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**MEDIA DEPENDENCE AND COMMUNITY INFLUENTIALS: A STUDY OF  
ACCESSIBILITY, EVALUATION AND CROSS-CHECKING IN ONE  
AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

*The Ohio State University*

**PH.D. 1981**

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MEDIA DEPENDENCE AND COMMUNITY INFLUENTIALS:  
A STUDY OF ACCESSIBILITY, EVALUATION AND CROSS-CHECKING  
IN ONE AMERICAN COMMUNITY  
DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate  
School of The Ohio State University

By

Donald Lettell Fry, B.A., M.A.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Ohio State University

1981

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I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Rupert and Margaret Fry, and my grandmother, Elizabeth Gensemer, for without their support in this endeavor it could never have been completed.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Denis McQuail (1972), in an introduction to a collection of essays on the sociology of mass communication, argued that media institutions are highly dependent on other social forces and are continuously affected by external circumstances. Further, he suggested that "the mass media as a social institution have no monopoly over the exchange and flow of information and ideas in a society, in part because of the diversity of forms and haziness of boundaries which characterize the institution" (12). For McQuail, then, one of the preeminent questions in mass communication research deals with the interrelationship between the media and other social forces; the form, the strength and the direction of these intrasocietal links become crucial areas for exploration. Other scholars have echoed a similar concern. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) and Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) have developed a mass communication theory that attempts to make explicit the importance of intrasocietal interrelationships as the basis of a media effects model. In a discussion of research directions in the study of the role of mass media in the political system, Bobrow (1974) argued that there is a crucial need for studies which explore the linkages between the mass media and other political system elements. Finally, Golding and Murdock (1978) called for theory and research that relates various levels of the mass communication process with each other and with the "central dimensions of social structure and social process" (353).

To fully address the issues raised by these scholars is practically impossible in one research project. One key starting point,

though by no means the only one, is with the information environment in a social system. As McQuail (1972) has noted, the mass media do not have complete control over the information environment in any society. At the same time, it would be absurd to suggest that the mass media are an insignificant part of the information environment in complex modern societies. The mass media at least augment and, in some cases, may take precedence over the interpersonal network in information exchange situations. Both mediated and non-mediated sources of information function simultaneously in complex information environments. As an initial step in understanding how the information environment functions for a population it is important to fully understand how the components of the information environment differentially relate and interrelate.

The primary concern in this research project was to define and describe the interrelationship between three major mass media sources (newspaper, television and radio) and the interpersonal network as they function in one specific information environment. The data collected in this study was drawn from interviews with influential members of one American community actively involved in an urban redevelopment issue. The issue itself dealt with an ongoing controversy over whether a memorial civic center should be constructed in the downtown shopping area as a catalyst for further redevelopment of the central city area of the community. The civic center issue had generated a great deal of conflict between two clearly definable factions within the community, one in support of and one in opposition to construction. The information environment was explored through three dominant constructs: access to information from the four sources mentioned above, evaluation of the

information from each of those sources, and the differential use of those sources for cross-verification of information. Through the use of those and other related variables, this study explored the interrelationship of the major source categories for the purpose of better understanding how and where one group of people get information about a high conflict issue, and to assess its level of dependence on the mass media.

This general research statement carries with it certain rather clear design parameters. First, the analysis of media-community influential information linkages was accomplished through the study of one American city. A community based analysis was selected for several reasons. Many of the basic assumptions about the place of the mass media in our society arose from early community centered analyses (see Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1944; Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee, 1954; and Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). The community analysis used in these and other similar research projects has demonstrated an ability for intensive and multidimensional assessments of the role held by the media in this society. Such a research strategy has the potential to build on the groundwork laid by these early studies by illuminating other linkages and interrelationships at the community level.

More importantly, Becker, McCombs and McLeod (1975) noted that this country has a long tradition of local media institutions. They argued that by concentrating on regional newspapers such as the New York Times or on broadcast networks, researchers ignore the "peculiarities of media roles within the community..." (33). The community level analysis allows for the extrapolation of the media's roles and how those roles interrelate with other roles at the community level. Further, an analysis

of media-community influential relationships will help to fill a gap in recent mass communication research. Much of what is known about this crucial relationship has arisen from studies on the national level (Resten, 1937; Nimmo, 1964; Ames, 1972; Sigal, 1973; Thompson, 1973; Crouse, 1974; and Gans, 1979) and, to a lesser extent, on the state level (Valleau, 1952; Baker and Walter, 1975; Merwin, 1971; Dyer and Nayman, 1977; and Morgan, 1978). Significantly less work has been done on the media-influential relationship at the community level, with the notable exception of the extensive body of research done by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (see as only one example Community Conflict and the Press, 1980). Finally, a community based analysis, particularly in a community the size of the one in question, met both the necessary conditions established by Bobrow (1974) for the effective analysis of links between the media system and political system elements. Those conditions are: 1) that both the media system and the political system must be small or homogeneous as well as accessible, and 2) many of the elements of each system must be stable (118).

The second parameter for this study related to the type of relationships or linkages to be studied. Clearly, there are a number of relationships at the community level that are worthy of analysis. The media-community influential relationship was selected for several reasons. First, and possibly the most obvious reason relates to the importance of community influentials in making local news. This relationship is crucial in understanding what is printed or broadcast to the public at large and may impact upon the actions of influentials, the general population and media personnel alike. Second, there is both theoretical and

empirical evidence to suggest that community influentials exert a strong influence on how the media function within the community structure.

Tuchman (1974) posited that media content reflects societal values, goals, ideals and the like. Further, she argued that "the structure of a medium also reflects the structure of its society" (2). Her point, though, is not that the media reflect the full range of goals and ideals of a society nor does the structure of the media reflect the full diversity of the social structure of the system. Instead, the media reflect the goals and ideals of the powerful and influential within a social system. Thus, the media products are reflections, if not totally accurate ones, of those who tend to be directly or indirectly influential.

Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) restated this general proposition and provided convincing evidence in its support. They stated that "...newspapers will reflect the power structure and the concerns of the community structure. The saying that 'newspapers mirror the society' does not mean that they give an accurate reflection of people's needs, but that they mirror the conditions of that system, including power conditions, and alignments" (80). The influentials in a community are not only consumers in the information environment, but are also in part creators of the information environment itself. This fact makes influentials particularly interesting when assessing the role of information flow in a community.

Finally, community influentials are a particularly crucial focus of analysis since the actions of such influentials are central in determining the outcome of community conflict. Decisions on conflict issues require information. The information environment within which influentials



function can provide useful information relating to the role of mediated and non-mediated channels in community decision-making.

The third parameter related to the focus of the information environment. Only one topic area was selected as the focus for the present study, a controversy over urban redevelopment. This decision was made for two reasons. First, based on Polsby's (1980) elaboration of a pluralistic approach to community power, it was assumed that influence in a community is a function of active participation in a controversy. Further, Polsby argued that one cannot assume that influence on one issue will be predictive of influence on another issue. Since the focus of this study was on community influentials it was determined that the selection of one topic would enhance the reliability of subject selection. Second, by selecting only one topic, it was possible to avoid the potentially confounding effects of differential treatment of different topics within a particular source on information. While differential treatment may be a significant variable, that issue goes beyond the specific purposes of this study.

It should also be noted that a high conflict issue was selected as the topic in question. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) have argued that conflict increases the accessibility and flow of information through all channels but particularly through mediated channels. Since the focus of this study was on community influentials and not specifically on the media's coverage of the issue, it was assumed that a high conflict issue would insure that maximum amounts of information would be transmitted through all channels. The findings would be more

likely to be a function of individual accessibility as opposed to a function of differential coverage of the issue by particular sources.

The final major parameter for this study arose from the research design itself. Data were collected through one survey contact with each community influential in a single community on only one issue. Such an approach obviously placed clear restrictions on the knowledge claims which can be made from the data. The pragmatic limitations of time, money and personnel were the dominant factors which dictated this limited design. Apart from these practical constraints certain theoretical considerations placed further restrictions on design decisions. These considerations will be elaborated in detail throughout the remainder of this chapter and in subsequent chapters.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Within the limitations discussed above this project addressed and was guided by the following research questions. Each of these questions related to a high conflict issue in Lima, Ohio, and were directed to a group of community influentials in that community.

1. What are the relationships between and among the information accessibility, source evaluation and cross-checking behaviors within the information environment under study?
2. What are the differences between and among mediated and non-mediated sources of information in terms of accessibility, evaluation and as a source for cross-checking information?
3. What are the differences between and among the three mediated sources of information in terms of accessibility, evaluation and as a source for cross-checking information?
4. What are the differences between groups and individuals who have varying issue positions and roles in the controversy?

These research questions have arisen out of a series of theoretical concerns and empirical research relating to dependence on mass and interpersonal sources. The remainder of this chapter will discuss both that theory and those empirical findings in order to establish the basic assumptions underlying this project. The next section of this chapter will deal with a set of theoretical propositions which form the basic assumptions relating to the general nature of the information environment in communities of the size and composition of the one in question. In a study such as this there are two crucial levels of analysis: the macro or structural level and the microprocesses, those processes which occur within the boundaries set by the structural characteristics of the community or social system. This study will concentrate on the microprocesses while making certain a priori assumptions about the structural characteristics. The theoretical propositions will lay out certain expectations about the parameters of the information environment which, in turn, will be followed by a discussion of the relevant microprocesses to be analyzed.

#### THEORETICAL GROUNDING:

The theoretical underpinnings of this study arise from several distinct but related approaches to the study of mass communication. The integrated model of mass media effects posited by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) and DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) served as one of the theoretical bases of this research. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) placed the mass media in a tripartite relationship which included the social system at large, the media's role in that system, and the audience's relationship to the media (261). The key variable in this model was the

nature of the relationship between these three elements. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach conceived of the relationship in terms of the relative dependence of the society on the media for its information dispensing function, two obviously interrelated dependencies.

Their explanation of differential levels of dependence was based on the level of societal complexity, a factor that will later be referred to as pluralism after Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980). Borrowing from the sociological theories of Durkheim, Tonnies and Marx, DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) posited that as societies grow more complex "people become dependent on media external to their groups when informal channels beyond their immediate groups begin to be disrupted." This disruption becomes more apparent, they argued, as "the [social] structure becomes more complex, [and] people have less and less contact with the social system as a whole [emphasis original]" (260). The central proposition, then, is that more complex societal structures become unable to supply certain types of relevant information without the intervention of the mass media, thus increasing media dependence.

This brief explanation of the theoretical approach presented by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach clearly does not do justice to its full richness, but these basic premises are sufficient for the present time. The abstract nature of this model leaves a number of questions unanswered. Indeed, the authors suggested as much: "The present theory is obviously developed at a level of abstraction that would make a simple all-or-none test with empirical data impossible" (279). They have left, by design, an unoperationalized concept of societal complexity as well as an unoperationalized definition of a social system. Equally, they offered

only the most general guidelines for the measurement of dependence and an undifferentiated concept of audience. Finally, they paid only scant attention to what is commonly referred to as the "gatekeeping" function of the media.

#### COMMUNITY PLURALISM:

Using a strikingly similar theoretical approach, Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) addressed some of these unanswered questions and offered some empirical validation for the DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach model. In a series of studies spanning well over 10 years, Tichenor, Donohue and Olien have attempted to assess the effect of community pluralism (a measure of societal complexity) on media structure, citizen media use and decision-making processes within a social system (Olien, Donohue and Tichenor, 1968; Donohue, Tichenor and Olien, 1973; Olien, Donohue and Tichenor, 1978; and Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1980). Their operational definition of pluralism is as follows: "the degree of differentiation in the social system along institutional and specialized interest group lines..." (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1980). While the results of these studies are not directly relevant to this study, they do suggest that level of pluralism does have the power to discriminate as a structural variable and, thus, needs to be considered consciously in the research design.

Olien, Donohue and Tichenor (1978) and Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) reported that media use patterns differed based on level of community pluralism, lending further support to results reported in a earlier study by Westley and Severin (1963). Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) also reported that in less pluralistic communities there

was a relatively large degree of "homogenization of power" (51), that is, the socially powerful in one sector of the community tended to be socially powerful in other sectors as well. This, they argued, encouraged interpersonal information exchange among the socially, economically and politically powerful and produced a minimum of public exposure to controversy through the media or otherwise. Evidence from a 1968 study by Olien, Donohue and Tichenor suggested that this tendency to handle controversy interpersonally led to the general avoidance of reported internal conflict in newspapers published in such nonpluralistic communities.

On the other hand, pluralistic communities manifested a rather different power structure. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) reported that pluralistic communities have numerous centers of social power with conflicting goals, interests and demands. These power centers were not necessarily linked interpersonally as in the case of less pluralistic communities. They posited that this diversity of power centers must be taken into consideration during decision-making processes. Thus, "in dealing with these diverse interests, pluralistic communities have a greater need for generation and use of formalized knowledge. The more complex the community, the greater the need for knowledge of other parts by any one segment" (53).

Thus, using DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach's (1975) term, more pluralistic communities, and in particular diverse power segments within those communities, show greater dependence on media transmitted information in making decisions than do less pluralistic communities. It is in pluralistic communities, then, that one should find the greatest impact

of the media on community influentials and the use of media for conflict resolution by those influentials should be most overt.

#### MODELS OF COMMUNITY POWER:

Before moving from this consideration of pluralism it is appropriate to address a competing model of community power. Polsby (1963,1980), in his critiques and evaluations of the dominant trends in community power research by sociologists and political scientists, presented two basic theoretical orientations prevalent in community power studies: general stratification theory and pluralistic theory. He argued that each of these orientations carries with it a set of basic assumptions which materially affect how the researcher defines the community power structure. It could equally be added that each orientation would lead to different sets of conclusions about the relationship between the media and community influentials.

Polsby (1980) defined five assertions held commonly by stratification theorists:

1. "The upper class rules in local community life...."
2. "Political and civic leaders are subordinate to the upper class...."
3. "A single 'power elite' rules in the community...."
4. "The upper class power elite rules in its own interests...."
5. "Social conflict takes place between the upper and lower classes...."  
(8-10)

Clearly, these five presuppositions, which he argued are either explicit or implicit in all stratification literature, define the community power structure quite differently from the pluralistic assumptions which are the basis of the work by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien. The key question here

is both conceptual and methodological; who is to be considered a community influential and how is he/she to be identified. If one assumes a stratification model of community power, then, community influentials would best be defined by ascertaining who in the community in question comprises the upper class. Traditionally, stratification researchers have used either measures of social status, economic status, or a combination of both as guides for defining class (Polsby, 1980). Under stratification assumptions, it is less significant and perhaps misleading to include local political leaders and other active community members who are not considered to be in the upper class since such people tend to be subordinate to and do the bidding of the upper class.

In contradistinction to the stratification approach to community power, Polsby (1980) posited a quite different set of assumptions common to pluralist theorists. First, while the stratification approach assumes that there is a single, relatively homogeneous power elite that is stable over time, pluralists assume that different, relatively heterogeneous small groups in a community make and carry out decisions on different community problems. Thus, those who can be considered as community influentials vary based on the issue or issues in question. Likewise, the persons comprising these issue defined groups often change even over short periods of time. Second, most decisions made by these groups are viewed as routine and are not considered to be important by other community groups. Finally, when a group attempts to bring about change in the community or when change becomes necessary and the change is salient to other community groups, all the concerned groups



must "achieve special kinds of legitimacy or risk the likelihood of failure" (124).

The implications derived from these assumptions function on several dimensions. First, the pluralist approach suggests that community influentials must be defined by their active participation in the resolution of a particular issue; it cannot be assumed that social class alone is a viable means of distinguishing influence. Further, it cannot be assumed that a community member's influence on one issue will accurately predict influence in other issue resolution processes. Second, the pluralist assumptions highlight the centrality of public controversy in certain types of decision-making. In a stratification model, conflicts are not excluded from consideration but those conflicts, at least the significant ones, occur within a small homogeneous group of upper class influentials. The public airing of those conflicts is relatively inconsequential since the power to resolve the conflicts does not ultimately reside in the public at large but within the upper class. The pluralistic model, on the other hand, suggests that community conflicts must ultimately become public since the involved groups must gain wide legitimacy and support from the public for their positions. The significant dynamics of conflict, then, are interpreted differently by the two models.

Tichenor, et al., have incorporated both approaches into their analysis of the community press. Some of the assumptions common to the stratification theorists seem to be implicit in their interpretations of small, homogeneous communities, while their interpretations of the role of the press in large, heterogeneous communities is clearly pluralistic. It is somewhat less crucial for this study to determine whether Tichenor,

Donohue and Olien's stratification interpretation for homogeneous communities is valid, though Polsby (1980) presented some evidence to place it in question. On the other hand, since the community under study falls within a pluralist category by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien's (1980) standards, it is crucial to assess the viability of the pluralist interpretation of community power for the conceptual and methodological reasons suggested earlier.

While the conflict between stratification and pluralist approaches can be characterized along a number of different dimensions, one of the fundamental points of disagreement is in the understanding of power by each. For stratification theorists such as Mills (1956) and others, power is the capacity to successfully impose one's will over the objection of others. While this is certainly not an unreasonable definition, the key to the distinction between the two approaches relates to the indexing of capacity. Stratificationists argue that social status and/or economic status on an a priori basis provides the capacity for successful influence. Power, then, becomes a residual of social and economic status, not a factor in and of itself. Further, power becomes an invariable state not an action. Polsby (1963) argued that such a view is tautological. In essence, high social and economic status gives one superior capacity to successfully impose one's will; therefore, people with high social and economic status must, by definition, be powerful. Again, power becomes an aspect of status, not an independent factor. Polsby (1963) posited that this tautology is impossible to disprove since the definitional structure requires that power be directly and inextricably linked with status.

The pluralist approach to power is based on the "fundamental presumption that human behavior is governed in large part by inertia. This notion leads pluralists to look upon overt activity as a more valid indication of involvement in issues than mere reputations for leadership" (Polsby, 1963, 116). Power is enacted by participants, it is not merely a state of being as is implied by stratifications. Polsby argued that if a person's work is banking, then that person "will spend his time at the bank, and not in manipulating community decisions" (117). The suggestion here is not that bankers never involve themselves in community decisions. Polsby's point is that if the banker is involved in running the community his activities will make that fact quite clear.

Though the stratification/pluralism controversy is much more complex than this short discussion implies, the points made here suggest several important strengths of the pluralist approach. First, pluralists view power as an active process, one which is negotiated between involved parties, and not a static attribute of one part of a community. This definition of power would seem to be more conceptually sound and empirically measurable than the stratification approach to power. Second, the presumption of inertia in human behavior would seem to be more consistent with life experience than the presumption that a group of social and economic elite consistently monitor and involve themselves in all aspects of community life. One should reasonably expect that people involve themselves in only those issues which are perceived as salient to them at the time, regardless of social and economic status.

Pluralism, though, is not without its limitations. These limitations are both conceptual and methodological in nature. If one assumes

that overt activity is an index of power or potential power, then, indirect and covert power becomes difficult to assess. For example, an attempt by an active participant in a conflict to please a high social or economic status non-participant by taking a particular position in the controversy suggests that the non-participant does have some power whether actively used or not. A pluralistic approach is unable to tap such power effectively. Further, a well placed word by a person with high social status or economic status may be extremely influential, but may not be characterized as active or overt participation. Thus, the operational definition of active participation must be carefully thought out by the researcher. In general, then, while pluralism is not free from conceptual and methodological problems, it does seem to be a more valid approach in the study of community power than does the stratification approach primarily due to the conceptually superior understanding of the dynamics of power. None-the-less, any pluralist interpretation of community power must be tempered by the possibility that certain power relationships may not be fully explicated by that approach.

#### THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN PLURALISTIC ENVIRONMENTS:

Assuming a pluralistic model in heterogeneous communities, then, Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) have attempted to assess the position and role of the mass media in this pluralistic environment. Drawing on the works of Coser (1956, 1967), they posited that "conflict is a central component in community life and social change." They further contended that "social conflict is a principle ingredient in much newspaper content..." (17). Within this atmosphere of social conflict the media

function as a social control mechanism by deciding who is interviewed, what is published or broadcast and in what form it is transmitted.

The implications of conflict at the community level are apparent for both community influentials and for the media. We have already established that in pluralistic communities community influentials are theoretically more dependent on media in decision-making situations than are community influentials in less pluralistic communities. But, if we again turn to Polsby's (1980) assumptions about pluralist theory, it is apparent that dependence functions most predominantly in conflict situations. Polsby's second assumption suggests that most decisions made by power groups in a community are considered inconsequential by other groups in the community. Thus, they pass relatively unheralded due to the lack of salience to the community at large. The decision-making process occurs within these groups on an interpersonal basis, a situation that minimizes media dependence. His third assumption posited that when a group actively seeks change, or if the necessity for change is forced on the group or community, which infringes upon areas salient to other groups, the groups involved with the issue or issues must "achieve special kinds of legitimacy" (124). Implicit in this assumption are several crucial points. First, the situation Polsby described is one that Tichenor, et al., would consider to be conflict. Second, Tichenor, et al., would consider such a situation in a pluralistic community as one which would lead to a relatively high level of media dependence in the involved groups. Finally, Polsby's assumption suggests the necessity for the involved groups to develop strategies to achieve the legitimacy necessary for a satisfactory issue resolution.

