

RE: NEWSPAPER CODE

The concern with the Newspaper Code this year was the considerable time it took to code. However, it appears that this was largely a function of the change in sampling frame since the last time we used the code (1980-Post). Also, the Rolling Cross-Section further increased the new sample points, adding considerably to the number of new papers mentioned. In 1984 Pre-Election we coded 88 newspapers that were not part of the 1980 Newspaper Code, and for Rolling Cross-Section we coded 174 new papers. (In addition, there was a large number of mentions that remained in "other" category--309 in Pre-Election and 1059 in Rolling Cross-Section.) In contrast, from the 1978 survey to the 1980 survey, studies based on the same sampling frame, we had to add only 11 newspapers. If this small number of addition is typical for studies based on the same sampling frame, then for subsequent surveys based on the SRC 1980 sampling frame for NES we should have a fairly complete Newspaper Code. However, if a Rolling Cross-Section component is added or if the number of PAs is increased, we may again see a large number of newspapers.

Even though we may not face too much difficulty coding newspapers until the sampling frame changes again (with the 1990 census), we may want to think about the utility and efficiency of this coding process. We get quite a variety of papers and many with only a few mentions. The list of papers on the following page, based on the Pre-Election survey, reports all papers (N=32) that received 1% or more of the total number of mentions (N=2649). These papers constitute almost half (46%) of all mentions. The remaining 54% of the mentions are spread across 194 papers and 309 mentions that remained in the "other" category; a considerable number of these papers received only a few mentions.

The question we need answered is how useful the Newspaper Code is in its present form--coding just name of paper and city of publication. We also need to determine how useful it is to code papers that have only a few mentions. Below is a description of the coding process and possible alternatives to this procedure.

Coding Procedure: For any paper mentioned that is not in the code, the coders wrote a MAKE CARD for the staff. Coders were complaining about the amount of cards they had to write. (We do not have any actual count of the number of cards but a realistic, probably low, estimate is 500.) The staff accumulated and sorted the cards. Any paper that was mentioned 3 or more times was added to the code after verifying that the paper was a daily and determining the correct, complete name. This process was rather time-consuming for several reasons:

- There was no single, complete listing of U.S. newspapers. It was often necessary to consult several different sources to determine the name of the paper and if the paper was a daily.
- The complete name of the paper was not always provided, making it difficult to identify multiple mentions and to be sure which paper R was referring to.

--Often a paper had evening, morning, and Sunday editions and it was difficult to determine which edition R was referring to. We also had the question of whether the morning and evening editions of a paper should be coded as two mentions. (We did code as two mentions.)

Alternatives:

- Continue as is, if users are satisfied with the code and find the coding of papers with few mentions useful. Including this question only in the Pre/Post and not in a Rolling Cross Section component would confine the number of new papers considerably.
- Set the threshold higher and add a paper only after it has a considerable number of mentions. (This would still necessitate the writing of MAKE CARDS by coders and the compiling of cards by staff.)
- Devise a different coding scheme which would include more information about the papers and allow some collapsing of codes. (This option would require considerable investment of time and should not be undertaken unless we are sure there is considerable usage for such a code.)
- Code only papers with a certain (high) circulation--nationally and in the PAs of the survey.
- Collect the names of the papers but do not code them.

1984  
(see section on survey)

There was a total of 2649 papers mentioned, summing across the three responses. The <sup>32</sup> papers listed below were the most frequently mentioned and are ordered here by number of mention.

Paper

15 m.

Mentions

#      %

Wall Street Journal	79	3.0
Los Angeles Times	66	2.5
USA Today	63	2.4
New York Times	51	1.9
Milwaukee Journal	51	1.9
Eugene Register-Guard	50	1.9
Des Moines Register	44	1.7
Detroit Free Press	43	1.6
Buffalo Evening News	42	1.6
New York News	41	1.5
San Francisco Chronicle	40	1.5
Elmira Star Gazette (NY)	37	1.4
Rawlins Times (WY)	35	1.3
Shelbyville Times Gazette (TN)	35	1.3
Lakeland Ledger (FL)	34	1.3
Grand Rapids Press	34	1.3
Port Huron Times Herald (MI)	34	1.3
Manchester Union Leader	33	1.2
Statesboro Herald (GA)	33	1.2
Chicago Sun Times	32	1.2
Houston Post	32	1.2
Ledger-Enquirer (GA)	32	1.2
Fresno Bee	31	1.2
The Robisonian (NC)	30	1.1
Chicago Tribune	28	1.1
Milwaukee Sentinel	27	1.0
Atlantic City Press	27	1.0
Denver Rocky Mountain NEWS (CO)	26	1.0
New York Post	26	1.0
Sacramento Bee	26	1.0
Birmingham News (AL)	26	1.0
Daily Herald (Plainview, TX)	26	1.0
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	1214	45.8%

