

PREDICTING READER INTEREST IN
AN ANTHROPOLOGICALLY-ORIENTED NEWSPAPER COLUMN

by

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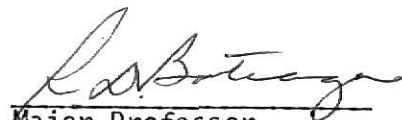
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists, traditionally bound by academia, have begun to consider alternative means of disseminating anthropological information and insights to the general public.

As is true of most sciences, anthropology has made very little information available to those outside professional or academic circles until quite recently. The American Anthropological Association (AAA) made no attempt to gain public recognition prior to 1970 and, with few individual exceptions, anthropologists did not attempt media involvement.¹

The underlying reason for this isolation was two-sided -- anthropologists (and scientists, in general) did not accept the mass media as responsible channels for communication of science information; and, conversely, journalists did not accept this information as appropriate news for their media audiences.

In several early studies, it was estimated that less than one percent of all science information ever reached the general public.²

At the 1969 National meeting of the AAA incidents, stemming from the controversial Jensen Report,³ brought to a head the concern of a growing number of anthropologists about their inability to reach the public. Recognition of the seriousness of that barrier led to an investigation into the feasibility of what came to be called Media Anthropology.⁴

A Media Workshop followed during the summer of 1970. Anthropologists, under the direction of Dr. Conrad C. Reining, met with media specialists who were engaged professionally with the communication of scientific information, and who shared their desire to get more of that information to the public.

Participants at the Media Workshop included Victor Cohn, science editor at the Washington Post; Paul Sampson, assistant chief of the National Geographic Society News Service; Thomas Harney, science information officer of the Smithsonian Institution; Pamela Moore, Washington editor of Behavior Today; the assistant editor of Psychology Today; representatives from television, radio, and newspapers; and executives from several professional and governmental organizations, such as the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Science Foundation; and others.

The Workshop objectives were to study the problem and then, to recommend practical methods of communicating anthropological information to the general public.

A wide range of topics were reviewed, including media attitudes toward the scientist, the scientist's attitudes toward the media, views of the American public and media techniques for anthropologists. The Workshop ended by making four specific recommendations:

1. A public information office for the AAA to function as a liaison between the press and professional anthropologists should be created.
2. A newsroom for the National meetings of the AAA should be created.
3. A glossary to translate in-group jargon into vocabulary easily understood by the press should be created.
4. A regular, syndicated newspaper column related to anthropology should be created.⁵

Introduction to the Study

Pertinent to this study was Recommendation Four: Proposal For
A Regular, Syndicated Column Related to Anthropology:

It is suggested that a list of anthropologists who would be interested in writing a column relating anthropological information to current events be compiled. At the same time, survey the available publication outlets and their audiences to see what style, format and focus would be best. Contact these and suggest submission of samples...to a syndicating agency. An individual should be the columnist for this regular feature, not a committee or group. He or she need not be an anthropologist of extraordinary renown since the column, if well done, as it gains a following will popularize itself.

The columns must be interesting but not too exotic. Each should have some relevant issue to explore being linked with news which is somewhat topical. Use the column as a vehicle for placing anthropological concepts and names before the public; emphasize quality above placement in the paper and always substantiate the news with studies pertinent to the topic, rather than depend on mere common sense. In other words, prove that the scientific approach can increase the interest factor of a popular piece. Foster intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary consultation on topics for the column, but allow the columnist editorial control over writing style, format and so forth.⁶

The workshop director described this Recommendation as one of the more feasible things to do. But as of November 1973, there had been no effort to produce a column for syndication; nor was there any empirical evidence to support the notion that such a column would be read by the public.⁷

The idea of the recommended newspaper column (but not the actual column described at the Workshop), therefore, was adopted as a focus for this study, and an attempt was made to gather empirical evidence to test its feasibility with a typical or representative newspaper audience.

Specifically, this study sought to discover whether an average newspaper audience would be interested in reading an anthropologically oriented newspaper column.

Definition of Relevant Terms

For the purpose of the study, an average newspaper audience was defined operationally as a representative sample of newspaper readers in Topeka, Kansas.

The term anthropologically-oriented was used to indicate that the purpose of the proposed column would not be to "teach" anthropology or to function as a public relations organ of the AAA. Its purpose would be to make available an exposure to the "anthropological perspective."

The anthropological perspective, as used by the writer, is the attitudinal basis of anthropology; somewhat inherent in but not exclusive to the subject matter of anthropology, per se. The anthropological perspective is defined, roughly, by Postman and Weingartner (1969) as the ability to view one's own situation (self, tribe, group, culture) as though he weren't a part.⁸

Two Basic Assumptions

Two assumptions for this kind of beyond-academia communication are (1) that the general public finds information which social scientists explore interesting and (2) that the mass media provide viable channels for communicating it.

For this study, the assumptions are that the public finds anthropological information interesting and that a newspaper column can communicate it.

Media communicators and anthropologists, alike, need to know if these assumptions are valid. This study was designed to answer three questions which focused on the validity of the assumptions:

1. Would an average newspaper audience read an anthropologically-oriented newspaper column?
2. How would reader interest in an anthropologically-oriented newspaper column compare with reader interest in current newspaper columns?
3. How do such factors as age, sex and education relate to reader interest in an anthropologically-oriented newspaper column?

CHAPTER II

THE LITERATURE: SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION AND THE PUBLIC

Scholars have been interested in the flow of science information among scientists for many years, and a significant literature exists concerning this aspect of information flow.⁹

More relevant to this study, however, is research concerning the flow of information from scientists to the public.

Flow of Science Information to the Public

The proposition that very little science information flows to the public is supported by many studies.¹⁰

Paisley (1965) noted that it was impossible to compute what fraction of all science information is made available to the public. Thistle (1958) estimated that only one hundredth of one percent of all science information can be communicated to the public and, although Tennenbaum (1963) noted that Thistle may have had his tongue in his cheek with such a low estimate, there is other evidence which indicates he wasn't far from the truth.¹¹

Wood (1962) found that much less than one percent of the information emanating from one specific science news-making event (the 1955 American Psychological Association convention) entered channels of communication to the public.

Interest of the Public in Science Information

Equally relevant to this study is evidence that the public would like

to receive more science information through the media.

A report by the National Association of Science Writers published by the New York University Press in 1958 indicated that the American public wants and needs considerably more news about science than they are getting. Seventy percent of the people questioned wanted newspapers to devote more space to science and medical items.¹²

Schramm (1962) reviewed much of the existing literature about the flow of behavioral science information to the public. From that review, data were found to support twelve propositions about the public's knowledge and attitudes toward science. Two of these propositions were germane to this study:

1. After school years, most of the increment of science knowledge comes from the media.
2. The public is interested in getting more scientific information.¹³

These studies indicate that the general public would be interested in receiving more scientific information. One could conclude that this would include anthropology and other behavioral science information, as well.

Interest of the Public in Anthropology

Although a great deal of opinion literature exists urging the dissemination of anthropology beyond academia,¹⁴ no empirical evidence was found which revealed the degree of public interest in the area of anthropology.

This study was conducted to produce such empirical evidence.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

To explore the amount of interest an average newspaper audience would have in an anthropology column, the writer decided to conduct a field survey in a typical midwestern city.