The necessity for legitimacy in conflict-related issues has been demonstrated in several studies. Polsby (1980) found that the success of a redevelopment issue in New Haven, Connecticut, was dependent on the mayor's ability to develop a broad community consensus in support of his position. In a review of literature dealing with community conflict, Coleman (1957) cited a number of instances in which community groups were unsuccessful in bringing about change because they were ineffective in gaining broad based popular support. Clearly, the importance of gaining legitimacy suggests the necessity for community groups to get their positions to a wider public. In pluralistic communities the media is a logical path.

The discussion to this point was meant to establish a conceptual framework on which this project was grounded and the assumptions that were accepted on an a priori basis. To summarize briefly, this study assumed a pluralistic model of community power or influence. This assumption suggested a set of expectations about the information environment in a heterogeneous community and dictated certain methodological procedures to effectively assess the media dependence of a set of community influentials. Based on the work of Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, it can be expected that dependence on the media will be relatively higher among community influentials in heterogeneous communities than it will be in homogeneous communities. In conditions where change is proposed by a group in a pluralistic community which infringes on salient areas of other groups, conflict becomes public and readily accessible to the media. This increases the accessibility of information through media channels. The increased accessibility is further encouraged by the media's

tendency to report conflict as well as the desire of involved groups to gain legitimacy within the community through a public airing of their position. While mediated information increases, there is a constraint on information through interpersonal sources due to the fragmentation of power groupings. Interpersonal contacts between these groups are inconsistent, leading to an increase in information seeking from the media.

#### MICROPROCESSES:

The Ball-Rokeach-DeFleur model was developed and has been presented as a macro-level analysis. Clearly, the model has heuristic value for increasing our understanding of the growth of the mass media in more complex social systems and is particularly useful in comparing traditional and modern societies. If the model is to have a practical research utility, though, it must be applicable to a micro-level analysis as well. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) have provided research support for the utility of the model in understanding differences between communities of different levels of structural complexity. While concentrating on structural differences across communities, they noted that "there is a need for more systematic understanding of the microprocesses in conflict situations. These are the group and organizational processes which analytically may be treated as intervening variables between structural characteristics and knowledge and opinion outcomes in a community" (235). These microprocesses provide another dimension to the dependence model.

An analysis of one community, or even one group of people within a community, can add significant amounts of new information about media dependence. The microprocesses implied by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien

are inherently part of the general media dependence model. Media dependence is more complex a phenomena than it initially appears. It functions on a number of different levels of analysis ranging from the individual level to the cultural level, and it provides theoretical guidance for researchers on any of these levels. In understanding the application of the model in specific research situations, one must remember what Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur considered to be the crucial variables in understanding media dependence. They argued that the relationship between the social system, the media's role in the social system and the audience are the key in any analysis. These relationships can be variously operationalized depending on the level of analysis of the research. It is the emphasis on relationships which makes the dependence model of particular utility in guiding an understanding of media. The model allows for analyses at the macro and the micro levels within the same theoretical structure. This study has attempted to analyze one set of relationships, that between media and audience, in detail. With this emphasis, the question becomes how are people dependent on media sources for information under a given set of circumstances.

#### **MEDIA DEPENDENCE:**

To assess the extent to which community influentials are dependent on the media for information, a further elaboration of the concept of dependence is needed. Conceptually, a necessary condition for media dependence is a need for information which is accessible through media channels. Both DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) and Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) imply this in their use of the term. While a general population may vary in terms of need for specific types of information,



this project has been designed to maximize the likelihood of a high need for information among the subjects. Two related design features tend to assure this. First, the selection of a high conflict issue increased the perceived need for information and the motivation to seek information. The positive correlation between high conflict issues and a high perceived need for information is strongly implied in the knowledge gap research by Donohue, Tichenor and Olien (1975), Ettema and Kline (1977), and Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980). Second, the community influentials who made up the population for this study were actively involved in the issue in question and its ultimate resolution. Since the outcome of the conflict was of concern to these individuals, it is reasonable to presume that they would feel the need to keep abreast of what was occurring.

If one assumes that a need for information is antecedent to media dependence, two other assumptions logically follow. First, a high need for information suggests overt information seeking behaviors among the community influentials in question. Chaffee (1979) argued that "motivated attempts to gather information are activated only in...instances where a change in behavior is contemplated that involves a substantial risk of adverse consequences if an incorrect decision is made" (2). In essence, Chaffee's characterization describes the situation in which community influentials functioning in a pluralistic community find themselves. Polsby (1980) argued that in conflict situations, influentials must legitimize their position in the community at large to be successful in establishing the dominance of their issue position. Thus, these persons must seek information which will allow them to develop

appropriate strategies to gain legitimacy, or risk failure. Chaffee (1979) further argued that persons in such situations "might reasonably seek information from all available channels with little regard to whether they are personal or mediated..." (2). Thus, one might expect that community influentials would not restrict their information seeking behaviors to only one channel.

#### ACCESSIBILITY:

The second assumption which follows from a need for information is that the need for information may be differentially satisfied by variously channels. DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) built their media dependence model on the assumption that accessibility of different channels of information will affect a person's ability to gain needed information. They argued that in complex, heterogeneous societies interpersonal sources of information are restricted, a situation which leads to increased dependence on the inherently more accessible media channels. Similarly, Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) posited that conflicting groups in pluralistic communities tend to be isolated from each other. This restricted interpersonal contact necessitates a reliance on media reports to keep abreast of the progress of the conflict. Thus, media dependence is, in part, a question of differential channel accessibility.

#### QUALITY OF INFORMATION:

Accessibility alone, though, is a dangerously simplistic measure of dependence. It is clearly possible that the media may be highly accessible but at the same time be unable to satisfy an information need. Therefore, a second dimension of dependence is the quality of the information available through different channels. As noted above,

Chaffee (1979) posited that information seeking behavior is probably manifested in surveillance of all available channels. Elsewhere, Chaffee (1972) had argued that this surveillance activity functions as a cross-checking process to assess the believability of the information itself. He further posited that over time through this cross-checking process people may develop levels of trust in available channels. Chaffee's contentions lend some validity to the quality of information dimension of dependence. He seems to be arguing that information quality is a crucial consideration.

Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) provided a useful example of quality of media information and the importance of media reports to community leaders. Though the research was done in a non-pluralistic community, the results do point towards several concerns relevant to the assessment of dependence. The controversy in the community revolved around the placement of a high voltage power line through or near the community in question. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien asked a group of influentials whether 1) media coverage made a difference in their opinion towards the issue and 2) whether media coverage influenced their organization's decisions about the issue. Approximately 61% of the influentials responded negatively to both questions. On further questioning Tichenor, et al., found several classes of reasons for the lack of media impact.

First, there was a lack of trust in the media's ability to get the facts and issues presented appropriately. One influential reported that "I would do my own research and dig into the issue myself" as opposed to accepting what the media presented (Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, 1980,

130). Several other influentials stated openly that the newspapers were simply unable to understand the problem. The second, and more frequent, response was that the influentials already had the information through interpersonal channels before any information was transmitted by the media. Only one of the influentials indicated that he had received new information on the issue from the media. The influentials who did indicate a media impact universally commented that the impact fell mainly in the area of public opinion. That is, the media was useful in gaging the opinions of the community on the issue; this knowledge was then useful in making alterations in their community awareness activities.

In one sense, the power line issue is somewhat atypical, since much of the information relevant to the community influentials was highly technical in nature and many of the influentials had some expertise in that type of information. Nonetheless, the comments reported by Tichenor, et al., suggest concerns which are generalizable to most community influentials. The three dominant concerns relative to quality of media information are 1) the accuracy of media information as well as the media's ability to present the "real" issues, 2) the "newness of the information, and 3) the usefulness of media information in developing persuasive strategies to gain legitimacy in the community.

To summarize, then, media dependence can be considered as having two distinct but probably related dimensions: 1) differential accessibility of interpersonal and media channels, and 2) differential quality of information transmitted through interpersonal and media channels. There is, though, a third dimension which may add further richness to the dependence construct. Chaffee (1979) has argued that "channel use

is determined mostly by structural factors in the organization of a person's information environment" (1); this is quite consistent with the orientation taken in this chapter. But he has also argued that "credulity is attached to the information itself, as a result of cross-checking it via several channels..." (2). In situations where accessibility is limited to only one channel, whether it be mediated or interpersonal, then accessibility alone is the determinant of the information environment. Such situations are relatively rare.

#### CROSS-CHECKING:

In more information rich environments such as heterogeneous communities dealing with a high conflict issue, differential accessibility of information sources may be minimal due to high information content available through all channels. Chaffee's (1979) concept of cross-checking has the potential for greater precision in describing the information environment and how it is used by community influentials. Further, cross-checking behavior has the potential to add greater sophistication to the media dependence construct articulated by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976). The basic model suggests that as interpersonal contacts are restricted in complex societies, dependence on the media increases. The model does not explicate the relationship between mediated and non-mediated information sources under conditions in which there is a moderate to high level of accessibility for all sources. Information cross-checking may allow for a clearer assessment of the interaction between various sources within the information environment.

Media dependence, as articulated here, is an extension and extrapolation of the Ball-Rokeach-DeFleur model which is based largely on

accessibility alone. The addition of the quality of information components has several advantages over the accessibility bound original model. First, the elaborated model moves away from the tacit assumption inherent in the original model that access is equivalent to dependence. Second, the elaborated model offers a richer understanding of the concept of dependence. The use of the term dependence implies more than mere exposure to information. As suggested above, dependence implies evaluation of information from various sources; it implies a reliance on the best information about a topic available from the accessible sources.

The addition of evaluation and cross-checking components leads to a more complex understanding of media dependence. It is clear that accessibility to a source is a necessary condition for any type of dependence. Accessibility, though, is not a sufficient condition for dependence in all cases. Inherent in the elaborated model is an understanding of dependence based on an audience's perception of the credulity of the information, not merely the accessibility of that information. Thus, relative dependence on a source is primarily a function of an audience member's level of evaluation of the information provided by that source. This is not to say that accessibility is always an insignificant factor in relative dependence. The relative importance of evaluation, cross-checking and accessibility in defining dependence may vary based on circumstance. Under conditions in which accessibility to information is relatively restricted, accessibility may be the determining factor in dependence. On the other hand, under conditions in which accessibility to information is high across a number of sources, evaluation and cross-checking may be the determining factors

in dependence. To put this in another way, if audience members do not have the luxury of high accessibility to a number of sources, they will be dependent on the accessible source. They have no other option. But, in situations of high accessibility across a number of sources, audience members will be dependent on the source which they feel provides them the best information. Such is the case in pluralistic communities, where multiple media sources are inherently present.

#### CONTINGENT CONDITIONS IN MEDIA DEPENDENCE:

As with any complex construct which is used to measure human behavior, there are factors which may affect levels of media dependence. It is important to discuss these factors in order to both assess their potential impact on media dependence and to further conceptualize the media dependence construct. Two factors would seem to be potentially significant: 1) the information carrying abilities of channels, and 2) the nature of the interpersonal communication network.

#### INFORMATION CARRYING ABILITIES:

Earlier it was argued that the quality of information transmitted through various channels is an important dimension of media dependence. A correlate of an influential's evaluation of mediated and interpersonal information is the ability and inclination of different channels to transmit certain types of information. Essentially, then, accessibility is at least a two dimensional issue. Accessibility of channels has already been established as an important consideration in media dependence, but accessibility of information through those channels is an antecedent question. Media dependence is only a viable issue if the media are willing to cover an issue, topic or the like. The media tend

to cover politics quite heavily; under such circumstances one would expect wider use of the media for political information seeking and more media dependence. Reliance on the media for political information has been demonstrated in such diverse areas as Detroit (Vinyard and Sigel, 1971) and Jordan (Barghouti, 1974). On the other hand, agricultural information tends to receive little media coverage. This leads to almost exclusive use of interpersonal channels by Canadian (White, 1970) and Jordoneese (Barghouti, 1974) farmers.

While this point is an obvious one, it is nonetheless important. Media dependence is not a question of being or not being dependent, but instead it is a question of levels of dependence. In evaluating level of dependence on the media, one has to assess how much information the media is transmitting. Low media dependence may be as much a function of the media's unwillingness to present information on a topic as is accessibility of and evaluation of channel specific information. This project has not been designed to study the media's coverage of the issue in question per se. While one of the issue selection criteria (see Chapter 2) was the presence of some amount of media coverage, it was impossible to fully consider this factor in assessing the results. Any knowledge claims made about the media dependence of community influentials must be considered in this light.

#### INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK:

The second contingent condition to be addressed in this study is related to the community influentials' interpersonal communication network. This network and how effectively it functions are crucial in assessing an individual's access to interpersonal sources of



information. For Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) relative access to relevant interpersonal networks was a key variable in media dependence. The model predicts that as the interpersonal network of an individual becomes constrained and is unable to provide needed information, the individual becomes more dependent on mediated sources of information.

Assessing the nature of an interpersonal communication network and its effectiveness in providing needed information is a complex problem, much more complex than assessing the information carrying abilities of the mediated sources. Clearly, one important factor relates to the relative access an individual has to people who have relevant information. This can be determined by frequency of contact with other members of the community or, more effectively, by frequency of contact with people who have expert information about the issue in question.

The issue of evaluation again is significant here. Frequency of contact is mediated by an individual's assessment of the quality of those interactions. Chaffee (1979) argued that, while accessibility to any channel is a crucial variable, one must also consider the credibility of the source as well, credibility being defined in part as expertise on a subject. Since it was impractical to fully trace the interpersonal network of each influential in this study, a less precise approach was used to assess the network of each subject. It was assumed that level of community participation would be an index of the likelihood of contacting people with expert information which was relevant to the subject. Community participation was considered as an analogue to the length and breadth of an individual's interpersonal communication network.

#### MEDIA SPECIFIC DEPENDENCE:

Media dependence thus far has treated the media in its undifferentiated form. Neither Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur nor Tichenor, Donohue and Olien have explored media dependence as it relates to specific media types. This would seem, though, to be an area of research which is a natural extension of media dependence research. There is a relatively large body of research which indicates that media such as newspapers, television, radio and the like do differ on a number of dimensions. Katz, Gurevitch and Haas (1973) argued that, while there are some similarities between television and newspapers, there are clear differences in both technical and aesthetic qualities. Bogart (1968-1969) noted that differences between television and newspapers allow each to complement the other by fulfilling interests aroused by the other and by exploring different aspects of the same event. A number of other studies have noted that newspaper and television news differ in the amount of dramatic impact each manifests and in the concentration on images and on detailed factual description (Cary, 1976; Hofstetter and Zukin, 1979; Robinson and McPherson, 1977; and Weaver, 1975).

Research has also demonstrated that differential attention to television news and newspapers leads to differences in knowledge levels among subjects. Benton and Frazier (1976) reported that newspapers have a greater agenda-setting effect relative to specific information about topics, though they found no differences between television and newspapers at the general issue level. Becker and Whitney (1980) found differences in knowledge about local and national issues based on subjects' levels of dependence on newspapers and television.

In general, then, it would be unwise to assume that community influentials use and evaluate all the available media equally. The relationship between the media and community influentials cannot be fully elaborated without considering the issue of differential media use. There is a small body of research which directly addresses the issue of differential media use and evaluation among influentials. Carter (1958-59) reported that school superintendents and physicians who evaluated media coverage of education and medical related topics ranked the overall quality of each media's stories quite differently. Superintendents preferred newspaper coverage over any other media channel; in general they found the broadcast media quite inadequate. On the other hand, physicians found the broadcast media superior to newspapers in the coverage of medical issues.

Dyer and Nayman (1977) also reported differences in the evaluation of media coverage by influentials. They found that Colorado legislators clearly preferred newspaper coverage of the legislature over broadcast news coverage primarily due to perceived greater accuracy and lack of bias in newspaper stories. The legislators ranked television news coverage as worst with radio news ranked only slightly higher. Similarly, Morgan (1978) reported that New York state legislators consistently expressed more dissatisfaction with television news coverage than they did with newspaper coverage. Finally, in a study of Texas legislators, Merwin (1971) found differences in the way media performance was evaluated. He asked legislators to evaluate newspaper and television news coverage of the legislature along a number of dimensions. Factor analysis of the responses showed some similarities but also some clear

differences in the factor structures. The most highly loaded items for television news were responsibility, reputability and wholesomeness while the most highly loaded items for newspapers were biasedness and partiality.

There are at least two reasons for the differences in evaluation by media type. First, there are differences in the way newspapers, television and radio present the news. Newspapers cover stories in greater depth as a rule; television news has the potential to dramatize issues and events. Depending on the type of information transmitted, it is clearly possible that one media may cover a story more effectively from the perspective of an influential who has very specific goals and needs relative to that story and its related issues. A second consideration, though, is the nature of coverage the media are giving to an influential and/or his issue position. Carter (1958-59) argued that influentials are more favorable in their evaluation of the press when the publicity it gives to them or their cause is perceived as conferring status as opposed to posing a threat. This position suggests that if an influential perceives a particular media to be more favorable to him or his position than other media, that influential is more likely to rely on that media more heavily. Morgan (1978) offered some support for this contention by noting that New York legislators and administrators tended to rely most consistently on the media which they felt gave them the most accurate and the most favorable coverage. It would seem, then, that assessing community influentials' evaluations of available media will lead to a fuller understanding of the patterns of media reliance in the community.

Past research suggests that community influentials will probably rely most heavily on newspapers. Dyer and Nayman (1977) and Morgan (1978) found that legislators predominantly preferred newspapers over all other media. Other research has reported that people who are higher in social participation or are likely to carry on active discussions about salient topics, characteristics which community influentials would presumably possess, tend to rely more heavily on newspapers. Atkin (1972) found that active discussions of an election were more highly correlated with newspaper use than with television use. Among senior citizens, Kent and Rush (1976) reported that social participation in meetings was highly correlated with reading the newspaper. Similarly, Donohew (1967) reported that residents in an Appalachian area who participated in local organizations read the newspaper more frequently; participation was negatively correlated with television use. While newspapers will probably be the predominant source of mediated information for community influentials, it is also reasonable to expect that they will also attend to the other community based media as well. Chaffee (1979) argued that in high information seeking situations people will survey all accessible channels. This, though, needs to be empirically tested.

One of the obvious issues in assessing media dependence in an information environment is a comparative one. The information environment in any social system, and particularly in complex social systems, provides a potentially large number of information sources. The apparent strength of the Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) model is their treatment of both mediated and non-mediated sources of information

within the same framework. By assessing the relationship between the use and importance of media channels and the use and importance of interpersonal channels, a more complex picture of the role and impact of the media relative to community influentials may be gleaned. Similarly, treating the media side of the equation in a comparative framework may add further useful insights. This study, then, will attempt to use this approach to study one group of community influentials in one community on one issue. The hope is that this case study will both provide information as to the utility of media dependence as an analytical tool and to shed further light on the role of the media at the community level. Beyond the limited scope of this study, media dependence, if proved useful, may lead back to comparative analyses across different communities and different issues, the next logical step in dependence research.

In summary this study has taken the accessibility bound media dependence model articulated by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) and added evaluation and cross-checking components. This elaborated dependence model was used to explore the information environment of a group of community influentials by analyzing the relative accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking between and among mediated and non-mediated sources of information. The results and interpretations which follow were based on the dependence model and were guided by the following research questions relating to community influentials:

1. What are the relationships between and among the information accessibility, source evaluation and cross-checking behavior within the information environment?

2. What are the differences between and among mediated and non-mediated sources in terms of accessibility, evaluation and as a source for cross-checking information?

3. What are the differences between and among the three mediated sources of information in terms of accessibility, evaluation and as a source for cross-checking information?

4. What are the differences between groups and individuals who have varying issue positions and roles in the controversy?

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY: COMMUNITY AND ISSUE SELECTION

The selection of the community within which this study was completed and the selection of the issue which formed the context for the information environment were intricately related. Both variables had direct impacts upon the findings of this project. There were two potential approaches to this selection process: 1) to first select an issue type to be studied and then locate a community where such an issue was present, or 2) to select a group of communities which were easily accessible for data collection and then isolate a relevant issue in one of those communities. The second approach was selected as the most appropriate for several reasons. First, the work of Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) suggested that the structure and complexity of a community impacts directly upon the nature of the information environment while the nature of a particular issue is substantially less significant in defining the information environment. The issue itself will, in part, determine who in the community will be actively involved in issue resolution, but there is little evidence to suggest that different issues in and of themselves are significant. Second, constraints on data gathering made it imperative that the study be done in a community easily accessible to the researcher.

