may be affected by the substance of the news items.

The information-processing paradigm is one which fits under the cognitive paradigm cited above and which would be well suited to addressing the problem of the impact of bad news in the media. This information-processing paradigm, which deals in part with the idea that learning from news is strongly linked to certain message factors including news
content, has been employed by researchers, such as Findahl and Hoijer (1981), Gunter (1980), and Graber (1988).

In support of the use of this paradigm, Berry, Gunter, and Clifford (1981) suggested that the findings on learning from television fit well into a broad framework of psychological theory. The authors noted that a psychological approach

emphasizes the way that detailed information is organized in individual messages and is processed by the viewer. This approach has shown rather more promise than a broad sociological one based on gross audience characteristics or one based on motivational notions. This does not mean that group and individual variables should be ignored but that they are probably best studied in relation to the detailed form and content of the material. (p. 185)

This observation and the evidence of the proliferation of bad news in the media have prompted a further look into how learning from the news may be influenced by the good-news and bad-news content of media and also suggested the need to consider the effect of what audiences may be learning from the news.

Woodall (1986) discussed news comprehension research and stated support for the use of an information-processing theory which is grounded in a field of research termed "cognitive science" or "social cognition." The author suggested that "comprehension of television news fits well within such parameters and promises to be one area in which knowledge gains can be made in both the nature of everyday
information-processing concepts and television news comprehension" (p. 134).

In describing a study of political information processing, Graber (1988) suggested that it is necessary to pay attention to the individual since the processing of information is affected by many contingencies. These include "the individual's personality, experiences, lifestyle, and world view" (p. 5).

Zuckerman and Litle (1986) further suggested that much of the research in media effects arose from basically social-environmental hypotheses which assume that the media shape behavior and interest. According to the authors, however, it is also true that people select from the media according to their personalities and needs. Furthermore, Wober (1986) suggested that "adequate, let alone full, understanding of how individuals interact with mass media, will not be reached without a good account of those individuals' fundamental attributes" (p. 211).

These postulates have prompted a look at the extensive literature involving personality in order to get an indication of a particular personality type that might be attracted to a specific news media format, which, in turn, would provide more than the usual amount of information obtained from regular news and, therefore, possibly could provide more than the usual amount of negative information. An analysis of this type could provide useful information on
the way in which certain members of the news audience may be affected by the proliferation of bad news in the media.

**Media Use and Personality**

Zaleski (1984) posited that

> the stimuli that we perceive are registered selectively. Some are preferred over others in the process of selection, and an individual who wants to ensure for himself the optimum level of arousal chooses specific situations and pays attention to selected stimuli. (p. 610)

This suggestion would indicate the need to examine the interest in good news or bad news based on personality type, how much news content is remembered by these particular personality types, and, ultimately, how the information gained from the particular news type may influence the individual's attitude and behavior toward government.

In 1982, a measure of a personality trait called "need for cognition" (NFC) was introduced by Cacioppo and Petty. These researchers suggested that the measure was designed to "identify differences among individuals in their tendency to engage in and enjoy thinking" (p. 116). Since then, these researchers and others have examined this personality trait and have provided evidence that there is a reliable difference among individuals who demonstrate that they are higher or lower in need for cognition and their tendency to derive information from and elaborate on externally provided message arguments (Cacioppo, Petty, & Morris, 1983). It has also been demonstrated that individuals higher in need for cognition are likely to be more curious and to have higher
sensation-seeking scores and higher American College Test scores (Olson, Camp, & Fuller, 1984). These findings all suggest that those high in need for cognition are more active information processors (Ahlering, 1987).

Ahlering (1987) compared groups high and low in need for cognition on behavioral intentions and behavior and attitude differentiation (number of beliefs) in the context of the 1984 presidential elections. Three hypotheses were tested in relationship to this personality trait. It was predicted that those high in need for cognition would be more likely to intend to watch the presidential and vice presidential debates and should be more likely, as a result of intentions, to actually view the debates. Finally, because high need-for-cognition people are more information oriented, it was hypothesized that they would have more highly differentiated attitudes, that is, they would have more beliefs about the presidential and vice presidential candidates than those low in need for cognition. Results indicated that those high in need for cognition were more likely to intend to watch the debates, marginally more likely to actually watch the debates, and had more differentiated beliefs about the candidates.

These findings are consistent with the evidence that individuals high in need for cognition tend to be more curious, therefore, perhaps being willing to seek out the
greater amounts of information offered in newsmagazines and documentaries than that offered during regular newscasts.

Along with curiosity, Cacioppo, Petty, and Morris (1983) suggested that those high in need for cognition tended to demonstrate higher sensation-seeking scores. One explanation of the increased motivation to watch debates by high need-for-cognition people could be an increase in the sense of drama and the potential for dramatic confrontations which seems to permeate presidential debates and, according to Neuman (1986), also permeates programs such as "Sixty Minutes" and other special events. Furthermore, these programs, according to Graber (1989), provide such people with themes of corruption, violence, and wrongdoing, all of which could appeal to the curious, sensation-seeking individual.

These suggestions have led to the hypothesis that

H 1. Need for cognition will be positively correlated with the number of television newsmagazines and public affairs documentaries sought out.

Motivation for Viewing, Issue Relevance, and Efficacy

On the other hand, research has indicated that television news is attended to by those who will watch the news but are not willing to read it. Robinson (1976) suggested that

Television touches those millions who will sit through the news because of what follows or what comes before, but who would rarely expend the energy to read through printed information.
Consequently, TV produces two audiences—the advertent (those who watch for the news) and the inadvertent audience (those who fall into the news). (p. 426)

The description of Robinson's "inadvertent" viewer could well suit the individual lower in need for cognition who would not necessarily seek out the television newsmagazine or public affairs documentary for information but rather for the entertainment content contained therein. Robinson also suggested that the viewer who "falls into the news" is generally of lower socioeconomic status, is less well educated, and generally comes into contact with information without the benefit of "mediation through opinion leaders" (p. 426). These factors, he posited, create a greater vulnerability to almost any type of television effect.

Another factor which could affect those individuals whose main exposure to news is for the entertainment content, and which warrants consideration, according to Levin (1986), is the dramatic and action-packed nature of news which is designed to entertain and hold the attention and interest of viewers. This characteristic of news which, as mentioned earlier, is strongly emphasized in television newsmagazines and documentaries, may contribute to an effect which Levin examined in local newscasts. Levin termed this effect "helplessness," an effect which she suggested resulted from the need for newscasts to evoke emotional responses by providing a disproportionate emphasis on human
crisis and misfortune. In examining the possible effects of this particular characteristic of news, Levin questions whether exposure to newscasts which dramatize the plight of crisis victims cultivates in viewers the sense that the environment is beyond control. The researcher also questioned whether such a belief could affect viewer expectations in regard to their own ability to effect change. On a broader scale she wondered whether, if television news emphasizes crisis and catastrophe, the very situations in which individuals are rendered most helpless, exposure to such depictions might create an illusion that social change is impossible. The research results provided evidence that during a 2-week period, the three stations she examined presented what she classified as evidence of human helplessness more than 70% of the time during which news segments were programmed. Furthermore Levin pointed out that

Major market local television newscasts include very substantial doses of helplessness, most of it at extreme levels. . . . The helplessness picture is even more dramatic when one considers that helplessness is often reported as not limited to specific instances but rather is a phenomenon which generalizes across situations and across time. . . . It is neither limited to a specific domain nor to a particular time frame and the general public cannot be expected to exert meaningful control. (p. 18)

Galacian (1986) also referred to this feeling of helplessness which television news created in viewers, along with feelings of depression, anxiety, and anger. It could
well be that these feelings could be differentiated in viewers whose exposure to television newsmagazines and documentaries is for different reasons. Upon exposure to political information in the news, those who can be termed inadvertent viewers, who, as mentioned earlier, may attend to television newsmagazines and documentaries merely for the entertainment element rather than for information, may be the ones adversely affected. These persons who see government officials disobeying the will of constituents and failing to follow the rules of government may feel helpless, regardless of need for cognition. Also, persons who have performed their civic duties—and still see officials misbehaving—may feel helpless and unable to affect the situation. These feelings of helplessness, depression, anxiety, and anger among casual viewers low in need for cognition may be more intense because of lack of sufficient information to analyze critically the information being provided or the benefit of Robinson's "mediation through opinion leaders" (p. 426). The response of these viewers could very well result in questions concerning the belief about their own competence to understand and participate effectively in the political process, whereas persons higher in need for cognition may have acquired greater understanding of the way government operates and may see avenues for improvement that persons lower in need for cognition may not see.
These suggestions concerning the effect of news content on viewers' feelings of efficacy have led to the following hypothesis:

H 2. After viewing television newsmagazines and documentaries showing government corruption and government officials ignoring the public will, persons lower in need for cognition will show a greater decline in internal political efficacy than will persons higher in need for cognition.

**Issue Relevance**

The question of what part, if any, perceived issue relevance has in the political behavior of individuals has long been of interest to students of political behavior (Perloff & Brock, 1980; Petty and Cacioppo 1981).

Accordingly, a cognitive response model was introduced in an effort to explain the manner in which people process information to which different levels of personal relevance have been ascribed. This model was examined by Petty and Cacioppo (1981) using their central and peripheral route-processing paths. These researchers have argued that there are two routes to attitude change: a central route, which provides for a deeper and more systematic processing of information, and a peripheral route, which allows for less effort devoted to cognitive processing. The researchers have suggested that the determination of which route is taken is dependent on individual motivation.
The motivation being considered in this study would be provided by perceived relevance of an issue to an individual which could motivate that individual to follow that issue in the media. Perloff (1985) suggested that "one might reasonably expect that when voters perceive that issues bear directly on their own lives, they will believe that their own interest will be best served by actively following the campaign in the political media" (p. 179).

This suggestion then leads to a consideration of how personal relevance can influence the processing of the news information being attended to. Perloff (1985) also suggests that

when people perceive that an issue is highly involving or highly relevant to them personally, they should process information deeply and systematically,

that is,

when individuals believe that an issue bears directly on their own lives, they will be motivated to devote the time and mental energy that is required to formulate a cogent position on the issue. . . . On the other hand, when individuals perceive that an issue is of little personal consequence, they should adopt a more peripheral processing strategy. (p. 178)

Katz, Adoni, and Parness (1977) also provided research results that indicated that relevant items are better remembered, along with items that are negative or have a surprising aspect. If individuals, therefore, have targeted political information being presented as being personally relevant and if it is demonstrated in the media that the
governmental parties involved may be corrupt and, therefore, less able to be influenced by the legal operations of a democracy, including voting, this could lead to high levels of frustration, creating the desire on the part of the viewer to act, a desire which, if it cannot be effectively fulfilled, perhaps due to inadequate political knowledge, could lead to feelings of political inefficacy.