The survey design replicated the plan described by Backstrom and Hursh in Survey Research (1963); the research instrument and the administration of that instrument was replicated from a method designed and validated by Jack B. Haskins.¹⁵

Research Method

To measure reader interest in the proposed newspaper column before it was actually published, the writer selected the Haskins' title-rating method -- a validated procedure for predicting readership of editorial items and ideas.*

Title-Rating

Professor Haskins designed and developed the title-rating method while he was senior research executive for the Curtis Publishing Company.

*Haskins describes the development and validation of this method in his doctoral thesis, "A Content-Oriented Method for Systematic Controlled Expansion of a Magazine Audience," University of Minnesota, 1959.

Title-rating is a method of predicting readership by exposing prospective readers to the titles and subtitles of an editorial item which may be published later. By applying this pretest method, "Successful ideas can be identified with a much smaller expenditure of money and effort than by testing actual editorial items in the pages of the publication."¹⁶

Haskins' procedure consisted of presenting magazine titles and subtitles to a representative sample of Saturday Evening Post readers and, on the basis of those titles and subtitles, asking them to rate their amount of interest in the item on a thermometer-type scale, from 0⁰ through 100⁰.

The thermometer-type scale, on page 10¹⁷, was used successfully by Haskins to make rating instructions clear to the respondents.

After the pretested articles were published, he measured actual readership and found that predicted readership was within 6 percent of actual item readership, on the average. More important to this study was his finding that rank order of item readership was highly correlated (+.79) with the actual readership rankings.¹⁸

Haskins confirmed the following basic assumptions of the title-rating method:

1. On any given magazine item, there are differences in its interest among individuals. With any given individual, there are differences in his interest among magazine items.

2. Individuals can make meaningful judgments of their interest in magazine items from the cues contained in titles, subtitles and other written characteristics.

**THIS BOOK
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WITH DIAGRAMS
THAT ARE CROOKED
COMPARED TO THE
REST OF THE
INFORMATION ON
THE PAGE.**

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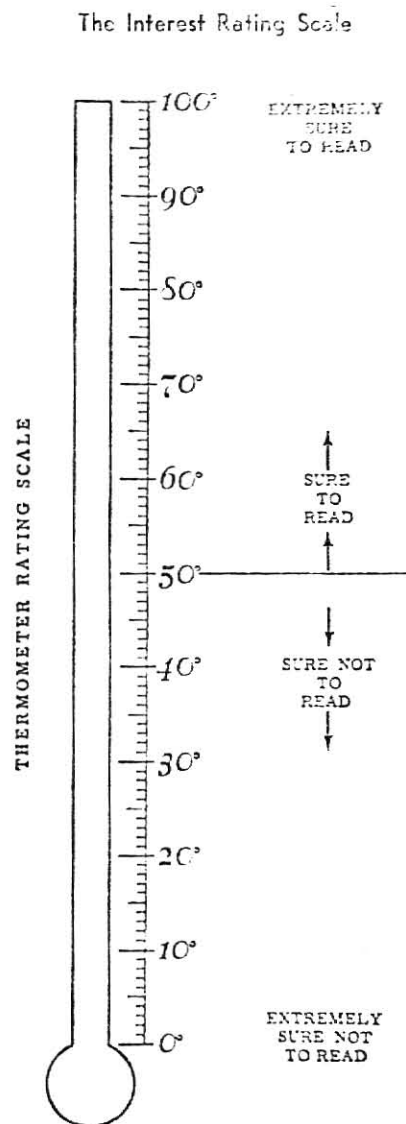


Fig. 1 -- The interest rating scale

3. An interest judgment of magazine items can be quantified for statistical manipulation and this quantified judgment of selected cue elements of an item will be known as "title-rating."

4. Title-ratings are directly related to reading behavior. Thus, predictions of reading behavior may be obtained from title-rating.¹⁹

He also found that titles and subtitles were the significant discriminator of interest, other written characteristics having little effect.²⁰

Although Haskins developed the method with a magazine audience, he concluded that, "the basic procedure can be used by newspapers and book publishers and in other editorial or research situations. It can be used to pinpoint the interest of a whole group, or of special groups within the larger audience."²¹

Haskins' method does not pretend to predict readership with total accuracy but it has been accepted as a reliable and valid measure. This writer chose to predict only relative reading interests, as opposed to predicting an actual percentage readership for particular items.

The Survey Method

The sample survey method was selected as the most appropriate way to measure the reading interests of a newspaper audience. Survey research is described as a "sensitive instrument" by Backstrom and Hursh, who commend its use when "generalizations about the characteristics of, or predictions about, the behavior of a great body of people require measurement along a broad spectrum."²²

The Major Hypothesis

Since there were no precedents from which specific hypotheses could be drawn, only one broad hypothesis was proposed to give a specific focus

to the analysis of data:

An average newspaper audience will rate their interest in reading anthropology items similarly to the way they rate their interest in reading items in sports, political comment, social comment and general interest.

If this should prove to be the case, one could predict that the proposed anthropology newspaper column would be read by approximately the same number who now read these established newspaper columns.

Population and Sample

The research question asked by this study had to be answered by surveying an average newspaper audience.

The Population

The population selected for the survey was the newspaper reading population of Topeka, Kansas. Topeka is a midwestern city of 125,000; it is the capital of Kansas and the home of a small university and the Menninger Institute.

The city has quality newspapers, and the population was considered large enough to compensate for special interest groups.

The Sampling Plan

The sampling plan, described by Backstrom and Hursh, followed in this study, called for a systematic sample of clustered housing units (three units per cluster), with a random starting point.²³

Unlike the Backstrom and Hursh procedure, the respondent within each sampling unit was not selected randomly. Interviewers were instructed to select respondents so as to balance age and sex. The only qualifications

for selection were that the respondent (within a specific housing unit) read a newspaper regularly, subscribed to a newspaper or read a Sunday newspaper; and the respondent did not know the purpose of the research.

The tolerated amount of error in the Backstrom and Hursh plan was 6 percent with confidence limits of 95 percent. The sample size required for that margin of error and confidence limits is 267. That number was then inflated by 10 percent to allow for not-at-homes, refusals, vacancies and so forth; making the total sample size 294. Thus, the clustered-sample design called for 98 3-unit clusters, selected systematically from the 1970 census block data for the Topeka, Kansas urbanized area.

The Research Instrument

The instrument was a duplication of Haskins' title-rating booklet, described below, with slight modifications. Haskins developed and validated the booklet successfully at Curtis Publications.

A modification of the booklet was made to reflect the change from magazine to newspaper. Titles and subtitles were changed to short summaries or leads, and the format and composition were in newspaper style.

No authors were named because no real anthropology column exists and, moreover, because only interest in the subject was sought. Haskins found that author names did not affect interest ratings, although he tested no famous names.²⁴

The Title-Rating Booklet*

The booklet contained a total of 27 items, 18 of which were title-rating items.

*A copy of the title-rating booklet is included in the Appendix, p. 47.

The thermometer interest-rating scale, an integral part of the title-rating method, was explained to respondents and displayed to them during the interviews as a means of facilitating their responses on the 0-100 degree rating system.

Titles and Subtitles

Eighteen sample column items were included in the title booklet: six represented anthropology and 12 (three each) represented the four established column subject categories of sports, political comment, social comment and general interest. All eighteen items were selected for their representative (in the sense of ordinary) nature.

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| ANTHROPOLOGY CATEGORY | POLITICAL COMMENT CATEGORY | GENERAL INTEREST CATEGORY | SOCIAL COMMENT CATEGORY | SPORTS CATEGORY |
| 6 items | 3 items | 3 items | 3 items | 3 items |

The six items in the anthropology category were selected to represent six subdivisions of anthropology: archaeology, social anthropology, physical anthropology, ethnology, ethnography and linguistics.

