MEDIA TRUST, MEDIA PREFERENCE, AND LEVELS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION BY SUB - GROUPS IN MEXICO CITY

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ABSTRACT

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LEVELS OF PUBLIC INFORMATION BY
SUB-GROUPS IN MEXICO CITY

By

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This is an exploratory study, aimed at the description of some variables relating to communication behavior in Mexico City. The variables that were analyzed included (1) credibility in two media, television and newspapers, as sources of social information, (2) preference for either medium among the respondents, and (3) levels of information about major topics in the news. The data were analyzed by sub-groups of the population, defined in terms of socio-economic and demographic variables. The respondents were chosen by area probability sampling methods.

This study revealed that residents of Mexico City trust significantly more in television than in newspapers as a source of public information, although they also feel an equal need to confirm in the other medium the information that they first get from either medium. Television is the preferred source of public information of a

significant majority of respondents, most of which also believe that that medium does a better job of informing the public than newspapers. In general, some differential patterns of media trust and media preference emerged when the data were analyzed by sub-groups.

With regard to levels of information, the general finding is that residents of Mexico City have very low levels of information about major news events that occur beyond the limits of their city; that is, in the rest of their nation and in the world. They tend to be somewhat informed about local events and they exhibit relatively high levels of information about entertainment-related news. Significant differences in levels of information for all categories of news were found among sub-groups of the population, except when the sub-groups were defined in terms of age.

The socio-economic and demographic variables were generally good predictors of within group variance of behavior patterns related to mass communication in Mexico City.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Justification

Research in the field of mass communication has practically been non-existent in Mexico. The first major study was published as recently as 1970 (Rota, 1970), and even that study was limited to only one medium. Furthermore, Rota's study analyzed the content of the medium and not its effects upon the audience or patterns of consumption by the public.

However, the past 30 years have witnessed a remarkable spread of the mass media of communication in Mexico. Both the electronic and the print media have been a common national phenomenon for several years, reaching almost every corner of the nation. Mexico City alone (the locus of the present study) boasts 14 major daily newspapers, 35 AM radio stations, 6 television channels, and scores of magazines.

The 14 major newspapers have a combined daily circulation of 1,547,000 (Editor and Publisher, 1972). The number of television sets in operation in the metropolitan area of Mexico City is about 2,250,000 sets (Gertner, 1972), or about half of the national total. One tenth of

the sets are in color. The format of both media is similar to that of their American counterparts.

In spite of such abundance of channels of mass communication, no empirical data have been gathered in Mexico that can allow us to assess the effects of the mass media upon their Mexican receivers, even though research done in other countries indicates that such effects do take place. Examples of areas of study of media effects in other countries would include patterns of consumption of mass media content (Troldahl, 1965a), news diffusion (Deutschmann and Danielson, 1960; Troldahl, 1963 and 1965b; Greenberg, 1964b; Funkhouser, 1971), the effects of social communication in emergent crises (Greenberg, 1965), behavioral effects of violence in the media (Baker and Ball, 1969), the impact of television content on children's behavior (Atkin et al., 1971), effects of mass communication (Schramm and Roberts, 1971; Schramm, 1960), diffusion of innovations (Rogers and Shoemaker, 1971), and the effects of communication in national development (Lerner, 1958; Schramm, 1964; Farace, 1966; Rogers, 1969).

The latter type of effect, the effect of communication in national development, would seem to have an added relevance in Mexico, a "transitional society" (Lerner, 1958) that has passed the stage of economic "take-off" and is now in the critical stage of "accelerated development toward economic maturity" (Rostow, 1971). It

is precisely at this stage, as Schramm points out (Schramm, 1963, pp. 38-39), where Lerner's theory of communication as the "main instrument of modernization" (Lerner, 1963) becomes crucial.*

Such notions of effects, plus the importance of knowing and explaining various aspects of human behavior, more than warrant the empirical study of the mass media of communication in Mexico. Therefore, the present study is carried out with the intention of throwing light to some hitherto empirically unknown aspects of communication behavior in Mexico. It is also hoped that this investigation will be a foundation from which additional communication research will continue.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is twofold:

1. To conduct an exploratory study (cf. Selltiz et al., 1959, pp. 51-65), aimed at the explanation of some variables relating to communication behavior, in a country with not much behavioral research (Rota, 1970).

2. To collect data that will hopefully lead to the formulation of more precise communication research

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*The role of communication in the development of nations, according to Daniel Lerner's theory, seems to be strongly supported by empirical evidence. An exhaustive reference to such empirical studies is found in E. M. Rogers' book, Communication of Innovations: A Cross-Cultural Approach (New York: The Free Press, 1971), pp. 388-466.

problems and the development of hypotheses. More importantly, it is hoped that those data will lead to tangible research efforts in Mexico.

Objectives

1. To gather data from a representative sample of residents of Mexico City which will allow us to describe some behavioral variables related to mass communication channels and messages.
2. To measure the degree of trust that residents of Mexico City have for two media of mass communication: newspapers and television.
3. To assess which of those two media is the preferred one as a source of public information.
4. To measure the level of information about major topics in the news that residents of Mexico City have.
5. To compare the amount of trust in the two selected media and levels of information among members of different sub-groups of the population.
6. To find out which independent variables, defined in terms of socio-economic and demographic indices, are better predictors of specified forms of communication behavior.

7. To establish an empirical foundation that may lead to the prediction of specific relationships and the formulation of hypotheses that will guide future research.

Nature of the Study

As cited above, this is an exploratory study aimed at explaining some aspects of human behavior related to mass communication. This study has been done in a country where relatively little behavioral research has been conducted and, more specifically, where behavioral research in the field of communication is practically non-existent.

This study will be looking at many variables, which will be analyzed in terms of several sub-groups of the population. These variables (dependent variables) are divided into two groups.

The first group is a set of variables pertaining to media trust* and media preference. We are interested in measuring how much trust residents of Mexico City have for television and the newspapers as sources of information and which one of the two media is preferred.

The second set of variables pertain to the level of information about major topics in the news that

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*The generic term "media" will be restricted throughout this study to two media only: newspapers and television. The generic term will be used for the sake of conciseness.

Mexico City residents have on five different areas of interest: international, national, regional, local, and entertainment.

Operationally, "international" news refers to any information which originates outside Mexico and which does not directly involve that country. "National" news will be understood as information of interest to the entire nation and not primarily limited to a specific geographic area, such as matters concerning the Mexican currency. National news will be distinguished from "regional" news in that this latter category refers to information which originates in and is limited to a specific geographical area within Mexico. "Local" information is that which originates in and refers to Mexico City. Finally, under the label "entertainment" we shall include sports, stars of the world of entertainment, and advertising; that is, information of a less "serious" nature but which a previous study of the content of Mexican journalism (Rota, 1970), revealed to be of very large importance, as judged by the space devoted to it.

Media trust and media preference, and levels of information, will be analyzed in terms of sub-groups of the population. These sub-groups are defined as different levels of any of five socio-economic and demographic characteristics: age, education, occupation, income, and sex, which will be treated as independent variables.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Sampling Method

Universe

The universe was first defined as the Mexico City Metropolitan area, with a population of about 8,600,000 according to the 1970 census (Direccion General de Estadistica, 1971). However, the inaccuracy and sometimes outright nonexistence of maps for several districts and towns within the metropolitan area, coupled with census data that was found to be unreliable for some districts, made it necessary to re-define the universe. The universe was re-defined as Mexico City proper, with a 1970 population of 2,902,968 inhabitants, distributed among 563,844 households (Direccion General de Estadistica, 1971).

