NEWSPAPERS, TELEVISION AND POLITICAL REASONING

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One of the most powerful hopes advanced by theories of representative government is that news media remain free so they may educate the public in making political choices.* Ignorance condemns people to sway with the most available rhetoric. The uninformed person chooses randomly or out of habit to support candidates or policies.[1] Often he or she avoids the political arena altogether -- perhaps because of hedonism or alienation.[2]

Researchers should take pains, therefore, to plot the educational role of journalism. The character of this role, and how different media share in it, may yield hints about the future for rationality and order in American political life.[3]

Studies have recently confirmed that this educational role exists, despite solemn, sociological pronouncements a few years back about "minimal effects". Agenda-setting by media is widely recognized now.[4] Learning about public affairs from media has been documented, holding competing explanations constant.[5]

This paper presents two amplifications. The first is to detail the relative contributions of newspapers and television to the public informing process. These contributions may interest students of the American political future who note the steady slippage in per capita circulation of newspapers and the equally persistent rise in minutes spent viewing television news.[6]

This shift may produce changes in levels of political understanding.[7] Or, it is possible that informing functions traditionally served by newspapers are being assumed by electronic journalism.[8, 9] The first findings reported below shed light on these alternative outcomes.

A second goal is to discern whether characteristics of media offered to citizens play a part in how informed people are. For reasons that will be made clear, amount of newspaper competition in markets represents a key feature of media for understanding public information about political affairs.

Since competition among newspapers is thought to be declining, any relationship between competition and levels of information would have implications for the future course of American political behavior.

Knowing about public affairs.

What is the proper meaning that should define being "informed"? The present analysis argues that possessing information about public affairs means having reasons for favoring or rejecting political alternatives.

Having reasons for perceiving or acting equips a person to explain choices -- to self as well as others -- lending order and pattern to political action. Reasons provide a cognitive framework for acquiring and processing additional information. Helping people develop reasons (to suit their own beliefs) is a goal to which schools and news media aspire.

This survey interviewed people at length about their reasons for supporting or rejecting political contenders in an important race -- the election for United States Senator in their state. Other arenas of choice would have been appropriate. But the senatorial contest can be used to compare the informing functions of two competing media systems, daily newspapers and television.

The analysis will not dwell on the specific reasons people offer. As one would expect some citizens have no choice at all for U.S. Senator, or having chosen can present no explanation for their preference. Other people express reasons of a discouragingly conventional sort. A tiny minority fulfill the hopes of their civics teachers by enlarging on the candidates' policy positions or advantages that would accrue to certain groups if one were elected instead of the other.

Expressing some reasons for senatorial choice, however primitive, is a precondition for having an elaborate point of view. The following analysis might be described as tracing the minimum conditions for an informed citizenry.[10]

Using media for public affairs information.

Contrary to popular opinion, research demonstrates that the public relies on newspapers somewhat more than television for political news.[11] Both vehicles are especially important in state and local affairs untouched by magazine journalism.

This study considers extent of exposure to newspapers and television news, as potentially informing vehicles. It also notes whether people discriminate political messages in these media. As findings will show, message discrimination represents the more direct and powerful contribution to learning.

The concept of message discrimination has been examined elsewhere.[12] It is meant to replace the conventional idea of gross media use as evidence that communication events have transpired. Instead, the amount of communication people have experienced is reflected by their reports of having discriminated symbols about specified topics, not by minutes spent exposed to media or frequency of reading or viewing.

To measure message discrimination, the interview asked two kinds of questions that provided maximum opportunity to relate the political messages people found in media. One is whether they had read or seen anything having to do with an election campaign, recently concluded. The other is whether they had read or seen messages having to do with national political issues that they nominated as important earlier in the interview.

As with the definition of information-holding, the concept of message discrimination provides latitude for people to report behavior they feel relevant to the political scene.

Links between communication and knowing.

The relationship between what media convey about politics and growth in public awareness surely depends on a variety of factors. Statistical controls might be imposed for many variables -- race, income, sex of respondent, and more.

A narrower path is followed here in order to concentrate attention on people's skills in making effective use of media and on their likely motivations for doing so. One step is to hold constant the level of formal education. This major stratification variable correlates powerfully with use of media and with knowing and participating in public affairs. Furthermore, media differ in the educational attainment of the audiences they reach. In the present analysis education serves as a shorthand measure of ability.