The ultimate result of this research project will be to evaluate whether or not exposure to television newsmagazines and documentaries, with their abundance of negative information, can lead to these feelings of decline in political trust and efficacy or "political discontent" in certain individuals.

Defining the term "political discontent," which was introduced by Craig (1979), involves considering the constructs "political efficacy," "political trust," and "political cynicism." Political discontent is deemed to be a more inclusive or generic term which encompasses the variety of negative citizen evaluations.

Included under the umbrella of political efficacy, and, hence, political discontent, are the terms internal efficacy and external efficacy. According to Craig, Neimi, and Silver (1990), internal efficacy refers to beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively, and external efficacy refers to beliefs about
the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens' demands.

Miller (1974) suggested that political trust is related to the extent to which individual citizens felt that government functioned and produced outputs in accordance with individual desires. The opposite of this trust is what Erber and Lau (1990) refer to as political cynicism.

Willnat (1991) demonstrated that political knowledge was found to have significant direct effects upon voters' attitudes toward the candidates and that knowledgeable voters tended to have somewhat more negative attitudes. Graber (1989) also suggested that "often news that etches a few facts into people's memories may leave them with generalized feelings of trust or distrust. For instance, prominently featured stories of serious corruption in government may lower the public's esteem for the integrity of government" (p. 172).

The perceived higher relevance brings about deeper cognitive processing which, along with greater retention, makes people more aware of government's being out of control and, thus, should bring about increased feelings of personal powerlessness.

These suggestions have led to the following hypothesis:

H 3. People who find segments showing government corruption more relevant will show a greater decline in
external political efficacy after exposure to the segments than will people who find the segments less relevant.

Once it has been established that the relevance of certain information can affect some individuals more than others, another question becomes important and that is the extent to which these individuals remember the relevant material to which they are exposed.

**Learning and Memory**

Graber (1989), in examining the kinds of politically relevant knowledge, attitudes, feelings, and actions that spring from people's contacts with the media, suggests that an insight into this information is elusive because of the limitations of measuring instruments.

This argument, however, does not seem to have halted the numerous studies that have examined learning from the media. Gantz (1978) suggested that learning from the media was directly related to the uses and gratifications sought when approaching the media. He posited that those who watch television news primarily for information acquisition tended to recall more than those casual viewers whose major use of the media was for diversion-recreation purposes.

Graber (1989) seemed in apparent agreement with Gantz's suggestion when she posited that a lack of motivation for political knowledge, distrust of the media, and deficiencies in the information supply deter the average individual from learning through media exposure. She points out that
people scan the news for major crises without trying to remember specific facts. However, when they sense that events will greatly affect their lives, or when they need information to make voting choices, political interest and learning perk up quickly and often dramatically. (p. 173)

In addition, she suggests that other factors may influence learning:

Occasionally, serious programs on radio and television become highly popular. Most of them involve themes of corruption, violence, or other wrongdoing, which may account for their popularity. Examples are "60 Minutes," which probes a variety of social ills; "The Winds of War," a made-for-TV movie that recapitulated World War II; and documentaries dealing with rape, child-snatching, and prison violence. Broadcasts of congressional hearings on Watergate and the Iran-Contra affair or of the Panama Canal debates in the Senate fall into this category. (p. 173)

Black (1987) also dissected television programs such as "Sixty Minutes." In an essay entitled "The Stung," the author suggested that such programs are considered flawed by "the hype, the slant, the impulse to dramatize" (p. 300).

Also, as suggested earlier, these programs generally tend to portray even more of the drama, excitement, and the type of highly emotionally charged material than would be evidenced on a regular television news broadcast. Television newsmagazines and documentaries, with their extended video portrayals, interviews, and coverage of personal and intimate details of whatever negatively portrayed dramatic situation is being unfolded, can lead to more emotionally charged viewing because of the greater length of stories. Such emotion and detail should lead to greater retention.
Another area of research which proves applicable to this research project is the work which has examined learning from radio programming. Robinson and Levy (1986) suggested that those individuals who were listeners to the in-depth coverage provided by radio and who were readers of the more serious newspapers tended to be better informed. These findings could well be applicable to people who watch television newsmagazines and documentaries for information. Gunter (1987) also provided research results from an earlier study he conducted in Britain which suggested that, compared to viewers of local television news, news knowledge was considerably increased in those subjects who claimed to be frequent listeners to radio news programs and radio political and current affairs discussions and viewers of network television news programs. Several factors would, thus, cause people who watch television newsmagazines to have higher levels of political knowledge: the fact that such programs use drama and devote more time to each story (factors which would lead to greater retention of the information), the fact that people who seek the programs out are likely to be information-oriented, and the fact that viewers of such programs tend to be also newspaper readers (which would provide an added channel of learning political knowledge) (Patterson, 1980).

Findings such as these, and those findings discussed earlier which suggest that learning from television
newsmagazines and documentaries is considerably increased over learning from regular television news (Fitzsimmons & Osburn 1968; Graber 1989), have led to the prediction:

H 4. Watching television newsmagazines and documentaries will be positively correlated with political knowledge.

While suggesting that the media provide ample information on candidates' human qualities, such as trustworthiness, character, strength, and compassion, and that those aspects are what voters concentrate on rather than on political issues, Graber (1989) suggests that those facts may condense into politically significant feelings and attitudes, which then may be remembered long after specific facts about news stories have been forgotten and may influence voting decisions.

Several research findings, including Graber's suggestions mentioned above, Ahlering's (1987) demonstration that those high in NFC showed more highly differentiated attitudes (number of beliefs), and the finding that those high in NFC are better able to derive information from and elaborate on externally provided message arguments (Cacioppo, Petty, and Morris, 1983), can be combined to lead to the following hypothesis:

H 5. Need for cognition will be positively correlated with levels of differentiation (number of beliefs) in attitude toward governmental agencies and individuals.
There seems to be convincing evidence, however, to suggest that an increase in the public's knowledge level is not necessarily advantageous to those in the political arena. While McLeod, Pan, Sun, and Hein (1989) were able to show in one research project that televised debates clearly helped voters to know the candidates by name and to understand their publicly stated issue positions, the effect was accompanied by a decline in voters' feelings of approval toward the candidates.

There is, however, the question of whether all individuals will be affected in a similar manner, and some research findings seem to indicate that age may be a factor in how individuals are affected.

**Willingness to Censor**

One aspect which bears consideration is whether or not individuals want to be exposed to political information in the media. Liebes and Ribak (1991) in a study which used first and second generations within families as subjects compared types of political alienation in Israel. The researchers, in comparing older individuals of Eastern and Western origin, suggested that "the older generation of persons of Western origin and high education stand high in both belief in the news and opposition to censorship" (p. 241). It also was suggested, however, of the other older individuals in the study, that "Western origin, low education, and Eastern origin, low education--deviate
significantly in a less democratic direction but that so do all the younger groups" (p. 241). Results of their study indicated that younger subjects were not as impressed by the openness of the media and even tended to give little credibility to the information to which they were being exposed. This attitude of cynicism on the part of the younger generation even resulted in the younger generation's being more inclined to favor censorship of the media.

These findings in Israel suggest an interesting comparison which arises in a society, such as that of the United States, which verbally has placed a huge value on openness and encouraged the rights of the people to know. Perhaps, however, younger persons may have acquired less respect for the tradition of openness toward government. If they approve of some groups that are shown as corrupt, they may blame the media for showing disunion and breeding disrespect for the government, a view espoused in Israel. Based on the reported findings concerning individuals of Western origin, it is hypothesized that

H 6. After seeing program segments showing government corruption, younger persons with less education will show a greater willingness to censor the press than will older persons with more education.

The results of the Liebes and Ribak (1991) study suggest that education plays a crucial role in the higher ratings given to media credibility and encouragement of free
flow of information. This idea would suggest the possibility that those individuals who turn to television newsmagazines and documentaries for entertainment may place less value on being informed and may, thus, be more willing to favor censorship of information. Furthermore, the fact that people have a high need for cognition would logically make us expect them to place a high value on information, to want it, and to be reluctant to see it denied them, suggesting, therefore, that people with a higher need for cognition would be more opposed to censorship. This suggestion leads to the hypotheses that

H 7. The degree to which persons watch television newsmagazines and documentaries for entertainment will be positively correlated with willingness to censor the press.

H 8. Need for cognition will be positively correlated with opposition to censorship.

In a society that does not favor censorship, however, if we follow Graber's (1989) suggestion that prominently featured stories of serious corruption in government may lower the public's esteem for the integrity of government, it may well be that different generations still may respond differently to exposure to negative information concerning government. Younger individuals who may not yet have formed political affiliations or beliefs about the value of democracy could be the ones most adversely affected by the
negative information, a suggestion which has led to the following hypotheses:

H 9. After seeing program segments showing government corruption, younger persons will show a greater decline in external political efficacy than will older persons.

H 10. After seeing program segments showing government corruption, younger persons will show a greater decline in intention to vote than will older persons.

Liebes and Ribak's finding, that older individuals of Western origin with higher education are higher in belief in the value of news, lends support to a study conducted by Goodman (1990) concerning television news viewing by older adults. Goodman offered evidence that "news and public affairs is the category of television programming most preferred by both elderly men (45.81%) and women (37.23%)" (p. 138). These findings have led to the hypothesis that

H 11. Older persons will seek out television newsmagazines and documentaries more than will younger persons.

Definition of Terms

Before any of the hypotheses suggested can be examined, an agreement must be reached on how several of the terms mentioned in this research project will be defined.

Levels of political knowledge. For the purpose of this study, general political knowledge will be assessed using a short-answer quiz about political figures, movements,
organizations, and United States government procedures. Persons will be considered high in political knowledge if they fall above the median on the test given them. They will be considered low in political knowledge if they fall below the median.

**Regularly scheduled network television newscasts.** These will include any of the network (NBC, CBS, ABC, CNN) newscasts.

**Television newsmagazines and documentaries.** These will include programs of the type such as "Sixty Minutes," "20/20," "FrontLine", etc.

**Levels of differentiation.** This will be determined by the number of statements that are made in response to predetermined questions concerning particular individuals in the government or events to which subjects will be exposed. Persons will be considered high in level of differentiation if they fall above a median score in number of responses to the question asked and low in level of differentiation if they fall below a median score.

**Programs showing governmental corruption.** Any actions performed by government officials that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest and that could harm the public will be considered as showing government corruption. Segments chosen for the study will be classified by a group of judges as having this trait.
Persons who watch television news for entertainment. The term refers to those individuals who would not make a conscientious effort to seek out the additional hard information afforded by television newsmagazines and documentaries but who may demonstrate an interest in these types of programming based on certain aspects such as their ability to help them relax, or who watch because they have nothing else to do. Those persons who watch television newsmagazines and documentaries for entertainment will be measured using an instrument obtained from Gantz (1978) in which an individual's scores can range from 5 to 25.