Mexico City is divided in 12 cuarteles* or districts (Direccion General de Estadistica, 1963). Each cuartel is subdivided in several secciones. This division is made for administrative purposes only and does not

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*Since the time of this study, the 12 cuarteles have been combined into only four districts which include not only Mexico City proper but the entire Federal District (population 6,874,165). This may make sampling even more difficult for future studies.

reflect any characteristics of the population. There may be as great a variance within any given cuartel as between cuarteles. Census data (Direccion General de Estadistica, 1971) and the author's own observations prior to the study, show that extreme differences in characteristics such as income, occupation and level of education can be found within very small areas. Therefore, those cuarteles cannot be used as the basis for stratified sampling (Cochran, 1963; Hansen et al., 1953; Kish, 1965).

Sample Size

Given a confidence level set at 95% and a tolerated error limited to ± 5%, the minimum sample size was determined to be 384 (Cochran, 1963; Hansen et al., 1953; Kish, 1965) for area sampling techniques with probabilities proportional to size.

Previous research experience in Mexico City indicated that a non-response rate of as much as 30% was possible. Consequently, the sample size was increased by one third, to 512. Four hundred twenty-one questionnaires were completed, giving a return rate of 82.23%, which is somewhat better than expected.

Sampling Method

Each housing unit was defined as a sampling unit, where any person was eligible for an interview, provided that that person was not younger than a teen-ager. Since

"teen-ager" was apparently not adequately defined for the interviewers, there was some inconsistency about the minimum age accepted for an interview. The absolute minimum was 14 years of age, although some interviewers placed the lower limit at 15 years and others at 16.

The 512 sampling units were distributed proportionately among all 12 cuarteles. One seccion of each cuartel was randomly chosen as the sampling area for the cuartel, with probabilities of being chosen proportional to the size of the seccion. A walking map was drawn for each interviewer and a starting point was randomly chosen. The interviewers were instructed to attempt an interview at every nth housing unit, with no replacement being permitted. The interval was determined by a ratio between the total number of housing units in the seccion and the size of the quota (Backstrom and Hursh, 1963).

Variables

As stated before, the questionnaire was divided in three parts. One designed to measure media trust and preference for either newspapers or television as sources of information. A second one intended to measure levels of information on major news events. The third part was concerned with socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population.

Media Trust

Several questions designed to measure the amount of trust and preference for the two media selected were developed and pre-tested. The final instrument started with two questions directly pertaining to trust:

In general, how much do you trust in TV news?
___ Very much
___ A fair amount
___ Little
___ Not at all
___ Don't know

Would you feel well informed if you only watched TV news?
___ Yes
___ No
___ Don't know

The same questions were then asked for the newspapers.

In addition, a question that directly compared television with the newspapers was also asked: "Which of these two media, newspapers or television, do you think does a better job of informing the public?"

Media Preference

As an indication of preference, first two questions were asked which were designed to measure the necessity of confirmation of information or supplemental need of information obtained from one medium in the other, by asking, "If you first become informed of a new item on TV, do you later look for it in the newspaper?", and "If you first become informed of a news item in the newspaper, do you later hope to find it in a TV news program?" The

final question in this block directly asked the respondent to state a preference for one of the two media: "If a news event of great interest to you takes place, to which of these two media, television or newspapers, would you go first to be well informed?"

Levels of Information

As Troldahl points out, most of the studies on news diffusion have been limited to determining only whether respondents to a survey were aware of a news event or not,* as opposed to measuring the meaning elicited by the news story or the level of information about that story (Troldahl, 1965). The present study attempted to obtain a better measure of information than simply awareness. Level of information was operationalized by coding the answer given by a respondent as "correct," "close," or "false," and assigning those categories a numerical value of, respectively, three, two, and one.

For example, a question like "What international meeting did President Echeverria go to recently in Chile?" was coded as "correct" if the respondent said "United Nations Conference on Trade and Development" or "UNCTAD."

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*See, for example, Deutschmann and Danielson (1960), Adams et al. (1969), Budd et al. (1966), Hill and Bonjean (1964), Greenberg (1964a), Greenberg (1964b), and Hazel Erskine's summary of social research in "The Polls," a section of Public Opinion Quarterly published in every issue of the journal since Winter, 1962.

It was coded as "close" when the respondent said things like "United Nations," or "A meeting on commerce," or "Something about trade," etc. Any other answers were coded as "false."

As mentioned before, information was gathered on five different areas of news interest: international, national, regional, local, and entertainment. Since several questions were asked about each area, the scores obtained by a respondent for the various questions were combined into a single score by adding the numerical values up. For example, five questions were asked about international information. A respondent who answered the five questions correctly obtained a score of 15. The minimum score would be 5, for those respondents who gave a false answer to each of the five questions. Between those two extreme values, a range was obtained which indicated the level of information of a respondent on international information depending on the position along that range.* In order to obtain a meaningful zero-point, those values were then adjusted by subtracting the minimum value from all scores. In the example, 5 points were subtracted from all scores.

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*The complete questionnaire is reproduced in the Appendix to this report. The questions are a liberal translation from the original Spanish text.

Socio-economic and Demographic Variables

One question each for age, education, occupation, income, and sex of the respondents was asked in order to obtain general characteristics of the population that would allow dividing it in different sub-groups. Measures of trust, media preference, and level of information were analyzed in terms of those sub-groups in order to find out which characteristics of the population are better predictors of the dependent measures.

Questionnaire Development and Pre-test

In order to select the questions that would be used to measure level of information, a brief content analysis of all the television news broadcasts and of a few selected newspapers published in Mexico City during one month was made a few weeks prior to the date when the questionnaires would be in the field. This was done with the purpose of identifying major news stories that had been prominently displayed by the two selected media. An additional consideration was that all the selected news stories were to be about events that had repeatedly appeared in the media during the period of the content analysis.

Forty four news stories that filled the conditions were identified. Practical considerations such as

similarity of events, sensitivity or nature of the event determined the elimination of eight items. The 36 remaining items were pretested and the 18 that showed the most variability among respondents were kept for the study.

The pre-test of the questionnaire, including questions on level of information, media trust and media preference, and socio-economic and demographic characteristics, was done on 35 randomly selected subjects from three different sectors of Mexico City, representing different socio-economic strata.

Data Collection

The interviewers were all advanced undergraduate students in social sciences at Universidad Iberoamericana, in Mexico City, who volunteered for the interviewing task. They worked under the direction of Mr. Alberto Cabal and received prior training.

All the interviews were completed over a period of ten days in late June, 1972. The interviewing was conducted at the respondent's home.

Some resistance and suspicion was found in many respondents. Respondents' comments allow us to attribute such defensive behavior to two factors: (1) The only previous experience with interviewers (either directly or heard from a relative, neighbor or friend) had been with market researchers (who do not ask questions about sensitive topics like politics and the national economy), or

with salesmen who used "research" as an excuse; (2) suspicion that the study was being done by some agency of the government. In most cases, resistance was satisfactorily overcome with the presentation of an official letter from Universidad Iberoamericana and with a standard explanation offered by the interviewer.

Statistical Analysis

Data on media trust and media preference are either at the nominal level of measurement or involve only the comparison among frequency distributions, for which cases Chi-square is the most appropriate inferential statistic (Siegel, 1956). For two variables, however: "In general, how much do you trust in television news?", and "In general, how much do you trust in the newspapers?", the assumption of intervality can be made (McNemar, 1969; Ferguson, 1966; Lieberman, 1971), in which case the one-way analysis of variance to test the significance of difference among means is an appropriate statistical test.