In the early stages of project formulation a set of four criteria were established which delineated necessary community characteristics. First, since one of the major research concerns was to explore the differential dependence on media types by community influentials, it was deemed



necessary that the community under study have local outlets for each of the major media types. The crucial characteristic was the presence of a local television station. This dictated that the community be relatively large, since only such communities could economically support a television station.

Second, the community had to be sufficiently small to allow for the reasonable possibility that all or most community influentials could be located and interviewed in a relatively short period of time. Bobrow (1974) argued that the study of a political system, as it relates to the mass media, requires that the system involved be "small or homogeneous and accessible" (118). It was decided that large metropolitan areas would present such a large range of people who could be considered influential on a particular issue that the location of and accessibility to the influentials would be impractical considering the limited resources available to the researcher. Smaller communities were expected to have a smaller and more accessible group of influentials. The third criteria was related to accessibility as well; the community under study had to be close enough for the researcher to have easy access to the community with a minimum of travel time and expense.

Fourth, the community had to be relatively isolated from major metropolitan areas. This criteria would assure that news coverage on the issue in question would come predominantly from the locally based news media. The analysis would become significantly more complex in communities which received media coverage from outside the community as well as from within. Further, the structural characteristics of communities close to major metropolitan areas are much more complex than more isolated

communities. Such communities may be internally homogeneous but surrounded by heterogeneous conditions due to the influence of the total metropolitan area. While such communities are worthy of study, the complex conditions found there add too many confounding variables in this early stage of research.

The final community selection criteria was the presence of an issue within the community which met the necessary requirements for the study. This criterion was the final determining factor in the selection of the community to be studied. A detailed discussion of the issue will come later in this chapter.

Two communities were isolated through application of the first four criteria. Both cities had all three of the major media outlets; both were relatively small and isolated from major metropolitan areas; and both were within relatively easy driving distance. The final selection was made through a two-step process. Back issues from the daily newspaper in each community were studied to isolate potentially useful issues. With a list of issues from each community, interviews were conducted with the editor of each of the newspapers and with the station managers of the local television stations. The interviews were of an unstructured nature during which each of the potential issues were discussed in depth. From these interviews it was determined that the issue in Lima, Ohio, best met the needs of the project.

#### COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS:

Lima is situated in Northwest Ohio along a major interstate highway. The city proper had a population of 47,500 in 1979, though the population had declined slightly since that time. The metropolitan area

had a population of 87,600 and Allen County had a total population of over 100,000, again using 1979 figures. Lima was the county seat of Allen County and was the hub of a ten county area which was largely rural in nature. The city had a mayoral form of government with a seven person city council. The county was governed by three elected county commissioners.

The metropolitan area demonstrated a diversity which is not atypical of cities of approximately the same size. Its transportation needs were served by Amtrack, Conrail and several commercial railroad companies, as well as the Greyhound Bus Line. Allen County had a small airport located outside Lima. The city had 35 elementary and secondary schools, as well as a branch campus of The Ohio State University, two technical colleges, two beauty schools and a school for the retarded. Two four year private colleges were located near the community. The community also had over 120 churches and well over 2,000 private businesses, including two major auto manufacturers and a major oil refinery.

These characteristics suggest that Lima can be considered as a heterogeneous community by the standards set by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980). Their index of community pluralism was based on five characteristics: 1. population, 2. number of businesses, 3. number of voluntary groups, 4. number of churches and 5. number of schools and educational centers (40). All five of those characteristics of a heterogeneous environment suggest a mix of people with different interests, goals and desires. From those characteristics, they developed an index of pluralism from the 19 communities which had been studied. While the scale cannot be directly replicated, it is clear that Lima would be very

high on the pluralism scale. Table 1 displays a comparison between Lima and the three most pluralistic communities in the Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien study. Lima compared very favorably to those communities in all respects. The high level of pluralism in Lima suggests that it is safe to assume a pluralistic model in this study.

#### MEDIA CHARACTERISTICS:

The community had a relatively diverse selection of media. At the time of data collection there was one daily newspaper, one local commercial television station, a public television station which served the area though originating from another community, a community-wide cable television outlet which served over 60% of the community, 6 radio stations and several weekly shoppers. The cable facilities were somewhat antiquated, providing the capability for only 12 channels of programming and no interactive capabilities. The cable company itself did no programming. Due to this lack of locally originating programming, the role of cable in the information environment was discounted. The community shoppers provided little or no local news either, so their role in the study was discounted as well. The public television station did do one half-hour documentary on the issue in question but it was aired several years before data collection. For all practical purposes, regular coverage of the issue was non-existent from this source; it was also excluded from consideration.

The remaining media sources did play a major role in the controversy under study and, therefore, it is important to explore briefly the specific characteristics of those media sources. The newspaper presented the most complex situation and one that may have had some effect on the

TABLE 1

Comparison of Community Characteristics Between Three Highly  
Pluralistic Communities in the Tichenor, Donohue and Olien  
Study and Lima, Ohio

	Population	Voluntary Groups	Churches	Schools	Business	Rank on Pluralism
Community X	39,700	47	40	34	1,848	17*
Community Y	100,500	174	146	76	3,311	19
Community Z	53,800	44	67	46	2,793	18
Lima	87,600**	53	120	41	2,000+	

\* Tichenor, et al., (1980) constructed their index by assigning a rank position on each characteristic for each community. The five rank scores were summed to provide an overall pluralism score. The highest pluralism rank was 19.

\*\* Following the procedures laid out by Tichenor, et al., population was assessed through figures reported by the community. The remaining characteristics were derived from the telephone directory.

evaluation of the coverage given to the issue in question. While responsibility for local news resides with the editor, editorial material is controlled by the parent company, the Freedom Newspaper chain. This relatively small chain was owned by a family who was strongly Libertarian in its political leanings. Though Lima was a relatively conservative community politically, the Libertarian positions of the chain were viewed as excessive to the vast majority of the subjects interviewed. This political orientation had led to strong editorial opposition to big government, the use of government funds in local projects and a strong stand for individual rights. The impact of this orientation will be discussed at greater length below.

The television station was owned by the Toledo Blade newspaper. There seemed to be no undue influence on the station practices by the owners as it related to the issue under study; if there was some influence it was not mentioned by any of the influentials or media professionals interviewed. The Blade in the past had taken direct action in support of the construction of a new library in Lima. The newspaper had actively opposed a new library on the grounds that government funding would be used in its construction. Since there were no other print media available to put forward the alternative position, the Toledo based newspaper put out a special edition of the newspaper for Lima, presenting a strong case for the library. This act left a favorable image with many influentials interviewed which had carried over to a generally favorable impression of the television station.

All the radio stations were owned by corporations outside the Lima area. There were no indications of positive or negative reactions to the

parent companies. One AM-FM combination was owned by a group of Lima businessmen, many of whom were among the most active in the issue in question, until about a year before data collection. The contact between these men and the station's personnel had remained strong. The station managers for both dominant AM-FM combinations in Lima were actively involved in the issue and had been since its outset.

This brief discussion of the characteristics of the community should provide a general context within which the selected issue had functioned. The next section will discuss the issue itself and the selection procedures used in its isolation.

#### ISSUE SELECTION:

As noted earlier, since community selection took precedence over the location of an appropriate issue, issue selection was at the mercy of circumstance. Nonetheless, there were four necessary conditions which any issue had to meet for selection. First, the issue had to generate a noticeable amount of conflict within the community. Conflict was necessary condition in this study because, according to Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) conflict "may be a necessary process for mass diffusion of information" (18). According to the theory which underlies this research, conflict among groups in a community enhances the likelihood of media coverage; it also increases the likelihood that groups will seek out a wider audience to gain increased legitimacy for their positions. Since this study sought to assess the relationship between mediated and non-mediated sources of information, a high conflict issue enhances the information flow through all available channels. This helped to assure that information flow was maximized from all sources. The differences

found across information sources, then, were more likely to be grounded in the community influential's own accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking behaviors than in source related restraints.

The second selection condition required that the issue have at least two definable alternative positions backed by community groups- Here again, such a situation enhanced media coverage. Tichenor, et al., (1980) argued that the "mass media draw attention to organized activity that is already under way" (19). Further, it is reasonable to argue that the presence of active groups with opposing positions is a necessary condition for public airing of controversy. Polsby (1980) argued that community decisions tend to be made by groups in isolation unless those group decisions infringe upon the interests of other community groups. When such an infringement occurs, the issue will move from the private to the public realm.

The third condition for issue selection required that the issue entail public discussion and public resolution. The fourth condition required that the issue have received noticeable media attention. These four selection conditions all strove to increase the likelihood of media involvement in the issue. The conditions also attempted to insure an information rich environment. Such an information environment clearly influenced the nature of the results of this study, but it also allowed for some control over variance in the amount of information transmitted by the media sources.

Selection procedures were briefly discussed earlier in this chapter but further elaboration may be useful. One issue from each of the competing locations seemed to have potential. These issues were isolated



by reviewing each of the two community newspapers. The major determining factors in this initial stage were the presence of an active conflict resolution process at the time and the appearance of disagreement in the community over the nature of the resolution. During the interviews with media professionals in each community, each was asked about the level of conflict surrounding the issue, whether there were active groups with alternative positions on the issue, and whether the issue was public in nature and had received media coverage. The issue in Lima most closely met all four conditions.

#### ISSUE DESCRIPTION:

The issue itself was on the surface a very simple and straight forward one, but the resolution had been excruciatingly complex and convoluted for the community. It had at the time of data collection not been resolved. The basic question was whether Lima should build a memorial civic center in the central city. The public airing of this question had been prominent in the community for at least three years. Before discussing the present state of the issue and the alternative issue positions, some background on the issue may be useful.

The controversy surrounding the proposed civic center found its origins in the early 1960's. As with many communities of the size of Lima and larger, the suburban areas surrounding Lima began to grow and population concentrations shifted to the periphery of the community. At the same time little or no action was taken to maintain the vitality of the central shopping area. Two of the major department stores in the downtown area were unable to find additional space to expand their facilities. One of the influentials interviewed implied that several

of the downtown businessmen who owned competing department stores blocked this attempt to expand in order to protect their own interests in the downtown. Ultimately, those two department stores moved to a mall on the outside of Lima, which precipitated the decline of the central shopping district. Even though the downtown area was in decline, the city administration refused to apply for the readily available model cities and urban renewal monies during the 1960's. Many of the downtown office buildings became vacant and a number of those properties were completely abandoned. Property owners continued to let those properties decay, seeing no financial benefit in investing money to keep them in repair. This state of disrepair led to a substantial reduction in consumer traffic due to easier accessibility and greater selection of stores at the mall.

In the early 1970's, a publicly supported, non-profit organization was formed under the name of Community Urban Redevelopment for Lima and Allen County (CURLAC). CURLAC developed a multifaceted plan for the redevelopment of the nine block downtown area, including a new street scape, increased off-street parking, restoration of storefronts and renovation of buildings into desirable residential units. The organization also enticed Blue Cross-Blue Shield to construct its Northern Ohio branch office in the downtown area. It was also proposed that a civic center complex, a 150 room hotel and a recreational facility be built. At the time of data collection, the street scape had been completed and parking facilities had been increased. Redevelopment had been stalled at that point. It was the feeling of those in support of the construction that the civic center would be a catalyst which was necessary to spur

on the remaining redevelopment projects. Without the civic center, many felt that downtown redevelopment would be stalled indefinitely.

The civic center itself was to cost somewhat over \$6.2 million, with the city and county providing 1 million each and the private sector providing the remainder. The city also expected to receive at least \$1.3 million from federal funds, but were unable to meet the requirements for such funding. At the time of data collection, the Civic Center Board of Trustees was short some \$1.3 million, though the exact figure was disputed by different sources. The center was to include a 1,800 fixed seat auditorium and a multipurpose facility. It was hoped by its proponents that a major hotel chain would build next to the center on its completion.

Support for the civic center had come from two major groups, CURLAC and the Town Square Memorial Civic Center Board of Trustees. Two other groups had been active in the past, particularly during a city referendum on the civic center, but were less active at the time of data collection. The mayor and his staff, a majority of the city council and several, though not all, of the county commissioners were also in support of the construction. The reasons behind this support were varied, though generally related. The predominant reason for support related to the perceived necessity to redevelop the downtown area either for economic or aesthetic reasons; other reasons included civic pride, the necessity for a place to bring people together and the necessity for a place where cultural events could be held. Most, though not all, of the active supporters were drawn from the business and professional community in Lima.

The active opposition to the civic center had appeared under the name of several groups including Citizens for a Choice on the Civic Center, Allen County Preservation Association, and the Committee to Save Memorial Hall, among others. While the group designations have changed, the core group of people had remained basically the same. The opposition was and had been throughout the controversy surprisingly small, rarely numbering over 15 or 20, and many times smaller. Regardless of their size, the opposition members had been very successful in delaying the project for over three years. Delayed was the crucial term, though. They had been unable to muster enough community support to kill the project; but the delaying tactics had been effective to the point where some of the supporters had begun to question whether inflation would take such a toll that the construction money would simply no longer be available to complete the project.

This small group of people was tied together through an eclectic range of reasons for its opposition to the civic center. One of the dominant strains of opposition had to do with the perception held by some of the group that the supporters of the civic center were strongly motivated by self interest and not for the good of the "average person." While there were slight variations in this theme, the group believed that the civic center was a means of saving the investments of property owners in the downtown area through the use of tax monies to build and maintain the facility. The opposition characterized themselves as struggling against the self-serving interests of the rich and powerful. There was a firm belief among some of the opposition that they were standing up for the rights of the average citizen who did not need nor

want a facility of this sort but who had to bare the brunt of the civic center's construction through taxes.

A second motivation for opposition arose out of a desire for preservation of old buildings. The scenario was that Lima had a number of old but structurally sound and fireproof buildings, including an old performing arts center. Several members of the group in opposition to the civic center were disturbed by what they perceived to be an "if its old tear it down and build something new" mentality. They saw the construction of the civic center as an obvious example of this mentality. To some extent this concern had its effect, for, as a compromise move, some monies ear-marked for the civic center had been reallocated for partial refurbishing of Memorial Hall.

A third source of opposition came from people living outside of Lima in the rural areas of Allen County. The motivating factor here stemmed from the fact that county monies were being used in the civic center project, both for construction and maintenance of the facility after completion (the county, not the city, would own and maintain it). It was the feeling among some that this money should be used for projects which would be more directly beneficial to county residents, such as bridge repair and the like. There was a feeling that the civic center at its present location would not be used by county residents and would benefit only the city. Further, they felt, as did the Lima based opposition, that the civic center would not aid in the redevelopment of the downtown area, nor would it provide an increased tax base for both Lima and Allen County as had been argued by the supporters of the civic center.

The opposition was an odd mixture of personalities and orientations held together primarily by their opposition to the civic center. It seems valid to suggest that those people were on the periphery of Lima society, at least in comparison to the proponents of the civic center. This was supported by comments from the media professionals as well as comments from civic center supporters. In a number of cases, the opposition's motivations were characterized as jealousy over the success both economically and socially, of those in support of construction. In essence, the opposition was isolated from the mainstream of Lima society and not linked with the rather strong interpersonal network which existed among the supporters. This situation provided an ideal opportunity to explore the media dependence of those two groups, each with a quite different set of connections with the community. It might also be noted that this situation was quite consistent with Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976). Clearly, the interpersonal network between the two major factions was fragmented at best. A relatively high dependence on media sources for information might reasonably be expected.

#### THE MEDIA'S ROLE IN COVERING THE ISSUE:

Each of the media sources had approached the civic center issue in a slightly different fashion. The newspaper had taken various editorial stands against certain aspects of the civic center issue which were perceived by the parent corporation as inconsistent with the Libertarian orientation it held. In particular, the newspaper had opposed the use of federal funds in the construction of the civic center, as well as editorializing against the use of eminent domain to gain property in the proposed site of the civic center. The day-to-day coverage of the

issue was extensive and seemed to have been relatively balanced. Those generalizations were based on a survey of the last three years of the newspaper coverage, as well as an extended discussion with the editor. They were also supported by most of the influentials interviewed, though the supporters of the civic center generally felt that the opposition received more coverage than it warranted, while the opposition felt that the supporters received relatively more coverage than they warranted.

The television station and the two AM-FM combination radio stations editorialized in favor of the civic center on several occasions. In general, the feeling among most people interviewed was that both television and radio gave relatively extensive coverage of the issue when warranted. Overall, the reaction to the coverage of the issue in those sources was similar to that relating to the newspaper; each side felt the other side was receiving relatively more coverage than it deserved. There was one situation which tended to encourage balanced coverage in the broadcast media. Several years ago the opposition brought a Fairness Doctrine case against the television and radio stations based on the premise that the opposition opinion was being blacked out by those sources. Both the television and radio stations reacted quickly and increased coverage of the opposition substantially. Those opposed to the civic center were somewhat more favorably disposed to those media sources after the change, though by no means were they totally satisfied.

There was a relatively consistent distrust of the media's role in this issue among some of the opposition. They felt that none of the media had given the opposition opinions a fair airing and that distortion

was common in all media sources. Others in the opposition, though, expressed a somewhat more ambivalent reaction. The distrust that was expressed seemed to find its origins in the feeling that the media were largely an arm of the supporters of the civic center and were unwilling to present the accurate and elaborated position of the opposition. There may be some justification in this position if one attributes validity to Tuchman's (1974) elaboration of the "reflection hypothesis" in that the media in a social system tend to reflect the goals, values and desires of the powerful in that society.

Among many of the supporters of the civic center there seemed to be an ambivalence towards all the media sources. While expressed in a number of ways during the personal interviews, the ambivalence seemed to arise from a tension between the perceived right of the opposition to have access to the media as a forum for presentation of its position, and the feeling that access was dysfunctional to the community due to the delays in the construction brought about by the opposition. While that ambivalence was articulated, the underlying current was clearly an irritation with the media for continuing to provide coverage to the opposition.

#### STATE OF THE CONTROVERSY DURING DATA GATHERING:

During the period of data collection, the issue was prominent in the media due to a series of actions by all parties involved. Two legal cases were filed by the opposition in a further attempt to delay demolition of a building at the proposed civic center site owned by one of the opposition. The county commissioners, after a somewhat convoluted procedure which extended over a week and one half, let the contract



for demolition of all the surrounding buildings. Those buildings were subsequently demolished. Questions were also raised about the amount of money for the construction of the civic center available at the time. These events were carried by all the media and were the topic of interpersonal discussions among the principles in the issue.

This chapter has attempted to establish the context within which the study was completed. The information presented here is important in understanding and interpreting the findings presented later in this report and will be referred to again in the final chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY: DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

#### POPULATION SELECTION:

The population under study was defined as the community influentials in Lima, Ohio, who were actively involved in the civic center controversy. Active involvement was the key definitional characteristic based on Polsby's (1963) articulation of the relationship between the assumptions of pluralism and the assessment of community power or influence. In essence, influence is an active process, not a static attribute. Thus, the selection of community influentials was based on assessments of active participation using the key informant technique (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1972).

The selection process preceded in two steps. An initial list of 29 influentials was collected during interviews with media professionals and from newspaper articles relating to the civic center. The criterion used in this initial selection was active involvement in the issue either through active participation in one of the involved groups or active involvement in the issue through direct participation in the actual decision making process.

Other influentials were isolated through the use of the snow-ball technique. During the interview process each influential was asked to name other people in the community who were active in the civic center controversy. To reduce redundancy influentials were asked: "Are there any people you know of who have been active in this issue but are not highly visible to someone from outside the community?" The assumption was made that the initial stage of selection had isolated the

central figures in the issue; the second stage was designed to isolate the behind-the-scenes participants. Through a combination of both steps, a total of 70 community influentials were located.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION:

A two-part questionnaire was constructed to address the research questions discussed in chapter 1. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 55 items, the first 7 questions were general media use and attention items and the remainder were Likert-type items with a seven point response scale (see Appendix B for a complete text of the questionnaire). Since this part of the questionnaire was to be self-administered by the influentials, a restatement of the research purpose and instructions for completion of the questionnaire was also included.

The second part of the questionnaire, which was administered to each subject by the researcher, consisted of four open-ended questions relating to the influential's attitudes and opinions about the controversy, Likert-type items tapping the same attitudes and opinions, an opinion leader index based on the scale developed by Trodahl and VanDam (1964), several indices of community participation, and various demographic items.

Data collection followed a multi-step process. The initial contact with the subjects isolated early in the data gathering procedures was made by mail through a letter of introduction describing the nature of the project and what was required for participation in the study. In a discussion of procedures for field research, Schatzman and Strauss (1973) discussed the importance of this initial contact. Stressing the importance of *entré*, they suggested the development of a short written

statement (no longer than one or two pages) which could be used either in person or through the mail. Such a procedure, they argued, has several advantages. First, the construction of such a statement forces the researcher to get his "story line" straight. Second, a short written statement may facilitate project explanation to potential subjects when initial contacts are extremely short or hurried. Finally, such a statement can be used in a number of different situations including phone contacts, written contacts and personal meetings.