One criterion exercised in choosing anthropology items was that if the proposed column were to be published at a later date, on a regular basis, the author of that column would have no trouble writing items to fit the title.

The particular items included were not selected from known high interest areas, such as sex in primitive societies, but from ordinary subject matter in six areas of anthropology.

Items in the other four column subject categories were selected to represent a typical cross-section of content. They were selected from

out-of-town newspapers published several months prior to the research period.

Anthropology Category Items

- "So Near And Yet So Far"

One of your ancestors was identical in appearance with today's European, but his world was much different. He lived 35,000 years ago... (archaeology)

- "Body Odor and Race"

Few notions regarding race differences are more widely believed than the idea that each race has its distinctive odor... (physical anthropology)

- "Did Jesus Speak English?"

An Arkansas town school superintendent, refusing a request that foreign languages be taught in high school, said: "If English was good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for you..." (linguistics; from a news item in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.)

- "Polygyny: The Life of a Part-Time Wife"

The life of a rising young leader among the Isneg, a remote Philippine mountain people, complained bitterly because her husband was too lazy to go out and get a second wife to help her with the household... (social anthropology)

- "Return To Laughter"

Personal excerpts from the story of a young American anthropologist deeply involved with a primitive bush tribe in Africa.²⁵ (ethnology; from the title of a book by Laura Bohannan.)

- "The Untouchables"

Someone had seen me leave the house of an Untouchable and shouted, "bhangi." Immediately, the children left my side. I would have to bathe before they would return -- to touch me would pollute them... (ethnography)

"Return To Laughter" was the only item in which reference was made to anthropology. The item titled "Did Jesus Speak English?", (from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.) was based on a current news item.

Political Comment Category Items

- "Amnesty for Mr. Nixon?"

At some point in the sad story of these items, we are probably going to have to think about a general amnesty not only for the draft dodgers in the war but the truth dodgers in the White House... (by James Reston)

- "Presidents Need Safety Valve, Too"

Do you ever blow your stack? Of course you do, if you're normal. But if you are a President of the United States, and your stack-blowing is seen on television, you are promptly analyzed as going to pieces under pressure... (by William Safire)

- "Key Test for Peking"

The stability inspired in China by Mao-worship and the balance achieved by Chou En-lai are on the verge of being tested by a reshuffle of Peking power structure... (by Charles Bartlett)

The first two items were chosen to give a pro and a con of the President. The third item was chosen to represent international politics.

General Interest Category Items

- "Miracle Drugs Abroad"

A majority of Americans coming to Europe are weighted down with every imaginable medication prescribed by family doctors. Each one is a miracle drug in its own right, and I haven't met an American tourist yet who isn't willing to share his medication with the less fortunate people who live abroad... (by Art Buchwald)

- "Get Pornography Back Where it Belongs"

It was not bad taste so much as bad judgment, compounded by grief, that finally did in the pornographers. Pornography is always in bad taste, but then so are a great many other things dear to the American heart... (by Russell Baker)

- "Cost of Being Moral is High"

If we weren't such an absurdly moralistic nation, our "war against crime" might be twice as effective and half as expensive... (by Sydney Harris)

Social Comment Category Items

- "Sharing Husband Nixed by Wife"

Dear _____: My husband told me he had a girl he wanted me to share him with. I was shocked when he suggested I meet the girl... (by Abby VanBuren)

- "Women Are Saying"

Here are some quotable quotes from women during the week... (no author named)

- "My Answer"

I am a Christian, or at least I am trying to be a better one. I'd like to know if it is a sin to fall in love with a married man... (by Billy Graham)

Sports Category Items

- "People in Sports"

Gaylord Perry, the Indians' controversial pitcher, said... A student at Pepperdine University in California has challenged Bobby Riggs... Charles O. Finley... (no author named)

- "The Outdoor Orbit"

For something that's so much fun, bass fishing is a topic of considerable controversy... (K.C. Star feature)

- "For the Record"

Local and national sports scores... (no author named)

The order in which these 18 column items appeared in the title-rating booklet was determined by the use of a table of random numbers.

The respondents had no idea of the purpose of the research, no author was named, and all items were displayed alike. Respondents gave ratings strictly from the titles and subtitles presented.

The booklet contents were typed and duplicated back-to-back on half sheets of heavy 9 x 11 paper. The front page indicated that the origin of the research was Kansas State University Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, and that the purpose of the research was to discover newspaper reader interests.

Pretest of the Title-Rating Booklet

The instrument and interviewing procedures were tested by the writer in Wellington, Kansas. It was discovered in the interviews that respondents could reply with equal ease when the 0⁰-100⁰ thermometer rating scale was explained and displayed separately from the booklet.

The interviewer's instructions to the respondents were to rate the items from 0 through 100. In addition to these instructions, the thermometer was also presented. Frequently, the reaction was, "I can remember 0 through 100 without referring to the thermometer each time." However, if the thermometer was not present, there were always questions.

The use of the thermometer scale was easy; it wasn't offensive to the respondents; and it made the directions immediately clear and the interview extremely simple to conduct.

Each interview was completed in from 5 to 15 minutes and it was determined to be simple enough for inexperienced interviewers to handle.

Interview Plan

Due to time limitations, the investigator could not personally interview 294 people. Consequently, an interview group was hired and trained by the writer.

Selection of Interview Group

Fifty junior and senior girls, members of the Topeka High School Drill Team, agreed to do the interviewing for \$100. The rationale behind the selection of this particular group was based on limitations of money. Also, it was practical to train a cohesive group in a short time. Since drill team members resided throughout the city, it was possible to schedule each girl to interview very near her own neighborhood.

Training Interviewers

Two training sessions were conducted. During the first session, the girls were told how to locate the specific housing units assigned to them for interviews. During the second session, they were told how to introduce themselves to respondents, how to explain the title-rating scale and booklet, how to handle call-backs and how to work with the interview supervisor in turning in completed booklets.

A third opportunity to ask questions and report problems was provided on the first (and major) interview day. A phone number was given in case unexpected problems arose.

The drill team supervisor was extremely helpful and, as the girls wanted very much to please her, she served effectively as the interview supervisor.

A uniform method of conducting the interview was borrowed from Haskins. The interviewers were given a script and told to follow it closely.

After identifying themselves and selecting a respondent, the interviewers were told to present the title booklet and say:

This booklet contains samples of newspaper columns. I would like you to look at the items and tell me how interested you would be in reading each one of them. (Present Thermometer Scale) Will you show me on this scale just how you feel about reading each one? Write your rating in the box provided.

If you are positive you would not like to read the item, give it a rating of zero; if you are positive you would like to read the item, give it a rating of 100. Other-wise, you may give the rating between 0 and 100 that best expresses your amount of interest.

Interviewer Packet

The interviewer packet consisted of the title rating booklets and a thermometer interest-rating scale, an instruction sheet, which included the directions, and a pencil with Kansas State University printed on the side (so the young interviewers would look more official).

Each interviewer also had a map card which gave specific directions to each housing cluster assigned to her.

Administration of Survey

Each of the 50 interviewers had approximately six interviews (or two clusters) to conduct. The girls worked in pairs for their own security and to help each other if needed.

The major portion of the interviews (almost two-thirds) were conducted between October 19 and October 24, 1973, with most of these occurring on Saturday, October 20. Monday was excluded as an interview day because one question asked for "yesterday's" readership of a newspaper. If interviews were conducted on Monday, that question conflicted with the question on "Sunday's" readership. In order to achieve a higher completion rate, additional interviews were conducted on Saturday, November 10. The time factor was not considered important to the results.