For all variables pertaining to level of information, comparisons among the mean level of information for various sub-groups of the population will be made. In this case, the one-way analysis of variance seems to be the most appropriate statistical test (McNemar, 1969; Ferguson, 1966). It should be noted here that the distributions of many sub-groups do not exhibit normality. Even

though this may reflect a true characteristic of the population, it could be argued that the assumption of normality is violated, invalidating inferences made on the basis of the analyses of variance. McNemar notes, however (McNemar, 1969, p. 288), that "there is ample evidence that marked skewness, departures from normal kurtosis, and extreme differences in variance do not greatly disrupt the F test as a basis for judging significance in the analysis of variance." In any case, trying to avoid any errors in inferences made in this study and following McNemar's suggestion (McNemar, 1969, p. 288) and Ferguson's (Ferguson, 1966, p. 294), we shall adopt a somewhat more rigorous level for claiming significance than the usually adopted .05 level. In this study, only critical values of F that are significant at or beyond the .01 level will be accepted.

Measures of correlation were not used in this study, even in cases where it would have been desirable to establish the degree of association between two variables, because (1) curvilinearity was found for some variables, and (2) the assumption of intervality was not met for many of the variables.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

Media Trust

The most significant finding of this study, in terms of trust in the media, is that residents of Mexico City generally trust television significantly more than newspapers as a source of public information, as can be seen in Table 1.

Both for television and newspapers, very few respondents said that they do not trust in the media at all. However, whereas almost half the respondents said that they trust very much in television, only less than one-fourth said the same for newspapers.

The analysis of the respondents' answers by subgroups shows no significant differences among the subgroups of any of the category variables (age, education, occupation, income, and sex) for television. The same applies for newspapers, except that a significant difference in the amount of trust for the newspapers was found among occupational subgroups, as shown in Table 2.

It should be noted here that in the interpretation of data analyzed in terms of occupation no assumption of linearity can be made. The category variable "occupation"

TABLE 1.--Trust in television and newspapers as sources of public information.

Amount of Trust in:	Television (%)	Newspapers (%)
Very much[a,b]	48.5	22.1
A fair amount/little[c]	50.0	73.1
Not at all	1.5	4.8
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
	N=332	N=376

Chi square = 56.7; d.f. = 2, $p < .001$.

[a]These four categories are a rough translation from Spanish. In the original (mucho, regular, poco, nada), and on the basis of the pre-test of the questionnaire, these categories seem to constitute a scale with equal-appearing intervals (cf. Guildord, 1954).

[b]The difference between the N for each category and the total number of respondents (421) who completed the questionnaire is due to those who answered "don't know" or who gave no answer.

[c]The categories "a fair amount" and "little" were combined into one for the analysis of these data because of the extremely low frequencies in the latter category. Only three respondents, out of 421, said "little" for television, and zero for the newspapers.

is a coded variable constructed merely to delineate groups, rather than a continuous variable. There is not a naturally ordered sequence of occupational categories, in contrast to variables such as income, age, and years of education.

TABLE 2.--Amount of trust in the newspapers by occupational sub-groups.[a]

Category	Sample Size	Mean Amount of Trust
Professional	56	2.0
Student	31	1.9
White collar	50	2.2
Blue collar, skilled	54	2.2
Blue collar, unskilled	13	2.5
Housewife	159	2.2
TOTAL	363	2.17

[a] One-way analysis of variance of means. $F = 4.91$; d.f. = 5, 357; $p < .001$.

In addition to the question on amount of trust in the media, the respondents were also asked whether or not they would feel well informed if they only had either one of the two media as their source of public information. The results confirm the finding that residents of Mexico City trust more in television than they do in newspapers.[1]

To the question "Would you feel well informed if you only watched television news?" 56% of the respondents answered "yes." By contrast, only 36% of the respondents said that they would feel well informed by only reading newspapers, when asked the same question.

[1] Chi square = 26.29; d.f. = 1; $p < .001$; n = 331.

The responses to those two questions were analyzed by sub-groups of the population. Table 3 shows that significant differences were found for all predictor variables, except sex.

It can be seen in Table 3 that an additional indication of greater trust for television than for newspepers was found for all sub-groups of the population when the respondents were asked "Would you feel well informed if you only watched television news?" and "Would you feel well informed by only reading a newspaper?"

In terms of age, there is a direct relationship between age and trust in the media: as the age of the respondents increases, so tends to do their trust in both media. However, and consistent with the finding that residents of Mexico City regard television as more trustworthy than newspapers, the percentage of respondents expressing trust for television is markedly higher than that of respondents declaring trust for newspapers.

The relationship between education and trust in the media follows an inverted J-shaped curve. The more years of education a respondent has, the less he trusts in both television and newspapers up to the level of High School graduate. Beyond that point, trust in the media tends to increase slightly.

Different occupational sub-groups also show statistically significant differences in trust for

TABLE 3.--Trust in information provided by each medium, if the medium were the only source of public information, by sub-groups of the population.[a]

Would you feel well informed?	Television			Newspapers		
	Yes (%)	Don't Know (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	Don't Know (%)	No (%)
Age:						
Less than 18	28.2	20.5	51.3	12.8	18.0	69.2
18 - 25	34.5	21.8	43.7	28.7	14.9	56.4
26 - 34	43.8	21.9	34.3	22.9	21.9	55.2
35 - 49	46.1	25.2	28.7	33.0	15.7	51.3
50 or more	58.7	14.6	26.7*	41.3	20.0	38.7*
Education:						
Grade school or less	56.3	26.3	17.4	34.2	22.6	43.2
Junior High	36.8	16.2	47.0	29.4	8.8	61.8
High School	23.6	18.1	58.3	22.2	9.7	68.1
College, commercial	38.5	17.6	43.9***	24.2	22.0	53.8***
Occupation:						
Professional	26.2	23.0	50.8	22.9	8.2	68.9
White collar	33.3	29.4	37.3	29.4	11.8	58.8
Blue collar	55.4	20.3	24.3	24.3	23.0	52.7
Housewife	52.9	20.3	26.8	36.9	21.9	41.2
Student	15.6	12.5	71.9***	6.3	9.4	84.3***
Income:						
0 - 999 pesos/month	52.9	24.3	22.8	32.9	32.9	34.2
1,000 - 2,499	48.7	22.6	28.7	29.2	15.4	55.4
2,500 - 4,999	36.5	17.7	45.8	27.1	15.6	57.3
5,000 or more	28.3	20.0	51.7**	28.3	13.3	58.4*

[a]Sample size for each category is 421.

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

***$p < .001$

All the levels of significance determined by Chi square test.

television and newspapers. However, no statements of linear relationship between occupation and media trust can be presented because occupation is a coded variable and not a continuous one, as explained above.

Finally, the data show an inverse relationship between income and media trust, although the curve describing the relationship between income and trust in newspapers flattens out. Nevertheless, the conclusion is quite clear that the higher the monthly income of the respondents, the lower their trust in television, but not for newspapers.

A final question pertaining to media trust was asked to the respondents: "Which of these two media, newspapers or television, do you think does a better job of informing the public?"[2] Consistent with the other findings, the answers to this question also show a significantly higher frequency count for television than for newspapers.[3] Four out of five respondents chose television. In addition, almost 3% of the respondents answered "none," and 14% failed to make a choice.

Breaking the answers to this question down by sub-groups of the population, it can be seen that there are

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[2]This question was added as an indirect measure of trust. Even though it yields the same results, it is acknowledged that it might be also measuring "completeness" of the information.