This approach for gaining access to subjects seemed to be a useful one. It might be worth noting the differential impact of the initial contact made by mail and by phone. In this study, there was no difference in refusal rate between the two approaches. The difference in the two approaches seemed to be with the potential subject's understanding of the nature of the project. When letters were followed up with phone calls asking the subject to participate, the subject's understanding of the project and its requirements was high. Agreement, if it was given, came in the first 1 or 2 minutes of the conversation. When the initial contact was made by phone there was more confusion about the project even though basically the same text was given. This experience suggests that gaining agreement to participate in this type of research is much easier if subjects are contacted in advance through the mail.

Once agreement to participate was gained, a time and place was established to personally deliver the self-administered part of the questionnaire. Where possible, the questionnaire was delivered directly into the hands of the respondent. If this was not possible, the questionnaire was generally left with a secretary or someone who would

deliver the questionnaire to the respondent. At this time a date and time was established for the follow-up personal interview. In eight cases the respondent requested that the questionnaire be mailed as opposed to hand delivered; this request was honored in all cases. Such an approach was less than ideal. Five of the eight respondents who received mailed questionnaires ultimately refused to complete the questionnaire. The strength of hand delivery appeared to be due to the reinforcing effect on the behavioral commitment given by the subject over the phone. To reinforce this point, no one who received a hand delivered questionnaire refused to complete it.

Follow-up interviews were completed at the offices or homes of the subjects. In five cases, personal interviews were impossible to schedule in person due to the schedules of those involved. These interviews were completed by phone. The interviews varied greatly in length, ranging from a low of 15 minutes to a high of 2½ hours. The average length was approximately 30 minutes. As well as completing the second part of the questionnaire, the self-administered questionnaire was reviewed to assure that it was properly completed and any further questions about the project from the subject were addressed.

The data collection process extended over a four week period, though the actual time on site was only 10 days. All interviews were completed in Lima. A total of 42 interviews were completed from the total of 70 influentials in the population; the completion rate was 60%. Seventy four percent of the population was contacted with 80% of those contacted completing the interview process.

#### OPERATIONAL MEASURES:

A series of measures were included in this study which relate to the information environment being analyzed. The next section of this chapter will discuss the operational definitions of each and present information relating to the nature of the indices constructed from specific questionnaire items.

#### MEDIA DEPENDENCE:

Media dependence was one of the key constructs in this study. To assess media dependence a series of indices were constructed to measure the various components discussed in chapter 1. Accessibility to sources of information was one of the key components of the dependence model presented here and was the dominant factor in the Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur model. Chaffee (1979) has also argued that accessibility and the likelihood that a source will contain relevant information are the major determinants of the sources a person will consult for information (1). The issue selection procedures have provided rough controls for variance in the likelihood that a source will contain relevant information. Primary emphasis was placed on the influential's access to specific sources.

#### EXPOSURE AND ATTENTION:

Accessibility can be operationally defined in a number of different ways. Two measures of accessibility were included in this study; the first was a self-report measure of exposure to local newspaper, local television news and local radio news. No comparable measure was available for the interpersonal network. Each subject was asked to report the number of days during an average week he/she read the newspaper,

watched the local television news and heard the local news on radio. Respondents were also asked to respond to Likert-type items measuring the amount of attention paid to local news stories from each of these sources on a 7 point scale ranging from "very close attention" to "no attention." Those items were included to control for differential attention to local news, the dominant consideration in this study.

The exposure and attention measures constructed in this fashion were not totally ideal measures for the issue specific nature of this study. While exposure and attention items could have been constructed based on exposure to information about the civic center, this was deemed inappropriate. Such items would tap the likelihood that a media source would regularly contain civic center related information, not the accessibility of a subject to the media source. A further complicating factor was the fact that media coverage of the civic center was based on the specific situation of the issue resolution at the time of data collection. It was difficult to predict when civic center related activities would occur. The more general exposure and attention measures provided an index of local news consumption patterns, which was more directly related to accessibility.

#### ISSUE ACCESSIBILITY:

The second measure of accessibility was based on the subject's perception of accessibility to information from the newspaper, television, radio and his/her interpersonal contacts. Subjects were asked to report the likelihood that they had heard about actions of a group with a similar position on the civic center, the likelihood of hearing about the actions of a group with an alternative position, the likelihood

of hearing about the attitudes and opinions of other people involved in the issue, and the likelihood of hearing about new and unfamiliar information about the civic center on a 7 point Likert-type scale ranging from "very likely" to "not likely" for each source of information.

The four information types were developed to represent general types of information available through any of the information sources. Hearing about the actions of groups with similar and with different positions on the civic center were selected based on two factors. First, according to Tichenor, et al. (1980), group activity is a key facet of the mass dissemination of information. Second, Tichenor, et al., posited that in a high conflict situation conflicting groups must monitor the activities of other groups in the community so that they may develop appropriate strategies to react to those actions. The attitudes and opinions item was selected based on the assumption that influentials not only monitor group activity but also have an interest in the public and private statements of individuals involved in the issue. Further, a few influentials tend to become spokespersons for their groups and their attitudes and opinions tend to be of interest to others. The fourth information type measured--information that was new and unfamiliar--was selected based on the research of Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) which suggested that influentials are most interested in staying current with the changing situation in order to plan appropriate strategies.

From these items an issue accessibility index was constructed for each source by summing the responses for each subject and dividing by the number of items to maintain the integrity of the seven point scale.



Cronbach's alpha was calculated on the issue accessibility scales for each information source. In each case, the new and unfamiliar information items reduced the reliability and was dropped from the index. Newspaper accessibility provided the lowest reliability coefficient of .82 followed by television with a .87 and radio with a .90.

#### EVALUATION:

Evaluation was the second major component of the media dependence model presented in the first chapter. The evaluation component was operationally defined through three items: thoroughness of the information presented by a source, accuracy of the information, and biasedness of the information. Thoroughness was defined for the subjects as the likelihood that a source had provided all the information available on the civic center issue. Accuracy was defined as the likelihood that a source had provided information which was correct and accurate. Biasedness was defined as the likelihood that a source provided information that advocated one position over another. Thoroughness and accuracy were selected as measures of evaluation based on subject comments reported by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980). They found that one of the major criticisms of the media made by influential participants in an issue under study was that the media were generally unable to get all the facts straight and that the media, by underplaying important aspects of the issue, tended not to provide the total picture. Biasedness was included as the third item based on evidence provided by Dyer and Nayman (1977) that news preferences were based in part on the perceived bias of the available media source.

The three items were constructed through the use of Likert-type items using a 7 point scale ranging from "very" to "not" thorough, accurate and biased. Evaluation scales for the newspaper, television, radio, and interpersonal discussion were developed in the same manner as the issue accessibility scales. Cronbach's alpha was also computed for each of those scales. The reliability coefficients were extremely high for each scale with radio evaluation providing the lowest (.86) followed by newspaper (.87), television (.88), and interpersonal discussion (.96).

#### CROSS-CHECKING:

The third component of the dependence model was cross-checking behaviors among information sources. This measure was based on thirteen questionnaire items which tapped the likelihood that a subject would cross-check or verify information received from one source with the remaining sources. As an example, subjects were asked "If you were to receive new information about the civic center from the newspaper, how likely is it that you would attempt to verify that information by: watching the local television news, listening to the local radio news, and asking someone you know about the information" (see questions 19, 20, 21, and 22 in Appendix B for the wording of all cross-checking items). The responses were all seven point scales ranging from "very likely" to "not likely."

A cross-checking index was constructed for each of the four sources in the following manner. Pearson Product Moment correlations were calculated for the three items relating to cross-checking with a particular source. The correlation coefficients were so high in all cases that it was apparent that the items measured the likelihood of

cross-checking information with a particular source regardless of the original source of that information. Based on those correlations, four indices of cross-checking were constructed by summing across the items which measured cross-checking with a specific source and divided by the number of items. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were startlingly high with the lowest for cross-checking with radio at a .88, followed by cross-checking with television (.92), cross-checking with newspaper (.94) and cross-checking with other people (.99).

#### INFORMATION SALIENCE:

While this study was constructed to ensure a high level of salience among the subjects, a series of four items were included to verify this assumption and to control for differential salience levels. Those four items were drawn from the four types of information used as measures of issue accessibility. While the items dealt with information salience, they can easily be translated into an issue salience index under the reasonable assumption that if a subject finds the information surrounding the civic center salient, he/she should find the civic center itself a salient issue. Subjects were asked "How important has it been for you to keep up with the activities of groups which hold a different or opposing position to yours," and so on. The salience index was constructed in the same manner as those discussed earlier. The reliability, based again on Cronbach's alpha, was .78.

#### ISSUE POSITION:

Issue position of most subjects was determined in two ways. First, in the personal interview, subjects were asked to relate their feelings about the construction of the civic center in an open-ended form. From

those responses a determination was made by the researcher as to whether the subject was in support of the construction, undecided or ambivalent about the construction, or opposed to the construction. After the subject completed his/her comments he/she was presented with that determination for verification. Second, in those cases where the subject belonged to a group active in the controversy, the group's position was matched with the subject's statement of position. In all cases but one the public position of the group and the stated position of the influential matched. In the one case where there was no match, the subject noted that over the last year his position had shifted from opposition to ambivalence. In the population interviewed, 32 subjects were staunchly in support of construction, 6 were staunchly in opposition to the construction and 4 were ambivalent. Three of the four who professed ambivalence were present or past county commissioners who supported the construction based on commitments made by earlier commissioners but have personal reservations about the project.

#### COMMUNITY AND ISSUE-RELATED PARTICIPATION

Indices of community and issue-related participation were used as rough indicators of the extent of the subject's interpersonal network of communication within the community. These indices were used as measures of potential accessibility to interpersonal sources of information in the same fashion as exposure measures were used to assess accessibility to media sources. Neither of these measures, community and issue participation, were as precise as the exposure measures, but were viewed as potential alternatives to a full-blown tracing of each subject's interpersonal network.

Community participation measured the amount and intensity of activity in community groups and was based on a social participation scale developed by Chapin (1955). The measurement procedure asked the subject to list all the local organizations in which he/she held membership at the time of the interview. The subject was also asked to note for each organization whether he/she attended any of the group's functions (exact amount of attendance has not been shown to discriminate any better than the simple yes/no categories of attend or not attend), whether he/she made financial contributions, whether he/she held any positions on committees in the group and whether he/she held any offices. Each of those participation characteristics were assigned a value ranging from 1 for membership through 5 for holding an office in the group. The scale was constructed by summing across all mentions, with the final scale values ranging from 6 to 65. The reliability of this procedure in the past has ranged between .89 and .95.

It should be noted that neither of these measures was wholly adequate. Both measure the potential for interpersonal contact relating to the civic center rather than the frequency of issue-related interaction. Further, neither measure precisely defines the information network in any detail. While an influential may have regular contacts relating to the civic center, those contacts may not produce extensive information exchange. A full-blown network analysis would be ideal, but impractical. The two measures used here were less precise but nonetheless addressed the level of potential contact.

OPINION LEADER STATUS:

The opinion leadership index was also used as a measure of accessibility to the interpersonal network. The index was based on the scale developed by Trodahl and VanDam (1965). Modifications were made in the original scale to specify opinion leadership on the civic center as opposed to a more general scale articulated by Trodahl and VanDam. The scale consisted of four items: number of people who asked the subject's opinion on the civic center, whether the subject perceived that others depended on his/her judgement on the civic center, whether the subject was more or less likely to be asked his/her opinion as compared to friends and whether it was important for the subject to be considered as a person whose opinions were well founded. The scale was constructed by summing across the items.

#### DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS:

A series of demographic indicators were also included in the questionnaire. Along with the standard occupation, education, age and income items, a cosmopolite-localite measure was included. This measure was based on the number of cities the subject had resided in since he/she was 18 years old. A measure of political participation was also included. Since the civic center was a political issue in Lima and many of the decisions about its construction were made by elected officials, the ability to discriminate among such officials and other participants was deemed as potentially significant.

#### ANALYSIS PROCEDURES:

One of the basic analysis issues dealt with whether the respondents should be considered a population or a sample. In some respects, as influentials in a specific community and active in a specific and

somewhat idiosyncratic issue, the respondents were best considered as a population. There were no clear indications that those influentials were representative of influentials in other communities active in other issues. On the other hand, it could be argued that the influentials were representative of a larger group of high information seekers. For the purposes of the following analyses, the subjects in this study were treated as a sample to allow for the use of statistical procedures. It was deemed important to have some gauge of measurement error in assessing relationships and differences between and among the indices and subjects. In making this decision, certain assumptions underlying the statistics were violated. First, the statistical procedures used in the analyses assumed that the subjects were a sample of a larger population. As noted earlier, this may have been problematic. Second, the subjects were not randomly selected nor was the community. This clearly violated another assumption of the statistics. The presentation of statistical analyses should be evaluated within those limitations and any generalizations arising from those analyses must be somewhat problematic.

There were two types of research questions addressed in this study: relationship questions and difference questions. The relationship questions were addressed through the use of Pearson Product Moment correlations and partial correlation procedures. Multiple regression procedures were also used in some cases to further clarify the nature of certain relationships. Difference questions were addressed through the use of paired t-tests and one way analysis of variance.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

R1. What are the relationships between and among the information accessibility, source evaluation and cross-checking behaviors?

#### CORRELATIONS AMONG SOURCES:

##### ACCESSIBILITY:

To address this research question a series of analytical approaches were used. The first step was to explore the relationships between and among the four information sources within each of the major components of the dependence model: accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking. Pearson Product Moment correlations were calculated among the four sources for each of those components. Confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level were also computed. The issue accessibility matrix (see Table 2) indicated a strong correlation between perceived issue accessibility from television and radio ( $r=.70, .83/.50$ ). Perceived issue accessibility from the newspaper and from television were also strongly correlated ( $r=.40, .63/.10$ ) though not as strongly related as radio and television. Accessibility from the newspaper and from radio, though, were not significantly correlated ( $r=.12, .40/-.19$ ). The relationship between mediated and non-mediated sources was weak. Issue accessibility to television information was not correlated with issue accessibility to information from interpersonal sources. A weak negative correlation existed between newspaper and interpersonal issue accessibility ( $r=-.14, -.42/.17$ ). The strongest correlation between a mediated and the non-mediated sources existed between radio and interpersonal sources ( $r=.20, .47/-.11$ ). While this relationship is not strong, it



TABLE 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlations Among Perceived  
Issue Accessibility of Information from Newspaper,  
Television, Radio and Interpersonal Contacts

	Newspaper	Television	Radio	Interpersonal
Newspaper	X			
Television	.40	X		
Radio	.12	.70	X	
Interpersonal	-.14	.06	.20	X

TABLE 3

Pearson Product Moment Correlations Among Evaluation  
of Information from Newspaper, Television, Radio and  
Interpersonal Contacts

	Newspaper	Television	Radio	Interpersonal
Newspaper	X			
Television	.78	X		
Radio	.35	.41	X	
Interpersonal	.10	.01	.25	X

suggested a weak relationship between radio and interpersonal sources which was sustained through other analyses.

#### EVALUATION:

The correlations between newspaper, television, radio and interpersonal sources for the evaluation component, while differing slightly from the issue accessibility results, showed a similar pattern (see Table 3). The evaluation of the newspaper and of television correlated at a strong .78 (.88/.62). Evaluation of television and radio, and newspaper and radio were moderately correlated with coefficients of .41 (.63/.12) and .35 (.59/.05) respectively. As with accessibility, the evaluation of information from the newspaper and from television were not correlated with the evaluation of information from interpersonal sources. Again, as with issue accessibility, evaluation of information broadcast by radio was weakly correlated with the evaluation of information from interpersonal sources ( $r = .25, .51 / -.05$ ).

#### CROSS-CHECKING:

The third correlation matrix in this set of analyses provided correlations among cross-checking indices for the newspaper, television, radio and interpersonal contacts (see Table 4). This matrix duplicated the relationships presented in the evaluation correlations though the correlations were somewhat stronger. The cross-checking of information through the newspaper correlated strongly with cross-checking through television ( $r = .83, .99 / .70$ ). Cross-checking through television and through radio were also strongly correlated ( $r = .68, .81 / .47$ ) as were cross-checking through the newspaper and through radio ( $r = .58, .75 / .34$ ). Neither cross-checking through the newspaper nor through television were

TABLE 4

Pearson Product Moment Correlations Among Cross-Checking  
Indices for Newspaper, Television, Radio and Interpersonal  
Contacts

	Newspaper	Television	Radio	Interpersonal
Newspaper	X			
Television	.83	X		
Radio	.58	.68	X	
Interpersonal	.00	.06	.32	X

correlated with cross-checking through interpersonal sources, though cross-checking through radio was moderately correlated with cross-checking through interpersonal sources ( $r=.32, .56/.02$ ).

All three of these correlation matrices demonstrated a similar pattern among the information sources, with only slight variation. For evaluation and cross-checking the newspaper and television were strongly correlated (.78 and .83 respectively). Television and radio were strongly correlated on both indices as well, with a .41 for evaluation and a .68 for cross-checking. The correlation between the newspaper and radio was the weakest among the relationships between mediated sources with a .35 for evaluation and a .58 for cross-checking. For evaluation and cross-checking, then, television and the newspaper were most strongly related followed by television and radio, with the weakest relation occurring between radio and newspaper. This weak relation between the newspaper and radio was duplicated for issue accessibility, though radio and television appeared to be more similarly accessible than television and newspaper.

One of the more intriguing findings was the consistent lack of relationship between the mediated sources and interpersonal contacts. Neither the newspaper nor television significantly correlated with interpersonal contacts on any of the three matrices. On the other hand, radio correlated, albeit weakly, with interpersonal contact on all three components of the media dependence construct.

#### EXPOSURE AND ATTENTION:

As noted in the previous chapter, two other accessibility measures were included for newspaper, television and radio. Correlations were

calculated among those sources for both exposure to local news and attention to local news. There were no significant correlations among the mediated sources of information (see Table 5) but with the attention measures all three sources were strongly correlated (see Table 6). Attention to the newspaper was strongly related to attention to television for local news stories ( $r = .80, .89/.66$ ). Correlations between television attention and radio attention, and newspaper and radio attention were not as strongly related ( $.45, .66/.16$ ; and  $.42, .64/.15$  respectively). Again, as with the correlations discussed above, the strongest relationship existed between television and the newspaper with weaker relationships between television and radio and newspaper and radio.

#### CORRELATIONS AMONG INDICES BY SOURCE TYPE:

In the next step of the analysis, correlations were calculated among the perceived issue accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking indices for each of the source types (see Figure 1). Issue accessibility and evaluation were moderately correlated for both radio and interpersonal contacts ( $.34, .58/.04$ , for both sources). A weak correlation existed between issue accessibility and evaluation for the newspaper ( $.26, .52/-.04$ ) while the correlation between issue accessibility and evaluation for television correlated only weakly.