People differ, also, in their willingness to follow public affairs. Some have been socialized by circumstances as well as institutions to concern themselves with political outcomes.

With education and interest controlled, there is some assurance that the remaining variance arises from the information environment to which people are exposed. This environment can fluctuate according to the demands of political events and the way in which events, like campaigns, are reported.

RESEARCH METHODS

Data originate from detailed personal interviews with a weighted sample of 1,883 adults, a cross-section of the American public in states with Senate elections in 1974. The sample was selected by multi-stage, probability methods. Research design, field supervision of data collection, coding and documentation were conducted according to high standards of the Center for Political Studies in the Institute for Social Research at Michigan. Details can be found elsewhere.[13]

Interviewing took place following the off-year congressional election; this analysis is confined to 25 states in the continental region where the Center had designated sample points and where senatorial elections were underway. Sample clusters of households represent 67 media markets, ranging from metropolitan giants like New York and San Francisco to rural hamlets in Pitt

County, North Carolina and Randolph County, Illinois. In the middle are such varied media locales as Louisville, Tulsa, Salt Lake City, Tulare, Bridgeport, and more.

One might examine these data in two ways: First at the level of individual behavior, correlating variables across persons, or second by aggregating data within media markets and correlating across them.

The second strategy is followed in order to focus toward the end on a characteristic of media markets that may be associated with how informed people are. This characteristic is the level of media competition -- the potential, at least, for a diversity of voices about public affairs, or a multitude of news presentations available to the public.[14]

Measures.

The criterion variable is having reasons for liking or disliking the two major party candidates for Senate. The questions read:

> "Was there anything in particular about the Democratic (Republican) candidate for Senator that made you want to vote for (against) him (her)?"

Respondents were quizzed extensively about likes and dislikes, and as many as twelve were coded into an elaborate system of content categories.[15]

Admittedly the measure favors people who consider themselves participants in the political process. Respondents who resolved not to vote after they studied the contenders and decided neither was worth support might have disclaimed having reasons to "vote for" or "against". They would thus be misclassified in terms of the meaning we attach to this measure -- a reflection of having reasons for political choice.[16]

Reading newspapers and viewing television news were measured with conventional items. Message discrimination, as already explained, used one set of questions asking whether the respondent had read anything or seen any programs

about the recent campaign, and another battery inquiring into reading and viewing about an important national problem the respondent had nominated and discussed earlier in the interview. Descriptions of these messages were also content analyzed according to a detailed coding scheme.[17]

Interest in public affairs was measured early in the interview with the following item:

> "Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?"

RESULTS

Predicting information holding.

Correlations are first examined between having reasons for choice between senatorial candidates and use of news media. Table 1 shows zero-order coefficients between all predictors and information level. Correlations have been calculated between mean levels for each pair of variables across the 67 news markets in which there were elections for U.S. Senate in 1974.

The limited contribution of television coverage to public information is immediately apparent. Neither TV news viewing nor message discrimination in any television programming correlates significantly with knowing about senatorial contenders. Newspapers contrast by showing large correlations for both number of papers read and amount of message discrimination. Of course, levels of education and political interest in the 67 markets are associated with average information holding.

A more stringent test can be performed for the informing value of television and newspapers, controlling for education and political interest and distinguishing between types of communication variables measured in this study.

Only a minority in the audience is devoted to television news or reads newspapers heavily for their political content. To assess political informing functions one should hold media exposure constant, along with education and interest in public affairs.

Multiple regression invoking all predictors simultaneously represents the appropriate analysis. Table 2 shows the fifth-order partials and standardized betas for each predictor. Overall news viewing and newspaper reading are eliminated as correlates of knowing about senatorial candidates. Discriminating messages in newspapers remains a strong predictor; discriminating messages on television shows a negative relationship that approaches the .05 level of signficance.

Table 1: Zero-order Correlations Between All Predictors and Number of Reasons for Senate Choice

	r
Exposure to TV news throughout day	.10
Number of newspapers read	.45
Discriminating problem and campaign messages on TV	.16
Discriminating problem and campaign messages in papers	.57
Interest in public affairs	.49
Education	.33

$r_{.05} = .24$

N = 67 markets, less one market in the case of TV news exposure for which there was insufficient data.