[3]Chi square = 123.6; d.f. = 1; $p < .001$.

statistically significant differences among the various sub-groups defined in terms of educational level and income. Age, occupation, and sex, on the other hand, are good predictors of which medium is perceived by the public of Mexico City as doing a better job of informing the masses. This is shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4.--Predictors of media perceived as informing the public better.

Predictors	Percent of Respondents who Perceive Each Medium as Informing Better				
	Television (%)	Newspapers (%)	None (%)	Don't Know (%)	Significance
Age:					
Less than 18	41.0	38.5	2.6	17.9	
18 - 25	71.3	13.8	5.7	9.2	$X^2 = 31.0$
26 - 34	64.8	17.1	1.0	17.1	d.f. = 16
35 - 49	72.2	14.8	2.6	10.4	$p < .02$
50 or more	66.7	12.0	1.3	20.0	
Occupation:					
Professional	62.3	21.3	4.9	11.5	
White collar	80.4	9.8	3.9	5.9	$X^2 = 27.9$
Blue collar	70.3	17.6	1.4	10.7	d.f. = 16
Housewife	66.8	13.4	2.1	17.7	$p < .05$
Student	46.9	34.4	6.3	12.4	
Sex:					
Male	60.3	24.4	4.5	10.8	$X^2 = 17.1$
Female	69.8	12.5	1.5	16.2	d.f. = 4
					$p < .01$

Table 4 shows that the three groups perceive television as informing the public significantly better than newspapers. This perception is constant across all sub-groups of the population defined in terms of age, occupation, or sex, except for those respondents of less than 18 years of age. Those younger respondents are equally divided between the two media, with about 40% going for each medium.

This last observation may be related to the percentages observed for the category "student" in the sub-group of the population defined by occupation, although this possibility has not been specifically tested.

Media Preference

Quite predictably, given the findings on media trust, television is clearly preferred over the newspapers as a source of public information. When asked "If a news event of great interest to you takes place, to which of these two media, television or newspapers, would you go first to be well informed?" two-thirds of those making a choice said "television."[4]

In spite of such a large difference, no significant differences were found among the various sub-groups of the population.

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[4]Chi square = 51.14; d.f. = 1; $p < .001$.

Two other questions were asked to the respondents in order to assess media preference: "If you first become informed of a news item on TV, do you later look for it in the newspaper?" and "If you first become informed of a news item in the newspaper, do you later hope to find it in a TV news program?" The frequency distributions for the answers to these two questions are practically identical, as can be seen in Table 5.

TABLE 5.--Need to confirm or supplement information.

	First Informed from TV, Need to Confirm in Newspapers (%)	First Informed From Newspapers, Need to Confirm in TV (%)
Yes	67.2	67.5
No	20.0	18.5
Don't Know	12.6	14.0
TOTAL	100.0	100.0
	N=421	N=421

As the data show, even though the respondents trust in television significantly more than in newspapers, and prefer television also significantly more than newspapers as a source of public information, they feel an equal need to confirm or supplement the news that they get from either medium in the other. This finding can also be interpreted in terms of media trust as indicating that the respondents

tend to cross-check the information received from either medium, regardless of where they become informed first.

An analysis of the data by sub-groups of the population reveals that no statistically significant differences exist for age, occupation, income, or sex. Differences were found, however, when the data were analyzed by education. Those differences are shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6.--Need to confirm or supplement information, by education.

Education	First Informed From TV, Need to Confirm in Newspapers			First Informed From Newspapers, Need to Confirm in TV		
	Yes (%)	Don't Know (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	Don't Know (%)	No (%)
Grade school or less	61.6	16.8	21.6	67.4	18.4	14.2
Junior High	70.6	4.4	25.0	66.2	8.8	25.0
High School	73.6	6.9	19.5	61.1	6.9	32.0
College or commercial	71.4	15.4	13.2	73.6	14.3	12.1

These data indicate that a curvilinear relationship exists between levels of education and need to confirm or supplement the information obtained from one medium in the other. No regular patterns in the curvilinearity of the various relationships can be inferred from these data, except for the U-shaped distribution of the "don't know"

category. There is some tendency for the distributions of the two "no" categories to exhibit an inverted U relationship, although the two curves are skewed in opposite directions. The distribution of percentages for the two questions, however, is almost equal, consistent with the general pattern presented in Table 6.

Levels of Information

Altogether, 18 questions were asked about different major news stories that had been prominently displayed by the media during the weeks prior to the administration of the questionnaire, as revealed by a content analysis of the media. The questionnaire is transcribed in the appendix. The 18 questions were combined into five categories of news: international, national, regional, local, and entertainment.

The answers of the respondents to each question were coded as correct, close to the correct answer, false, and don't know. Since the last two categories indicate lack of knowledge about a news event, they were both assigned a value of one. Close was given a value of two, and correct a value of three. The obtained values of a respondent for each of the questions constituting a category of news were summed, in order to obtain a category score.

The general finding is that the level of information of the residents of Mexico City about international,

national, regional, local, and entertainment news, considered as a single general category, is very low. As Table 7 shows, of the total number of responses given by all subjects, almost half are in the category "don't know."

TABLE 7.--Overall distribution of level of information.

Level	Percentage
Correct	35.6
Close	9.4
False	7.3
Don't Know	47.7
TOTAL	100.0

The percentages presented in this table correspond to the sum total of the answers given by all respondents to all 18 questions. Once those percentages are broken down by categories, interesting patterns emerge (Table 8).

These data show that as the news events get closer in physical proximity to the individual, or as the event becomes of a "lighter" nature (sports, world of entertainment, advertisements), the level of information increases notably. The category entertainment is the only one where the number of correct answers is markedly greater than the number of don't knows. Local news and entertainment are the only two categories where the sum of the correct and

TABLE 8.--Distribution of level of information by categories of news.

Level by Category	Percentage
International:	
Correct	29
Close	3
False	1
Don't know	64
	100%
National:	
Correct	28
Close	3
False	28
Don't know	41
	100%
Regional:	
Correct	32
Close	9
False	5
Don't know	54
	100%
Local:	
Correct	34
Close	23
False	7
Don't know	36
	100
Entertainment:	
Correct	49
Close	12
False	2
Don't know	37
	100%

close to correct answers (which indicate at least some level of information) is larger than the sum of false and don't know (which indicate no information at all).

In any case, however, the frequency distribution is still strongly loaded toward a low level of public information among residents of Mexico City, as revealed by a representative sample of the population.[5] The don't know figures in Table 8 show that well.

Realizing that there was a possibility that such large differences in the distribution were an effect of the artifact used to measure the level of information of the respondents, given the low percentages for "close" and "false" in some categories, a further analysis of the data was made. As presented in Table 9, correct and close answers were combined into a single score which is a measure of at least some level of information about major topics in the news. False and don't know answers were also combined as an indication of no information on the part of the respondents on some major news stories. The large difference in the distributions still persisted.[6]

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[5]There is a 95% confidence in the inference and a tolerated error of ±5%. This means, for example, that when we say that 49% of the answers to questions in the category entertainment were correct, we are 95% confident that between 46.55% and 51.45% of the answers are correct for that category.

[6]An indication that the questions were not biased is that if they were one would not expect the clear trend from local and entertainment information to international information that was found.

TABLE 9.--Combined levels of information by categories.

Category	Some Information
International	32%
National	30
Regional	41
Local	57
Entertainment	61

Table 9 confirms the finding that the level of public information on international, national and regional news events among residents of Mexico City is generally very low, and that such pattern becomes reversed for local news and entertainment, where the level of information is rather high.