Interviewers were supervised by the writer and their Drill Team supervisor.

Interviewers were told to make three call backs before skipping the housing unit.

Coding and Processing of Data

The title rating booklet was precoded to provide for easy data processing. The coding system was cleared by the operators who would keypunch the data. When the completed booklets were returned by the interviewers, the investigator transferred responses from the booklets to keypunch coding sheets for ease of handling.

Keypunch cards were then made for each respondent and the data were sent to the Computer Center at Kansas State University.

Analysis of Data

The statistic used to answer the research hypothesis was the mean interest rating for the five subject categories: anthropology, political comment, general interest, social comment and sports.

Further analysis was done to measure reader interest in each of the 18 items. The mean rating for each item is the important statistic here.

The demographic characteristics of the sample (age, sex, education) were related to the reader interest data in order to test for significant differences (t-tests at the .05 level). Age was divided into under-30/over 30 age groups; education was divided into under college/college-and-above groups. Tests for statistically significant differences were run for the demographic variables in relation to each of the five subject

categories and in relation to each of the six anthropology items. In addition, personal contact with foreign people or places and differences in particular newspapers read were related to reader interest ratings in the same categories and items.

Interpretation of the interest scale ratings is important to this study.

Individual respondents scored items on a continuum of 0-100. Zero meant they were positive they wouldn't read the item; 100 meant they were positive they would read it. A score in between indicated an amount of interest. Fifty degrees, therefore, was not interpreted as a non-response, as it would be in some scale type measurements.

A mean score, being an average of individual scores, would fall at the mid-point in the case of an equal number of 0's and 100's. Therefore, a 50-degree mean score does not indicate indifference. The mean score shows the degree of relative interest, summarized for all respondents.

The standard deviations served as indicators of the general interest in the five categories. A high SD would mean lower general interest (more scores at the extremes -- 0 degree or 100 degree interest). A low SD, conversely, would mean a higher general interest (more readers alike in their ratings).

The Haskins' rating scale (Fig. 1, p. 10) shows a cutoff point at 50 degrees. All ratings above this level were considered "sure to read"; all below, "sure not to read." This cutoff point was not relevant to this study. It would be easy to consider the mean ratings as percentages. However, in this study the purpose was to measure the level of predicted reader interest in anthropology items and to compare this level with the measured predicted interest in four other subject areas of established

newspaper columns. Thus, the average ratings are important, not as accurate measures of predicted actual readership, but as measures to compare relative interest in the five categories.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The sample was considered representative of the real population and the most outstanding characteristic of the rating scores was their similarity.

The Sample

There were 256 completed interviews; 95.88 percent of the required 267 and 87.04 percent of the attempted interviews.

The X's on the map, shown in Figure 2, indicate the position of each cluster in which at least one interview was completed. The 38 interviews which were not completed, for various reasons, fell into no particular pattern.

Although the total number of completed interviews was 11 short of the required number for a 6 percent error and 95 percent confidence, the Topeka metropolitan area was thoroughly covered by the sample.

There were 100 males in the sample and 156 females; 156 respondents fell within the combined educational categories of grade-high school and 100 within the combined categories of college-graduate school-other. As to age, 102 respondents were in the below-30 age category and 154 were in the 30-and-above group.

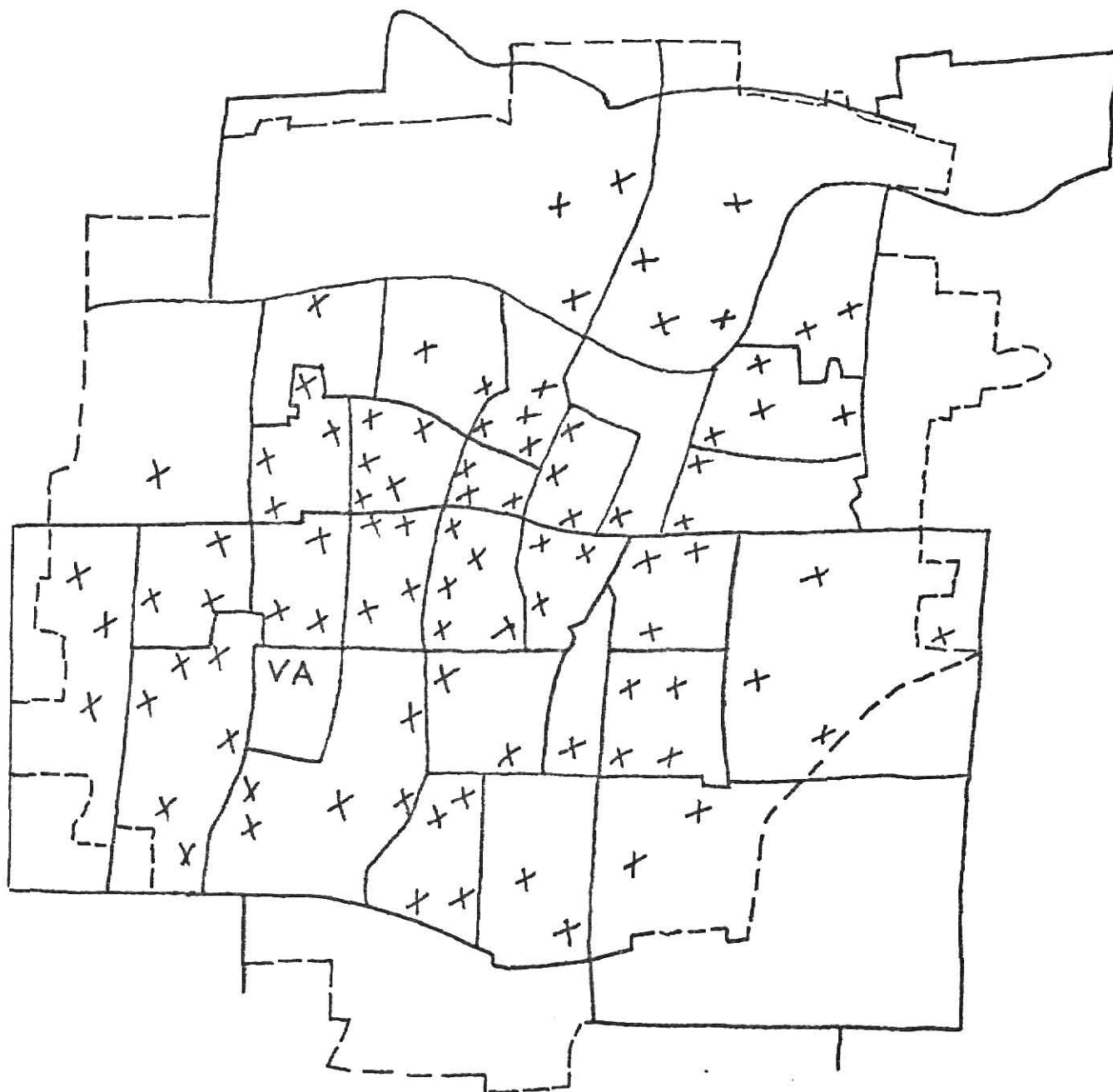


Fig. 2 -- Completed interview clusters in
the census tracts, Topeka, Kans. SMSA

There were 165 respondents who reported regularly reading the Topeka Daily Capital and 153 who read the Topeka State Journal.