Persons who watch television news for information. Those individuals who, given a choice, say they would seek out the additional information provided by television news in order to, for example, keep up with political events or economic news, will be considered persons who watch television newsmagazines and documentaries for information. Those persons who watch television news for information will be measured using the instrument obtained from Gantz (1978) in which an individual's scores can range from 5 to 25.

Internal political efficacy. Internal political efficacy refers to beliefs about one's own competence to understand and to participate effectively in political affairs. This will be measured using a scale employed by Craig, Neimi, and Silver (1990). Persons will be considered high on internal political efficacy if they fall above the
median on the test. They will be considered as being low in internal political efficacy if they fall below the median.

**External political efficacy.** External political efficacy refers to one's beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens' demands. This will be measured using a scale employed by Craig, Neimi, and Silver (1990). Persons will be considered high on external political efficacy if they fall above the median on the test given them. They will be considered as being low in external political efficacy if they fall below the median.

**Intention to vote.** Intention to vote will be measured using a 5-point question which asks the subject to estimate the likelihood of his/her voting in the next presidential election. The responses vary from "I definitely plan to vote" to "I definitely do not plan to vote."

**Relevance.** Subjects will be asked to put an X in the blank whose number best matches their opinion of how unimportant or important to them are the issues mentioned in each segment. This will be measured on a 7-point scale, and a mean of the responses will be taken. Scores which fall below the median will be considered as showing less overall perceived relevance, and scores which fall above the median will be considered as showing more overall relevance.

**Need for cognition.** This personality trait will be identified with individuals using the need-for-cognition
scale established by Cacioppo and Petty (1982). Persons will be considered as being high on need for cognition if they fall above the median on the test given them. They will be considered as being low in need for cognition if they fall below the median.

**Older viewer.** Older persons will be those in a sample of persons, ages 60 and above, drawn from a group, the Retired Faculty of the University of Florida, who volunteered to be participants in the study.

**Younger viewer.** Younger persons will be those subjects, ages 18 to 44, drawn from intact undergraduate classes in the college of Journalism and Communications. If an individual in this group happens to fall in the older age range, the information from this student will be discarded.

**Willingness to censor the press.** The degree of willingness to censor the press will be gauged by a 5-point questionnaire adapted from Liebes and Ribak (1991) to measure this.
CHAPTER IV
METHODOLOGY

Design

The independent variables in this study included

1. segments from television newsmagazines and documentaries showing government corruption (Appendix G),
2. need for cognition,
3. perceived relevance of the segments,
4. viewing of television newsmagazines and documentaries,
5. motivations for viewing, and
6. age.

All the individuals in the experimental groups were shown the same segments; however, a control group made up of young college undergraduates did not see the segments. The dependent variables in the study were

1. choice/preference of program,
2. external political efficacy,
3. internal political efficacy,
4. levels of political knowledge,
5. levels of differentiation,
6. intention to vote, and
7. willingness to censor the media.
The hypotheses in the study repeated a 2 X 2 design as follows:

For four of the hypotheses, younger and older subjects were compared on one of the following: willingness to censor the press (before seeing the segments and after seeing the segments), levels of external political efficacy (before seeing the segments and after seeing the segments), stated intention to vote (before and after seeing the segments), and the type of program sought out (whether subjects viewed television newsmagazines and documentaries). For all analyses age and education were used as between-subject factors, and willingness to censor, levels of external/internal political efficacy, and intention to vote were considered within-subject factors.

For two hypotheses, subjects' need for cognition (high and low) was compared with levels of internal political efficacy (before seeing the segments and after seeing the segments) and on the basis of willingness to censor the press (before and after seeing the segments). For the analysis, need for cognition was considered a between-subject factor.

The seventh 2 X 2 design compared the two measures of external political efficacy (before and after) with two levels of a measure of perceived overall relevance (high and low) of the segments. Two of the hypotheses compared the two levels of the independent variable, need for cognition,
with (a) levels of differentiation (number of beliefs) in attitudes toward governmental policies and (b) relationship of need for cognition to seeking out television newsmagazines and public affairs documentaries for information. Perceived relevance and levels of differentiation were analyzed as between-subject factors. One hypothesis compared two stated reasons for watching television news (information or entertainment) with willingness to censor the press, and one hypothesis compared viewing level of newsmagazines and documentaries with level of political knowledge (high and low). Reasons for watching television and level of political knowledge were both considered between-subject factors.

Stimulus Materials

Preparation of Videotapes

In preparing the stimulus to be used in the study, the first step was to select broadcasts from the newsmagazines or documentaries of interest which contained the particular type of information to be evaluated. This included broadcasts containing information showing government being corrupt and/or ignoring the public will.

Pretest

A previously selected group of judges comprised of students registered in an Introduction to Telecommunication course in the College of Journalism and Communications saw the excerpts. The group was split into three parts, and
each of the three groups saw eight segments. This was done because there would not have been enough class time available to show all 24 segments to the entire group, and it was feared that boredom would occur if the students watched all 24 segments. The 24 segments were approximately 2 to 4 minutes in length. To make the illustration of corruption clearer, some excerpts were edited. The judges were asked to rate the segments in terms of intensity and clarity with which the segments illustrated the concepts.

Before evaluating the segments, subjects were told that they would see excerpts from television programs showing government corruption—actions performed by government officials that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest and that could harm the public. Judges were asked to rate each segment on two things:

1. How clearly does the segment show corruption or harm to the public? Here they were given 5 choices ranging from 1 (This is an extremely strong, specific, and immediately clear demonstration of the government being corrupt or harming the public) to 5 (This does not show government being corrupt or harming the public to me at all).

2. How important is the segment to you—that is, does it deal with something that affects you personally—your money, comfort, or happiness? In order to respond to this
question, judges were given a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important) (Appendix A).

The 15 segments that were judged as showing corruption most clearly were employed in the study.

**Pilot Test of the Instrument**

To locate possible flaws in the questionnaire being used in the experiment, the researcher administered the major parts of the questionnaire to a group of students in a class in Telecommunication Processes and Effects. This version of the questionnaire assessed the subjects' preferences for (a) television news and (b) television newsmagazines and documentaries. A measure was included on the questionnaire which assessed the personality trait, need for cognition. Along with the standard demographic information including age and education, the instrument also contained the measure of political knowledge. Also included on the instrument were measures of likelihood of voting, political efficacy, levels of differentiation, and belief in censorship.

**Dependent Measures**

**Television News Preference**

In the first section of the questionnaire subjects were asked to imagine that a major story concerning government had recently broken in the news, and during the week they had decided to get information on the situation. In television listings they will find a list of news programs
and newsmagazines which will be covering the topic. Subjects were given a list of the network news broadcasts that are available through the local cable programming (i.e., ABC, CBS, NBC, & CNN) and also a list of the information programs available including 20/20, FrontLine, Sixty Minutes, and Inside Edition. Subjects were able to add names of other programs they watched that were not listed on the questionnaire.

The First Questionnaire

On the first questionnaire, (Appendix B), subjects were asked first to rate their top five programs in terms of their preference for getting information. Next, they were told to choose programs they would normally select in order to obtain information on the story and also to indicate which programs they had actually watched in the prior week. For analysis subjects were classified into five groups: those who watched up to 20% of the programs, those who watched more than 20% but not more than 40%, those who watched more than 40% but not more than 60%, those who watched 60% but not more than 80% and those who watched more than 80%.

Sections of the questionnaire evaluated subjects' internal and external political efficacy using Craig, Neimi and Silver's (1990) scales. A measure adapted from one that was used by Edwardson, Kent, Engstrom, and Hofmann (1991) was used to measure subjects' levels of political knowledge,
while willingness to censor the press was measured using an adaptation of Liebes and Ribak's (1991) scale. Subjects' reasons for watching television news were also measured using Gantz' (1978) measure. Also included on the first questionnaire were questions asking subjects to indicate their past voting behavior and likelihood of voting in the future. The last five pages of the questionnaire were used to analyze the segments to which subjects would be exposed (Appendix E). The segment sheets contained questions which measured the extent to which the subject found the particular segment to be relevant and two dummy questions to hide the purpose of the experiment. The first dummy question concerned some effects of the visual content and asked if the pictures made the segments more emotional, real, interesting, clearer, did not add anything, were a little distracting, or were very distracting. The segment sheet also contained questions regarding the extent to which language used in the segments made them hard to understand. The questions were constructed to replicate parts of a study by Graber (1990).

The Second Questionnaire

The second questionnaire (Appendix C) contained questions from the scale measuring the personality trait, need for cognition. Subjects were asked, using a scale ranging from "Very Strongly Disagree" to "Very Strongly Agree," to indicate how well each item reflected their
opinion of themselves. This questionnaire also measured subjects' levels of differentiation by asking them to write down all the good and bad things they could think of concerning the policies of United States President George Bush. As on the first questionnaire the last five pages contained the questions for judging the segments.

The Third Questionnaire

The final questionnaire (Appendix D), began with the five segment sheets and contained questions identical to those on the first questionnaire which were used to measure internal and external political efficacy, willingness to censor the press, and likelihood of voting in the future. Several questions were also included which evaluated subjects' television dependence, other media use, attitudes toward television's portrayal of government, and attitude toward government itself. A final question was an effort to determine whether the subjects had deduced the purpose of the study (Appendix D).

Subjects

Once the questionnaire was pretested and the excerpts from programs were chosen, permission to carry out the study was requested and granted from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Florida, and a new pool of subjects was then drawn. Because some students who received one of the pretests were later found to be in the classes used in the experiment, a precautionary step was taken. In
the final questionnaire, students were asked to describe the purpose of the study. It was decided that the responses from any subject who had discovered that the purpose of the study was to test disillusionment with government that might lead to less participation, greater feelings of inadequacy in dealing with government, or beliefs that government is unresponsive would be discarded. The researcher determined that no student had discerned the purpose of the study.

For age-comparison purposes, a group of more than 75 subjects was drawn from the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications. A second pool of subjects was comprised of 31 older, educated individuals. Twenty-four of the older individuals were members or spouses of members of the Retired Faculty of the University of Florida (RFUF) who had volunteered to participate in the study. Six of the older subjects were other retired faculty members or their spouses who were not members of the Retired Faculty of the University of Florida.

Many hypotheses in the study concerned comparisons between young and old subjects. However, it was considered wise to have an added group of young persons who had not seen the 15 segments and who could be a control group that would respond to the basic questions concerning political efficacy and attitudes toward censorship and voting. Sections of students taking a basic Writing for Mass Media course were subjects. The course is the same one being
taken by the young subjects for the experiment except that it is not taught in the Department of Telecommunication. Both courses were taught within the College of Journalism and Communications.