Correlations between issue accessibility and cross-checking demonstrated a much stronger set of relations (see Figure 1). The relationship between issue accessibility and cross-checking was strongest for interpersonal contacts, with a correlation of  $.66 (.81/.47)$ . Accessibility and cross-checking were also strongly related for television

TABLE 5

Pearson Product Moment Correlations Among Exposure  
To Newspaper, Television and Radio

	Newspaper Exposure	Television Exposure	Radio Exposure
Newspaper Exposure	X		
Television Exposure	.14	X	
Radio Exposure	-.13	-.02	X

TABLE 6

Pearson Product Moment Correlations Among Attention  
Paid to Local News Stories from Newspaper, Television,  
and Radio

	Newspaper Attention	Television Attention	Radio Attention
Newspaper Attention	X		
Television Attention	.80	X	
Radio Attention	.42	.45	X

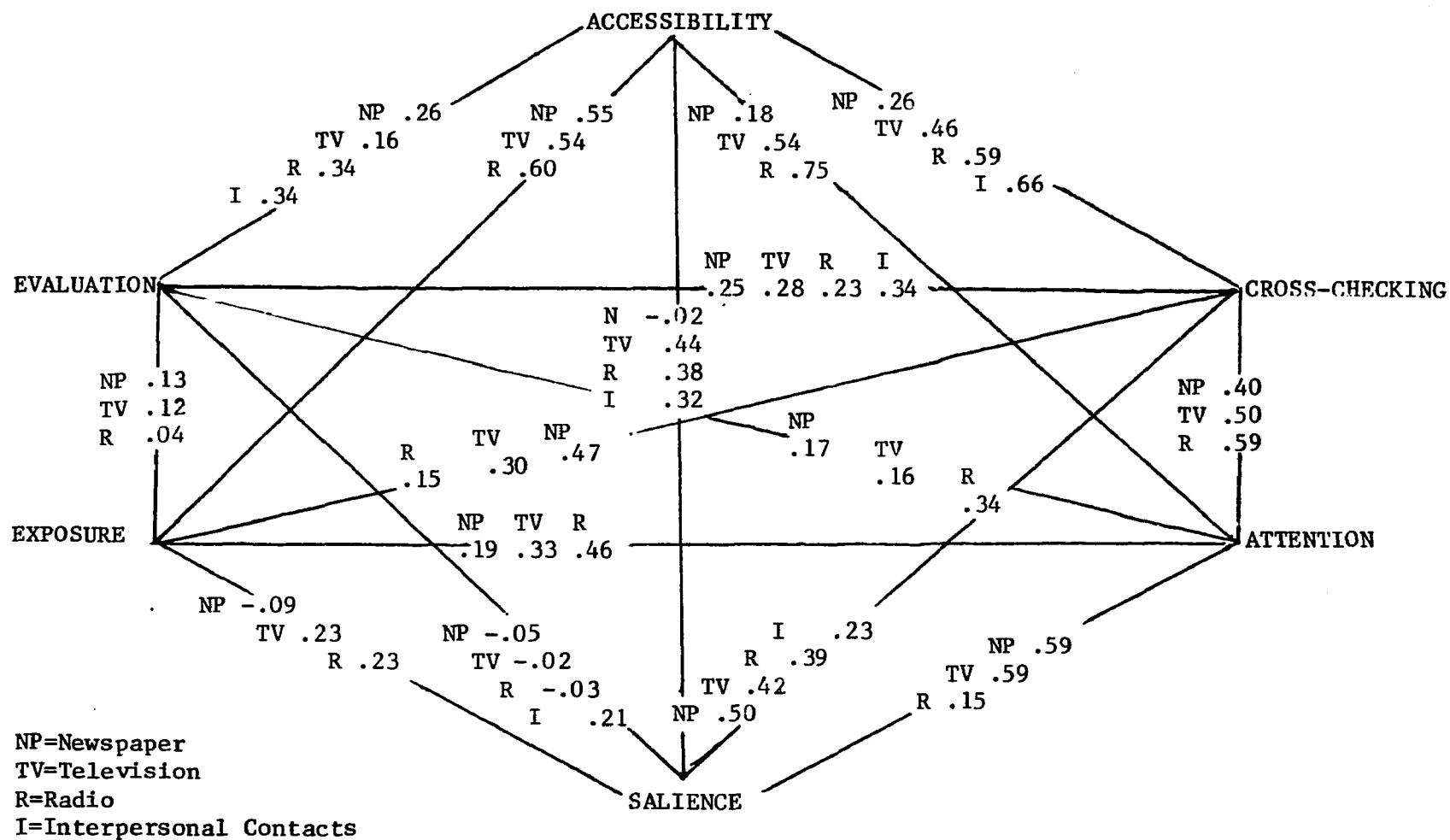


FIGURE 1

Intercorrelations Among Accessibility, Evaluation, Cross-checking,  
Exposure, Attention and Salience for Newspaper, Television,  
Radio and Interpersonal Contacts

and radio (.46, .67/.18, and .59, .76/.35, respectively) The newspaper provided the weakest correlation between issue accessibility and cross-checking with a .26 (.52/-.04). The weak relationship demonstrated for the newspaper appeared to be somewhat idiosyncratic in comparison to the other source types. The relationship between evaluation and and cross-checking was relatively consistent for all four source types. The strongest relationship existed for interpersonal contacts with a correlation of .34 (.58/.04), followed by television (.28, .53/-.02), newspaper (.25, .51/-.05) and radio (.23, .49/-.07).

It seems clear that the strongest relationship among the three dominant components of the dependence construct for this group of subjects was between issue accessibility and cross-checking with the exception of the newspaper which deviated from the pattern common among the other three sources. It should also be noted that radio and interpersonal contacts had similar correlations between issue accessibility and cross-checking and that those correlations were much stronger than those for television and newspaper.

To further clarify the relationship between the three components of media dependence, a series of other variables were included in the analysis. While differential salience of information about the civic center was in part controlled for by the study design, the salience index was correlated with both issue accessibility and cross-checking in most cases. There was a moderate correlation between issue accessibility and salience for television, radio and interpersonal contacts (.44, .66/.16, .38, .61/.08, and .32, .56/.02 respectively). Interestingly enough, no correlation existed between issue accessibility



and salience for the newspaper. Salience was somewhat more strongly correlated with cross-checking. The relationship was strongest for newspaper ( $r=.50$ ,  $.69/.23$ ) followed by television with a correlation of  $.42$  ( $.64/.13$ ) and radio with a correlation of  $.39$  ( $.62/.09$ ). Salience and cross-checking correlated at a weak  $.23$  ( $.49/-.07$ ) for interpersonal contacts. There was no significant relationship between salience of information and evaluation of information for any of the sources. It is interesting to note that for the newspaper, salience did not correlate with issue accessibility but strongly correlated with cross-checking.

The general exposure and attention measures also provided several interesting relationships. Exposure to local news was strongly correlated with perceived issue accessibility to information for all three media sources with correlations of  $.60$  ( $.76/.36$ ) for radio, a  $.55$  ( $.73/.29$ ) for newspaper and a  $.54$  ( $.73/.28$ ) for television. Such a strong relationship could reasonably be expected. The relationship between exposure and cross-checking was somewhat more varied. Exposure to the newspaper and cross-checking information with the newspaper were strongly correlated ( $r=.47$ ,  $.68/.20$ ), exposure to local television news and cross-checking information with television news were moderately correlated ( $r=.30$ ,  $.55/.00$ ), while exposure to radio news and cross-checking information with radio news were very weakly correlated. These results provided a variable picture of the relationship between general exposure to local accessibility of information about the civic center and cross-checking for each of the mediated sources. While exposure was strongly related to issue accessibility in all cases, issue accessibility and

cross-checking were strongly correlated and exposure and cross-checking were not significantly correlated for radio. The correlation between issue accessibility and cross-checking were weak and the correlation between exposure and cross-checking was strong for newspaper. Both issue accessibility and cross-checking were correlated at a moderate to strong level for television. Finally, it should also be noted that exposure and evaluation were not significantly correlated for any of the mediated sources.

The attention to local news items also provided a complex picture. Attention was strongly correlated with cross-checking for both television ( $r=.50$ ,  $.69/.23$ ) and radio ( $r=.59$ ,  $.76/.35$ ) and moderately correlated for newspaper ( $r=.40$ ,  $.63/.10$ ). The relationship between attention to local news and cross-checking for both radio and television was much stronger than the relationship between exposure and cross-checking for the same sources. For the newspaper, though, the two relationships were approximately equal in strength. Attention was also related to issue accessibility for radio and television ( $r=.75$  and  $.54$  respectively) but attention was not related to accessibility for the newspaper. Attention to local news items and evaluation of information about the civic center were not correlated for the newspaper and television but were moderately correlated for radio ( $r=.34$ ,  $.58/.04$ ).

Of the three indices used to tap the interpersonal network of the influentials, only opinion leadership status provided any significant correlations. While not correlating significantly with any of the exposure and attention measures, opinion leadership was positively correlated with issue accessibility for radio ( $r=.33$ ,  $.57/.03$ ) and

issue accessibility for interpersonal contacts ( $r=.38$ ,  $.61/.08$ ).

Opinion leadership was also correlated with cross-checking information with interpersonal contacts ( $r=.39$ ,  $.62/.09$ ). Finally, opinion leadership was negatively correlated with evaluation of information from the newspaper and was positively correlated with evaluation of information from radio ( $r=-.29$ ,  $-.54/.01$ , and  $r=.26$ ,  $.52/-.04$ ).

#### MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSES:

##### ACCESSIBILITY:

To further understand the three dependence indices, a series of multiple regression analyses were computed for accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking. The issue accessibility indices for each of the source types were treated as dependent variables in the first set of analyses and cross-checking, evaluation, salience and opinion leader status were treated as predictors. For the mediated sources, exposure and attention were also included as predictors (see Table 7). Predictors were entered using hierarchical inclusion procedures. Exposure to the newspaper and cross-checking with the newspaper both entered the equation at statistically significant levels for newspaper issue accessibility ( $F=23.42$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $F=7.17$ ,  $p < .05$  respectively). These two variables accounted for 41% of the variance in newspaper accessibility with exposure accounting for much of that variance (30%).

Exposure to local television news and attention to local television news entered at statistically significant levels for television accessibility ( $F=11.92$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $F=5.73$ ,  $p < .05$  respectively). As with newspaper issue accessibility, exposure again accounted for the greatest amount of variance (35%) with attention accounting for another 9% (see

TABLE 7  
Multiple Regression Analyses of Information  
Accessibility by Source Type

Accessibility of:	Predictors	R <sup>2</sup>	BETA	F
Newspaper	Exposure to Newspaper	.30	-.61	23.42***
	Cross-Checking with Newspaper	.11	.34	7.17*
Television	Exposure to Television	.35	.46	11.92**
	Attention to Television	.09	-.32	5.73*
Radio	Attention to Radio	.42	.47	14.42***
	Exposure to Radio	.12	-.38	9.57**
Interpersonal	Cross-Checking with Interpersonal contacts	.43	.65	28.95***

\* p < .05  
 \*\* p < .01  
 \*\*\* p < .001

Table 7). While both attention and exposure entered at statistically significant levels for radio issue accessibility as well ( $F=14.42$ ,  $p < .001$  and  $F=9.57$ ,  $p < .01$ ), attention to local radio news accounted for most of the variance (42%) with exposure accounting for another 12%. Finally, cross-checking with interpersonal contacts was the only significant predictor of interpersonal issue accessibility ( $F=28.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ), accounting for 43% of the variance.

It seems clear that issue specific information accessibility is strongly a function of general patterns of media use for the mediated sources. Since a comparable measure of attention and exposure were not available for interpersonal contacts, it is impossible to determine whether that same pattern held true for interpersonal contacts. It is interesting to note that attention to local radio news accounted for the greatest amount of variance in radio issue accessibility, while exposure was the dominant factor for newspaper and television accessibility. This may in part be due to the relatively high correlation between radio exposure and radio attention ( $r=.46$ ); exposure and attention for television and newspaper were more weakly correlated ( $r=.33$  and  $.19$ ).

#### CROSS-CHECKING:

Regression analyses with cross-checking as the dependent variable, and accessibility, evaluation, exposure, attention, salience and opinion leader status as predictor variables demonstrated a much more complex pattern (see Table 8). Salience and opinion leader status entered at statistically significant levels ( $F=10.85$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $F=4.04$ ,  $p < .05$ ) for cross-checking with the newspaper. Salience accounted for the greatest amount of variance (19%) with opinion leader status accounting

TABLE 8  
Multiple Regression Analyses of Information  
Cross-Checking by Source Type

Cross-Checking with:	Predictors	R <sup>2</sup>	BETA	F
Newspaper	Saliency of Information	.19	.52	10.85**
	Opinion Leader Status	.09	.32	4.04*
Television	Accessibility of Television	.28	.53	14.98***
Radio	Attention to Radio	.30	.55	16.87***
Interpersonal	Accessibility of Interpersonal Contacts	.43	.65	28.95***

\* p < .05  
 \*\* p < .01  
 \*\*\* p < .001

for another 9%. This was the only equation in which these variables entered at a statistically significant level. Issue accessibility was the only significant predictor of cross-checking with television ( $F=14.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 28% of the variance. Similarly, accessibility was the only significant predictor for cross-checking with interpersonal contacts ( $F=28.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 43% of the variance. Attention to local radio news was the only significant predictor of cross-checking with radio ( $F=16.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and accounted for 30% of the variance.

Cross-checking with a specific source appeared to be contingent on different factors for different sources. For television, accessibility of civic center related information was the best predictor of cross-checking while attention to local radio news was the best predictor. Accessibility was clearly the best predictor for cross-checking with interpersonal contacts. Finally, and somewhat idiosyncratically, salience and opinion leader status were the best predictors of cross-checking with the newspaper.

#### EVALUATION:

The final set of regression analyses specified evaluation as the dependent variable and issue accessibility, cross-checking, salience, opinion leader status, exposure and attention as predictor variables. None of the predictor variables entered the equation at statistically significant levels for any of the source types.

#### PARTIAL CORRELATION ANALYSES:

Based on both the correlation and regression results, further analyses were performed on the relationship between source issue

accessibility and cross-checking. Substantial differences in the strength of correlations existed between issue accessibility and cross-checking based on source type. Similar variability in correlation strength existed across source types among exposure, attention and salience with both accessibility and cross-checking. The regression results also showed differences between source types in terms of those variables which accounted for variance in issue accessibility and cross-checking.

To further clarify those differences across source type, partial correlations were computed on the relationship between accessibility and cross-checking controlling for exposure, attention, salience and bias. The bias item was a single item and, thus, its reliability was unknown. Nonetheless, the concern over bias in the media sources was significant to the respondents; this concern seemed to warrant its inclusion. In the following discussion only zero, first and fourth order correlations are presented. For a complete listing of all partial correlations see Tables 9, 10 and 11.

The zero order correlation between newspaper issue accessibility and cross-checking with the newspaper was .26. When attention and salience were individually added, there was only a minimal change in the correlation; attention decreased the strength of the correlation ( $r=.20$ ) and salience increased the strength ( $r=.31$ ). The addition of bias had a somewhat more dramatic effect, reducing the correlation well below its zero order level ( $r=.12$ ). Exposure had the greatest individual effect, increasing the correlation between newspaper issue accessibility and cross-checking with the newspaper to .42. When controlling for all



TABLE 9

First, Second, Third and Fourth Order Partial  
Correlations for Newspaper Issue Accessibility and  
Cross-Checking with the Newspaper

Zero Order Correlation	First Order Correlation	Second Order Correlation	Third Order Correlation	Fourth Order Correlation
.26	Controlling For	Controlling For	Controlling For	Controlling For
	Exposure	Exposure and Attention	Exposure, Attention and Salience	Exposure, Attention, Salience and Bias
	.42	.42		
	Attention		.45	
	.20	Exposure and Salience	Exposure, Attention and Bias	.40
	Salience	.46		
	.31	Exposure and Bias	.37	
	Bias	.36	Exposure, Salience and Bias	
	.16	Attention and Salience	.41	
		.28	Attention, Salience and Bias	
		Attention and Bias	.21	
		.13		
		Salience and Bias		
		.23		

TABLE 10

First, Second, Third and Fourth Order Partial  
Correlations for Television Issue Accessibility and  
Cross-Checking with Television

Zero Order Correlation	First Order Correlation	Second Order Correlation	Third Order Correlation	Fourth Order Correlation
.46	Controlling For	Controlling For	Controlling For	Controlling For
	Exposure	Exposure and Attention	Exposure, Attention and Salience	Exposure, Attention, Salience and Bias
	.37	.21		
	Attention		.19	
	.26	Exposure and Salience	Exposure, Attention and Bias	.20
	Salience	.26		
	.34	Exposure and Bias	.22	
	Bias	.38	Exposure, Salience and Bias	
	.47	Attention and Salience	.27	
		.23	Attention, Salience and Bias	
		Attention and Bias	.24	
		.27		
		Salience and Bias		
		.34		

TABLE 11

First, Second, Third and Fourth Order Partial  
Correlations for Radio Issue Accessibility and  
Cross-Checking with the Radio

Zero Order Correlation	First Order Correlation	Second Order Correlation	Third Order Correlation	Fourth Order Correlation
.59	Controlling For	Controlling For	Controlling For	Controlling For
	Exposure	Exposure and Attention	Exposure, Attention and Salience	Exposure, Attention, Salience and Bias
	.36	.18		
	Attention	Exposure and Salience	.13	.11
	.29	.21	Exposure, Attention and Bias	
	Salience	Exposure and Bias	.16	
	.40	.35	Exposure, Salience and Bias	
	Bias	Attention and Salience	.25	
	.54	.26	Attention, Salience and Bias	
		Attention and Bias	.25	
		.28		
		Salience and Bias		
		.39		

four variables simultaneously, the overall correlation was only slightly less than that generated by controlling for exposure alone ( $r=.40$ ).

The pattern for both radio and television was dramatically different from that for the newspaper. The zero order correlation television issue accessibility and cross-checking with television was .46. With the exception of bias, which had no effect on the strength of the correlation, the remaining three variables reduced the strength of the relationship. Exposure had the least dramatic individual effect, reducing the correlation between accessibility and cross-checking to .37. Controlling for salience reduced the correlation to .37, with attention reducing its strength to .26. When all four variables were controlled for simultaneously, the correlation dropped to a weak .20.

The relationship between radio issue accessibility and cross-checking with radio demonstrated almost the same pattern. The zero order correlation was a substantial .59. Controlling for bias had almost no effect. As with television, controlling for attention had the greatest impact, reducing the correlation to .29. Controlling individually for salience and exposure also had a significant impact, though less dramatic than controlling for attention ( $r=.40$  and  $r=.36$  respectively). Again, as with television, when all four variables were controlled for simultaneously, the correlation between radio accessibility and cross-checking dropped below statistically significant levels ( $r=.11$ ).

Several different patterns appeared when those partial correlation results were compared across media sources. First, when attention was controlled, the strength of the relationship between accessibility and cross-checking was reduced in each case. Second, though the zero order

correlations between accessibility and cross-checking varied substantially in strength (.26 for newspaper, .46 for television and .59 for radio), those differences were substantially reduced when controlling individually for exposure and for salience. Third, controlling for bias has little effect on the relationship for television and radio, but did noticeably reduce the strength of the correlation for the newspaper. Finally, controlling for all four variables simultaneously had the opposite effect on the correlation between accessibility and cross-checking when comparing television and radio with newspaper. Those variables reduced the correlations greatly for television and radio, while the same variables increased the correlations for the newspaper. The analysis will not shift from questions of relationship to questions of difference between and among mediated and non-mediated sources.

R2. What are the differences between and among mediated and non-mediated sources of information in terms of accessibility, evaluation and as a source for cross-checking information?

Overall, accessibility to the four sources of information was high. On a scale ranging from 1 (very likely to receive information about the civic center) to 7 (not likely to receive information about the civic center) source mean accessibility scores ranged from 2.21 to 2.79 (see Table 12). Paired t-tests were computed between interpersonal contacts and each of the mediated sources to determine whether any significant differences in accessibility existed. Interpersonal contacts did not differ from any of the mediated sources at a significant level.

While interpersonal sources were equally accessible when compared to mediated sources, interpersonal sources were evaluated more highly (see Table 13). On a scale ranging from 1 (very thorough and accurate)

TABLE 12  
Means and Standard Deviations for Issue  
Accessibility by Source Type

Source	Mean	SD
Newspaper	2.21a*	1.13
Television	2.79ab	1.39
Radio	2.42	1.46
Interpersonal	2.36b	1.30

a Subscripts denote statistically significant differences  $<.05$ .

\* Scales ranged from 1 (very high accessibility) to 7 (very low accessibility)

TABLE 13  
Means and Standard Deviations for Evaluation  
by Source Type

Source	Mean	SD
Newspaper	3.20a*	1.45
Television	3.55ab	1.52
Radio	3.24	1.32
Interpersonal	2.75b	1.79

a Subscripts denote statistically significant differences  $<.05$

\* Scales ranged from 1 (very high evaluation) to 7 (very low evaluation)

to 7 (not at all thorough and accurate), interpersonal sources had mean score of 2.75 while the mediated sources' mean scores ranged from 3.20 to 3.55. Paired t-tests were again computed between the mediated sources and the non-mediated sources. Interpersonal contacts were evaluated at a significantly higher level than television ( $p < .01$ ). While not statistically significant, interpersonal contacts appeared to be more highly evaluated than newspaper and radio as well. In general, though, all sources demonstrated at least a weak positive evaluation based on mean scores.

The most dramatic difference between mediated and non-mediated sources existed with the likelihood of cross-checking information with a specific source. Respondents were significantly more likely to cross-check information received from other sources by talking with other people than they were to cross-check information with any of the mediated sources. Paired t-tests showed this difference to be statistically significant at greater than the .001 level in each case (see Table 14).

It would appear, then, that while accessibility was not a significant consideration between mediated and non-mediated sources, interpersonal contacts were evaluated more positively and were used more as a source for information verification than were mediated sources. This suggests a slightly greater dependence on non-mediated sources for information. That generalization was not as clear cut when the items used to construct the accessibility scales were analyzed individually.