The vast majority (234) reported reading the Sunday Topeka Capital Journal with only 29 reading "other" Sunday papers. (It was possible to be included more than once, if the respondent read more than one paper.)

There were 161 respondents who reported knowing someone from a foreign country and 85 who had visited a foreign country.

These particular findings were not directly relevant to the research question, but were used in the analysis of data.

Bias in the sample was evident in that three-fifths were women; three-fifths were in the lower educational bracket; and three-fifths were in the 30-and-above age group.

However, none of these biases were considered great enough to have seriously affected the results.

Reader Interest Findings

A summary of the data show that reader interest in items and in categories were quite similar. There were few statistically significant differences of interest with regard to the demographic characteristics of age, sex and education.

Category Analysis

This section presents the reader interest findings for the five categories of Anthropology, Sports, General Interest, Political Comment, and Social Comment.

As shown in Figure 3, the highest group mean (57.6⁰) was in the

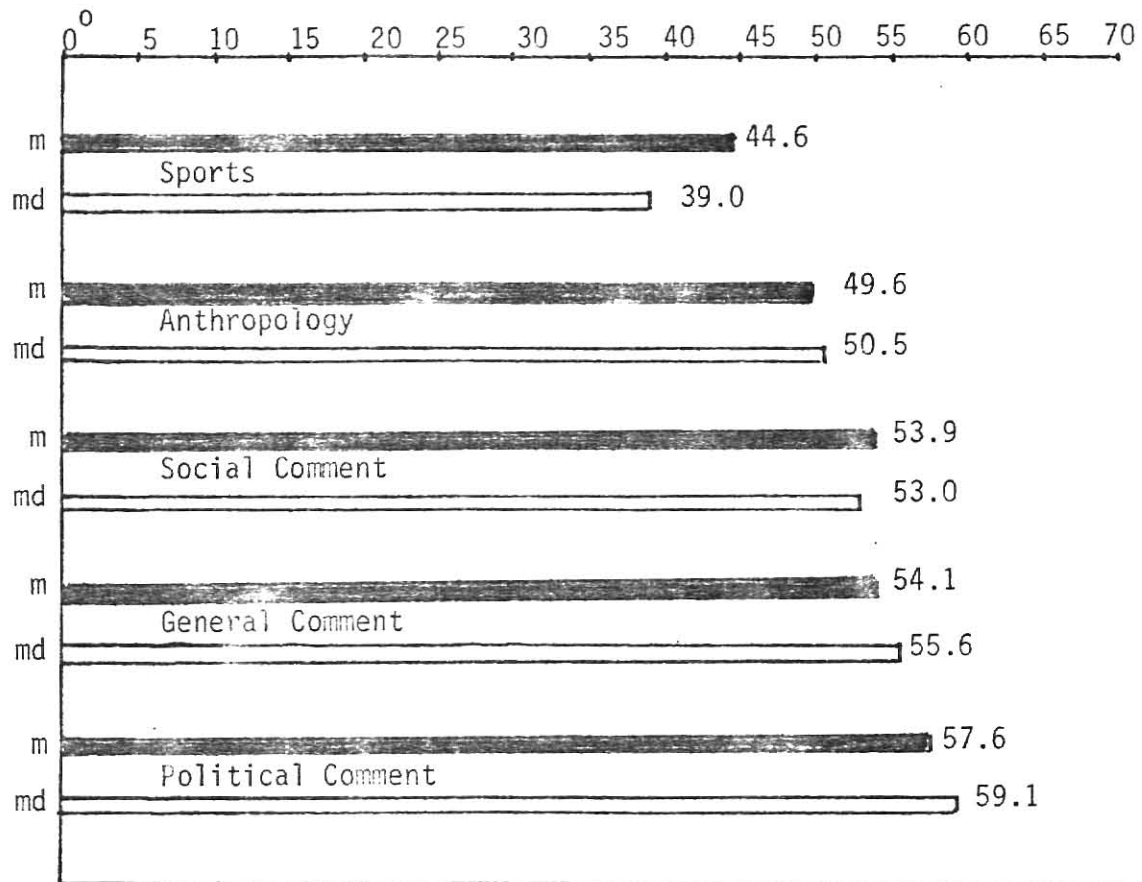


Fig. 3 -- Mean and median ratings
for five subject categories by
degrees of interest.

political comment category and the lowest group mean (44.7^0) was in the sports category.

Ranked from highest to lowest, the group means were:

Political Comment - 57.6^0

General Interest - 54.1^0

Social Comment - 53.9^0

Anthropology - 49.6^0

Sports - 44.7^0

Group means were quite similar considering the diversity of subject matter. However, two high scores in the political comment category (items in which President Nixon was mentioned) certainly affected the mean. Also, one low score in the sports category (a title about bass fishing) certainly resulted in a low mean.

Because of this unexpected similarity, additional computer analysis was made on these data. Two tests for the variance between groups were run on the means (the SCHEFFE and the Modified LSD Procedure) to determine whether or not statistically significant differences existed at the .05 level.

Both the SCHEFFE procedure and the Modified LSD Procedure showed the mean interest rating of the anthropology category was significantly different (at the .05 level) than the mean interest rating of the political comment category and of the general interest category. It was not significantly different from either the sports category or the social comment category.

Item Analysis

This section presents the reader interest findings for the 18 column items. As shown in Figure 4, the most outstanding feature of the