If an assumption can be made that entertainment is as close to the respondents or closer than local events such as politics, labor unions and disasters, then the data of this investigation would show a direct relationship between proximity of news events to residents of Mexico City and level of information about those events. That is, the closer the information is to the individual, the better informed he is.

Given such general findings on levels of public information in Mexico City as reported above, the next step

should be an analysis of those findings by sub-groups of the population.

Of the five predictor variables (age, education, occupation, income, and sex) that defined the various sub-groups of the population for this study, age was the only one that generally did not show any statistically significant differences on level of information among sub-groups. Information on local news events was the only category of news that showed significant differences by age sub-groups. The analysis is presented in Table 10.

TABLE 10.--Level of information on local events, by age sub-groups.

Category	Mean Level	Sample Size
Less than 18 years	4.39	38
18 - 25	4.88	83
26 - 34	5.90	101
35 - 49	6.04	112
50 - 65	6.00	45
More than 65	5.55	22
TOTAL	5.57	461

One-way analysis of variance of means. $F = 6.6$; d.f. = 5, 400; $p < .001$.

According to those data, an inverted U-shaped relationship between age and knowledge of local news exists. The older a person gets, up to the 35-49 age level, the better informed he is. Beyond that point, his level of information tends to decrease. It should be noted, however, that most of the difference is accounted for by the younger respondents.

In summary, it can be said that age is not a predictor of differential levels of public information in Mexico City, except insofar as local information is concerned, in which case an inverted U-shape relationship between the two variables is found to reach statistical significance.

Consequently, in the remainder of this analysis of levels of information by population sub-groups, age will not be considered.

International Information

The level of knowledge on international news among the respondents was tested with five questions. The first four asked the respondents to name the presidents of the United States, Russia, Chile, and France, all of which had been very frequently in the news just prior to this study. The fifth question asked for the capital of North Vietnam.

As explained before, the answers were coded as correct, close, false, and don't know. For example, the correct answer to the question on the president of Chile would be Allende. Frey (former president), Neruda (politician and ambassador to France), and other national figures closely identified with the Chilean presidency, would be coded as "close" since, even though they failed to identify the president, they did at least show some knowledge of Chilean government and politics. Other answers were coded as "false." The last answer and "don't know" were given a value of one. "Close" was given a value of two, and "correct" a value of three. Since there were five questions on international information, the maximum possible score would be 15, and five would be the lowest score. The obtained scores were then adjusted by subtracting five points, so that the scale would go from 0 to 10, zero becoming a meaningful value of "no information at all." This range also places in better perspective the means entered in Table 11.

The analysis by sub-groups (Table 11) shows that the four category variables (education, occupation, income, and sex) are good predictors of levels of information on international news.

An inverted J-shaped relationship between level of information and education was found. As years of education increase, so does knowledge of international news, up to

TABLE 11.--Levels of international information by sub-groups. (Range of scores: 0-10).

Sub-groups	Sample Size	Mean Level of Information	F*
Education:			
Grade school or less	181	1.7	F = 45.5
7th to 9th	57	3.3	d.f. = 4, 355
10th to 12th	26	5.5	
Commercial studies	40	6.7	p < .0005
College	52	3.6	
Occupation:			
Professional, business	54	5.3	F = 17.3
Student	31	4.4	d.f. = 5, 361
White collar	43	3.3	
Blue collar, skilled	55	2.4	p < .0005
Blue collar, unskilled	14	1.4	
Housewife	165	2.1	
Income:			
0 - 999 pesos/month	66	1.9	F = 19.6
1000 - 2499	177	2.3	d.f. = 4, 373
2500 - 4999	81	3.9	
5000 - 9999	33	4.8	p < .0005
More than 10,000	11	7.8	
Sex:			
Male	144	4.2	F = 54.7
Female	234	2.2	d.f. = 1, 377
			p .0005

*One-way analysis of variance.

the level of college education where there is a drop in the average level of information.

Statistically significant differences were also found among the occupation sub-groups. As explained above, however, no linear relationships between occupation and level of information can be stated because occupation is not a continuous variable. Nevertheless, the data show that there is a significant increase in level of knowledge as we move toward occupations that are usually associated with higher levels of education and income.

The data for the sub-groups defined by monthly income also show a highly significant linear relationship with level of information on international news. The higher the income level, the higher the level of information.

Finally, the analysis by sex shows that men are significantly better informed about international news than women.

In general, however, most sub-groups of the population of Mexico City have low levels of knowledge on international news (see also Tables 8 and 9). The data for the mean level of information of each sub-group, presented in Table 11, show that the average for most sub-groups falls below the median value of 5 in a range going from 0 to 10.

National Information

National information was operationally defined as those news stories of interest to all Mexicans, with no geographical restrictions. The questions that were asked were (1) "Do you know which country in the Far East did President Echeverria visit a few months ago?" (2) "What international meeting did President Echeverria go to recently in Chile?" and (3) "With regard to the recent world monetary crisis, do you know if the Mexican peso has been devalued?" (Questions are in Spanish in the original text of the questionnaire. These, and all questions quoted in this thesis, are to be considered as liberal translations from the original.) A respondent who answered the three questions correctly would get the maximum score of 6 points. The minimum score is 0.

Table 12 presents the data by sub-groups. The data show a statistically significant relationship between education and level of information on national news, although the relationship is J-shaped. Up to the level of commercial studies, an increase in years of education shows a concomitant increase in information. However, for the group with college education there is a drop in the mean level of information.

Occupation is also significantly related to level of information on national news. The data reveal a clear tendency for the mean level of information to increase as

TABLE 12.--Levels of national information by sub-groups. (Range of scores: 0-9).

Sub-groups	Sample Size	Mean Level of Information	F*
Education:			
Grade school or less	190	1.3	F = 11.1
7th to 9th	68	1.0	d.f. = 4, 387
10th to 12th	28	2.4	p < .0005
Commercial studies	38	2.5	
College	64	1.9	
Occupation			
Professional, business	55	2.4	F = 5.07
Student	31	1.9	d.f. = 5, 396
White collar	51	1.8	p < .001
Skilled blue collar	59	1.5	
Unskilled blue collar	15	1.2	
Housewife	186	1.5	
Income:			
0 - 999 pesos/month	69	1.4	F = 7.8
1000 - 2499	193	1.6	d.f. = 4, 401
2500 - 4999	94	1.8	p > .001
5000 - 9999	35	2.5	
More than 10,000	11	2.6	
Sex:			
Male	151	1.9	F = 5.8
Female	262	1.6	d.f. = 1, 411
			p < .01

*One-way analysis of variance.

the kind of occupation suggests increasingly higher levels of education and income.

A linear relationship between income and knowledge of national news was also found, which reaches statistical significance. It can be seen that the respondents with higher monthly income are also higher in mean level of information.

The level of information on national events analyzed by sex did not reach the minimum level of statistical significance set for this study.

Finally, the data show a very low level of information on national news among the respondents. In a distribution where the minimum possible score for level of national information is 0, and 6 is the maximum value, all sub-groups of the population fell under the median value of 3.

Regional Information

Regional information was operationally defined as that which specifically refers to a limited geographical area within Mexico, other than the metropolitan area of Mexico City.

Two questions were asked. The first, "In what state of the Republic do the Tarahumara Indians live?" refers to a large group of Indians who live in the mountains of northern Mexico and who had been given considerable attention by the Mexico City media because

of their numerous social problems. The second question was "What is the most important city in the Yucatan peninsula?" It refers to the socio-politic, economic and administrative capital of the Mexican southeast.

The distribution of scores of the responses for this news category goes between the extreme values of zero and four.