The partial correlations enclosed by a box in Table 2 (and their betas) supply persuasive evidence for a unique educational role by newspapers. Messages in newspapers confer information beyond what can be expected from general exposure levels. Television may actually exert an inhibiting effect on knowing about politics.[18]

Is this because people simply do not find messages about public affairs on television? Not according to this survey. Average scores are alike for measures of following the campaign and problems in newspapers and television (1.18, compared to 1.15 -- with nearly identical variances).

Table 2: Results of Multiple Regression Between All Predictors and Number of Reasons for Senate Choice

	Fifth-order Partials	Standardized Betas	t-value	Sig-nificanc
Exposure to TV news throughout day	-.06	-.0164	NS	
Number of newspapers read	-.04	-.0490	NS	
Discriminating problem and campaign messages on TV	-.22	-.2431	1.77	.08
Discriminating problem and campaign messages in papers	.33	.5343	2.71	.01
Interest in public affairs	.28	.2969	2.25	.03
Education	.06	.0593	NS	

Multiple R = .64

Are people who discriminate messages in newspapers fundamentally different from people who report this experience with television? Possibly. But that kind of explanation must confront the positive correlation between these two communication behaviors -- a pearson coefficient of .49 at the market level, and a coefficient of .33 at the level of individual analysis.

Are there substantial differences in the kinds of messages people can read and those they can view and hear? Undoubtedly. But any differences do not extend to the topics those messages cover.

We content analyzed topics reported by newspapers (front pages only) and tape recorded television news broadcasts before the election. Conclusion of

this part of the research awaits coding of more of the news programs taped in the 67 markets. However, topic emphasis by a few stations that have been analyzed correlates highly with the same-city newspaper coverage, suggesting one would find more similarities than differences between media in their treatment of public affairs.[19]

Like McClure and Patterson (1976, p. 25), one is left for the moment with familiar speculations about why newspapers convey more information -- their greater content and detail, audience control over the pace of exposure, and so forth.[20]

In any event, we turn to the second stage of analysis armed with a simplifying discovery. If reasoning about political choice (for U.S. Senator) depends at all on the features of an area's media system, those characteristics will be found in the newspapers that circulate there, not in television coverage.

Can differences among newspaper markets be explained?

Inferences based on this survey can not lean on compilations of the "ten best" or "ten worst" newspapers or on normative views about journalistic excellence. This is because superior journalistic effort lies beyond detecting by the dependent variable, as presently calibrated. The analysis distinguishes essentially between people who have no basis they can express for liking or disliking the senatorial candidates and those who have at least one reason.

In order to describe intermarket differences each mean level of information holding was adjusted through regression analysis. Predicted market means were calculated through multiple regression against level of education and amount of interest in political affairs. The predicted value was subtracted from the observed value to yield a residual.

Markets with positive residuals have greater levels of information than expected from their residents' ability and interest. Markets with negative residuals have lower levels of information than expected. The analysis concluded earlier implies that each market's residual should be related somehow to characteristics of newspapers that circulate within it.

One could logically reason that circulation size would be a major factor. Danielson and Adams's study of completeness of coverage during the 1960 presidential race showed newspaper size to be important.[21] On other occasions the authors have examined regression analyses for cost data describing more than 400 daily newspapers. Both the size of editorial budgets and the average number of news pages produce large coefficients of determination (in the .90s) against raw circulation.

Volume of news output might make a dent in public information -- as calibrated here. Accordingly, circulation of dominant papers was split to yield three groups of markets.

The smallest markets are those with papers having 40,000 circulation or less. For these places the pattern is clear. Seventeen out of 22 showed large negative residuals (-.26 or greater, residuals expressed as standard scores), indicating that their citizens possess even less information than levels of education and political interest would predict. Three have near-zero residuals ($\pm$ .25), and two show high positive residuals (+.26 or greater).

This neatness disappears among the two larger groups of markets -- those dominated by papers in the 50,001 to 175,000 class, and greater than 175,000. These markets distribute nearly equally in terms of residual information holding; some are highly negative, some near zero and some highly positive.

One insight into this apparent confusion is provided by shifting briefly from a market-by-market analysis to paper-by-paper comparisons. This elimin-

nates the influence of non-readers and can suggest whether newspaper characteristics other than size might affect the outcome.