These subjects were given two questionnaires. The questionnaires were identical and included questions which assessed internal and external political efficacy, voting intention, and belief in censorship. These particular questions were the ones given to the experimental groups. The control group did not view the segments. The two questionnaires were given 1 week apart.

**Design and Procedure**

The experimental procedure was done in three sessions, each separated by 1 week, and subjects were tested in two groups. The members of RFUF agreed to meet with the researcher for an hour either before or an hour after their weekly Wednesday meetings. The students were tested immediately following their usual class meeting. Because some students had other classes immediately following their class, the group was split into two, with one group being tested on Tuesdays and one on Thursdays for the 3 weeks of the experiment. To aid the matching of the three parts of the questionnaire, each subject was asked to write the last four digits of the subject's social security number on each questionnaire.
Subjects were told at the beginning of the study that the researchers were analyzing reactions to the methods of presentation of news. At each session of the experiment, interest was focused on use of video in the presentation, language used in each segment, etc. At no time during the study was mention made of the content of the presentation. Subjects were frequently reminded that the researchers were interested in their opinion of the methods of presentation.

At the first session subjects were given Part One of the questionnaire. Subjects were then shown five of the segments with a pause of approximately 1 minute between segments during which subjects were asked to complete the part of the questionnaire recording their responses to questions concerning each segment. Because some segments showed corruption that occurred during the Bush administration and the study was done during the 1992 presidential campaign, the researchers were careful to spread these particular segments out over the three sessions and assured the subjects that no "Bush-bashing" was intended.

At the second session 1 week later, subjects were administered a Midpoint Questionnaire. Subjects were then shown the second set of five segments with the same pause of approximately 1 minute between segments during which subjects were asked to complete the part of the
questionnaire recording their responses to questions concerning each segment.

At the third and final session subjects were first shown the last five segments and were asked, as before, to respond to each. Subjects were then administered the follow-up questionnaire. The study was completed before the presidential election.

Following the study, the subjects drawn from the Retired Faculty of the University of Florida were reminded that at a specified later date they would be debriefed concerning the actual purpose of the study and given information concerning the results of the study. This was carried out when the researcher was the speaker at a meeting of the group. The term following the experiment after data were analyzed, results of the study were discussed in a telecommunication course that would be expected to contain many of the student subjects.

Upon conclusion of the experiment, all sections of the questionnaires were matched. After removal of unmatched questionnaires where a subject may have participated in one or two sessions but missed a session, a final tally was taken resulting in 88 completed questionnaires. These included 30 questionnaires from the older group comprised of members of the RFUF ages 60 and above (one subject withdrew due to ill health), 52 student subjects between ages 18 and 24, and 6 students between 29 and 44. Fifty-nine of the
subjects had 2 years or more of college but less than a bachelor's degree, and 29 of the older sample had education beyond a bachelor's degree. Forty-seven of the subjects were males and 41 were females.
CHAPTER V
RESULTS

Reliability Analyses

Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to obtain reliability estimates for several of the measures used in the experiment.

In order to measure some of the constructs used in the experiment, it was necessary to create or locate several indices. Among these was an index to measure the personality trait, need for cognition. For this measure, Cacioppo and Petty's (1982) 18-item measure was used. Seven responses were possible for each item and thus a possible range of answers extended from 18 to 126. The reliability analysis done showed a standardized item alpha of .83.

Two main reasons for watching television news were measured: entertainment and information. In order to analyze these reasons, Gantz' (1978) measure of entertainment vs. information-seeking in television news was used, each containing five items, for each of which 5 responses were possible with a range extending from 5 to 25. The entertainment index yielded a standardized item alpha of .58; the information index yielded a standardized item alpha of .72.
This experiment evaluated two aspects of political efficacy: internal political efficacy and external political efficacy. These were measured using a scale adopted from Craig, Neimi and Silver's (1990) work. The measure of internal political efficacy combined seven items each of which had 7 possible responses and thus a range extending from 7 to 49. This measure yielded a standardized item alpha of .87. The measure of external political efficacy combined four items each of which had 7 possible responses and thus a range extending from 4 to 28. This scale yielded a standardized item alpha of .75. Table 5-1 presents the standardized item alpha results outlined above.

In the discussion of the hypotheses, except where otherwise noted, for ease in comparisons, one-tailed probability values are given.

Table 5-1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for cognition</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for watching news</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Efficacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal efficacy</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External efficacy</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The study's first hypothesis proposed a positive relationship between the personality trait need for cognition and individuals' preference for television newsmagazines and public affairs documentaries. The hypothesis stated,

H1: Need for cognition will be positively correlated with the number of television newsmagazines and public affairs documentaries sought out.

As stated earlier, a scale was used to measure need for cognition. Subjects were also asked to indicate all the programs they would normally seek out to get information on an important story in the media. The percentage of television newsmagazines and documentaries sought out was counted, and the hypothesis was analyzed using a Pearson correlation coefficient. No significant correlation was found between need for cognition and the amount of television newsmagazines and public affairs documentaries sought out: .09 (p = .20), and therefore the hypothesis was not supported.

Because this finding seemed contrary to expectations about high need-for-cognition subjects, it was decided to reanalyze the data, breaking the television newsmagazines and documentaries listed on the questionnaire into what we termed "hard newsmagazines" and "soft newsmagazines". "Soft newsmagazines" were defined as those customarily shown on
commercial stations and employing many visuals and graphics, much location shooting, human interest features and more dramatic presentations. The programs which seemed to fit this category were 60 Minutes, Inside Edition, 20/20, Prime Time, and 48 Hours. "Hard newsmagazines" were defined as those which were broadcast on the Public Broadcasting System or which used fewer visuals and more "talking heads" in providing the information. The programs falling into this category were FrontLine, Washington Week in Review, The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour, The McLaughlin Group, Nightline, and Listening to America. It was assumed that those high in need for cognition would seek out the "hard newsmagazines" for information rather than the "soft newsmagazines" which may be more entertainment oriented. The results of the reanalysis indicated a positive correlation between need for cognition and hard newsmagazines; however, the result only approached significance with .16 (p = .13), but was indeed closer to the anticipated result than the original analysis. Results also indicated a negative, non-significant relationship between need for cognition and the "soft newsmagazines" -.08 (p = .45).

**Hypothesis 2**

Hypothesis 2 compared the relationship between those persons low in need for cognition and their levels of
internal political efficacy before and after viewing the
segments. The hypothesis stated,

H2. After viewing television newsmagazines and
documentaries showing government corruption and
government officials ignoring the public will,
persons lower in need for cognition will show a
greater decline in internal political efficacy
than will persons higher in need for cognition.

Hypothesis 2 was analyzed using two different
statistical tools. The first analysis was done using t-
tests to compare those high and those low in need for
cognition and their first and second measures of internal
political efficacy (Table 5-2). The results indicated that
at the first measurement, those low in need for cognition
had significantly lower levels of internal efficacy (M =
31.04) than those high in need for cognition (M = 35.73),
t(85) = -3.19, p < .001. In comparing those high and low in
need for cognition on the second measure of their levels of
internal political efficacy, results of the t-test indicated
again that those low in need for cognition had significantly
lower levels of internal efficacy (M = 31.70) than those
high in need for cognition (M = 36.41), t(85) = -3.34, p <
.001. Possible range of means for the internal efficacy was
7 to 49, with higher means indicating lower feelings of
efficacy.

However, a t-test comparing those high and low in need
for cognition on a change score determined by subtracting
the first internal efficacy score from the second internal
efficacy score (internal efficacy at time 2 - internal
Table 5-2

Levels of Internal Political Efficacy at Times 1 and 2 by Low and High Need for Cognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need For Cognition</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31.04</td>
<td>35.73</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31.70</td>
<td>36.41</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Efficacy at time 1 yielded no significant results; those high (M = .67) and low (M = .66) did not differ significantly in need for cognition, t(85) = -.02, p = .49. This indicated that subjects had no significant change in their levels of internal political efficacy after viewing the segments, and, therefore, this hypothesis was not supported.

In order to avoid compounding any errors in measurement that may have occurred when creating a difference or change score for internal efficacy at time 1 and time 2, this hypothesis was also analyzed using a multivariate analysis of variance. Results of the multivariate analysis of variance were also found to be not significant (F = .00, df = 1/85, p = .99), thereby indicating no significant change in levels of internal political efficacy over time.
As indicated in the previous chapter, a group of students was used as controls in order to get measures of internal political efficacy, external political efficacy, censorship beliefs, and voting intention from people who had not been exposed to the segments. To determine the levels of internal political efficacy, a paired sample t-test done on the control group also indicated no significant difference between the first measure of internal political efficacy (M = 35.43) and the second measure (M = 35.70), t(39) = -.51, p = .30, two-tailed.

**Hypothesis 3**

Hypothesis 3 was an examination of the relationship between individuals' overall perceived relevance of the program segments and their levels of external political efficacy before and after seeing the segments. The hypothesis stated,

H3. People who find segments showing government corruption more relevant will show a greater decline in external political efficacy after exposure to the segments than will people who find the segments less relevant.

This hypothesis was analyzed in the same manner as Hypothesis 2. A measure of overall relevance was computed by summing across scores for all 15 segments and using a median split to determine low and high overall relevance. The first t-test, which compared levels of overall relevance of the segments (high and low) and the measure of external efficacy, indicated that at the first measure there was no
significant difference in level of external efficacy between those low on perceived overall relevance ($M = 17.38$) and those high on perceived overall relevance ($M = 18.59$), $t(81) = -1.36, p = .09$. For the second measure of external political efficacy, results also indicated no significant difference between those low in perceived overall relevance ($M = 17.64$) and those high in perceived overall relevance ($M = 18.44$), $t(81) = -.96, p = .17$. As with the previous hypothesis, a change score was again computed for levels of external efficacy. Results of a $t$-test comparing those low on perceived overall relevance and those high on perceived overall relevance and their change score on external political efficacy indicated that there was no significant difference in the change in external political efficacy between those low on overall relevance ($M = .2619$) and those high on overall relevance ($M = -.1463$), $t(81) = .67, p = .25$. The hypothesis was, therefore, not supported.

An analysis of the data also yielded results that indicated a significant difference in the overall perceived relevance of the segments between older subjects ($M = 6.12$) and the younger subjects ($M = 5.45$), $t(81) = -3.32, p < .001$. Some subjects did not respond to parts of the relevance question.