All the category variables that divide the population into sub-groups show statistically significant differences in the mean levels of information (Table 13).

For the category variable education, a linear relationship is found between years of education and level of information on regional news, up to the level of commercial studies. After that level, a pronounced drop in the mean value is found.

Statistically significant differences between population sub-groups defined by occupation and knowledge of regional information were also found. For the non-student and non-housewife sub-groups, the same relationship that was found for the previous categories of information also holds for regional news. The more an occupation would tend to be associated with higher education and income, the better the knowledge of regional information.

A linear relationship between income and level of information of regional news was also found to reach statistical significance. The relationship is a direct one,

TABLE 13.--Levels of regional information by sub-groups. (Range of scores: 0-6).

Sub-groups	Sample Size	Mean Level of Information	F*
Education:			
Grade school or less	190	0.9	F = 23.3
7th to 9th	68	1.8	d.f. = 4, 395
10th to 12th	29	1.7	p < .0005
Commercial studies	43	3.2	
College	66	2.0	
Occupation:			
Professional, business	61	2.6	F = 10.9
Student	32	1.3	d.f. = 5, 404
White collar	51	2.1	p < .0005
Skilled blue collar	59	1.0	
Unskilled blue collar	15	1.7	
Housewife	187	1.2	
Income:			
0 - 999 pesos/month	70	1.0	F = 12.7
1000 - 2499	195	1.2	d.f. = 4, 409
2500 - 4999	96	1.7	p < .0005
5000 - 9999	37	2.5	
More than 10,000	12	3.8	
Sex:			
Male	156	1.9	F = 23.1
Female	265	1.2	d.f. = 1, 419
			p < .0005

*One-way analysis of variance.

so that higher income levels correspond to higher information levels.

Sexual differences were found to be statistically significant. Men are better informed about regional events than women.

The data presented in Table 13 also confirm the findings presented in Tables 8 and 9 about the generally low level of regional information. The median value of the theoretical distribution of information on regional news is 2.0. This value is higher than the observed average level of information found for most sub-groups of the population.

Local Information

This category refers to major news events in and about Mexico City. It excludes, however, the many news stories that originate in Mexico City but which are national in scope.

The level of information about local news was measured with three questions. The first one was "At present, who is the mayor of Mexico City?" and is self-explanatory. The second question, "Do you know which labor union is Fidel Velzquez the leader of?" refers to the leader of the most powerful labor union in the country, who was involved in several important local news events during the weeks prior to the interviewing of respondents for the present study. The third question deals with a storm that

hit Mexico City several days before interviewing the respondents, and which particularly affected a suburb where it caused considerable damage and claimed several lives: "Could you tell me what was the sector of Mexico City most seriously affected by the recent storm?"

An analysis of the data, presented in Table 14, shows that all four category variables considered exhibited statistically significant relationships with the amount of information on local events.

The relationship with education follows an inverse J-shaped distribution. Increases in numbers of years of education lead to better information on local events, up to the level of commercial studies. Beyond that level (where we only find the sub-group with college education) the average score of information on local news falls down.

Occupation is also significantly related to level of local information. However, no linear relationships can be posited given the non-continuous nature of the category occupation. Nevertheless, and similarly to other categories of news, there is a clear tendency for the sub-groups with occupations usually related to higher levels of education and income to be better informed.

The data by income sub-groups show quite clearly that an increase in monthly income is associated to an increase in level of knowledge on local events.

TABLE 14.--Levels of local information by sub-groups. (Range of scores: 0-6).

Sub-groups	Sample Size	Mean Level of Information	F*
Education:			
Grade school or less	183	1.9	F = 17.5
7th to 9th	61	2.9	d.f. = 4, 378
10th to 12th	29	3.2	p < .0005
Commercial studies	41	4.3	
College	65	3.2	
Occupation:			
Professional, business	60	4.1	F = 10.0
Student	31	1.9	d.f. = 5, 388
White collar	48	3.0	p < .0005
Skilled blue collar	54	2.7	
Unskilled blue collar	15	2.6	
Housewife	181	2.1	
Income:			
0 - 999 pesos/month	66	1.8	F = 9.9
1000 - 2499	185	2.3	d.f. = 4, 391
2500 - 4999	93	3.2	p < .0005
5000 - 9999	36	3.2	
More than 10,000	12	4.5	
Sex:			
Male	144	3.4	F = 43.2
Female	259	2.1	d.f. - 1, 402
			p < .0005

*One-way analysis of variance.

With respect to sex, men are better informed than women.

Since three questions were used to measure level of information on local news events, the range of scores can go from 0 to 6. Table 14 shows that more than half of the various sub-groups of the population were above the median in their level of information on local events. This contrasts with the findings reported for levels of knowledge on the three previous categories of news: international, national, and regional.

Entertainment Information

Under this label we have included public information other than "hard news." A total of five questions were asked, covering sports and entertainment, as well as advertising.

The two questions on sports were "Do you know who is the featherweight boxing champion of Mexico?" and "Which are the leading teams in Group A of the national soccer league?" The boxing champion had been receiving considerable media coverage. As for the two soccer teams, this study was on the field during the last few weeks of the soccer season, with strong competition between two local teams for the championship of a sport that Mexican journalists often describe with words such as "passion."

Two questions were asked about two very popular actors. One was "What is the name of the artist whose death was commemorated in April, on the 15th anniversary of his tragic death?" The other: "Do you know which Mexican actress is popularly known as "La Doña?" An interesting observation is that those two questions ranked number two and one, respectively, among the number of correct answers for all 18 questions. Eighty-five percent of the respondents knew that "La Doña" is Maria Felix, and 79% knew that Pedro Infante was the actor who had died 15 years ago. It could also be mentioned that the question that ranked third highest in terms of correct answers was "Could you tell me the name of the president of the United States?" Seventy-eight percent of the respondents said Nixon.

The final question for this category was about an advertisement: "Do you know which product has the slogan '<u>Aguanta, aguanta, todas las pruebas</u>' in its advertising campaign?"

Table 15 shows all four category variables are good predictors of differential levels of information on entertainment by sub-groups of the population.

The relationship between education and knowledge about entertainment information follows the form of a U-shaped curve.

TABLE 15.--Levels of entertainment information by sub-groups. (Range of scores: 0-10).

Sub-groups	Sample Size	Mean Level of Information	F*
Education:			
Grade school or less	153	5.1	F = 11.4
7th to 9th	56	6.7	d.f. = 4, 324
10th to 12th	23	7.0	p < .0005
Commercial studies	36	6.8	
College	57	6.3	
Occupation:			
Professional, business	52	6.8	F = 6.6
Student	29	6.2	d.f. = 5, 328
White collar	45	6.9	p < .001
Skilled blue collar	52	6.1	
Unskilled blue collar	10	5.5	
Housewife	141	5.1	
Income:			
0 - 999 pesos/month	57	4.3	F = 6.9
1000 - 2499	166	5.8	d.f. = 4, 328
2500 - 4999	74	6.5	p < .001
5000 - 9999	28	6.7	
More than 10,000	8	7.8	
Sex:			
Male	139	6.7	F = 29.3
Female	203	5.2	d.f. = 1, 341
			p < .0005

*One-way analysis of variance.

No clear patterns in the relationship between sub-groups defined by occupation and level of entertainment information were found, although there are differences among groups and those differences have a chance of better than one in one thousand of reflecting true characteristics of the groups.

The relationship between income and knowledge of entertainment information is linear and highly significant. As for sex, men know more about entertainment news than women.