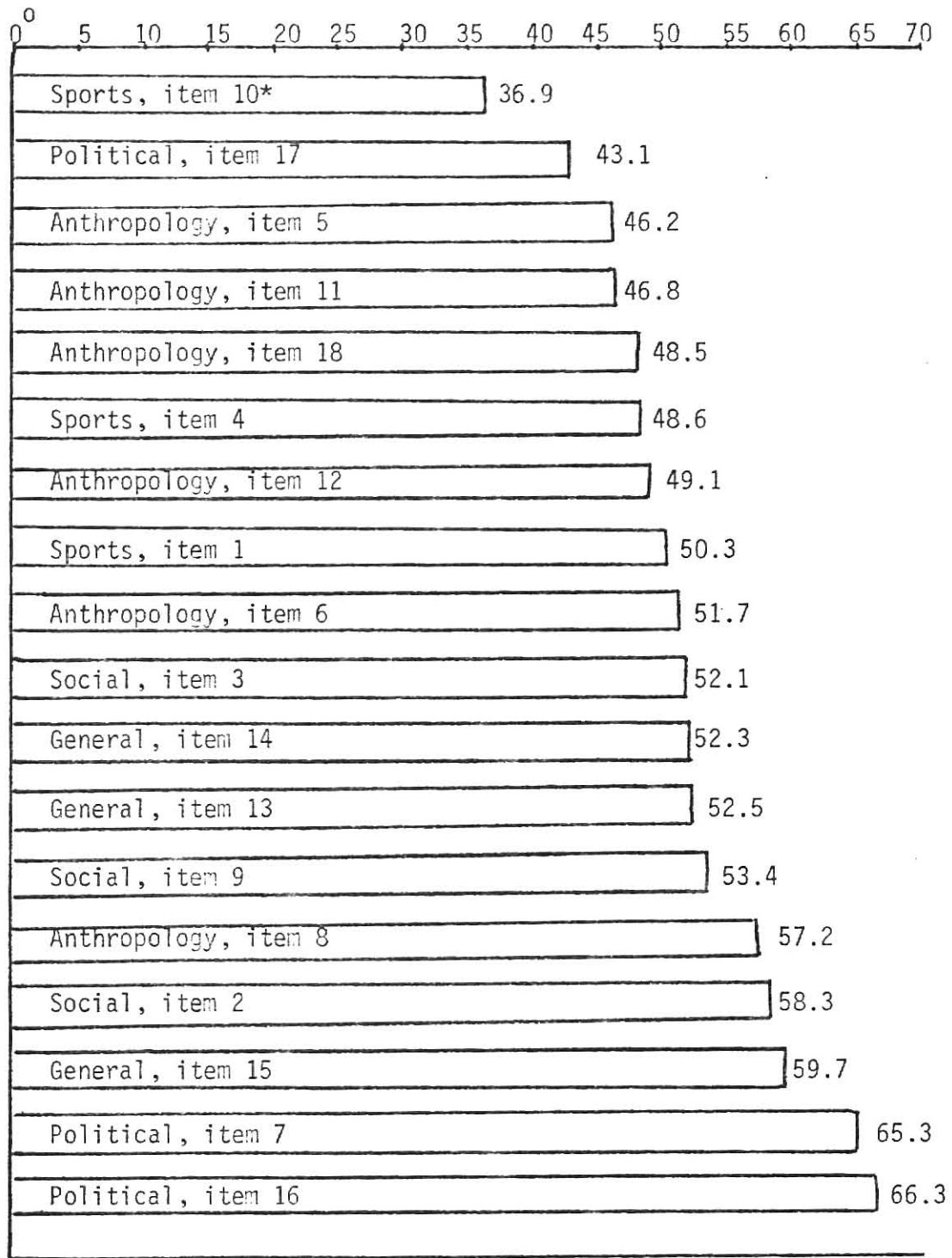


Fig. 4 -- Rank-order of mean ratings
for 18 column items by degrees of interest

*item numbers refer to the title-rating booklet

mean ratings of items was their similarity. Medians were also calculated and were slightly higher, as a rule. They were not notably different in terms of rank order.

Fifteen of the 18 means were within the middle 20 degrees of the scale, including all six anthropology items.

Except for three items, all means fell within the mid-20 degree range. Two of the political items were above the 60 degree mark, and one of the sports items was below the 40 degree mark.

The range was 100 in all cases.

The two highest rated items were political items about President Nixon. It was probably unfortunate that two columns mentioning the President's name were included in the title-rating booklet. As it turned out, Mr. Nixon was a timely subject during the interview period due to Watergate. Under "normal" political conditions there is some doubt that this extreme interest would appear and the high political rating should be viewed in that light.

The lowest rating, below the 40 degree mark, was a sports item about bass fishing. This is understandable since fishing is not a major sport, and not all fishermen are interested in bass fishing. Also, the low sports category mean could be partially explained by the larger number of women in the sample.

Ten of the 18 item means were within the middle 10 degrees of the scale: five were from anthropology, two were from sports, two were from social comment and one was from general interest.

Five of the six anthropology items were within five degrees of each other on the interest scale. The rank-order of anthropology subdivisions were:

linguistics
 physical anthropology
 ethnology (mentioning the word "anthropologist")
 ethnography
 social anthropology
 archaeology

The most popular item, "Did Jesus Speak English?", surpassed the 55 degree mark. This item represented one way the anthropological perspective could be presented using a current news story.

Rank order of the standard deviations of the five categories indicated that the greatest similarity of interest was shown in the case of the anthropology category.

In order, the SD for each category was:

Sports - 27.6
 Social Comment - 26.3
 Political Comment - 25.3
 General Interest - 22.4
 Anthropology - 20.0

As one might expect, the SD data showed that respondents deviated little from each other in their interest in the general interest category. However, the anthropology category had the lowest standard deviation, indicating the greatest uniformity of interest by prospective readers.

Demographic Analysis

This section presents reader interest findings in relation to the demographic variables of sex, age and education. These demographic variables were analyzed with regard to reader interest in the five categories and the six anthropology items.

Between-group variance (t-test) was great enough in several instances to show significant differences at the .05 level.

Analysis showed that the males and females differed significantly (t-test, $p < .05$) in interest toward one anthropology item. Males seemed to be more interested in their 35,000 year old ancestor, the archaeology item.

| <u>Sex</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| archaeology, Item 5 | 53.3 | 41.7 |
| sports category | 63.1 | 33.9 |
| political comment category | 62.4 | 55.6 |
| social comment category | 46.3 | 59.9 |

There were significant differences in interest shown by males and females in three of the five category groupings of items. Males were, predictably, more interested in sports; women, again predictably, were more interested in the social comment category; and men were more interested in the political comment category.

Neither the general interest category nor the anthropology category (six items as a group) showed a significant difference in terms of sex.

With regard to age, there were significant differences in interest shown in two anthropology items ("Did Jesus Speak English?" and "Return To Laughter"), and in the political comment category.

In all instances, the over-30 age bracket showed more interest.

| <u>Age</u> | <u>Below 30</u> | <u>30 & Up</u> |
|---|-----------------|--------------------|
| linguistics/anthropological perspective, item 8 | 47.9 | 63.4 |
| ethnology, item 12 | 43.4 | 53.2 |
| political comment category | 50.3 | 63.6 |

The higher educated group showed significantly greater amount of interest in two anthropology items ("So Near And Yet So Far" and, again, "Return To Laughter").

| <u>Education</u> | <u>grade- high school</u> | <u>college- or more</u> |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| archaeology, item 5 | 41.8 | 53.1 |
| ethnology, item 12 | 45.1 | 55.6 |
| anthropology category | 47.4 | 53.9 |
| political comment category | 54.8 | 63.6 |

The higher educated group also showed significantly more interest in the political comment category and in the anthropology category. This is the only instance in which a demographic variable showed a significant difference in relation to the anthropology category -- the grouping of six anthropology items.

Other Findings

Several questions were included in the title-rating booklet that had no direct bearing on the major research questions. The findings on these items are discussed below.

Personal Contact with Foreign People or Places in Relation to Interest in 18 items and Five Subject Categories

Respondents who knew someone from a foreign country were not significantly different in their interest ratings for anthropology or anthropology items from those who did not know someone from a foreign country. (t-tests, $p < .05$)

The political comment category was the only case in which significant differences were found between these two groups of respondents. People who knew someone from a foreign country appeared to be more interested in

political items, but that particular category (as noted) was rated very high across the sample.

Respondents who had visited a foreign country showed significantly more interest in the political comment category; they also showed significantly more interest in one anthropology item that mentioned the word "anthropologist" ("Return To Laughter").

Interest Differences Between Readers of Topeka Newspapers

T-tests were also run to determine whether reading a particular newspaper was related significantly to interest in anthropology items or in the five subject categories of items.

The data showed no significant differences at the .05 level between the interests of Topeka Daily Capital regular readers or subscribers and Topeka State Journal regular readers or subscribers.

The t-test run on Sunday readers of the Topeka Capital Journal (the two dailies combined) and any other Sunday newspapers combined indicated that the "other" group showed significantly more interest in reading the anthropology item "Return To Laughter," and the category of political items.

The number of respondents who read "other" papers was small (29), and the results should be viewed in that light.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study indicate that an average audience of newspaper readers would be as interested in reading an anthropology column as they now are in reading established columns in sports, political comment, social comment and general comment.

Summary of Findings

In general, the most outstanding characteristic of the interest ratings was their similarity across items and categories. The mean of the ratings for the anthropology items fell within 5 degrees of three other category means (general interest, social comment and sports); 5 degrees above the lowest mean (sports) and 8 degrees below the highest mean (political comment).