Results of the paired samples $t$-test conducted on the control group offered similar findings regarding the lack of change in levels of external political efficacy between the
Table 5-3

Levels of External Political Efficacy at Times 1 and 2 by Perceived (overall) Relevance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Importance</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17.38</td>
<td>18.59</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>18.44</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

first measure of external political efficacy (M = 18.18), and the second (M = 18.05), t(39) = .33, p = .37, indicating no significant change in levels of external political efficacy.

**Hypothesis 4**

Hypothesis 4 predicted a relationship between levels of political knowledge and programs watched:

H4. Watching television newsmagazines and documentaries will be positively correlated with political knowledge.

A measure of knowledge was obtained by determining the number of correct fill-in-the-blank responses on an instrument measuring political knowledge (Appendix B). This score was then correlated with the number of television newsmagazines and documentaries watched during the week prior to the study. The hypothesis was analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient, and results indicated that
there was indeed a positive and significant relationship between the number of newsmagazines watched and the subjects' level of political knowledge .21 (p = .03). This hypothesis was supported. Analysis also indicated that the older subjects had an overall correct response rate of 68.0% as opposed to the younger subjects who had a 46.1% overall correct response rate. Older subjects gave a greater percentage of correct answers to each of the 10 questions than did younger subjects. (Table 5-4)

Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 predicted a relationship between need for cognition and levels of differentiation (number of beliefs) in attitude toward governmental agencies. The hypothesis stated,

H5. Need for cognition will be positively correlated with levels of differentiation (number of beliefs) in attitude toward governmental agencies and individuals.

A measure of differentiation was computed by determining the number of items mentioned by subjects in response to a question asking for a list of the good and bad things they could think of concerning the policies of President George Bush. This question required the use of three people to code the responses. Intercoder agreement was determined to be approximately 99%. Subjects were then compared based on their level of need for cognition and the level of differentiation score. Pearson correlation coefficient results indicated that there was a positive and significant
Table 5-4
Correct Response by Age to Political Knowledge Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Correct Response</th>
<th>Younger</th>
<th>Older</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is the current Chief of Staff at The White House?</td>
<td>Jim Baker</td>
<td>18 (31%)</td>
<td>21 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informally, the Strategic Defense Initiative (or SDI) is known as</td>
<td>Star Wars</td>
<td>35 (60%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often does a member of the House of Representatives need to run for reelection?</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>36 (62%)</td>
<td>20 (67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the worldwide bank that has been recently accused of corruption? (Initials will be accepted)</td>
<td>BCCI</td>
<td>12 (21%)</td>
<td>07 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is the Panamanian recently tried on drug charges in Miami?</td>
<td>Manuel Noriega</td>
<td>39 (67%)</td>
<td>27 (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the political system that Nelson Mandela fought against? (just one word)</td>
<td>Apartheid</td>
<td>47 (81%)</td>
<td>26 (87%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often does a U. S. Senator need to run for reelection?</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>19 (33%)</td>
<td>24 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is the prime minister of Great Britain?</td>
<td>John Major</td>
<td>25 (43%)</td>
<td>21 (70%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is the speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives?</td>
<td>Tom Foley</td>
<td>13 (22%)</td>
<td>14 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do the initials NATO stand for?</td>
<td>North Atlantic</td>
<td>24 (41%)</td>
<td>22 (73%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
relationship (.28) between need for cognition and level of differentiation ($p < .005$), and results of a $t$-test indicated that there was a significant difference in number of beliefs between those high in need for cognition ($M = 9.22$) and those low in need for cognition ($M = 7.14$), $t(85) = -2.67, p < .005$, thereby supporting the hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 6**

Hypothesis 6 predicted a relationship between willingness to censor, age, and education. The hypothesis stated,

H6. After seeing program segments showing government corruption, younger persons with less education will show a greater willingness to censor the press than will older persons with more education.

The hypothesis was analyzed using an ANOVA statistic. Each of the five responses to the question regarding willingness to censor was given a number with 1 assigned to the statement "There should definitely be censorship" and 5 assigned to the statement "There definitely should not be censorship." Results indicated that there was a small, but significant, change in beliefs about censorship after viewing the segments $F(1,86) = 4.0, p < .05$.

An analysis of age and before-and-after measures of censorship using $t$-tests indicated that after seeing the segments the groups changed sufficiently to provide a significant difference, although not in the way predicted by the hypothesis. There was little change in the younger
group's attitude toward censorship: (M = 3.59) on the first measure and (M = 3.53) on the second measure; the greater change was in the older group, which became more opposed to censorship after exposure to the segments, (M = 3.67) on the first measure and (M = 4.10) on the second.

Unlike the experimental groups, the control group in a paired samples t-test indicated no significant change in censorship beliefs from the first measure (M = 3.53), to the second measure (M = 3.70), t(39) = -1.74, p = .09, two-tailed. A multivariate analysis of variance conducted on this hypothesis, in an effort to eliminate the compounding of measurement error resulting from subtracting external efficacy at time 2 from external efficacy at time 1, provided similar results with (F = 3.99, df = 1/86, p < .05).

Table 5-5
ANOVA Summary Table for Experiment Comparing Age and Change in Level of Approval of Censorship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>&lt;.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>100.21</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>104.86</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis 7

Hypothesis 7 predicted that there would be a relationship between the reason people watch television news and their beliefs about censorship. The hypothesis stated,

H7. The degree to which persons watch television newsmagazines and documentaries for entertainment will be positively correlated with willingness to censor the press.

The censorship-approval rating at the beginning of the experiment was analyzed with the two scores measuring reasons for watching television news (information or entertainment). Results of a Pearson correlation coefficient showed that watching television news for entertainment was positively though not significantly correlated with approval of censorship .11 (p = .15) whereas watching television news for information was negatively though insignificantly correlated with approval of censorship -.07 (p = .27). The hypothesis was, therefore, not supported.

Hypothesis 8

This hypothesis suggested that there would be a relationship between need for cognition and willingness to censor the press:

H8. Need for cognition will be positively correlated with opposition to censorship.

An analysis of this hypothesis using a Pearson correlation coefficient indicated that while the result was in the
direction proposed by the hypothesis, it only approached significance, .16 (p = .07).

**Hypothesis 9**

This hypothesis predicted a relationship between age, watching the segments, and external political efficacy:

H9. After seeing program segments showing government corruption, younger persons will show a greater decline in external political efficacy than will older persons.

This hypothesis was first analyzed using *t*-tests to compare young and old subjects' levels of external political efficacy before and after seeing the segments. Results outlined in Table 5-6 indicated that at the first measure of external political efficacy there was no significant difference between young viewers (M = 17.69) and old viewers (M = 18.70), *t*(86) = -1.14, *p* = .13. Similar results were obtained for the second measure of political efficacy indicating no significant difference between young viewers (M = 17.90) and old viewers (M = 18.40), *t*(86) = -0.60, *p* = .28. A final *t*-test compared young and old viewers with a change score for external political efficacy obtained by subtracting the score on the first measure from the score on the second measure (external efficacy 2 - external efficacy 1). Results indicated that there was no significant difference in the change in external political efficacy between younger viewers (M = .21) and older viewers (M = -.30), *t*(86) = .42, *p* = .20. A multivariate analysis of variance conducted on this hypothesis in an effort to
eliminate the compounding of any error in measurement that may have resulted from the two measures of external political efficacy provided similar results with \( F = .70, \) \( df = 1/86, \) \( p = .20 \). The hypothesis was, therefore, not supported.

Table 5-6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in External Political Efficacy by Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 10

This hypothesis predicted a relationship between age, viewing the segments, and intention to vote:

H10. After seeing program segments showing government corruption, younger persons will show a greater decline in intention to vote than will older persons.

This hypothesis was first analyzed using an ANOVA. A change score was calculated for voting intention (by subtracting voting intention at time 1 from voting intention at time 2). The results of the ANOVA summarized in Table 5-7 indicated that there was no change in the older group, and the change
in the younger group was insufficient to constitute a significant difference $F(1, 86) = .15, p = .35$. For the same reasons offered in the previously discussed hypothesis, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted on the hypothesis. As was anticipated, the results of the multivariate analysis of variance offered no support for this hypothesis with ($F = .15, df = 1/86, p = .35$).

Table 5-7

ANOVA Summary Table for Experiment Comparing Age and Change in Voting Intention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>13.93</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>13.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of the paired samples $t$-test conducted on the control group also indicated no significant change in voting intention between the first measure ($M = 1.53$) and the second measure ($M = 1.53$), $t(39) = .00, p = 1.00$, two-tailed.

Hypothesis 11

This hypothesis predicted a relationship between age and the type of television news program an individual would customarily seek out. The hypothesis stated that
H11. Older persons will seek out television newsmagazines and documentaries more than will younger persons.

The hypothesis was analyzed using a t-test, the results of which indicated that there was indeed a significant difference between the percentage of television newsmagazines listed on the questionnaire that would normally be sought out by young viewers: (M = 42.07) and old viewers (M = 52.67) t(86) = -2.01, p = .02. The hypothesis was, therefore, supported.

Some Attitudes Toward Visuals and Language

An analysis of the data replicating Graber's (1990) study concerning whether the pictures may have added to the segments or distracted from them yielded some significant results. Subjects were asked to indicate whether the pictures made the segments more emotional, more real, more interesting, or clearer, and whether the pictures did not add anything, were sometimes a little distracting, or were sometimes very distracting. A mean response to each of 7 questions concerning the 15 segments was obtained for each subject.

Results (summarized in Table 5-8) indicated a significant difference between the older and the younger groups in their response to most of the questions, with the older group thinking that the visuals added relatively more than the younger group. To a significant degree the older group (M = 8.34) found more segments in which the visuals
added emotion to the segments than did the younger group ($M = 3.98$) $t(84) = -5.88$, $p < .001$. The older group also cited more segments in which the visuals added reality ($M = 8.93$) than did the younger subjects ($M = 6.23$) $t(84) = -3.01$, $p < .005$. The older group also noted more segments in which the visuals added clarity ($M = 6.90$) than did the younger group ($M = 4.40$) $t(84) = -2.75$, $p = .007$. The younger group cited more segments as having visuals that added nothing ($M = 3.79$) than was the case with the older group ($M = 1.31$) $t(84) = 4.56$, $p < .001$. Although there was not a significant difference, the older subjects did find more segments in which they thought the visuals were very distracting ($M = 1.07$) compared to the younger group ($M = .4737$) $t(84) = -1.07$, $p = .29$. There was a significant difference between the older subjects ($M = 1.90$) who found the visuals a little distracting and the younger subjects ($M = .6316$) $t(84) = -2.83$, $p = .006$. Results also indicated that there was no significant difference between the older subjects ($M = 7.48$) and the younger subjects ($M = 6.53$) $t(84) = -1.07$, $p = .29$, in their feelings that the pictures added interest to the segments, and the means indicated that both groups found that the pictures added a lot of interest. Results also indicated that there was no significant difference between the older group ($M = 21.36$) and the younger group ($M = 21.78$) $t(80) = -.30$, $p = .76$, in their evaluation that the language used in the segments posed
little difficulty for either group. Probability values are two-tailed.