Finally, the data show that residents of Mexico City are very well informed about entertainment news, as compared to other categories of news. The median value of the theoretical distribution of scores is 5. As can be seen in Table 15, all the sub-groups but one are above the median.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, INTERPRETATION, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary

This was an exploratory study, aimed at the description of some variables relating to communication behavior in a country where relatively little behavioral research has been done. More specifically, no research on variables such as the ones analyzed in this investigation, and summarized below, has been done in Mexico.

Some research in mass communication has been done in other Latin American countries. For example, McNelly and Fonseca (1964) studied exposure of Costa Rican college students to the mass media and related it to political interest. Deutschmann and McNelly (1962) described and compared the use of the mass media in two Latin American communities, one in Colombia, the other in Costa Rica. Deutschmann, McNelly and Ellingsworth (1961) studied the patterns of mass media use by "sub-elites" in eleven Latin American countries. However, no research seems to have been carried out in Latin America on variables comparable to the ones of the present investigation.

Investigations in areas similar to the one of the present study can be found in countries outside Latin America, and particularly in the United States. Findings of such investigations, however, were not used as a basis for the research reported here because the nonexistence of Mexican data would make the problems and perils of cross-cultural generalization particularly relevant.

The variables that were analyzed included (1) credibility in two media, newspapers and television, as sources of public information, (2) preference for either medium among the respondents, and (3) levels of information about major topics in five categories of news: international, national, regional, local, and entertainment. The data were analyzed by sub-groups of the population which were defined by five socio-economic and demographic variables: age, education, occupation, income, and sex.

The locus of the research was Mexico City. The respondents were chosen by area probability sampling methods, and constitute a fairly representative sample of Mexico City.

In terms of accessibility, the two media selected for this study are fairly comparable. The total combined circulation of the 14 major daily newspapers in Mexico City is 1,547,000 (Editor and Publisher, 1972). This number is increased somewhat by several smaller daily

publications. The number of television sets in operation in the Mexico City metropolitan area is about 2,250,000 (Gertner, 1972).

The format of the two media is quite similar to their average American counterparts. In terms of operation, however, the Mexican media are under greater government control than in the U.S. Post-censorship does exist in Mexico. Recently, the government has also moved toward the direct acquisition of newspapers, such as Cadena Garcia Valseca, the largest chain of newspapers in the country. As for television, a government decree of July 1, 1969 extended the present television stations concessions by 10 years, renewable for another 10 years, or a maximum total of 20 years. After that, the decree gives the government an option to buy any television station.

Media Trust

Residents of Mexico City were found to trust significantly more in television than in newspapers as a source of public information. Almost half the respondents said that they trust "very much" in television, compared to less than one-fourth for newspapers.

For the answers to the general question on trust, no significant differences in credibility were found among the various sub-groups of the population, except for occupation.

However, when asked about their trust in the information provided by each medium, if the medium were the only source of public information, even though the same preference persisted, some differential patterns emerged. It was found that for those respondents higher in age, but lower in educational level and income, and engaged in occupations that would tend to be associated with low education and low income, trust in both media tended to be higher than for other sub-groups. Trust, however, was always significantly much higher for television than for newspapers. Sex did never account for any differences.

When the respondents were asked to choose between television and newspapers as to which medium does a better job of informing the public, four out of five respondents chose television.

Media Preference

As would be predicted from the previous findings, significantly more respondents preferred television over newspapers as a source of public information. Two-thirds of the respondents said that if an event of great interest to them took place, they would go first to television in order to be well informed.

In spite of such clear preference and greater trust for television, however, it was also found that

regardless of which medium is the first source of information, the respondents feel a need to confirm or supplement the information that they get from one medium in the other. Two-thirds of the respondents declared such need to confirm or supplement in television what they found out from newspapers. The same proportion of respondents stated a need to confirm or supplement in newspapers the information that they first get from television.

These findings apply generally in about the same proportion to all sub-groups of the population. Statistical analyses failed to disclose any significant differences among population sub-groups, except insofar as education is concerned, in which case the finding is that the more education a person has the more he needs to confirm or supplement in newspapers what information he gets from television, the same trend being less clear, although still significant, when newspapers are the original source of information.

Levels of Information

The general finding is that the level of information of residents of Mexico City about all categories of news is very low. When the answers to all questions in all categories of news were combined into a single general category called "public information," it was found that almost half of the total number of responses given by all

subjects are in the category "don't know." If to the number of "don't knows" we add all those answers given which were incorrect, deriving a category of responses which indicated complete lack of public information, the finding is that 55% of the residents of Mexico City, as inferred from a representative sample of the population, are not informed about the major news events reported by the local media. Of the remainder, one-tenth are just vaguely informed, and only one-third are correctly informed about major topics in the news.

It should be mentioned here that the questions asked the respondents were not arbitrarily concocted by the researcher. Rather, they were chosen from the news events that the media in Mexico City displayed more prominently and repeatedly a few weeks prior to the interviewing of the respondnets, as disclosed by a content analysis of the media made during a period of one month. That content analysis identified 44 major news events. The 18 questions that were utilized were chosen because a pre-test of the questionnaire revealed those to be the ones with greater variance in the responses, and therefore with finer discriminability of answers.

An analysis of the distribution of responses that indicate at least some knowledge of the major news events, by category of news, shows that the percentage of respondents with some information goes from 32% for

international information and 30% for national information, to 41% for regional news, 57% for local news, and 61% for what was classified as "entertainment." In addition to indicating that residents of Mexico City are better informed about "soft news" than about "hard news," those findings also lead to the interpretation that a direct relationship between proximity of a news event to the respondent and amount of knowledge about that event does exist.

An analysis of the various categories of news indicates that statistically significant differences exist among sub-groups of the population.

Predictor Variables

In summary, the data show that age is generally not a good predictor of differential levels of public information. Sub-groups defined by age only show significant differences for local information. All the other four variables are good predictors.

Education is generally related to levels of public information in the form of an inverted J-shaped curve, so that as the number of years of education increases, so does the average score for information, up to the level of "commercial studies" (which is more than high school but less than college). At the college level there is a decrease in the level of knowledge on public information,

for all categories. Such decrease in level of information at the college level is rather puzzling since a high degree of association between education and levels of information would be expected, such that the college educated respondents, the sub-group with the most education, should also be the best informed sub-group.

An explanation as to why such a decrease in levels of information occurs for the college educated sub-group cannot be adequately provided with the data gathered for this study, and it should be the subject of a subsequent study. A tentative explanation, however, would be that the college educated sub-group generally exhibits a lack of trust in the media, leading them not to use the media, which would necessarily limit their access to news reports. It can also be that the more educated respondents do not use the media for reasons other than trust. For example, some respondents may associate television with undesirable activities ("the idiot box," "a loss of time") and therefore may not use that medium at all. Further research, however, is needed seeking to explain why such an unexpected relationship between education and levels of information occurs, and what are the social implications of such a relationship.

With regard to occupation, all that can be said is that there are significant differences among different sub-groups defined in terms of occupation, and level of

public information. However, since occupation is a non-continuous variable, no linear predictions can be made. Nevertheless, the data show that levels of information are higher among those sub-groups whose occupations are usually associated with higher levels of education and higher income. Education and income would then be the relevant predictor variables.

Income was found to be an excellent predictor of differential levels of public information. The higher the monthly income of the respondents, the higher the level of information. This relationship was constant across all categories of information.

Finally, sex was also found to be a good predictor of knowledge about public information in Mexico City. National information was the only category of information where sexual differences were not very clear. Otherwise, men were found to be better informed than women.

A crude generalization of the findings of this study would be: rich men in professional occupations and with slightly more than high school education constitute the best informed sub-group of the population of Mexico City.