Paired t-tests were computed among mediated and non-mediated sources for accessibility of information about the actions of groups holding a

TABLE 14  
Means and Standard Deviations for Cross-  
Checking by Source Type

Source	Mean	SD
Newspaper	3.32a*	1.99
Television	3.57b	1.99
Radio	3.57c	1.92
Interpersonal	1.76abc	1.50

a Subscripts denote statistically significant differences  $<.001$

\* Scales ranged from 1 (very high likelihood to cross-check with source) to 7 (very low likelihood to cross-check with source)



similar position on the civic center to the respondent's, for accessibility of information about the actions of groups holding a different position and for accessibility of information about the attitudes and opinions of people involved in the issue (see Table 15). For information about groups with a similar position to the respondent, accessibility was highest for interpersonal contacts, though the difference between interpersonal contacts and mediated sources was statistically significant for only television ( $p < .05$ ).

For information about groups with opposing positions, the situation was reversed. This type of information was least accessible through interpersonal contacts. Though the difference between interpersonal contacts and the newspaper was the only statistically significant finding ( $< .01$ ) examination of the mean scores for television and radio showed somewhat greater accessibility to this type of information than from interpersonal contacts.

Finally, information about the attitudes and opinions of people involved in the issue was most accessible through interpersonal contacts. Such information was significantly more accessible through interpersonal contacts than from television ( $p < .01$ ) and from radio ( $p < .05$ ). While not statistically significant, the newspaper demonstrated the same pattern.

These findings suggest that while interpersonal contacts were used more heavily for cross-checking information and were evaluated more highly, certain types of information were not as accessible through interpersonal sources as they were through mediated sources. Information about the actions of groups which the respondent was a member or which the respondent had some allegiance based on a similar issue position

TABLE 15  
Accessibility Item Means and Standard Deviations  
by Source Type

Source	Information about Groups with a Similar Position	Information about Groups with an Opposing Position	Information about Attitudes and Opinions of Others
Newspaper	M 2.34* SD 1.46	1.68cd 1.13	2.66e 1.65
Television	M 2.81ab SD 1.55	2.27d 1.47	3.32efg 1.72
Radio	M 2.17a SD 1.64	2.16 1.51	2.90fh 1.72
Interpersonal	M 2.02b SD 1.42	2.76c 1.77	2.27gh 1.36

\* Scales range from 1 (very accessible) to 7 (not accessible)

a Subscripts denote statistically significant differences <.05

was more accessible through interpersonal sources. Similarly, people's attitudes and opinions about the civic center were more accessible interpersonally. On the other hand, information about the actions of opposing groups was not as accessible through interpersonal contacts. Such information was more accessible through mediated sources. The next research question explores the differences between and among the three mediated sources.

- R3. What are the differences between and among the three mediated sources of information in terms of accessibility, evaluation and as a source for cross-checking information?

Three separate accessibility measures were available for the mediated sources: exposure to local news, attention to local news and accessibility to information about the civic center. The respondents were high in exposure for all three media types. Mean newspaper exposure was 6.5 days a week. Mean exposure levels for television and radio news were somewhat lower, though respondents watched local television news and listened to local radio news over 5 days a week in both cases. Attention to local news was high across all three media types with no significant differences by media type.

Accessibility of information about the civic center was highest for the newspaper followed by radio and television. Paired t-tests showed that accessibility through the newspaper and through radio were significantly higher than television ( $p < .05$ ) (see Table 12). The newspaper and radio were evaluated similarly, with television evaluated less positively. Newspaper and television differed at a statistically significant level ( $p < .05$ ) in level of evaluation (see Table 13).

There was no significant difference across the three media types in terms of the likelihood of cross-checking.

An analysis of the individual items making up the accessibility index provided further information about differences across media types (see Table 15). For information about the actions of groups with a similar position on the civic center, radio was the most accessible followed closely by the newspaper. Television was perceived to be the least accessible. Paired t-tests showed that the accessibility of this type of information was significantly greater for radio than for television ( $p < .01$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between radio and the newspaper.

Information about opposing groups was significantly more accessible in the newspaper than it was for television ( $p < .01$ ). While there was no statistically significant difference between the newspaper and radio, a comparison of the means indicated a tendency for such information to be more accessible in the newspaper. For information about attitudes and opinions of people involved in the issue, the same pattern occurred. Attitudes and opinions were most accessible through the newspaper followed by radio and television. There was no statistically significant difference between the newspaper and radio but both significantly differed from television ( $p < .05$ ).

These findings suggested a relatively consistent pattern. The newspaper was read more, it was perceived as more accessible and it was evaluated more highly. Radio differed little from the newspaper on all items and indices with the exception of exposure to local news. Television tended to be the least accessible and it was evaluated in

the least positive fashion. In all analyses, with the exception of cross-checking, television differed from the newspaper and/or radio at a statistically significant level.

R 4. What are the differences between groups and individuals who have varying issue positions and roles in the controversy?

Influentials were divided into three different categories to address this research question. The first two divisions were based on level of activity at the time of the interview and on the role the respondents played in the issue. Level of activity was based on participation in a group which was active at the time of the interview and participation in a group which was not active at the time. Role in the controversy was based on the decision-making capacity of the respondent. Elected and administrative officials were considered to have decision-making capacities. No statistically significant differences were found for either of these divisions.

The division of respondents into supporters of the civic center and opponents to the civic center did provide significant differences. Four respondents were categorized as ambivalent; this group did not differ significantly from either supporters or opposition in any of the analyses. A series of One Way Analysis of Variance were calculated for accessibility, exposure, evaluation and cross-checking across each of the four sources.

The supporters and the opposition did not significantly differ in perceived accessibility of information about the civic center for any of the source types. Neither did they differ in terms of their exposure to television and radio. The only significant difference was exposure

to the newspaper. Supporters of the civic center were more likely to read the newspaper than were the opposition ( $p < .01$ ). Supporters read the newspaper well over 6 days a week while the opposition read the newspaper only 5 days a week (see Table 16).

Clear differences existed between the two groups on the evaluation of the sources. While radio was the only statistically significant difference ( $F=7.55$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .01$ ), the opposition more negatively evaluated all the sources than did the supporters (see Table 17). In light of those noticeable differences in evaluation, it was interesting to note the differences in cross-checking. The opposition was more likely to cross-check information in all sources than were those who supported the civic center (see Table 18). While the difference between supporters and opposition was significant only for television ( $F=4.00$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p < .05$ ), examination of the mean scores for each group indicated greater cross-checking among the opposition across all sources.

This chapter has attempted to explicitly address the four research questions developed and presented in the first chapter. Two basic types of analyses were performed on the data. First, a detailed exploration into the relationship between the four sources in terms of accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking was presented. This was followed by an analysis of the relationship between accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking for each individual source. Second, an examination of the differences in accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking across sources was presented, as well as an examination of those indices as they vary based on the issue position of the subject. The next chapter will attempt to interpret and clarify those findings.

TABLE 16

Media Exposure Means and Standard Deviations for Groups  
in Support of the Civic Center and Groups  
in Opposition to the Civic Center

Source	Supporters N=33	Opposition N=6	Total N=42
Newspaper	M 6.78a SD 0.66	5.00a 2.19	6.49 1.19
Television	M 5.25 SD 1.46	5.17 2.48	5.24 1.56
Radio	M 5.56 SD 1.80	6.60 0.89	5.63 1.71

a Subscripts denote statistically significant differences  $< .01$

TABLE 17

Evaluation Means and Standard Deviations for Groups  
in Support of the Civic Center and Groups  
in Opposition to the Civic Center

Source	Supporters	Opposition	Total
Newspaper	M 3.08 SD 1.31	4.08 2.22	3.20 1.45
Television	M 3.52 SD 1.46	4.08 2.15	3.55 1.52
Radio	M 2.94a SD 0.94	4.92a 2.01	3.24 1.32
Interpersonal	M 2.59 SD 1.47	3.42 2.31	2.75 1.79

a Subscripts denote statistically significant differences  $<.01$



TABLE 18

Cross-Checking Means and Standard Deviations for Groups  
in Support of the Civic Center and Groups  
in Opposition to the Civic Center

Source	Supporters N=33	Opposition N=6	Total N=42
Newspaper	M 3.55 SD 2.05	1.67 1.05	3.22 1.99
Television	M 3.80a SD 1.95	1.67a 1.12	3.57 1.99
Radio	M 3.62 SD 1.80	2.50 2.33	3.57 1.92
Interpersonal	M 1.69 SD 1.47	1.38 0.92	1.76 1.50

a Subscripts denote statistically significant differences  $\leq .05$

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The fundamental issues underlying this study were two-fold: 1) to describe and to define the information environment of a group of community influentials, and 2) to make several theoretical and empirical statements about media dependence at the community level. Those two issues are obviously interrelated in that the information environment was operationalized through the elaborated media dependence model presented in the first chapter. This chapter will first discuss the results relating to the nature of the information environment, and then present several implications of those results for our understanding of the media dependence construct.

The information environment in Lima was operationally defined through measures of information accessibility, channel evaluation, information verification behaviors and information salience. Each of those measures were related to each of the four channel types present in Lima.

Before discussing the meanings and implications arising from this study, it may be worthwhile to review and summarize the significant findings. In general, the media sources were moderately to strongly correlated for the issue accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking indices. The only exception to this pattern was the weak correlation between radio and newspaper issue accessibility. There was little or no correlation between either the newspaper or television and interpersonal contacts on any of the major variables, though there was a moderate correlation between radio and interpersonal contacts.

In some cases correlations between and among issue accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking varied across media type. In general, though, there was a weak to moderate correlation between evaluation and cross-checking for all source types. Similarly, there was a weak to moderate correlation between evaluation and issue accessibility. Strong correlations existed between issue accessibility and cross-checking with the exception of the newspaper which demonstrated a weak correlation. Exposure and attention were strongly correlated with issue accessibility, with the exception of newspaper attention and issue accessibility which were weakly correlated.

Multiple regression analyses indicated that issue accessibility was predominately a function of exposure to and/or attention to a source. Exposure was the best predictor for both the newspaper and television while attention was the best predictor for radio. There was considerable difference in which variables best predicted cross-checking: interpersonal and television cross-checking were best predicted by issue accessibility; radio cross-checking was best predicted by attention to local news; and newspaper cross-checking was best predicted by salience of information.

Differences across source types for issue accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking varied considerably. There was no significant difference between the newspaper radio and interpersonal contacts for issue accessibility. Television was significantly less accessible than the newspaper and interpersonal contacts. Examination of the individual issue accessibility items indicated a more complex picture. For information about groups with similar positions, there were no

differences between newspaper, radio and interpersonal contacts. Television was significantly less accessible for this information. For information about groups with opposing positions, there were no significant differences between newspaper and radio, but both television and interpersonal contacts were significantly less accessible than newspaper. Finally, for information about attitudes and opinions, there were no differences between newspaper and interpersonal contacts. Radio and television were significantly less accessible than interpersonal contacts and television was significantly less accessible than the newspaper.

No differences existed between the newspaper, radio and interpersonal contacts in terms of evaluation, though interpersonal contacts were evaluated most positively. Television was evaluated significantly less positively than either the newspaper or interpersonal contacts. For cross-checking, interpersonal contacts were used to cross-verify information significantly more than any of the media sources. There were no differences in cross-checking across media sources.

Finally, it was found that while the supporters and the opposition differed little in their accessibility to information about the civic center, they differed noticeably in their evaluation and cross-checking. The opposition evaluated all sources more negatively than did the supporters, though the differences were significant only for radio. Equally, the opposition cross-checked much more frequently with all sources than did the supporters, though the differences were significant only for television. Each of these findings will now be discussed in detail.

Accessibility to information about the civic center was generally high for all sources, though television accessibility was lower than other sources. This finding lends support to Chaffee's (1979) contention that in high information seeking situations, people attempt to contact all available sources of information. These results, though, do not provide conclusive support. Most of the influentials interviewed were high consumers of local news. Mean local news exposure scores were well over six days a week for the newspaper and well over five days a week for both television and radio news. Most of the respondents were business or professional people in Lima who kept a close watch on what was happening in Lima and Allen County. The data available in this study do not allow for a clear determination as to whether the civic center issue had any effect on media consumption patterns in general. Several respondents did mention that they listened to radio news more frequently during the referendum vote on the civic center. Activity by all involved parties increased during that time, and those respondents indicated that radio news provided more up to the minute information than the other sources. As the situation stabilized after the referendum, radio news consumption patterns returned to a more normal level. This does suggest that the issue did have some effect on news consumption.

Though accessibility levels differed little across sources, the relationships among accessibility to sources did provide some interesting differences. Accessibility to radio and to television were moderately correlated and accessibility to the newspaper and to radio were not correlated at a significant level. The explanation for this pattern is by no means clear. It seems apparent that the differing correlation

strengths are not a function of the relationships among general patterns of local news consumption, since exposure levels across the three mediated sources were not correlated at a statistically significant level. A more likely explanation relates to the different forms information takes in the three sources. Neither radio news nor television news provide indepth coverage for any given story. The amount of information given during any newscast is limited by time constraints inherent in the two media. Due to this restriction on the amount and depth of information, one might expect that the respondents would view the accessibility of information from each source similarly. It can also be argued that the amount and type of coverage given to the civic center by the newspaper and television would be more similar than the amount and type of coverage given to the civic center by the newspaper and radio. This would explain the moderate correlation between newspaper issue accessibility and television issue accessibility and the extremely weak correlation between newspaper issue accessibility and radio issue accessibility.

It may also be that the differences in correlation strengths are a function of how readily available the mediated sources are to the subject over the course of the day. People can read the newspaper throughout the day returning to it when ever time permits. Both television and radio news consumption is more under the control of the time schedule of the particular newscast. One would expect that this consideration would lead to more similar perceptions of radio and television accessibility. The differences in correlation strengths between newspaper and television and newspaper and radio can also be explained by the relative amount of control the person has over when and where news is

consumed. Television news is generally broadcast at times when people tend to be available to watch. While differing from the control over when the newspaper is read, one can argue that there is some similarity in accessibility of television and newspaper. They both can be consumed at times in which people are able to spend time with a medium. Radio, on the other hand, has regular, short newscasts throughout the day, most of which are during times when people are working. Ready access to radio news due to this fact may be perceived as significantly different from ready access to the newspaper.

The relationship between both newspaper and television issue accessibility and interpersonal issue accessibility was extremely weak. This might be reasonably expected. Accessibility to interpersonal contacts is a much more complex phenomenon than accessibility to the mediated sources. Interpersonal contacts are much more under the control of the individual and are much less patterned than regularly scheduled newscasts or publication schedules. Thus, media encounters and interpersonal encounters would not necessarily be related. The weak correlation between radio accessibility and interpersonal accessibility can also be interpreted within this same structure. While a high correlation between interpersonal and radio issue accessibility would not be expected due to the amount and nature of the information these sources provide, the accessibility patterns between interpersonal contacts and radio news are more similar than those for the newspaper and television news. Several respondents mentioned that they relied more heavily on radio to keep up with the ongoing changes in the controversy because they could easily tune in radio news any time during the day and get the

latest information about the civic center, as opposed to waiting for the local evening news on television or waiting for the newspaper to be published the following day. In some respects, this is similar to interpersonal interactions. Like interpersonal interactions, the individual seeks out the medium whenever information is desired as opposed to waiting for the evening television news or the next day's newspaper.

#### EXPOSURE AND ATTENTION:

The discussion so far has concentrated largely on issue accessibility. Other more general measures of media accessibility were also included in this study. Most studies in the past which have analyzed media news consumption have concentrated heavily on exposure and attention to media sources as general measures of accessibility. Inherent in these measures is the assumption that general exposure to news is sufficiently precise to be used to assess accessibility regardless of the issue under study. The correlations between general local news exposure and attention and civic center specific accessibility suggest that such an approach has both strengths and weaknesses. Exposure to news and accessibility to information about the civic center were strongly correlated for all media. At least in this instance, then, a general exposure measure is strongly related to accessibility to specific types of information. Attention measures provided a more variable pattern. Attention to local news and issue accessibility were strongly correlated for radio and for television. Issue accessibility and attention were weakly correlated for the newspaper. For this group of community influentials, then, there is a differential relationship between general attention to local news and issue accessibility.



The lack of a strong correlation between attention to local news in the newspaper and issue accessibility is anomalous. Probably the best explanation for this anomaly relates to the extremely high exposure and perceived accessibility for the newspaper. There was relatively little variance across subjects as well. It may well be that the limited variance in accessibility was insufficient to demonstrate a strong relationship between accessibility and attention in this case.

General exposure levels were significant predictors of issue accessibility for all three media sources. Exposure to both the newspaper and television accounted for 30% or more of the variance in issue accessibility. It should be noted, though, that the amount of variance accounted for may be somewhat inflated due to the small size of the sample. For radio, exposure was a less effective predictor than was attention, but nonetheless accounted for 12% of the variance in radio issue accessibility.

Attention was the most effective predictor of radio issue accessibility, accounting for 42% of the variance. Attention to local news was also a significant predictor of newspaper issue accessibility. The differential impact of general exposure and attention on issue accessibility is an interesting finding, though not a particularly surprising one. It can be argued that newspaper, television and radio differ in their overall function in society. A newspaper is fundamentally, though not exclusively, a news and information medium. Both television and radio are much more general entertainment media. When one reads the newspaper he/she is likely to be seeking information about topics of interest. For both radio and television, information about news

events is not the dominant part of daily programming. One listens to the radio for music and only secondarily for news. Similarly, though less dramatically, one watches television for entertainment and in many cases only secondarily for news. It can be argued that attention to local news from television and radio would play a greater role in explaining accessibility to specific types of information than attention to the newspaper. This is particularly true for radio since newscasts tend to be short and interspersed throughout the programming day.

In general, then, the results of this study suggest that general exposure and attention measures are adequate indices for assessing the accessibility to specific types of information but they are not isomorphic with indices constructed to measure access to specific information. This is not a startling revelation since it is clear that the more general the measure the less precisely it will measure specific phenomena. Unfortunately, the data available in this study are insufficient to articulate precisely how exposure and attention measures and information specific measures differ. Exposure and attention measures accounted for between 30 and 54 percent of the variance in issue accessibility depending on media type. This leaves a substantial amount of variance unexplained. Some of this unexplained variance may be related to the form information takes based on the nature of each medium. It may also be related to the amount of information presented on a topic by a specific medium. Finally, it may be related to the differences in measurement scales used to assess exposure, attention and issue accessibility. This issue will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter. These findings suggest that reliance on media exposure

and attention as accessibility measures is a satisfactory substitute for measures specifying exact content accessibility, depending on the nature of the research questions. It seems clear, though, that some information is lost by this procedure.

#### EVALUATION:

The evaluation results demonstrated several predictable patterns as well as several which were not so readily apparent. Interpersonal contacts were evaluated more highly for their accuracy and thoroughness than were mediated sources. There is evidence to suggest that interpersonal sources are not universally trusted over mediated sources. Banta (1964) reported that 44% of the people who first heard about the Kennedy assassination from media sources completely believed it, while only 24% believed the news when told by a good friend, and only 16% believed the news when told by someone else. Edelstein and Tefft (1974) found that people believed mass mediated sources much more frequently than interpersonal sources in relation to the Watergate affair. The Kennedy assassination and the Watergate affair, though, differ in nature from the civic center issue. Chaffee (1979) argued that in information seeking situations "expertise is probably an important criterion..." (4). Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) reported data which lends support to Chaffee's contention. They found that many respondents active in an issue under study indicated that they, as experts on the issue in question, relied more heavily on their own research on the issue or on other expert information gained through interpersonal channels as opposed to accepting information from the media compiled by reporters who lacked the same level of expertise.

The community influentials in this study could well be considered as experts relative to the civic center and to urban redevelopment in general. Most of the respondents had been actively involved in the issue for at least three years and were quite familiar with the issues involved. One could expect that they would feel more confident in the accuracy and thoroughness of information received from interactions with other people involved in the issue than of information received from the media due to the generally high level of expertise among those involved. Many respondents commented that the reporters from all the media often missed the important aspects of meetings and interviews while isolating on issues which were not totally germane. Many also noted that statements made by participants were distorted and in some cases were inaccurate. This strongly suggests that accessibility to expert sources of information through interpersonal channels is a key variable in media dependence.

The issue relating to the expertise of sources is by no means inconsistent with the dependence model posited by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976). They argued that media dependence increases as an audience no longer has access to relevant information through interpersonal sources. It is key to note, though, that all interpersonal sources are not treated equally. The Banta (1964) and Edelstein and Tefft (1974) studies suggest that people will believe mediated sources over interpersonal sources in situations where interpersonal sources are unlikely to have first hand information. In this study, the interpersonal sources did have first hand information (or expertise); interpersonal contacts were also evaluated more highly. Thus, given relatively equivalent accessibility,

perceived differential expertise between mediated and non-mediated sources is probably a discriminating factor in level of media dependence.