Regarding an anthropology column, the three research questions were answered as follows:

- a. Would an average newspaper audience read an anthropologically-oriented newspaper column? Yes, to a degree similar to their reading interest in established columns.
- b. How would reader interest in an anthropologically-oriented column compare with reader interest in current newspaper columns? The rating fell within 5 degrees of sports, general interest and social comment and within 8 degrees of political comment.

- c. How do such factors as age, sex and education relate to reader interest in an anthropologically-oriented newspaper column? Age and sex groups indicated a similar degree of interest; the higher educational group indicated a significantly higher degree of interest (at the .05 level).

All six anthropology items were rated within the middle 20 degrees of the interest scale, ranging from 46.2 to 57.2.

The highest rated item, "Did Jesus Speak English?", placed 14th (out of a possible 18), and the lowest rated item, "So Near and Yet So Far," placed 3rd.

The rank order of topic subdivisions, within anthropology, were: linguistics/anthropological perspective through a current news story, physical anthropology (about race), ethnology (the one item mentioning anthropology), ethnography (about the caste system), social anthropology (about polygyny) and archaeology (about early men).

The anthropology category mean ranked fourth out of the five subject groupings, sports ranking lower.

The only demographic variable which showed a significant difference (at the .05 level), in terms of category mean, was education. The higher education bracket showed more interest in anthropology items.

The 30 or older age bracket showed significantly more interest (at the .05 level) for the linguistic/anthropological perspective item and the ethnology item.

The college or more educational bracket also showed significantly more interest in the archaeology item and the ethnology item.

Men showed significantly more interest than women in the archaeology item.

The portion of the sample who had visited a foreign country showed significantly more interest in the ethnology item.

The standard deviation of the anthropology category was lower than that of any other group, indicating a greater similarity of interest by readers in this area.

Conclusions and Discussion

The major conclusion of this study is that the proposal for a regular, syndicated column related to anthropology, made by the 1970 Media Workshop, is a feasible recommendation. The particular style and specific purpose of that column would be proper subjects for further study.

The findings support the basic assumption of Media Anthropology: the general public finds information which anthropologists explore interesting.

The findings also support the assumption that a newspaper column could communicate anthropological information to the general public, thereby giving the general public "exposure to the anthropological perspective." The more complex question, "Can a newspaper column communicate the anthropological perspective?" would be an important subject for further study.

A longitudinal study on the effects on an anthropology column would provide valuable information in theoretical areas of both journalism (the effects of mass communication) and anthropology (the effects of the anthropological perspective).

Much more current information is needed in the general area of public interest in scientific information. For example, it would be interesting to compare reader interest in various scientific subject matter, using this research design.

Interest of the Public in Science and Anthropologically-Oriented Information

The findings of this study indicate that there would be considerable interest in an anthropologically-oriented newspaper column; and this finding lends support to the proposition that the general public would like more science information made available to them.

In particular, the similarity of interest in the five subject categories measured by this study should prove encouraging to anthropologists who wish to communicate their information and insights to the general public. And knowledge of this interest should prove valuable to newspaper editors who wish to provide information that the public wants and needs.

In the past, newspaper editors have claimed valid reasons for limiting their use of science information, and scientists have claimed valid reasons for avoiding newspapers as a channel for the communication of their material. But times have changed.

Scientists and communications specialists, alike, are urging that more science information be made available to the general public and, simultaneously, that responsible science writers and behavioral science journalists be trained to supply it.²⁶

The training and hiring of these writers could break down the traditional barriers which have separated science, the media and the public.

Recommendations

The over-all recommendation which this study points toward is that behavioral science journalists be trained and added to media staffs.²⁷

And, as newspapers are reportedly the dominant source of science news after school years²⁸, the hiring of these trained reporters is particularly

vital for the newspaper audience.

Anthropologists trained in journalism or journalists trained in anthropology would make valuable additions to newspaper staffs. They could translate the information of anthropology and communicate the anthropological perspective to the public.

The potential of this perspective as a catalyst to human understanding and an intellectual instrument vital to survival is not questioned. Scientists and laymen, alike, would agree with Postman and Weingartner that "The need for this kind of perspective has always been urgent but never so urgent as now."²⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹ Media Workshop Report, a report to the Executive Board and membership of the American Anthropological Association, 1970.

² Thistle, 1958; Tennebaum, 1963; Wood, 1962.

³ Media Workshop Report, 1970.

⁴ Media Anthropologist Newsletter, Vol. 1, Fall, 1972.

⁵ Media Workshop Report, 1970.

⁶ Media Workshop Report, 1970, p. 38.

⁷ Reining, Conrad C., Chairman, Department of Anthropology, The Catholic University of America and Director, 1970 Media Workshop; private correspondence; April and October, 1973. In a letter, subsequent to this study (January, 1974), Dr. Reining reported a newsroom was established for the 1973 National meetings of the AAA (recommendation No. 2 from the Media Workshop) but, to his knowledge, the other three workshop recommendations have not been carried out.

⁸ Neil Postman and Charles Weingartner, Teaching as a Subversive Activity, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1969), p. 4.

⁹ (See, for example, Nelson and Pollock, 1970; Paisley, 1965).

¹⁰ In addition to those mentioned, see Ubell, 1957; Cutlip, 1954; Smythe, 1952; Schramm, Lyle and Pool, 1963; Taylor, 1957.

¹¹ For example, Wood, 1962; Paisley, 1965; Tennenbaum, 1963; Thistle, 1958.

¹² Kriehbaum, Hillier, Science, the News, and the Public, New York University Press, 1958.

13

Schramm (1962) quoted in Paisley, 1965.

14

See, for example, Media Anthropologist Newsletter, AAA Newsletter, Media Workshop Report.

15

Haskins, Jack B., "A Content-Oriented Method for Systematic Controlled Expansion of a Magazine Audience," University of Minnesota, 1959.

16

Haskins, Jack B., "Pre-testing Editorial Items and Ideas for Reader Interest," Journalism Quarterly, 1960, pp. 224-230.

17

Haskins, Journalism Quarterly, 1960.

18

Haskins, Journalism Quarterly, 1960.

19

Haskins, Doctoral Thesis, 1959.

20

Haskins, Journalism Quarterly, 1960.

21

Haskins, Journalism Quarterly, 1960.

22

Backstrom and Hursh, Survey Research, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963).

23

Backstrom and Hursh, 1963.

24

Haskins, Journalism Quarterly, 1960.

25

Bowen, Elenore S. (Laura Bohannon), Return To Laughter, (The National History Museum, 1964).

26

See, for example, Fredrick T. C. Yu, ed., 1968; Liberman and Kimball, Journalism Quarterly, Summer 1961.

27

This writer is aware of existing programs to train behavioral science journalists. For example, there are programs at the University of Texas and at Kansas State University funded by NIMH; and one created specifically to train anthropologists in mass media usage, sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation.

28

Wade and Schramm, 1969.

29

Postman and Weingartner, 1969.

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- _____. January 6, 1974.

Kansas State University
Department of Journalism and
Mass Communications

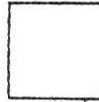
NEWSPAPER READER INTEREST SURVEY

CLUSTER # _____
CASE # _____
Call back time & address _____

Item 1

"People in Sports"

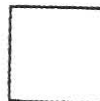
Gaylord Perry, the Indians' controversial pitcher, said... A student at Pepperdine University in California has challenged Bobby Riggs... Charles O. Finley...