Table 5-8

**Response by Age Concerning Effect of Pictures on Segments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion</th>
<th>Young M</th>
<th>Young S</th>
<th>Old M</th>
<th>Old S</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>8.34</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>&lt;.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>= .007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>6.53</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>= .29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not add anything</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were a little distracting</td>
<td>.6316</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>= .006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were very distracting</td>
<td>.4737</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>= .29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary question posed in this research project concerned whether exposure to negative information in television newsmagazines and documentaries, showing government being corrupt or unwilling to follow the will of voters, could cause a decline in internal and external political efficacy, thereby resulting in lower political participation and feelings of political discontent.

To answer the research question, it was suggested that there may be particular variables which contribute to effects of negative information on viewers and that certain individuals may prefer to seek out the more information-laden and in-depth television newsmagazines and documentaries, thereby exposing themselves to an abundance of this negative information. This exposure, it was thought, could result in the decline in internal and external political efficacy (feeling that individuals can understand government or have power to affect it) and ultimately political discontent and lower participation.

One finding may provide insight into why recent studies, including the present one, have not been able to replicate Robinson's finding of a significant increase in
political discontent following exposure to negative information about government. Several hypotheses in this study predicted significant declines in both internal and external political efficacy and willingness to vote following exposure to the segments showing government corruption (H2, H3, H9, H10); none of these hypotheses was supported. However, especially in the case of internal political efficacy (H2), the initial scores may have been so low to begin with that any change, especially a decline, was difficult, indicating that subjects had already, prior to exposure, been experiencing feelings of political inefficacy.

This finding is of particular importance since Robinson's "videomalaise" hypothesis rested on the premise of change, the idea that video portrayals could have an influence on viewers which could result in changing their attitudes towards government and their willingness to participate. The current study is the first to attempt exposure to 15 segments (over a 2-week period) of concentrated illustrations of government nonresponsiveness. There was no indication that the portrayals increased viewers' feelings of inefficacy.

One factor that may have contributed to this floor in political inefficacy is the recent scandals referred to by Patterson and Magleby (1992) in their evaluation of public support for Congress. The authors suggested that
Unfavorable publicity about the conduct of members may lead the public to hold Congress as a whole in low regard. People are much more likely to have opinions about Congress as an institution rather than about their individual representatives. . . . Attacks on the Congress from the executive branch are common, and members of Congress have long run against Congress (p. 540). . . . The standing of Congress as an institution recently hit an all-time low. In March and April of 1992, only 17 percent of the public approved of the way Congress handles its job. (p. 541)

This problem, as outlined above, could very well affect people's feelings about their internal efficacy since, also according to Patterson and Magleby, the processes of Congress are often seen to be "sluggish and exceedingly contentious" (p. 539), which over a long period of time could have led people to feel that they have no control over government and perhaps are incapable of understanding it.

This idea is bolstered by some of the responses to a question asked of subjects at the end of the study concerning whether the 15 excerpts (more than half of them critical of Congress) that they had seen at the three sessions had changed their attitudes toward government. Of the 30 older subjects, 13 responded "no," two said the segments reinforced previously held opinions, and one respondent stated that

I'm even more aware, indignant, and annoyed at the inept, corrupt, and unchecked processes in government and worried about what can be done.
Of the 58 student participants, 27 responded "no," and 13 said their feelings were only reinforced, offering statements such as the following:

- It did not change my attitude, but supported it even more. Politicians are liars. They lie, cheat, and steal.
- No, just reinforced my suspicions about how criminal the government really is.
- Not really. I already was under the assumption that government was crooked, and the excerpts just enhanced my view.

In proposing H9, it was suggested that younger viewers who had not yet formed political affiliations or beliefs about the value of democracy could be the ones more adversely affected by the negative information. There was no support for this expectation in this study: not only was there no significant difference in external efficacy between young viewers and old viewers on the first or the second measure but, as stated earlier, there was also no significant change in levels of external efficacy for either group. However, the findings concerning a near-relationship between perceived relevance of the segments and external political efficacy, though not statistically significant, are teasing enough (p < .09) to perhaps warrant further exploration.

Another hypothesis dealing with efficacy was an examination of subjects' need for cognition in relationship to their feelings of external efficacy. It was proposed that subjects who were low in need for cognition and perhaps
did not seek out the more in-depth news programs would, upon the extended exposure during the experiment, exhibit a decline in external efficacy. This hypothesis was also not supported, and, indeed, there appeared to be hardly any change in levels of external political efficacy.

Need for cognition, however, appeared related to several factors considered in this study as it was determined that persons high in need for cognition to a significant degree tended to have higher internal efficacy, greater political knowledge, greater levels of differentiation, and less willingness to censor the press. Also, with results only approaching significance, high need-for-cognition individuals indicated a preference for the "hard television newsmagazines and documentaries." The suggestion, however, that a person's degree of need for cognition and reasons for watching television news, whether entertainment or information, could be related to willingness to censor the press was not supported.

Age also proved to be an important variable in this study, and several differences were uncovered. The prediction that age may be a factor in determining the type of television program preferred was supported, with results indicating that older persons, to a significant degree, sought out television newsmagazines and documentaries more than did younger persons (H11).
Age was also considered in questions concerning voting behavior. It was suggested that exposure to these programs with their negative content which would heighten political discontent would lead to less willingness by younger people to participate in government by voting. Although the young did show an insignificant decline in intention to vote, the study shows no indication that a "videomalaise," brought on by information about corruption, is responsible for this country's low voting rate. The fact that political efficacy was so low at the beginning of the study may, of course, indicate that the "videomalaise" with its resulting decline in intention to vote had occurred through media before the subjects took part in the experiment. It is also possible that the subjects may have overestimated the strength of their intention to vote, and H10 which predicted that younger persons would show a greater decline in intention to vote was not supported.

Age was also considered a factor that could influence willingness to censor. After seeing the segments, younger persons who were initially willing to favor censorship remained more willing to favor censorship than were the older group which became more opposed to censorship after seeing the segments (H6). The evidence of opposition to censorship on the part of the older audience supports the findings and suggestion of Liebes and Ribak (1991), cited earlier, that the older generation of persons of Western
origin and high education in Israel stands high in both belief in the value of news and opposition to censorship. A difference in this study and the Liebes and Riebak study, however, is that in the current study the difference between the older and younger viewers resulted from the fact that the older viewers became more opposed to censorship following exposure, a change which was not expected. The suggestion could be made that the older individuals saw the corruption in the segments and decided that people should know about such things; the younger people showed no increase in such feelings.

Several other significant differences based on the age of the subject also emerged in the study. These include the fact that older subjects had substantially greater political knowledge than the younger subjects, a result which could perhaps be due to their more extensive use of both information-laden television programs and print media. Among the older subjects 22 of the 30 stated that they rely on newspapers "a lot" to help them choose a President, while only 9 of the 58 younger subjects stated that they relied on newspapers "a lot." Younger subjects found the segments less relevant than did the older subjects and found fewer instances in which the pictures contributed emotion, reality, and clarity. We can speculate that young subjects paid less concentrated attention to the segments and analyzed the contributions of individual elements less. Such a failure
to analyze the video elements is surprising in a group of young subjects who had expressed an interest in majoring in telecommunication.

To answer the research question, it was also suggested that there may be a difference in the information processing of television programs based on factors such as format. It was suggested that the in-depth and more extensive material offered in television newsmagazines and documentaries could influence and even enhance learning. This prediction was supported in that watching television newsmagazines and documentaries was positively and significantly related to higher levels of political knowledge. Although this finding provides support for Fitzsimmons and Osburn (1968) and Graber (1989), who suggested that certain aspects of these programs may influence learning, the possibility remains that some of this learning may be coming from the print media, a fact bolstered by the findings in this study that the older people who had greater knowledge also tend to use print media more in choosing a president than did younger subjects.

As noted earlier, this is the first test of "videomalaise" that used a long period of time and 15 segments. However, like the other researchers who have been unable to replicate Robinson's findings, including Miller, Goldenberg, and Erbring (1979), this research has not found the effect.
This overwhelming lack of support for any of the predictions which would have supported a "videomalaise" hypothesis would seem to demonstrate the difficulty of locating the concept as put forward by Robinson or as reevaluated in this study, and it could be posited that the malaise is a virus acquired to such an extent before this study that no increase was possible and that the long period of using media before the research did the job earlier.

The results indicate that even concentrated doses of negative information in television newsmagazines and documentaries do not add to viewers' levels of political inefficacy, and this finding may offer some comfort to those in the television industry who have been accused of providing an abundance of negative information to their viewers, information which could be creating negative feelings toward government. However, the problem remains that citizens are not voting sufficiently to provide the healthiest possible democracy.

It seems apparent that in these days when programs about politics are being produced specifically for high schools, we reach many people who are low in need for cognition, but it is important to make certain that they understand issues. The fact that young people understand no more than 46% of some basic terms often encountered in the news and are not learning enough about current events may be
an indication that we need to define concepts constantly in television programs on public affairs.

In this study younger persons also found such programs less relevant; thus, the relevance to them of news stories must be emphasized. This would be especially useful in programs for the very young in schools. The fact that younger people are less opposed to censorship means that some young people do not understand the need for information through a free press. It could be argued that this is something that needs to be stressed in schools.

**Study Limitations**

The major limitation of this study concerns the nonrandomization of the sample. Intact groups were used due to the fact that it was logistically impossible for the researcher to schedule the desired groups of subjects, young/old, highly educated/less educated, to meet for three occasions in any other manner. The homogeneity of the intact group of highly educated individuals (RFUF) and intact classes does, of course, diminish the generalizability of the findings.

Further, the study measured intention to vote rather than voting behavior. A comparison of actual behavior before and after the experiment might have produced more significant results.
Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the results which indicate that people's feelings of internal and external political efficacy may not be as suddenly altered as Robinson (1976) once posited, and also on the finding that young persons complete their political socialization long after reaching adulthood (Kinder and Sears, 1985), an analysis should be made of other forms of media, more specifically newspapers and magazines, to determine possible instruments of attitude change. The results of this study which indicated that older, more well educated people are steadfast in their intention to vote supports a belief that the low voter-turnout does not result from disaffection among the elderly. Another research project could, therefore, examine newspaper and magazine reports over an extended period in order to evaluate reader impact, especially on younger individuals.