Across media types, there was little or no difference in the evaluation of the newspaper and radio, though television was evaluated less positively than either. The significantly lower evaluation of television when compared to the newspaper is not surprising. Other research has shown that newspapers are more positively evaluated than television among the more highly educated (Carter and Greenberg, 1965; Clarke and Ruggels, 1970; and Atkin, Galloway and Nayman, 1976). The lack of difference between the newspaper and radio is interesting. While radio is not generally known for its news, it did seem to be an important factor in the information environment in Lima. The comparable evaluation of radio and the newspaper is probably not due to similarities in the amount of information transmitted by each medium; by the nature of the two media, one would expect much more indepth coverage from the newspaper.

On the other hand, the connection between the radio personnel, particularly the station managers, and the supporters of the civic center, probably gave the radio stations more ready access to expert information about the position taken by the supporters of the civic center. Since most of the respondents were supporters of the project, one would expect a generally positive evaluation of that medium. When the evaluation scores were split by support or opposition to the civic center, radio was evaluated only slightly less positively than interpersonal contacts and slightly more positively than the newspaper by the supporters. The opposition evaluated radio much more negatively. The difference between supporters and opposition was statistically significant only for radio. This certainly suggests that

the connection between media personnel and active participants had an effect on the evaluation of information transmitted by that medium. This conclusion has been supported in other research. Carter (1958-59) argued that frequency of contact between source and reporter is a crucial variable in explaining the source's evaluation of a reporter and his/her newspaper. Sigal (1973) found that social relationships between reporters and sources in Washington, D. C., facilitated the news gathering process. He argued that "traveling in the same social circles can lay the foundation for trust in each partner's reliability..." (48). These sorts of extra-professional relationships are clearly worthy of further research.

It seems clear from the results of this study that radio is perceived as somewhat different than the other media sources. The evaluation of the newspaper and television were highly correlated. The evaluation of both television and the newspaper were only moderately correlated with radio, while radio was the only mediated source which correlated significantly with interpersonal sources. The differences in correlation strengths may also be a function of the connection between radio personnel and the supporters of the civic center. This connection may have led the supporters in particular to evaluate radio and interpersonal sources similarly. While the television station editorialized in favor of the civic center, it in general remained apart from the controversy. The newspaper's position was neutral to negative. These findings give tentative support for McQuail's (1974) call for increased analysis of the linkages between media personnel and the community. Such linkages may effect the information environment and the accessibility to particular channels.

Whether or not the importance of radio in the information environment in Lima is generalizable to other issues and other communities must be held as problematic at this point. On the other hand, the importance and positive evaluation of radio in the civic center issue is consistent with the strong community orientation in radio today. Most radio stations do attempt to involve themselves in the community as a means of gaining and holding audiences. This community orientation may lead to a greater reliance on radio news relating to community events than is true for national and international events.

#### CROSS-CHECKING:

The cross-checking index provided some of the most interesting results in this study. It might be useful to discuss briefly the nature of the construct as it relates to this study. The index was constructed under the assumption that people do not blindly accept information from any source, but instead use other accessible sources to cross-check or cross-verify what they hear or read. Responses to the cross-checking items and comments during the exit interviews lend great credence to this assumption. There is every indication, at least among this group of subjects, that information cross-checking does occur.

It was expected that the source of information might affect the likelihood of cross-checking information with other sources. This appears not to be the case. In the preliminary analysis of the data, correlations among cross-checking information from various sources with a specified source were so high, as high as .99 in several cases, that it was reasured that cross-checking behaviors were much more a function of the source used as a

cross-check than a function of the original source of the information. The extremely high reliability coefficients for the cross-checking indices lend further support to that contention. At the same time, this should not be taken as a conclusive statement since the findings were drawn from a relatively small, homogeneous and somewhat idiosyncratic group of subjects. It is unclear at this point how the cross-checking indices would function for a larger, more heterogeneous sample which demonstrates greater variance in information salience, evaluation and accessibility. This is a significant area for future research.

It is reasonably clear, though, that this group of Lima community leaders did perceive significant differences in cross-checking information with mediated sources and with non-mediated sources. Mean cross-checking scores for the mediated sources were only slightly above the mid range of the cross-checking scales. The likelihood of cross-checking with interpersonal contacts was substantially higher. This suggests that interpersonal sources function as the ultimate arbiter in information verification.

The significance of interpersonal sources in cross-checking may again be related to the issue of expertise discussed above. Most respondents had relatively easy access to expert information through interpersonal channels. It is reasonable to expect that these sources would be used for information verification. As the perceived expertise accessible through interpersonal channels is reduced, we might expect that the differences in likelihood of cross-checking with non-mediated and mediated sources would change. This contention, though, needs to be empirically tested.

The relative likelihood of cross-checking with newspaper, television and radio differed only slightly across the sources. While respondents



reported a slightly greater likelihood of cross-checking with the newspaper than with television and radio the differences were not statistically significant. This suggests that the respondents viewed all media sources very similarly when it came to information verification. The lack of differentiation may also be due to the nature of the cross-checking items. The items were sufficiently general in nature that respondents may have had difficulty in clearly discriminating among mediated sources. Measures with more precision may illuminate differences more clearly.

Of the three dominant variables in the elaborated media dependence model, cross-checking allowed for the clearest distinction between mediated and non-mediated sources. Given this, further discussion about cross-checking seems warranted. Conceptually, accessibility to information and evaluation of information are not necessarily related. The correlation results demonstrate that evaluation and accessibility to information about the civic center were at best weakly related. Evaluation and general exposure and attention measures did not correlate at a statistically significant level with the exception of a weak positive correlation between attention to radio news and evaluation. On the other hand, one would expect a relationship between both of those variables and cross-checking. Accessibility can be reasonably considered as a necessary and sufficient condition for cross-checking information. This was born out by the results. With the exception of the newspaper, accessibility to information about the civic center was strongly correlated with cross-checking. A weak but significant correlation existed for the newspaper. With some variation, exposure and attention measures also correlated with

cross-checking as well. This was further supported by the multiple regression analysis. Again, with the exception of the newspaper, accessibility type measures were the best predictors of cross-checking.

Interestingly enough, in no case was evaluation a significant predictor of cross-checking, nor was evaluation correlated with cross-checking any more than weakly. This was somewhat surprising since the cross-checking construct has been conceptualized as a means of establishing the credulity of information. This should, then, be related to evaluation. While the correlations were weak, there was evidence to suggest that there is a relationship between evaluation of source and cross-checking. The differences between the supporters of and the opposition to the civic center provided the clearest support for this relationship. The opposition group was significantly more likely to cross-check information with all sources; that group was also likely to evaluate all sources more negatively. This finding implies that lower evaluation of information from a source leads to increased cross-verification behaviors. Such a claim, though, must be held as tentative considering the small number of opposition respondents interviewed.

While cross-checking does seem to be dominantly a function of accessibility, there were some differences across source types. Interpersonal contacts and television cross-checking were predicted by accessibility to information about the civic center. This is consistent with the expectations outlined above. However, cross-checking with radio was best predicted by attention to local news on radio. Since attention can be reasonably considered as an accessibility type variable, the deviation from the expected pattern is not substantial. Further, there was a problem of

multicollinearity, since accessibility to information and attention were strongly correlated. Nonetheless, this finding suggests that the amount of attention paid to radio news is a significant factor in understanding people's use of radio.

The significant deviation from the expected pattern was with cross-checking with the newspaper. In this instance, salience of information was the best predictor of cross-checking. The explanation for this finding is by no means clear. The relationship between salience and cross-checking in and of itself is not wholly surprising. One might reasonably assume that the more salient a piece of information is, the more likely it is that a person would want to verify it. This seems to be born out by the moderate to strong correlations between cross-checking and salience for the mediated sources. It may be that as accessibility levels approach maximum, as is the case for this group of subjects relative to the newspaper, accessibility measures no longer provide enough variance to discriminate. Under these conditions, other variables such as salience become significant.

A similar anomaly occurred with the partial correlation analyses. Zero order correlations between accessibility to information about the civic center and cross-checking demonstrated a strong relationship for television and radio and a weak relationship for the newspaper. When variance due to exposure, attention and salience were controlled for, the correlations between accessibility and cross-checking were moderate for the newspaper and extremely weak for television and radio. Again, the extremely high exposure levels for the newspaper seem to be the most apparent explanation for these findings. While differences between the newspaper and the broadcast media should not

wholly be discounted as an explanation at this point, replications of this study using a more heterogeneous sample are needed before such explanations should be seriously addressed.

#### MEDIA DEPENDENCE:

The data allows for several general statements about the information environment in Lima. The community influentials studied in this project were very high consumers of local news. It is also clear that they had a high need for information about the civic center. This was assured by the research design and substantiated by the high salience scores for information about the civic center. There were strong indications from the interviews that interpersonal discussions took place between and among respondents on a regular basis. It was not uncommon for respondents to mention phone calls or interpersonal discussions with other respondents. In some cases there were daily contacts among some respondents. It is reasonable to suggest that many, if not most, of the respondents had ready access to expert information about the civic center. At the same time, interpersonal contacts were somewhat restricted between the conflicting groups. Cross group interactions tended to occur primarily at county commissioner meetings since representatives of both sides attended.

Within this environment some comments can be made about the media dependence of this group of respondents. First, accessibility to information about the civic center was quite similar between mediated and non-mediated sources of information, with the exception of television. In an information rich environment which has minimal constraints on the amount of

information available, accessibility of information is high for individuals who are seeking that information. But, for information that is not readily available through interpersonal channels, in this case information about groups with alternative positions, there is a greater reliance on mediated sources. This finding lends some support for the basic dependence model posited by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976). At the same time, the fact that information is readily available through interpersonal channels does not reduce the accessibility of information from mediated sources. While this is relatively obvious, it is nonetheless important to note. In this particular situation, and probably in other similar situations, there was a substantial amount of information redundancy. Much of the information available in the environment was readily available through any of the channels.

The civic center controversy, then, provides a situation where differential accessibility is not a significant issue. Under these conditions evaluation of sources and cross-checking with sources provide a more precise understanding of media dependence. Respondents generally evaluated interpersonal sources as more accurate and thorough than mediated sources though the differences between mediated and non-mediated sources were statistically significant for television. The most apparent explanation for these differences in evaluation relates to the issue of expertise discussed above. Chaffee (1979) argued that, in general, reporters and editors who lack expertise on a topic gather and cross-check information from more expert sources. Under these conditions media professionals may or may not synthesize the information gained from experts effectively and accurately.

A number of respondents commented on this problem during the interviews. Many of them noted that the reporters covering the civic center were in essence apprentice reporters, learning their trade on their first job. This lack of experience caused inaccuracies in the reporting of the controversy. Further, some noted that there had been frequent turnover in the reporters who covered the controversy. This lack of consistency, some felt, caused a lack of understanding of the history of the issue. The differences in evaluation between mediated and non-mediated sources is probably a function of the perceived expertise of the various sources.

The differences in cross-checking behaviors further clarify this point. Regardless of any differences in accessibility, the respondents were significantly more likely to cross-check information from another source with someone who was involved in the controversy. In some respects, the cross-checking indices are much more precise than the evaluation indices. While the relationship between evaluation and cross-checking is not totally clear from the data in this study, it seems reasonable to assume that one would be most likely to establish the veracity of information by cross-checking with a trusted source. In this case, those trusted sources were interpersonal contacts with expertise on the issue.

In general, then, the community influentials in this study would best be described as dependent on interpersonal sources as opposed to mediated sources, based primarily on the higher evaluation of interpersonal sources and on the greater likelihood of cross-checking with interpersonal sources. This finding does not deviate from what might be expected considering the relatively easy access to expert interpersonal sources. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) argued that as interpersonal

sources become more inaccessible in complex societies, dependence on the media increases. In Lima, interpersonal sources were reasonably accessible to the participants and their dependence on those sources was somewhat higher than for mediated sources. It should be noted, however, that the mediated sources were more important as a source of information about the actions of opposing groups, information which was not readily available through interpersonal sources.

It should be noted again that the assessment of media dependence in this study went beyond the basic Ball-Rokeach-DeFleur model. The model itself is primarily an accessibility model. While accessibility is a necessary condition, it is not a precise construct when dealing with information rich environments. By adding evaluation and cross-checking components to the basic model it is possible to more precisely define the information environment and its differential use. The results of this study strongly suggest that media dependence is far more complex than simple levels of accessibility.

It may be useful to return again to the general conception of dependence offered in the first chapter. It was argued that dependence on any source is a function of both accessibility and perceived quality of information, in this case measured by evaluation and cross-checking. Using this basic model, it is possible to offer an index of media dependence. The index can be constructed by combining accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking scores for each mediated and non-mediated source. This procedure places greater emphasis on quality of information variables than it does on accessibility. The skewed emphasis on information quality is consistent with an understanding of dependence which stresses

active audience judgements of information. Thus, an audience member's dependence is contingent on his/her relative evaluation of accessible information. Each individual source dependence score is categorized as high or low and a typology based on relative dependence on mediated and non-mediated sources is generated.

Whether this is the most appropriate means of indexing media dependence remains to be tested. Nonetheless, this approach appears to have potential as a descriptive tool in understanding audience media use. Hopefully, future research will be able to further clarify the relationship between accessibility, evaluation and cross-checking and will be able to add more precision to the indexing procedure offered here.

#### MEDIA SPECIFIC DEPENDENCE:

Several generalizations can be made about the respondent's reliance on the mass media in this situation. For this group of people, all three of the media types played a major role in providing information. As sources for information verification, there were no significant differences between the newspaper, television and radio. Exposure to all the media was high, as was attention to local news items. What differences that did exist centered on television. Television was perceived as less accessible, and it was evaluated less positively than the newspaper or radio.

One of the more interesting findings related to the role of radio in this situation. While not generally noted for its news, radio was perceived by the influentials as being equivalently accessible as the newspaper and was evaluated as positively. Radio was particularly accessible



for information about the actions of groups regardless of their issue position. This suggests that radio may play a more significant role in the process of information flow at the community level than has been assumed in past research. More research is needed in this area to clarify the place of radio in the information environment. If the significance of radio news is generalizable to other communities on other issues, there is a need to explore whether its significance is a function of inherent characteristics of radio as a medium or whether its significance arises due to the greater competition that exists between radio stations in larger communities such as Lima. Such a competitive structure rarely exists between newspapers and television stations in such mid-sized communities.

#### LIMITATIONS:

There were a number of limitations to this study which must be considered when evaluating its results. Certain generalizations were made in this chapter about media dependence, information seeking and the information environment within which influential members of the community functioned. While those generalizations seem to be supported by the data, some care must be taken when translating them to other influentials in other communities. While case studies such as this are a valuable source of information about specific cases, assessing the generalizability of the results can only be effectively determined by comparing across several case studies of the same type.

In addressing data from a case study, the researcher is faced with the problem of determining what is idiosyncratic to the situation in

question and what is the general pattern that extends beyond the specific situation. While estimations can be made, they must be held as tenuous without evidence from other case studies. Comparisons among case studies allow researchers to trace patterns across varying situations and separate them from anomalous findings arising from the unique nature of a specific situation. Many of the findings reported here are consistent with other research, many others lack other empirical support from other studies. Those findings must be considered as suggestive but at this time by no means conclusive.

At a more specific level, community selection procedures were not designed to isolate a representative mid-Western community. Instead, the community was selected based on certain pragmatic needs of the researcher. Though Lima compares favorably with the pluralistic communities studied by Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980), this is insufficient evidence to argue for Lima's representativeness. The representativeness of the subjects in this study in terms of dependence on mediated and non-mediated sources must also be held as problematic. There is evidence to suggest that the respondents cannot be considered as representative of the community as a whole. The sample selection procedures separated out only the most active participants in the issue, thus clearly separating them from their more apathetic counterparts. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) noted that such people "are in many ways marginal members of the local community" (101). Whether the influentials in this study can be considered as representative of other influentials is a mute point. There is insufficient evidence to make a conclusive decision on this point.

There were a series of conditions in the civic center issue which are potentially idiosyncratic. With the data available, it is impossible to determine whether the handling of the issue by the media represents the coverage of other issues in the community. Further, there is no way to address the questions relating to "gatekeeping" decisions made by individual reporters and editors. As Chaffee (1979) noted, accessibility is a function of both the individuals' access to a source and the amount and nature of the information available from that source. While attempts were made to assure that all three media sources carried information about the civic center, the exact nature of presentation and nature of the information was unavailable. There is, then, no way to assess differential coverage effects as they relate to media dependence.

A further complicating factor relates to the fact that the respondents were interviewed only one time in the middle of the conflict resolution process. This decision, while practically necessary, froze what must be considered an ongoing process at one point in time. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) argued that conflict situations proceed through at least three definable stages: initiation, conflict definition and a series of legitimation stages (112). Each of these stages carries with it certain communication needs which differ from stage to stage. It is reasonable to assume that media dependence would also vary across stages. At the time of data collection, the conflict process in Lima was well into the legitimation phase. Indeed, the alternative positions had hardened to the point that negotiation and compromise between the conflicting parties had all but ceased. The crystalized positions may have increased information redundancy through all sources. Such an increase in redundancy

may have affected the subjects' abilities to discriminate among sources particularly in terms of accessibility. The more general point, though, is that those data cannot address the question of whether media dependence alters based on the conditions of the controversy.

The nature of the measurement procedures also added some potential ambiguity to the findings. Both the accessibility and cross-checking items asked the respondents to determine how likely it was that he/she had received specific types of information from a source or how likely it was that he/she had cross-checked information from another source with a specialized source. In essence the items asked the respondents to generalize their experience as opposed to specifying a particular situation or time frame. This measurement approach potentially reduces the reliability of the responses. The logic behind asking the more general items was to reduce the impact of gatekeeping decisions or lack of coverage during the interview process. At the same time, the more general items were further removed from specific access or cross-checking behaviors. This is a significant consideration when one considers the correlations between media exposure and media accessibility. For all three media sources, the correlation between the two indices was high. It is difficult to attribute a precise interpretation to those findings since exposure is much more closely tied to actual behavior than accessibility. Since the two indices are of a different order of measurement, the correlation coefficients may in part be explained by the different nature of the indices. The correlation and regression findings in particular must be considered in this light.

Finally, the statistical procedures used in this study also provided potential limitations in evaluation of the results. As noted in the third chapter, the group of respondents may best be considered as a population not a sample. If this is indeed the case, the use of statistics was inappropriate. Further, in using statistical procedures, the assumption of random selection of subjects has been violated. The statistical results, then, should be considered as rough indicators but should not be considered as conclusive.

Within the parameters set by these limitations, the results and findings of this study may best be generalized to community influentials in communities of a similar size and composition. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) provide clear evidence of the importance of structural characteristics in determining the role of the media and an audience's media dependence. Assuming the same social structural characteristics, similar results should occur. Further, the findings will probably hold true for communities which have the same mix of media. The interaction between the media in a community will effect media dependence. Thus, the mix of the media is a crucial consideration in generalizing these findings.

#### IMPLICATIONS:

As with any piece of exploratory research, this study offers more questions than it answers. One of the dominant concerns in the formulation of the project was to address and operationalize the concept of media dependence as articulated by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976). An elaborated dependence model was constructed to extend the accessibility bound model by including source evaluation and information verification constructs.

The results of this study suggest that the addition of these constructs add further richness to our understanding of media dependence. If the analyses had concentrated only on accessibility type measures, the ability to discriminate among dependence on mediated sources and dependence on non-mediated sources would have been severely retarded. With the addition of the cross-checking indices, in particular, the dependence on interpersonal sources became clear for the influentials in Lima. It seems apparent that media dependence is a far more complex process than suggested by the accessibility model.

From the results it can be suggested that, at least in some cases, the explanatory power of media exposure and other accessibility measures can reach an optimal level beyond which other factors must be addressed. Accessibility is a necessary but not sufficient condition in understanding the role of mediated and non-mediated sources in the flow of information through a social system. If a person has access to only one source of information, accessibility is likely to be the preeminent factor in explaining that person's information environment. But as sources proliferate, the explanatory power of accessibility must be augmented by other factors. In the situation under study in which accessibility to a number of sources was high, evaluation and cross-checking provided this extra information.

It should be noted that the addition of those two constructs was not meant to alter in any substantial way the basic media dependence model. Instead, the two constructs were added as a means of increasing the precision in measuring dependence. The results were consistent with what

might be predicted by the Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) model. That is, influentials in this study were more dependent on interpersonal sources for information that was readily available through those channels, in this case information about the activities of the influential's own group, and they were more dependent on mediated channels for information that was less readily available through interpersonal sources, information about the activities of the opposition groups. In general, it can be posited that community influentials are more dependent on interpersonal sources than mediated sources because they have access to expert information through their interpersonal network. This is quite consistent with the dependence model. The emphasis on expert information is crucial, though. If one moves beyond accessibility and considers that audience members attribute credulity to information as suggested by Chaffee (1979), media dependence is a function of both availability of information through a channel and the audience's perception of the believability of that information.