Item 2

"Sharing Husband Nixed by Wife"

Dear _____: My husband told me he had a girl he wanted me to share him with. I was shocked when he suggested I meet the girl...



Item 3

"Women Are Saying"

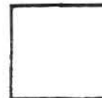
Here are some quotable quotes from
women during the week...



Item 4

"For the Record"

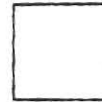
Local and national sports scores...



Item 5

"So Near And Yet So Far"

One of your ancestors was identical in appearance with today's European, but his world was much different. He lived 35,000 years ago...



Item 6

"Body Odor and Race"

Few notions regarding race differences are more widely believed than the idea that each race has its distinctive odor...



Item 7

"Presidents Need Safety Valve, Too"

Do you ever blow your stack? Of course you do, if you're normal. But if you are a President of the United States, and your stack-blowing is seen on television, you are promptly analyzed as going to pieces under pressure...



Item 8

"Did Jesus Speak English?"

An Arkansas town school superintendent, refusing a request that foreign languages be taught in high school, said: "If English was good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for you..."



Item 9

"My Answer"

I am a Christian, or at least I am trying to be a better one. I'd like to know if it is a sin to fall in love with a married man...



Item 10

"The Outdoor Orbit"

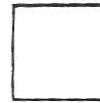
For something that's so much fun, bass fishing is a topic of considerable controversy...



Item 11

"Polygyny: The Life of a Part-Time Wife

The wife of a rising young leader among the Isneg, a remote Philippine mountain people, complained bitterly because her husband was too lazy to go out and get a second wife to help her with the household...



Item 12

"Return To Laughter"

Personal excerpts from the story of a young American anthropologist deeply involved with a primitive bush tribe in Africa...



Item 13

"Get Pornography Back Where it Belongs"

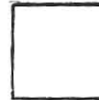
It was not bad taste so much as bad judgment, compounded by grief, that finally did in the pornographers. Pornography is always in bad taste, but then so are a great many other things dear to the American heart...



Item 14

"Miracle Drugs Abroad"

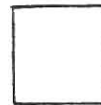
A majority of Americans coming to Europe are weighted down with every imaginable medication prescribed by family doctors. Each one is a miracle drug in its own right, and I haven't met an American tourist yet who isn't willing to share his medication with the less fortunate people who live abroad...



Item 15

"Cost of Being Moral is High"

If we weren't such an absurdly moralistic nation, our "war against crime" might be twice as effective and half as expensive...



Item 16

"Amnesty for Mr. Nixon"

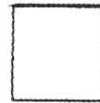
At some point in the sad story of these times, we are probably going to have to think about a general amnesty not only for the draft dodgers in the war but the truth dodgers in the White House...



Item 17

"Key Test for Peking"

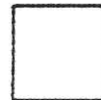
The stability inspired in China by Mao-worship and the balance achieved by Chou En-lai are on the verge of being tested by a reshuffle of Peking's power structure...



Item 18

"The Untouchables"

Someone had seen me leave the house of an Untouchable and shouted, "bhangi." Immediately, the children left my side. I would have to bathe before they would return - to touch me would pollute them...



Population Information

1. Sex (check one): 1 ☐ male
2 ☐ female
2. Name of last school attended (check one):
1 ☐ grade
2 ☐ high school
3 ☐ college
4 ☐ graduate school
5 ☐ other; _____
3. Age (check one): 1 ☐ under 18
2 ☐ 19-29
3 ☐ 30-49
4 ☐ 50 up
4. Do you know someone from a foreign country?
1 ☐ yes
2 ☐ no
5. Have you visited a foreign country?
1 ☐ yes
2 ☐ no

6. Did you read a newspaper yesterday?

- 1 ☐ no ☐ yes, which one?
2 ☐ Topeka Daily Capital
3 ☐ Topeka State Journal
4 ☐ Pictorial Times
5 ☐ Ebony Times
6 ☐ other, specify _____

7. Do you read a newspaper regularly?

- 1 ☐ no ☐ yes, which one?
2 ☐ Topeka Daily Capital
3 ☐ Topeka State Journal
4 ☐ Pictorial Times
5 ☐ Ebony Times
6 ☐ other, specify _____

8. Do you subscribe to a newspaper?

- 1 ☐ no ☐ yes, which one?
2 ☐ Topeka Daily Capital
3 ☐ Topeka State Journal
4 ☐ Pictorial Times
5 ☐ Ebony Times
6 ☐ other, specify _____

9. Do you read a Sunday paper?

- 1 ☐ no ☐ yes, which one?
2 ☐ Topeka Capital Journal
3 ☐ Kansas City Star-Times
4 ☐ Wichita Eagle Beacon
5 ☐ other, specify _____

Name (optional) _____

(The people conducting this survey may wish to contact you by phone to spot-check interviews.)

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX

PREDICTING READER INTEREST IN AN
ANTHROPOLOGICALLY-ORIENTED NEWSPAPER COLUMN

BY

SUSAN L. ALLEN

B.A., Wichita State University, 1970

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Journalism and Mass Communications

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1974

Anthropologists, traditionally bound by academia, have begun seeking an alternative means of disseminating anthropological information and insights.

Two basic assumptions of "beyond academia" anthropology are that the general public finds information which anthropologists explore interesting and that the mass media offer viable channels for communicating it.

This study focused on three questions relevant to communicating anthropologically-oriented information through a newspaper column:

1. Would an average newspaper audience read a column related to anthropology?
2. How would reader interest in a column related to anthropology compare with reader interest in other current newspaper columns?
3. How do such factors as age, sex and education relate to reader interest in columns related to anthropology?

To find answers to these questions, the writer surveyed newspaper readers in Topeka, Kansas, a city of 125,000. A representative sample (systematic - clustered) was selected; the survey instrument was administered by personal interviews in late October and early November, 1973.

The survey instrument was designed following the Jack B. Haskins' title-rating method for pretesting readership in editorial items. Respondents were provided booklets in which titles and subtitles of 18 newspaper column items were displayed. Six of these items were anthropologically-oriented; the twelve other items were in the areas of sports, social comment, political comment and general interest. Using a 0 - 100⁰ scale, respondents indicated their degree of interest in reading each item.

The findings supported the hypothesis that reader interest in anthropologically-oriented items would be similar to reader interest in the other four areas.

An analysis of ratings by item showed that the means of 15 items fell in the middle 20 degrees on the scale (40^0 - 60^0). All six anthropologically-oriented items fell in this area, ranging from 46+ through 57+ degrees. Two politically-oriented items, referring to Nixon and the presidency, were rated above 60 degrees (65^0 and 66^0). One sports item was rated below 40 degrees at 36+ degrees.

Analysis of variance showed a statistically significant difference ($p < .05$) between anthropologically-oriented items and items in two other areas (general interest and political). However, the group means for the five areas were consistently strong, ranging from a low of 44+ degrees for sports items to a high of 57+ degrees for political items. Anthropology items were rated at 49+ degrees, 5 degrees above sports columns and 8 degrees below political items.

Analysis of reader interest in the five areas by sex, education and age showed significant differences ($p < .05$) as follows: in sex, for sports (higher interest for men), for social items (higher interest for women), and for political items (higher interest for men); in age, for political items (higher interest for older age group); and in education, for anthropology items and for political items (higher interest for higher educated group).

On the basis of these findings, the author concluded that reader interest is great enough to justify a newspaper column for communicating anthropological information and insights to the public. The overall recommendation of this study is that writers be trained to supply it.