Despite the limitation that many newspapers are represented by a handful of readers, interesting clues emerge from a look at each paper's residuals. Some multi-paper areas show marked differences in information holding between readership groups. Consider the following residuals, expressed in standard scores:

New York Daily News	-.27
New York Post	.31
New York Times	1.42
Baltimore News American	-.34
Baltimore Sun	.39
Chicago Sun-Times	-.49
Chicago Tribune	.38
Chicago Daily News	.72
Seattle Times	-.39
Seattle P-I	.21
Oakland Tribune	-1.33
San Francisco Chronicle	-.73
San Francisco Examiner	.27

In Chicago, to take one case, there's a world of difference between readers of the Sun-Times and the Daily News. Personal opinion governs whether this or any other comparison confirms the information level one would expect, controlling for education and interest. And, of course, some markets show only narrow differences. (Both Louisville papers have high positive residuals; Atlanta papers have large negative figures; Philadelphia is uniformly high positive.)

But differences among papers warn that public understanding in metropolitan zones depends not only on circulation penetration, but on which newspapers penetrate. The variability of residuals in multi-paper markets suggests attention to media competition or diversity as a correlate of information.

Either of two expectations might be confirmed. The first is pessimistic. It holds that where newspapers compete on nearly equal footing for audience, they will battle for control of the "lowest common denominator". Given that politics interests only a few people, these competing papers would be expected to slight their public affairs obligations in favor of more popular fare. Through the years markets with more than one paper would come to have lower levels of information than predicted by other factors like citizens' ability and interest.

The more optimistic observer views diversity as producer of net social gain. Rival newspapers may not compete for the same readers; they may seek survival through differentiation. If at least one journal chooses to cover politics thoroughly, perhaps the audience for that kind of information will benefit, will develop levels of information beyond what could be expected from predisposing factors. The wide range of residuals in New York, Baltimore, Chicago, Seattle, the Bay Area and elsewhere is consistent with the more optimistic point of view.

From this brief and incomplete sketch it is clear that the causal imagery linking competition or diversity and knowing about politics is extremely complex. Its details can not be laid to rest here. But one can test whether the pessimists or the optimists have the greater support for their contrasting positions. The results, it will be seen, sustain the more encouraging point of view about diversity.

For each market average differences were calculated in penetration by various dailies that circulate in the appropriate census unit containing the sample interview area (units might be a city, county or SMSA). Actual circulation data were used, rather than readership reported by persons interviewed, so that origins of the competition variable would be separate from the dependent variable under analysis. The index for competition represents environ-

mental conditions surrounding citizens who were interviewed, not their individual use of that information environment. The competition variable signals, in part, the balance of newspapers' journalistic resources -- even if under common ownership -- and the availability of more than one report of political events -- even if reports might differ only in the time of day they are delivered.

Some markets have little or no diversity, such as Toledo, where the Blade is the only Ohio paper circulating. Some markets have more competition, where papers differ from 70 to 30 percentage points in audience reach. The next category includes markets with 30 to 15 point gaps. The fourth group has gaps between 15 and 10 points. The most competitive markets have 10 to 0 point gaps in circulation reach by dailies.

This category scheme divides markets into as nearly-normal a distribution as can be accomplished -- 10 in the near-monopoly group, 18, 16, 12, and 11 in the most competitive environment.

Table 3 shows the results. The correlation between diversity and residual information holding is .50 ($p < .01$; Gamma coefficient). Whatever the words competition and diversity mean, and whatever philosophical passions they excite, closeness of market penetration is linked to a social condition of some value -- the fact that citizens have reasons for making an important political choice.[22]

A great variety of Senate contests and statewide political systems is represented by the 67 markets plotted in Table 3. It is reassuring that the relationship between newspaper competition and public understanding does not result from clustering of a state's media markets in a single area of the table.

For example, three Ohio markets are found in the high positive row, two in the middle area, and two in the high negative row. New York has markets in

all three rows of the table. So does California; Pennsylvania and other states are represented in two rows.

In all these cases media markets within individual states range widely in newspaper competition, as well.

A cluster of markets that contributes greatly to the correlation of .50 is found in the lower left hand cells of Table 3. Most of these are small areas, some rural, with small circulation dailies that enjoy near-monopolies. Markets in the Midwest, the traditional South, Florida, the Middle-Atlantic and even the West contribute to this group.