Since the results of this study also demonstrated that, other than an increased opposition to censorship, older people perhaps are affected less by the information and that younger people have significantly less knowledge that could aid in their decision-making processes, a reanalysis using groups of less educated individuals, college undergraduates, and working individuals between the ages of 25 and 45 years of age, may uncover relationships between voting behaviors, media use, and factors that contribute to lack of political participation especially by the younger adults.
This is part of a study of television news. We think it is very important, and we thank you for helping us. Later, we will explain what we are trying to find out.

You will see excerpts from television programs showing government corruption—actions performed by government officials that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest and that could harm the public.

We are asking you to rate each of these segments on two things:

**QUESTION A:** (a) How clearly does the segment show corruption or harm to the public?

You have been given 5 choices for rating the program segments that you are about to see. **Put an X beside the number of the choice that best describes your opinion:**

Here is what the numbers mean:

1. This is an extremely strong, specific, and immediately clear demonstration of the government being corrupt or harming the public.

2. This is a fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration of government being corrupt or harming the public.

3. This is a moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration of government being corrupt or harming the public.

4. This is a vague demonstration of government being corrupt or harming the public.

5. This does not show government being corrupt or harming the public to me at all.
QUESTION B: How important is the segment to you—that is, does it deal with something that affects you personally—your money, comfort, or happiness?

After Question B for each segment, put an X in the blank whose number best matches your opinion of how unimportant or important to you is the issue mentioned in the program. Please do not use check marks, and please do not put an X between two blanks.

Here is what the numbers mean.

1—very unimportant
2—somewhat unimportant
3—a little unimportant
4—neither especially unimportant nor important
5—a little important
6—somewhat important
7—very important

SEGMENT #_____

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Important

Very
SEGMENT #

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Very Unimportant          Important

SEGMENT #

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Very Unimportant          Important

SEGMENT #

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Very Unimportant _____________________          Important
Very
Unimportant 1  2  3  4  5  6  7

SEGMENT #

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Unimportant 1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Very Important
SEGMENT #_____ 

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

___ 1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___ 2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___ 3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___ 4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
___ 5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Important

SEGMENT #_____ 

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

___ 1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___ 2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___ 3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___ 4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
___ 5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Important
SEGMENT #_____

Question A: How clearly does this segment show that some people in the government are corrupt—in other words, are doing things that are illegal, immoral, or dishonest, or that might hurt large parts of the public?

___1. Extremely strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___2. Fairly strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___3. Moderately strong, specific, and clear demonstration
___4. Vague demonstration of government corruption
___5. Does not show government corruption to me at all

Question B: How important to you personally are the issues this segment deals with?

Very Unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Important
Question 1.

Suppose an important news story continues to get attention in the media for several days. Imagine that you have decided to spend time watching TV and getting information on the situation. TV weekly listings tell you that the story is being covered on all the following programs during the week.

We would like you to do two things. First, rate your top five programs in terms of your preference for getting information, (using the numbers 1 = My first choice to get the information, 2 = My second choice to get the information, etc.).

Second, please put an X beside ALL the programs you would normally seek out in order to get information on the situation. (You can include the programs you have already ranked).

___ A. 20/20       ___ B. ABC Nightly News
___ C. CBS Evening News ___ D. 60 Minutes
___ E. Frontline       ___ F. NBC Evening News
___ G. CNN Evening News ___ H. Inside Edition
___ I. Prime Time       ___ J. 48 Hours
___ K. Washington Week in Review ___ L. Nightline
___ M. The MacNeil-Lehrer News Hours ___ N. Listening to America
___ O. McLaughlin Group ___ P. Other
Question 2.

During the past week have you actually watched any of the programs listed above?

____Yes
____No

If yes, please list any of the programs listed above that you watched during the past week.

__________________________   ______________________
__________________________   ______________________

Question 3.

For the following questions, we would like your first response depending upon the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement. **PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST MATCHES YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT EACH STATEMENT.**

Here is what the responses mean:
- VSD = Very Strongly Disagree
- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- N = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree
- VSA = Very Strongly Agree

1. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.
   
   VSD......SD......D......N......A......SA......VSA

2. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.

   VSD......SD......D......N......A......SA......VSA

3. Other people seem to have an easier time understanding complicated issues than I do.

   VSD......SD......D......N......A......SA......VSA
4. I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA

5. I often don't feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA

6. I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA

7. Some politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA

8. There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA

9. Under our form of government, the people in this country have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA

10. If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think, there is really no way to make them listen.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA

11. People like me don't have any say about what the government does.
VSD........SD........D..........N..........A..........SA..........VSA
Question 4.

Write the answer to each question in the blank. Last names are sufficient, and we do not expect you to know all of these.

A. Who is the current Chief of Staff at the White House?

B. Informally, the Strategic Defense Initiative (or SDI) is known as

C. How often does a member of the House of Representatives need to run for reelection?

D. What is the worldwide bank that has been recently accused of corruption? (Initials will be accepted)

E. Who is the Panamanian recently tried on drug charges in Miami?

F. What is the political system that Nelson Mandela fought against? (just one word)

G. How often does a U. S. Senator need to run for reelection?

H. Who is the prime minister of Great Britain?
I. Who is the speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives?


J. What do the initials NATO stand for?


Question 5.

At a time of national crisis, would you be in favor of censoring television programs that you believe would cause Americans to be divided in their opinions if these divided opinions might weaken the national will to win a war? Put an X in the blank by the response that matches your opinion.

___ a. There should definitely be censorship.

___ b. I am not fully decided, but I tend to favor censorship in such circumstances.

___ c. Undecided.

___ d. I am not fully decided but I tend to oppose censorship in such circumstances.

___ e. There definitely should not be censorship.

Question 6.

My age is: Please put a check mark in the correct blank

___ From 18 - 24
___ From 25 - 39
___ From 40 - 60
___ More than 60

Question 7.

My sex is

Male____
Female____
Question 8.

The next set of questions deals with your reason for watching television news. **PLEASE CIRCLE ONE OF THE NUMBERS BELOW THAT BEST TELLS HOW IMPORTANT THE REASON IS TO YOU.** The responses range from 1 "Exactly," to 5 "Not at all".

For example: If a question suggests that getting the latest information on local news stories is one of your most important reasons for watching television and you agree with this statement, you would circle the number 1 or a number close to it meaning that this is exactly one of your reasons for watching television news. On the other hand, if getting the latest information on local news stories is absolutely not a reason for your watching television, you would circle the number 5. **Many of your answers will probably fall somewhere between "Exactly" and "Not at all."**

1. To relax after a hard day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exactly</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

2. Because you like to watch television and there's nothing else on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exactly</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. To keep up with our country's relations with other countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exactly</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. To keep up with political events in our country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exactly</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
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</table>

5. Because when the newscasters talk, it's like listening to a friend

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exactly</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Because you have nothing else to do

Exactly Not at all
1. ...........2. ............3. ............4. ............5

7. To keep up with events in other countries

Exactly Not at all
1. ...........2. ............3. ............4. ............5

8. Because you like to see interesting things that happen to other people

Exactly Not at all
1. ...........2. ............3. ............4. ............5

9. To keep up with the latest economic news

Exactly Not at all
1. ...........2. ............3. ............4. ............5

10. Because finding out what's happening adds some excitement to your life

Exactly Not at all
1. ...........2. ............3. ............4. ............5

PLEASE PUT AN X IN THE CORRECT BLANK FOR THE NEXT THREE QUESTIONS:

Question 9.
Were you eligible to vote in the last Presidential election?

____ Yes
____ No

Question 10.
Are you eligible to vote in the next Presidential election?

____ Yes
____ No
Question 11.

If you were eligible to vote in the last Presidential election, did you vote?

_____ Yes
_____ No

Question 12.

How likely are you to vote in the next presidential election?

_____ 1. I definitely plan to vote.
_____ 2. I probably will vote.
_____ 3. I have not decided whether to vote or not.
_____ 4. I probably will not vote.
_____ 5. I definitely do not plan to vote.

How much education do you have?

_____ I completed grade school.
_____ I completed high school.
_____ I have two years of college.
_____ I completed a trade school.
_____ I have a bachelor's degree.
_____ I have education beyond a bachelor's degree.
APPENDIX C
MIDPOINT QUESTIONNAIRE

RESPONDENT ID # _____

Question 1.

We would like for you to read these statements giving suggestions about your interests. Keep in mind that there are no correct answers. We would like your first response depending upon the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement. PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST MATCHES YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT EACH STATEMENT.

Here is what the responses mean:

VSD = Very Strongly Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
D = Disagree
N = Neither Agree nor Disagree
A = Agree
SA = Strongly Agree
VSA = Very Strongly Agree

1. I would prefer complex to simple problems.
   VSD SD D N A SA VSA

2. I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.
   VSD SD D N A SA VSA

3. Thinking is not my idea of fun.
   VSD SD D N A SA VSA

4. I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.
   VSD SD D N A SA VSA
5. I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is a likely chance that I will have to think in depth about something.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

6. I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

7. I think only as hard as I have to.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

8. I prefer to think about small daily projects to long-term ones.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

9. I like tasks that require little thought once I've learned them.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

10. The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

11. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

12. Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA

13. I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.

VSD SD D N A SA VSA
14. The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.

15. I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.

16. I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort.

17. It's enough for me that something gets the job done; I don't care how or why it works.

18. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.

Question 2.

Write down all the good things you can think of concerning the policies of President Bush.
Question 3.

Write down all the bad things you can think of concerning the policies of President Bush.

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX D
FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONNAIRE

RESPONDENT ID # _____

Question 1.

For the following questions, we would like your first response depending upon the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement. **PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSE THAT BEST MATCHES YOUR ATTITUDE ABOUT EACH STATEMENT.**

Here is what the responses mean:

- VSD = Very Strongly Disagree
- SD = Strongly Disagree
- D = Disagree
- N = Neither Agree nor Disagree
- A = Agree
- SA = Strongly Agree
- VSA = Very Strongly Agree

1. I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics.

   VSD.......SD.......D.......N.......A.......SA.......VSA

2. I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country.

   VSD.......SD.......D.......N.......A.......SA.......VSA

3. Other people seem to have an easier time understanding complicated issues than I do.

   VSD.......SD.......D.......N.......A.......SA.......VSA

4. I feel that I could do as good a job in public office as most other people.

   VSD.......SD.......D.......N.......A.......SA.......VSA
5. I often don't feel sure of myself when talking with other people about politics and government.

VSD........SD........D........N........A........SA........VSA

6. I think that I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people.

VSD........SD........D........N........A........SA........VSA

7. Some politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on.

VSD........SD........D........N........A........SA........VSA

8. There are many legal ways for citizens to successfully influence what the government does.

VSD........SD........D........N........A........SA........VSA

9. Under our form of government, the people in this country have the final say about how the country is run, no matter who is in office.