The differences between the opposition and the supporters of the civic center, while only suggestive, are interesting. Though the two groups did not differ significantly in their overall accessibility to information sources, there were noticeable differences in both evaluation of sources and in cross-checking behaviors. The opposition attributed less positive evaluations to all sources and were more likely to cross-check information through all sources than were the supporters. Though both groups evaluated interpersonal contacts more positively than mediated sources and were more likely to cross-check with interpersonal contacts than with mediated sources, the opposition evaluated and used

the sources differently. While the implications of these differences must be held as tenuous due to the small size of the opposition, the results suggest several directions for further research.

The differences in both cross-checking and evaluation seem to be a function of how the opposition perceived themselves in relation to the power structure of the community as well as their perception of the relation the media outlets had with the power structure. It was clear that the opposition viewed themselves and were viewed by the supporters as outside the mainstream of the community socially, economically and politically. It was also clear that the opposition viewed the media, to varying extents, as an arm of the power structure in the community. This was particularly true of the radio stations. The orientation to the system manifested by the opposition seems to have led to a different orientation to information sources. Opposition members had an apparent distrust of all sources when compared to supporters. This distrust appears to have been manifested in increased cross-verification behaviors through all sources whether they were mediated or non-mediated.

This implies that an audience member's position within the social system seems to affect how that person uses the media. Position within the social system does not necessarily refer to objectified criteria such as social class, occupation and the like. Instead, it refers to an audience member's perception of his/her role in the social system in relation to the perceived role of the components of the system. Interviews with the opposition in general indicated that opposition members perceived the supporters as a small group of social and political elite who were attempting to run the community in their own interests. They also perceived



the media as only an arm of the power elite. This necessitated more cross-checking of information since all information was treated as problematic by the opposition. Orientation to the system as a construct may not be directly related to accessibility to information sources but may well be related to how accessible information is evaluated and used.

It may be worthwhile at this point to refer back to the pluralism-stratification controversy discussed at length in the first chapter. The discussion above seems to suggest that a stratification model was functioning in Lima. One must not consider the pluralism-stratification issue as unidimensional, though. It is clear that many of the respondents in the community perceived the power structure in Lima along stratification lines. This was particularly true for the opposition but was also true to only a slightly lesser extent for the supporters. The fact that the residents behaved as if power conformed to a stratification perspective does not necessarily invalidate the use of a pluralistic perspective in this study. There are several reasons for this. First, simply because the perceptions of the power structure among the members of a community can be interpreted in terms of a stratification model does not equate with the conclusion that the community power structure should be interpreted along stratification lines by the researcher. A pluralistic model may still be the most appropriate means of assessing power and influence in the community.

Second, the civic center issue is not a useful issue to make assessments about the competing models. Because the issue is inherently an economic one, both models are likely to define the same power structure. One would expect that the economic elite of Lima would be actively

involved in an issue of this sort. Thus, either model will generally define the same individuals. The key point, though, is that the perception among the members of the community as to the nature of the power structure seems to relate to the way the media are used. Media dependence may be generally related, at least in some cases, to how groups differently assess the nature of the power structure. Tichenor, Donohue and Olien (1980) posited a similar perspective. They tentatively suggested that the perceived power of a group in a conflict situation may relate to the level of media dependence. While this study cannot shed light on this question, the results seem to lend further support for exploration into the issue.

#### DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

There are a series of questions arising out of this study that warrant further research. It is necessary to replicate this study in other communities using different issues. As with any case study, it is extremely difficult to determine what is idiosyncratic to the particular case and what is a generalizable pattern. The findings of this study are suggestive of patterns of media dependence among community influentials but further validation is necessary. It may also be useful to explore the utility of the information received through various channels. By default, this study has treated all information received from the sources in question as equally useful. An exploration into the differential utility of information may add further richness to our understanding of media dependence.

In actuality, it may be that the issue of utility of information is one of the key variables in dependence research. It is apparent that the influentials in this study had relatively easy access to expert information about the civic center from interpersonal sources. Nonetheless, there was relatively high use of the media for information. It may be significant to discover whether all the sources are merely redundant, or whether they serve complementary functions. Bogart (1968-1969) noted that differences between television and newspaper allow each to complement the other by fulfilling interests aroused by the other and by exploring different aspects of the same event. It may be true that interpersonal and mediated sources serve the same complementary roles. Audience motivations for information seeking through a particular medium needs to be further researched.

An analysis of the media messages themselves would also be warranted. As noted earlier, accessibility is not totally restricted to the audience. The selection process within the news organizations also has an effect on the overall accessibility of information. This study was not designed to address this issue but it is clearly significant in understanding media dependence.

A further question relates to the generalizability of these findings to the larger audience. The population under study might well be considered idiosyncratic when compared to a general sample of Lima residents. The process of active participation in an issue of this sort sets those participants apart from their more apathetic peers. One of the more obvious discriminating variables is salience of issue. The vast majority of the respondents in this study found the issue highly salient

and tended to actively seek information. Such information seeking behavior should lead to increased accessibility and increased cross-verification behaviors. A study including a more heterogeneous group of people with varying levels of salience would tell us substantially more about cross-checking in particular. One might expect that the likelihood of cross-checking would decline as salience declines. It is less clear as to whether the relationship between source-specific cross-checking behaviors would also alter. It might be expected, though, that as expert information received through interpersonal sources declines, the relationship between cross-checking with mediated and non-mediated sources would alter.

The findings in this study also suggest that there may be clusters of people within a community who have distinct patterns of media dependence. The opposition group may have a following within Lima who are equally distrustful of the power structure and who manifest the same cross-checking behaviors. This sort of orientation to the system may be a useful means of defining dependence clusters.

Finally, and possibly most significantly, there is a need to relate this measure of media dependence to an effects model. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) constructed the media dependence construct as part of a media effects model. Whether the elaborated model presented here is useful only as a descriptive tool or whether it is useful in explaining media effects needs to be directly addressed in future research.

## APPENDIX A

### Letter of Introduction

A study of the process of urban redevelopment at the community level will soon be conducted in your community under the auspices of the Department of Communication, The Ohio State University. Dr. Thomas McCain, Associate Professor of Communication, and I will be interviewing a number of influential residents in Lima about their experiences with urban redevelopment. Your community, along with several others, has been selected because Lima has been actively involved in this process for several years. Our major purpose in this research is to study how community members obtain and use information in making decisions about the course of urban redevelopment in your community. We are particularly interested in the issues surrounding the construction of the Town Square Memorial Civic Center.

In our preliminary research you were mentioned as a person who has actively participated in the decision making process relating to the construction of the Civic Center. As an active member of the community, your insights are of great importance to us. We will be contacting you in the next several weeks to ask you to complete a questionnaire dealing with your sources of information about Civic Center related issues, with particular emphasis on the role of newspaper, television and radio coverage in providing you with such information. This will be followed by a short personal interview scheduled at your convenience. Of course, all comments you make on the questionnaire and during the personal interview will be held in the strictest confidence.

I am looking forward to the opportunity of talking with you. Let me thank you in advance for aiding us in this project.

Sincerely

Donald L. Fry  
Doctoral Candidate  
Department of Communication  
The Ohio State University

## APPENDIX B

### Survey Instrument

The major purpose of this research project is to develop a better understanding of how communities make decisions about urban redevelopment. One of the important factors in any decision-making process is the availability of information about an urban redevelopment related issue. This questionnaire deals with your reliance on different sources of information about the Town Square Memorial Civic Center project and your evaluation of the quality of the information you have received from those sources over the course of the issue. We are aware that the issue over the construction of the civic center has been an ongoing one in Lima and some of what has occurred may not be fresh in your mind. Nonetheless, we would like you to think carefully about the questions which follow and answer them as accurately as you can. We will be asking you a series of questions about your attitudes and opinions relating to the construction of the civic center during a short personal interview several days after you have completed this questionnaire. If you have any questions or confusion over any instructions or specific questions included here we will clarify them at that time.

The vast majority of questions you will be answering in this questionnaire have the same structure. You will be asked a question followed by a series of responses from which to choose. For instance, question #2 on the next page asks you to circle the number which represents the amount of attention you pay to stories about Lima and Allen County in the Lima News. Beside the question are a series of numbers from 1 to 7 organized in the following way:

Very Close					No	
Attention					Attention	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

To answer this question you should circle the number which you feel describes the amount of attention you pay to local news stories. If you pay very close attention circle 1: if you pay no attention circle 7. The lower the number the more attention you pay to local news stories in the newspaper, the higher the number the less attention you pay. Other questions will ask you to use "very important" to "not at all important" or "very likely" to "not likely" in the same fashion. There are also a few questions which ask you to express your opinions on certain issues in writing. We would like to thank you for your commitment to complete this questionnaire and we are looking forward to talking with you personally after you have completed it.

The first seven questions deal with your use of the newspaper, and radio and television news to keep informed about what is going on around Lima and Allen County.

1. During an average week how many days do you read the Lima News? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Many people pay close attention to local news stories in the newspaper while others pay very little attention to local news stories. Circle the number which represents the amount of attention you pay to stories about Lima and Allen County in the Lima News.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Very Close |   |   |   |   |   | No        |
| Attention  |   |   |   |   |   | Attention |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |

3. During an average week how many days do you watch the local news on local television?
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Circle the number which represents the amount of attention you pay to stories about Lima and Allen county when watching the local news on television.
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Very Close |   |   |   |   |   | No        |
| Attention  |   |   |   |   |   | Attention |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |

5. During an average week how many days do you hear the local news on one of the local radio stations?
- \_\_\_\_\_

6. How many newscasts do you usually hear on the radio during an average day?
- \_\_\_\_\_

7. Circle the number which represents the amount of attention you pay to stories about Lima and Allen County when listening to the local news on radio?
- |            |   |   |   |   |   |           |
|------------|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Very Close |   |   |   |   |   | No        |
| Attention  |   |   |   |   |   | Attention |
| 1          | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7         |

Our experience in other communities has indicated that people involved in community issues generally express some interest in three types of information: information about the activities of organized groups which are actively involved in an issue of community interest; information about the attitudes and opinions of other people involved in the issue; and information about the up to the minute developments during the course of an issue. The next few questions will ask you to rate the importance of each of these types of information to you as it relates to the civic center. Please circle the number beside each question which represents the importance of each to you over the course of this issue.

8. Over the course of this issue, how important has it been for you to keep up with the activities of groups which hold a position on the civic center which is similar to the one you hold?
- |           |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
| Very      |   |   |   |   |   | Not At All |
| Important |   |   |   |   |   | Important  |
| 1         | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7          |

9. How important has it been for you to keep up with the activities of groups which hold a different or opposing position to yours on the civic center?
- |                |   |   |   |   |   |                      |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
| Very Important |   |   |   |   |   | Not At All Important |
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                    |
10. How important has it been for you to seek out information about the attitudes and opinions of other people involved in the civic center issue?
- |                |   |   |   |   |   |                      |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
| Very Important |   |   |   |   |   | Not At All Important |
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                    |
11. How important has it been for you to keep up with any changes or developments in this issue?
- |                |   |   |   |   |   |                      |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------------|
| Very Important |   |   |   |   |   | Not At All Important |
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7                    |

In the space below would you briefly describe what specific information you have sought out, that is, the information about the civic center which has been of particular interest to you.

One of our primary concerns in this study is to assess where people get information about issues related to the construction of the civic center. The next series of questions will deal with four different sources of information from which people could get information about the civic center. Please circle the number beside each question which represents how likely it has been that you have received civic center related information from that source.

12. When a group with a similar position on the civic center has taken some action related to the civic center, how likely is it that you would hear about that action from:
- |  |             |   |   |   |   |   |            |
|--|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------|
|  | Very Likely |   |   |   |   |   | Not Likely |
| the local newspaper?                             | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7          |
| the local television station?                    | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7          |
| the local radio stations?                        | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7          |
| talking with other people involved in the issue? | 1           | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7          |
13. When a group with a different or opposing position on the civic center has taken some action related to the civic center, how likely is it that you would



have heard about that action from:	Very Likely						Not Likely
the local newspaper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local television station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local radio stations?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
talking with other people involved in the issue?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

During the course of this issue a number of people have expressed their attitudes and opinions about the construction of the civic center. The next set of questions will ask you to rate how likely it has been that you have received information about other people's attitudes and opinions from the sources discussed above.

14. How likely is it that you would hear about the attitudes and opinions of other people involved in the civic center issue from:

the local newspaper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local television station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local radio stations?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
talking with other people involved in the issue?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Community issues such as the civic center usually produce a lot of discussion both among individuals and through the news media. In some cases such discussions deal with information people are already familiar with and in other cases those discussions deal with new information, that is, information people did not already know.

15. How likely is it that you would hear about new and unfamiliar information about the civic center from:

the local newspaper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local television station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local radio stations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
talking with other people involved in the issue?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

We would now like you to think about the quality of the information you have received about the civic center over the course of the issue. The next series of questions will ask you to rate the accuracy, thoroughness and biasedness of the information you have received about the civic center. We would first like you to rate the thoroughness of the information you have received from the sources we have been discussing. Please circle the number which represents how thorough you feel each source has been in your opinion. By thoroughness we mean the likelihood that a source has provided you with all information available on the civic center.

16. In general, how thorough has the information been from:

	Very Thorough					Not Thorough	
the local newspaper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local television station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local radio station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
talking with other people involved in the issue?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Now we would like you to think about the accuracy of the information you have received which dealt with the civic center. By accuracy we mean the likelihood that a source has provided you with information which is correct and accurate.

17. To the best of your knowledge, how accurate has the information about the civic center been from:

	Very Accurate					Not Accurate	
the local newspaper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local television station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local radio station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
talking with other people involved in the issue?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Would you now think about how biased or slanted the information is you have received which dealt with the civic center. By biasedness or slantedness we mean the likelihood that a source will provide information that advocates one position or another, that is, information that is slanted towards one position over another. By circling a "1" you would be indicating that the information you have received from the source only presented one side of the issue; by circling a "7" you would be indicating that the information you have received presented all sides of the issue equally well with no favoritism.

18. How biased or slanted has the information about the civic center been from:

	Very Biased					Not Biased	
the local newspaper?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local television station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
the local radio station?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
talking with other people involved in the issue?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In the space below would you comment on your feelings about how the local news media have covered the civic center issue.

People vary considerably in how they use different sources of information when they are seeking information about issues of concern to them. One of the ways some people use these sources is to cross-check or verify information they have heard about from other sources. The next series of questions will ask you how likely it is that you would check the information received from one source with other sources. In answering these questions you should think about a situation in which you have received new information about a development or change in the civic center issue from the source indicated.

19. If you were to receive new information about the civic center from the newspaper, how likely is it that you would attempt to verify that information by:

	Very Likely					Not Likely	
watching the local television news?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
listening to the local radio news?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
asking someone you know about the information?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20. If you were to receive new information about the civic center from watching television news, how likely is it that you would attempt to verify that information by:

- |   | Very<br>Likely |   |   |   |   |   | Not<br>Likely |
|---|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---------------|
| reading the newspaper?                              | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7             |
| listening to the local<br>radio news?               | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7             |
| talking with other people<br>involved in the issue. | 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7             |
21. If you were to receive new information about the civic center from listening to radio news, how likely is it that you would attempt to verify that information by:
- |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| reading the newspaper?                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| watching the local television news?              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| talking with other people involved in the issue? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
22. If you were to receive new information about the civic center from talking with other people you know, how likely is it that you would attempt to verify that information by:
- |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| reading the newspaper?                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| watching the local television news?                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| listening to the local radio news?                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| asking someone else you know about the information. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

The final few questions in this questionnaire deal with the influence each of the sources of information have had on your own attitudes and opinions on the civic center project. Please think for a moment about the development of your own attitudes and opinions on this issue and about any changes or alterations in the way you have thought about the issue over the last few years. The questions below will ask you to rate how influential you feel the four sources we have been discussing have been in the formation of and any changes or alterations in your attitudes and opinions.

23. How influential have the following sources been on your attitudes and opinions about the civic center project:

	Very Influential					Not At All Influential	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
newspaper coverage of the issue?							
television coverage of the issue?							
radio coverage of the issue?							
discussions with other people involved in the issue.							

In the space below would you comment on what impact you feel the local news media's coverage of the civic center has had on you and on the course of the issue as it has developed over the last few years.

This completes the questionnaire. We would like to thank you for the care and attention you have given to the questions. If you have any questions about this questionnaire or about the project we will be more than happy to answer them during the personal interview.

Personal Interview: Urban Redevelopment, Lima, Ohio

Respondent Number \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Date \_\_\_\_\_

Interview Time \_\_\_\_\_

1. The issues surrounding the building of the civic center have been prominent in Lima for several years. Some people have questioned whether the civic center should be built while others have staunchly supported the project. What are your feelings about the construction of the civic center?

1. Should be built
2. Undecided/Ambivalent
3. Should not be built

Comments:

2. Have your opinions changed over the course of the issue?

1. Yes, changed
2. No, not changed

3. (IF YES) How would you say your opinions have changed?

4. What caused you to change your position on the civic center?

5. People involved in the civic center issue have expressed a number of different concerns about the civic center project. What do you feel are the two most significant issues relating to the civic center that have arisen over the last few years for you personally?

1.

2.

I am going to read you a list of statements which describe issues relating to the construction of the civic center that some people have raised. As I read each issue would you tell me how important each has been to you personally using this set of responses: very important, important, not very important, and not at all important.

- |  |         |        |          |           |
|--|---------|--------|----------|-----------|
| 6. Funding provided by federal, county and local government should not be used in constructing the civic center.             | vi<br>1 | i<br>2 | nvi<br>3 | naai<br>4 |
| 7. The civic center is needed to increase convention business in Lima  | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |
| 8. Decisions about the use of funds earmarked for the civic center have been made behind closed doors.                       | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |
| 9. Construction of the civic center is necessary to encourage further redevelopment in the downtown area.                    | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |
| 10. Decisions about the use of funds earmarked for the civic center have not been in accordance with state and local laws.   | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |
| 11. Construction of the civic center is important in the further economic development of Lima and Allen County.              | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |
| 12. The civic center will not produce enough revenues to pay for itself.   | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |
| 13. The civic center will increase the tax base of the community.  | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |
| 14. Money being used to construct the civic center could be better used to refurbish and remodel already existing buildings. | 1       | 2      | 3        | 4         |

In the next few questions I would like to ask some general information about your discussions with other people relating to the civic center.

- |   |        |          |            |        |
|---|--------|----------|------------|--------|
| 15. Over the last few years would you say that a lot of people have asked your opinion about the civic center, a few people have asked your opinion, or no one has asked your opinion about the civic center? | A<br>4 | Lot<br>2 | A Few<br>0 | No One |
|---|--------|----------|------------|--------|

16. If someone you know said that he or she depended a great deal on your judgement regarding the civic center would you believe that person?
- |  |     |          |          |     |    |
|--|-----|----------|----------|-----|----|
|  | Yes | Probably | Probably | Not | No |
|  | 4   | 3        | 2        | 1   | 0  |
17. Compared to your circle of friends are you more likely or less likely to be asked for your opinions about the civic center?
- |  |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|
|  | More | Same | Less |
|  | 4    | 2    | 0    |
18. How important is it to you to be considered a person whose opinions on the civic center are well founded, is it very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?
- |  |   |   |    |    |
|--|---|---|----|----|
|  | V | S | NV | NA |
|  | 3 | 2 | 1  | 0  |
19. Would you say that you have had more discussions about the civic center with people who agree with you on the civic center, more discussions with people who disagree with you, or have your discussions been about equally divided?
- |  |    |   |    |
|--|----|---|----|
|  | MA | E | MD |
|  | 3  | 2 | 1  |
20. Are you now or have you in the past been a member of an organization or organized group which has been actively involved in the civic center issue?
- |  |     |    |
|--|-----|----|
|  | Yes | No |
|  | 1   | 2  |
21. (IF YES) And which organizations would that be?
- | Name of organization | Financial Contributions | Member of Committee | Offices |
|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| 1.                   |                         |                     |         |
| 2.                   |                         |                     |         |
| 3.                   |                         |                     |         |
| 4.                   |                         |                     |         |
22. The final part of this questionnaire deals with activities in the community apart from the civic center issue. Would you list for me the organizations you presently hold membership in. An organization can be any active and organized group such as a club, lodge, business, professional, political or religious organization, labor union or the like.





32. What is your approximate household income for the last year?

1. Under 10,000
2. 10 to 15,000
3. 15 to 20,000
4. 20 to 25,000
5. 25 to 30,000
6. 30 to 40,000
7. More than 40,000
9. NA

I have one more question for you and we are finished. In any community issue there are people who are very visible in their activities on the issue of concern and there are others who tend to work behind the scenes. The people I have talked with so far are very visible in their activities in relationship to the civic center, but I have not had the opportunity to talk with the less visible people who are active in this issue. Are there any people you know of who have been active in this issue but are not highly visible to someone from outside the community?

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