If a single state or region of the country had dominated an area of Table 3, we would suspect that peculiarities of individual Senate campaigns or traditions of political competition intrude on the relationship between newspaper competition and the public's information holding. This does not seem likely.

SUMMARY

Results are drawn from a nationwide sample including many media outlets. Findings underscore the superiority of newspapers as agents of information to help people identify assets and liabilities of important political contenders.

One can not determine with these data why television should demonstrate a suppressing effect on information. Viewing and recalling political messages is strongly related to television news exposure, and is even related to message discrimination in newspapers. But when appropriate controls are made in analysis, areas where people use television for political news emerge as less informed than areas of equal education and political interest where people avoid the medium.

Table 3: Markets by Newspaper Competition and Residual on Information Holding

Size of Residuals	Monopoly				High Competition
+.26 or More	Sioux Falls, S.D.	Bridgeport, Conn. Eugene, Ore. Knox, O. Oneida, N.Y.	New York Suburbs Philadelphia Suburbs Pittsburg Suburbs	Bronx, N.Y. Louisville, Ky. Philadelphia, Pa. St. Louis, Mo. St. Louis Suburbs Salt Lake City, Utah Tulare, Cal.	Cleveland, O. Cleveland Suburbs Indianapolis, Ind. San Francisco, Cal. Tulsa, Okla.
±.25		Logan, Colo. Manhattan, N.Y. Mississippi, Ark.	Chicago Suburbs Los Angeles, Cal. Los Angeles Suburbs Phoenix, Ariz. Plumas, Cal. Seattle, Wash.	Brooklyn, N.Y. Dayton, O. Hamilton, O. San Francisco Suburbs	Baltimore, Md. Chicago, Ill.
-.26 or Less	Adair, Mo. Columbia, S.C. Currituck, N.C. E. Carroll, La. Lowndes, Ga. Miami, Fla. Orlando, Fla. Snyder, Pa. Toledo, O.	Acadia, La. Escondido, Cal. Hancock, O. Logan, Ill. Pitt, N.C. Sarasota, Fla. Shoboygan, Wisc. Stoddard, Mo. Waterloo, Ia. Whatcomb, Wash. Wilkes-Barre, Pa.	Clark, Ark. Crawford, Ia. Little Rock, Ark. Muhlenberg, Ky. New London, Conn. Ulster, N.Y. Vallejo, Cal.	Montgomery, Ala.	Atlanta, Ga. Baltimore Suburbs Randolph, Ill. Watauga, N.C.

This conclusion coincides with findings by McClure and Patterson in their study of presidential campaigning in 1972. They measured the relationship between issue salience and gross media exposure. We charted the correlation between holding information and amount of message discrimination. Despite major differences in concepts and measurement, results coincide.

The more novel finding here is the association between public understanding and newspaper competition. The correlation, of course, does not resolve important causal issues at stake. Are competitive markets superior because of a qualitative richness in political news reporting about statewide races? Are they more informed because people have more than one opportunity each day to read about events? Or because aggregate newspaper readership is greater? Demographic and cultural variables may contribute alternative explanations as well.

It is conceivable that informed readers make for newspaper competition. This possibility might depend on an indirect process involving high levels of consumption among informed (and affluent) people. Consumption generates needs for advertising linage, so necessary for supporting more than one paper in a market.

Although these competing factors need to be untangled, we have at least circumstantial evidence that competition and diversity are important social indicators of resources for political education in America.

The meaning one can attach to words like competition and diversity remains equivocal, however. Competition usually refers to a condition of corporate or economic structure in a news market. Diversity refers to similarities or differences in the news products delivered by corporate structures.

One must recognize that closeness of circulation penetration is neither a reliable indicator of economic competition, nor does it necessarily predict nec

diversity in news offerings. For example, morning and evening papers under the same ownership may publish quite different news accounts. Or competitive papers may rely on almost identical wire service reports.

Several kinds of competition may be available in different markets -- other than the classic head-to-head battle between home town dailies. Metropolitan papers may compete with suburban dailies within their commercial market sphere. Special editions of metropolitan papers may circulate to other cities within their state. Small towns that can not support their own daily newspaper may lie in the zone of circulation overalp between nearby, larger cities.

Examples of each kind of competition can be found in Table 3. It would be valuable to chart trends in penetration in these different types of markets as a barometer of opportunities for public education about political affairs.