VSD........SD........D........N........A........SA........VSA

10. If public officials are not interested in hearing what the people think there is really no way to make them listen.

VSD........SD........D........N........A........SA........VSA

11. People like me don't have any say about what the government does.

VSD........SD........D........N........A........SA........VSA

Question 2.

At a time of national crisis, would you be in favor of censoring television programs that you believe would cause Americans to be divided in their opinions if these divided opinions might weaken the national will to win a war? Put an X in the blank by the response that matches your opinion.

_____ a. There should definitely be censorship.

_____ b. I am not fully decided, but I tend to favor censorship in such circumstances.

_____ c. Undecided.
d. I am not fully decided but I tend to oppose censorship in such circumstances.

e. There definitely should not be censorship.

Question 3.

How likely are you to vote in the next presidential election?

1. I definitely plan to vote.
2. I probably will vote.
3. I have not decided whether to vote or not.
4. I probably will not vote.
5. I definitely do not plan to vote.

Question 4. Please put an X in the blank that is the best answer for the questions below:

How much do you count on television to help you make up your mind about whom to vote for in a presidential election?

A lot
Somewhat
Very little
Not at all

How much do you count on newspapers to help you make up your mind about whom to vote for in a presidential election?

A lot
Somewhat
Very little
Not at all
5. **Please fill in the blanks.** How many minutes do you spend on an average **weekday** reading a newspaper—other than the Alligator?

About_______minutes.


About_______minutes.

6. **Please put an X in the blanks.** On which nights during the past week did you watch an evening television network newscast? (From ABC, CBS, NBC, or CNN)

- [ ] Sunday
- [ ] Monday
- [ ] Tuesday
- [ ] Wednesday
- [ ] Thursday
- [ ] Friday
- [ ] Saturday

What is the one source that does **most** to help you choose which presidential candidate to vote for?

- [ ] Political Party
- [ ] Friends and relatives
- [ ] Television
- [ ] Newspapers
- [ ] Newsmagazines
- [ ] Other____________________

Have the 15 excerpts you have seen during the past three sessions changed your attitudes toward the government? If so, how?

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________
After seeing the 15 excerpts, what is your opinion of the way television portrays government?

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

What has happened to your opinion of the way television portrays government as a result of this experiment?

_____ Become more favorable toward television

_____ Unchanged

_____ Become less favorable toward television

Do you have any other reactions to the experiment or the program excerpts you have seen that you want to mention? If so, please do.

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

In one or two sentences please use the following lines to tell us exactly what you think this study was about.

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU VERY MUCH
APPENDIX E
SEGMENT SHEET

Following are some short questions concerning the segments you will watch. We would like for you to complete a separate page for each segment. The segments will be identified by number as they are shown.

SEGMENT # ______

Question 1.

Put an X in the blank whose number best matches your opinion of how unimportant or important to you are the issues mentioned in the program. Here is what the numbers mean:

1— very unimportant
2— somewhat unimportant
3— a little unimportant
4— neither especially unimportant nor important
5— a little important
6— somewhat important
7— very important

Please do not use check marks, and please do not put an X between two blanks.

2. Overall how important to you are the issues mentioned in the program?

Very Unimportant ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______

Very Important ______ ______ ______ ______ ______ ______
Question 2.

What—if anything—did the pictures add to the segment? (You may put an X in more than one blank.)

1. The pictures made the segment more emotional.
2. The pictures made the segment more real.
3. The pictures made the segment more interesting.
4. The pictures made the segment clearer.
5. The pictures did not add anything to the segment.
6. The pictures were sometimes a little distracting.
7. The pictures were sometimes very distracting.

Question 3.

To what extent did the language used in the segment make it hard to understand?

1. All the language was very clear.
2. Only occasionally was the language hard to understand.
3. The language made the segment moderately hard to understand.
4. The language made the segment generally hard to understand.
5. The language made the segment very hard to understand.
APPENDIX F
ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT

RETIRLED FACULTY

No.

Yes, to a limited extent. Perhaps I am a bit more cynical about government and the way it operates.

These 15 segments point up to me the moral erosion of insiders in Federal Government. The general attitude of the privileged "us" is gouging the vague and nebulous "them" has caused this country to become morally, spiritually, emotionally, politically, and financially bankrupt. Who will deliver us from this body of sin and death?

I'm even more aware, indignant, and annoyed at the inept, corrupt and unchecked processes in government and worried about what can be done. Over 30 years ago my father concluded that the 1960 election would be the last traditional contest and that TV, etc. would ruin all.

No.

Since I had been somewhat aware of most of the issues, my opinions about them were formed at an earlier time.

No.

Reinforced previously held viewpoints.

One must be aware that our government has faults, but it is a hell of a lot better than any other that I have seen.

I have certainly been awakened to problems/government scams to a greater extent--and am somewhat more appalled by the secrecy & evasion that goes on.

No.

Yes.
Strengthened my general opinion.

No, I don't think so.

Reinforced my opinions--because I was already familiar with the issues.

They have depressed and discouraged me. The rosy glow of "government" is gone.

They have pointed out some problems I was not aware of and the need for reforms.

Yes, slightly. Made me more depressed, cynical, untrusting.

No. I've seen most of these segments before. I watch Bill Moyers and PBS.

No.

No.

No.

Page missing.

Yes. I have less confidence in government.

Clarifying and educational. My trust level is low. It (the study) confirms my opinion that leaders are subject to much manipulation.

No.

The excerpts have reminded me where we need to focus on certain government practices. Congressional and legislative watchdogs must be separated from the functions they regulate.

No, not really.

No.

No.

STUDENTS

Yes, I didn't realize how poorly run of an institution our gov't seems to be.

No, but they reinforced some feelings I already had.
It confuses me more. You don't know who or what to believe & you certainly hope that the people you have hope in are (not) leading you astray.

Only now I am more aware of certain problems and corrupt individuals that are part of the system.

No, this is how I have seen the government portrayed on nightly news shows.

Yes, I would like information I saw to be more widely broadcast to stop these illegal gov't practices.

Yes, I think the government doesn't do enough for the people and it's all a vicious circle.

They have cleared up, or uncovered much information that I wasn't truly aware or clear about.

No.

No! I always knew the gov't was corrupt!!

No. They have (not) changed, just enlightened me about some issues.

No.

Yes, I feel more betrayed than before the experiment. I distrusted government before but now I am disgusted.

I believe the government is more corrupt than I first thought.

No.

I was aware of most of the topics covered, but was shocked to hear the story of King Hussein's daughter being the one to give the congress report.

Yes--somewhat. There are many things going on in gov't that citizens may not know of.

Not at all.

It did not change my attitude, but supported it even more. Politicians are liars. They lie, cheat and steal.

Yes. I don't know who can be trusted!

No.
No, not really.
No, just reinforced my suspicions about how criminal the gov't really is.
Somewhat. It brought out some issues that I was not completely aware of.
No.

Somewhat.
Not really. I already was under the assumption that government was very crooked & the excerpts just enhanced my view.
No, because before and after seeing these excerpts, I don't trust government.
No.

Yes, but I always knew how rotten they are.
Not really since they were only about three minutes long. I didn't get the chance to understand and learn.
Yes--it made me realize how much scandal is going on. The gov't seems to think the public is really ignorant. I don't think they have any self-conscience.
No, they have not. Instead they reinforced my beliefs that government everywhere is corrupted no matter where you are.
No.

No.
No.
No.
No.

Not changed, but more informed about those issues presented.
Yes, some things like Team 100, I was not aware of. I think more people would be shocked by this too.
No, although the segments illustrate and explain certain issues.
No.
Yes. I am now a little more wary of the people placed in government and the system itself. It makes you wonder if average people really have a say in government or can even affect the political system itself.

No, it just helped illustrate the shady dealings in government.

No.

No, they have given me new arguments and viewpoints to better support my personal debates.

Yes, I realize how corrupt our government really is and at the expense of average citizens.

They may have made me a little more disgusted, but I wasn't too happy to begin with.

No.

They have reconfirmed what I believe was going on in the government.

Yes. I am better informed. I was very interested in the topics discussed, especially the segment on "soft money." I did think the segments put down the gov't. However I feel it was and is effective to educate people.

Somewhat; the Team 100 story confirmed my suspicions that most of the money is controlled by very few rich people. That's why the economy is so bad & people don't go out to have a good time because all their money can just pay bills.

Yes, I am more skeptical about our gov't. and leaders.

No.

It has made me wary of congress, not the entire government.

They just made me more suspect of the government.

No, I've always had a sense of distrust in government officials.

Yes--it has made me even more of a pessimist about government.
APPENDIX G
DESCRIPTION OF SEGMENTS


2. Health care in America—How individuals who lobby for health care companies manipulate House Ways and Means committee members.

3. Favors bought through savings and loan PAC contributions to the House and Senate banking committee members.

4. Congress members' involvement in fund-raising parties in Washington—Hidden contributions received from big money donors and how these donors are rewarded.

5. Real estate and the "Passive Loss Rule."—Congress' tax breaks and how the rule benefits real estate brokers who are big money donors.

6. Tax reforms which give breaks to companies that are incorporated in foreign countries, and therefore pay little or no tax in the United States.

7. Government's involvement in the savings-and-loan bail out and the effort made by the government to hide the magnitude of the cost of the bail out until after the election.

8. American's lack of adequate health care coverage and some worthless insurance coverage allowed by a regulatory loophole.


10. How army nuclear waste plants are being put in residential areas.

12. How Congress' Federal Forfeiture Law is being used to seize personal property from ordinary citizens suspected of drug trafficking.

13. How Congress provides excellent day care for its people working in Washington but state governments do not actively inspect child-care centers across the country.

14. How government provides benefits which aid companies that move out of the U. S. leaving Americans unemployed.

15. U. S. involvement in the Gulf war and the public relations tactics used by the government to stimulate support for the war.
REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Patricia S. E. Darlington was born in Jamaica, W. I., on December 26, 1955. Darlington immigrated to the United States in 1972 to attend Tuskegee University where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in economics. She became a citizen of the United States in 1988.

Darlington received a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from the University of Florida in 1988 and entered the Ph.D. program that same year, graduating in May 1993. Darlington is married to Headley W. Darlington II and is the mother of three children, Bashir Nelson, Rolda Louise, and Headley Wilford Darlington III.
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Mickie N. Edwardson, Chairperson
Distinguished Service
Professor of Journalism
and Communications

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ira S. Fischler
Professor of Psychology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Kim B. Walsh-Childers
Assistant Professor of Journalism and Communications

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Michael F. Weigold
Assistant Professor of Journalism and Communications
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

John W. Wright
Professor of Journalism and Communications

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Journalism and Communications and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 1993

Dean, College of Journalism and Communications

Dean, Graduate School