Much remains to be learned about causal paths among richness of communication resources, public attention to these resources, skill and motivation to decipher messages, and retention of information. And one must distinghish between long-term developments in political understanding and the foreshortened learning that may take place between candidate nominations and election day, especially when new political figures emerge.

The present analysis has not been able to separate candidate attributes long familiar to the public (an incumbent's record in public office, for example) from attributes only recently communicated (i.e., a challenger's image of honesty or sincerity). Recent learning may correlate more than older learning with patterns of mass media use. Television portrayals may be especially important for learning during the closing days of a campaign -- when apathetic citizens first pay attention to the passing political parade.

All differences in time span and recency of learning have inevitably been mixed in the cross-sectional data analysis presented here.

Our results and those of Patterson and McClure do not dismiss television as a political force in America. The data simply call into question television's power to convey candidates' policy positions or personality in such a way that heavy viewers will retain more of this information than light viewers. Results suggest we can legitimately feel unease over declining newspaper circulation and over any industry developments that limit the amount of newspaper competition within markets.

Opportunity to reason about political events requires <u>having</u> reasons. If communication assets that are linked to public reasoning weaken, the quality of public judgments about partisan contenders may be in jeopardy.

FOOTNOTES

* Data for this report were collected by the Center for Political Studies of the Institute for Social Research. Support was provided by grants from the National Science Foundation, the John and Mary R. Markel Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation.

Survey documentation and data are available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, University of Michigan. Neither the original collectors of the data, nor the Consortium, bears any responsibility for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

1 An analogy to this point, drawn from laws of inertia, can be found in Philip E. Converse, "Information Flow and the Stability of Partisan Attitudes," Public Opinion Quarterly, 26:578-599 (1962).

2 The conventional image of the alienated and withdrawn citizen may be badly out of date, however. Recent studies have disclosed many people who are distrustful of government, but who combine this feeling with intensely held attitudes about political issues.

Extreme conservatives and liberals can be expected to possess above average levels of information. See Arthur H. Miller, "Political Issues and Trust in Government: 1964-1970," American Political Science Review, 68:951-972 (1974), and following comment by Jack Citrin and rejoinder.

3 Comparisons between print and broadcast media in political effects have been reported recently. See Robert D. McClure and Thomas E. Patterson, "Print vs. Network News," Journal of Communication, 26: 23-28 (1976); and their earlier paper, "Television News and Political Advertising: The Impact of Exposure on Voter Beliefs," Communication Research, 1:3-31 (1974).

4 Pertinent findings are reviewed in Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw, "Structuring the 'Unseen Environment'," Journal of Communication, 26:18-22 (1976).

5 For a study comparing national and local public affairs issues, see Philip C. Palmgreen, Mass Communication and Political Knowledge: The Effects of Political Level and Mass Media Coverage on Political Learning (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1975).

6 Current criticism of both newspapers and local television news leads to the discouraging prediction that the public's grasp of "hard news" would be on the decline, whatever media they use. For pessimistic analyses, see Ron Powers, The Newscasters (New York: St. Martins 1977); and Fergus M. Bordewich, "Supermarketing the News," Columbia Journalism Review, pp. 23-30 (September/October, 1977).

7 These trends in audience reach are amply portrayed in minutes of meetings by the American Newspaper Publishers Association and in the pages of Broadcasting Magazine.

8 Radio and word-of-mouth communication are omitted from this discussion because research has failed to show correlations with learning about public affairs.

9 This analysis does not deal with persuasive effects of media on attitude formation and change. For contemporary studies of newspapers' editorial effects on voting decision, see Robert S. Erikson, "The Influence of Newspaper Endorsements in Presidential Elections: The Case of 1964," American Journal of Political Science, 20:207-233 (1976); and John P. Robinson, "Perceived Media Bias and the 1968 Vote: Can the Media Affect Behavior After All?" Journalism Quarterly, 49:239-246 (1972).

10 The authors avoid judgments about the completeness, sophistication or even "accuracy" of reasons people give for their views of senatorial candidates. Possessing any reasons counts here -- a blind acceptance that is justified by finding that the major point of variance is between persons who lack reasons altogether, and persons with at least one criterion for choice between candidates.

11 One set of research results can be found in Peter Clarke and Lee Ruggels, "Preferences Among News Media for Coverage of Public Affairs," Journalism Quarterly, 47:464-471 (1970). Also see Alex S. Edelstein, The Uses of Communication in Decision-Making (New York: Praeger, 1974).

12 Peter Clarke and F. Gerald Kline, "Media Effects Reconsidered: Some New Strategies for Communication Research," Communication Research, 1:224-240 (1974); Philip Palmgreen, F. Gerald Kline and Peter Clarke, "Message Discrimination and Information-Holding About Political Affairs," presented to the International Communication Association, New Orleans, April, 1974.

13 Persons interviewed here are 18 years or older in households selected by probability sampling methods. Approximately two-thirds had been interviewed in 1972. Sampling, weighting and other survey documentation can be found in Warren E. Miller, Arthur H. Miller, and F. Gerald Kline, The CPS 1974 American National Election Study (Ann Arbor: Inter-University Consortium for Political Research, 1975).

14 Individual analyses have not been overlooked. Patterns of results reported here are duplicated when we examine relationships between individuals' media use and information.

We also recognize the imprecision of estimating mean levels of information, media use and other market variables using data from a few interviews -- even when based on probability samples. Imprecision attenuates any correlation with other factors like media competition. The substantial size of this relationship (see below) encourages some confidence that the data have attained reasonable accuracy across the 67 markets.

15 When reasons people give are examined in detail, the majority cluster in four categories. Most frequent are references to the candidates' prior records of public service -- general mentions of how well they have filled governmental or political offices.

Mentions of being a good party man come second. References to integrity and honesty are third. The fourth most popular category is general expressions of having heard good things about the candidate.

Respondents cite favorable characteristics much more often than criticisms. The respondent's party preference did not qualify as a reason.

16 All respondents, voters and non-voters, were asked these questions, however.

17 See Miller, Miller and Kline, op. cit.

18 The possibility of inhibition from television persists when the analysis is controlled for education, political interest and message discrimination — leaving exposure levels unpartialled. The third-order partial for message discrimination in newspapers is .43 ($p < .01$). For message discrimination in television the value is -.24 (beta = -.2206, p=.06).

19 Others have found impressive similarities between television and newspapers in quantity of coverage of national issues. (See Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media," Public Opinion Quarterly, 35:176-187 (1972).) Whether or not this finding is duplicated at the statewide political level depends on a number of influences — including, presumably, greater closeness between editors and events in their state, relative importance of state and national wire service priorities, and importance of local vs. national issues in each senatorial race.

20 Objections can be raised about permissiveness in accepting the ingredients of "reasoning" as reflecting a person's level of political information. (For an analysis using this kind of data to measure political ideology, see Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David E. Apter (ed.) Ideology and Discontent (Glencoe: Free Press, 1964.) The reasons some persons express for liking or disliking candidates may be incorrect, according to a detached observer, or shallow, irrelevant, or otherwise unappealing.

Accordingly, we conducted a parallel analysis using a more conventional test for knowledge -- ability to name the senatorial candidates who competed in the election.

Four major independent variables were introduced in simultaneous multiple regressions against both indices of information with the following results. Data are standardized beta weights with their statistical significance.

	Reasons		Candidate Names	
	beta	p	beta	p
Education	.0136	ns	.0465	ns
Interest	.3744	.004	.2814	.033
Newspaper mess. discr.	.3176	.009	.3629	.004
Television mess. discr.	-.0290	ns	-.0728	ns

Parallels between these results are striking. One can conclude that findings based on reasons for political preference, the less presumptuous measure of information, do not present a warped view of the weak educational role played by television.

21 Wayne A. Danielson and John B. Adams, "Completeness of Press Coverage of the 1960 Campaign," Journalism Quarterly, 38: 441-452 (1961).

22 The latter portion of this analysis can be misunderstood if read too literally. Individual towns and cities in Table 3 should not be labeled for all time as above or below expectations in level of information holding. Eugene, Ore., and Crawford County, Ia., are randomly-drawn data points in the same sense that one views individual persons in the typical sample survey analysis. Markets studied here represent classes of markets; each is imperfectly described by the responses and behavior of a handful of adults in households chosen by probability methods.

One can be confident of findings in the aggregate, especially when grouped into broad categories as here. We can be less certain that in a second survey Phoenix or Seattle would appear in the same cells of analysis.