Interpretation

Implications

The findings of this study can be synthesized by saying that residents of Mexico Study trust in

television more than in newspapers and prefer the former medium over the latter as a source of public information. In general, those people are poorly informed about important events that happen beyond the geographical limits of their city, including events of national scope that presumably may affect them. However, they tend to be well informed about such things as sports, movie actresses and folk singers, and advertisements of brandy.

The preferential use of and greater trust in television over newspapers may be an indirect manifestation of "functional illiteracy" (Rogers, 1969), even though the data of this study do not allow for the establishment of any causal links. Nevertheless, it is known that the index of illiteracy in Mexico has dropped in recent years from more than two-thirds of the population to less than one-third as a national average, and to slightly under 10% for Mexico City. It is also known that the reduction in illiteracy rates can be explained in Mexico by literacy campaigns of short duration, and by more children going to school, although for relatively few years. For example, 45% of the respondents in this study had had education of grade school or less, in addition to 4% who declared they were illiterate. Short literacy campaigns and few years of formal education allow people to pass literacy tests, but they usually do not lead to effective use of reading and writing skills, nor do they lead to any meaningful

consumption of print media (Rogers, 1969). This may be reflected in the findings of this study about media trust and media preference.

An important implication may be for the development of Mexico. If literacy is indeed an important agent of modernization (Rogers, 1969, 1971; Lerner, 1958) and if consumption of the mass media of communication constitutes the "main instrument" of modernization and development (Lerner, 1958, 1963; Schramm, 1963, 1964), then the data of this study suggest not only that Mexico's path to modernization has not been completed yet, but also that efforts should be made in order to increase the consumption of both print and electronic media in Mexico. It should be noted, furthermore, that the data for this study were gathered in a city with indices much higher than the rest of the country in literacy rates and in development and consumption of the media.

Whether or not the mass media of communication will actually be used to a greater extent to inform the public better and to utilize the potential of communication as an agent of social change and development, what should be noted is that credibility in the media as sources of public information is lowest among the better educated sub-groups, with higher income, and in professional occupations. It is precisely among members of such sub-groups of the population where one is likely to find the leaders that

control the social mechanisms. Whether or not those leaders also exhibit lack of credibility in the media, and whether or not such mistrust, if any, is circumscribed to the present content of the media, or is generalized to the media institutions, is an empirical question which cannot be answered in the present study. But if that were the case, the implications for a continued social, economic, and political development of Mexico would be rather noxious.

It can also be assumed from the present study that important negative factors exist in Mexico City which may potentially limit and be detrimental to an active participation in the social, political, and economic life of Mexico by many sub-groups of the population.

It should be obvious that public communication and adequate levels of information about the important aspects of Mexico's life are prerequisites for a functional participation by individuals and groups in various socio-economic and political aspects of the country. However, the data of the present study show that the level of public information for most of the population of Mexico City is very low. Consequently, it can be inferred that a sizeable percentage of the population is poorly equipped to participate meaningfully in important decisions that affect all Mexicans.

When relatively high indices of knowledge on public information were found for a majority of sub-groups

of the population, for things other than entertainment-related news, the news events were of a local nature. This would tend to present the population of Mexico City as oriented toward their immediate environment, and relatively isolated from the national and world scenes. This lack of "cosmopoliteness" (Rogers, 1969) can be interpreted, according to Rogers' theory (Rogers, 1969, 1971), as an indication of "traditionalism" that still subsists in the more modern, "transitional" Mexican society (Lerner, 1958) and which may restrain Mexico from truly "accelerated development toward economic maturity" (Rostow, 1971).

It can also be inferred from the present study that residents of Mexico City use the media primarily for entertainment. Authors like Schramm and Stephenson* would equate such use of the media with a need for instant gratification and immediate reward. If this were generalized as a characteristic of the entire population (and it can be, given the representativeness of the sample), it might be suggestive of a somewhat immature social psychology.

Generalizability

The data of the present study referred to a representative sample of residents of Mexico City. The sample

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*See, for example, Schramm (1949), Schramm and Roberts (1971), and Stephenson (1967).

was drawn by area probability sampling methods, in order to maximize the possibility that all residents of the city would have an equal change of being interviewed for this study.

Given a representative sample, the findings of this study should be fairly generalizable to the entire population of Mexico City.

Reservations

Data for this study were gathered for only two media: newspapers and television. In order to have a better picture of media credibility and media preference, an effort should be made to include other media. (In this study, it was decided not to include magazines as one of the media because their limited circulation makes a comparison with television and newspapers difficult, in terms of accessibility. Radio was excluded because the present author has come to the conclusion, through personal observation, that many of the radio news programs obtain all of their material from newspapers.)

The data could have been analyzed in more powerful ways if the questions on socio-economic and demographic variables had been supplemented with other social indicators.

Finally, a more precise instrument for the measurement of social information should be developed.

Even though the present instrument was developed in an effort to improve upon those commonly used in studies of news diffusion (Deutschmann and Danielson, 1960; Troldahl, 1963; Greenberg, 1964a, 1964b), this instrument still represented a rather crude and imprecise scale for the measurement of information. Furthermore, the questionnaire used in this study did not make any attempt to assess the meaning elicited by the information, as Troldahl suggests (Troldahl, 1965a), nor the effects of that information on the respondents' values, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and, ultimately, behavior.

Suggestions for Future Research

1. The data presented here should be used to formulate more precise communication research problems in Mexico, and to develop and empirically test hypotheses regarding human behavior in general, and communication behavior in particular, in Mexico.

2. A study should be done aimed at explaining why the trust in the media (newspapers and television) is so low, and why is it so much lower for newspapers.

3. An attempt should be made to discover the factors that lie behind such low levels of public information in Mexico City.

4. Research should be done aimed at discovering ways of increasing levels of public information among residents of Mexico City.

5. With regard to the inverted J-shaped distribution of level of public information by education, it is suggested that research be done in order to explain the reason why beyond the level of "commercial" studies there is a drop in the level of information. That is, why people with college education are less informed than people with only high school education.

6. If proximity of a news event to an individual is indeed related to that individual's level of information about that event, research should be done in order to discover the factors that explain such a relationship.

7. Research efforts aimed at explaining the relationship between the findings reported in this study and the social, economic and political development of Mexico should become tangible.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE*

INTRODUCTION: I am _____ of Universidad Iberoamericana. We are doing a scientific study of the mass media of communication in Mexico City and we will appreciate very much your help in this investigation. It will only take your answers to a few questions.

First, let me ask you about television:

1. Do you watch television news programs?

   Yes / / No / / No answer / /
   GO TO Q. 7.

2. Could you tell me which TV news programs do you usually watch?

   ____ One program
   ____ Two programs
   ____ 3 or more
   ____ None, no TV.

3. How frequently do you watch (it) (them)?

   ____ Every day
   ____ 4-6 times a week
   ____ 2-3 times a week
   ____ Once a week or less
   ____ Don't know, no answer

4. What type of information do you like better in TV news programs?

   _____

5. In general, how much do you trust in TV news?

   ____ Very much
   ____ A fair amount
   ____ Little
   ____ Not at all
   ____ Don't know, no answer

*Liberal translation from Spanish.

6. Would you feel well informed if you only watched TV news?

____ Yes
____ No
____ Don't know, no answer

AND NOW ABOUT NEWSPAPERS . . .

7. Which newspapers do you usually read?

_____

if "none" go to Q. 16

8. How frequently do you read (it) (them)?

____ Every day
____ 4-6 times a week
____ 2-2 times a week
____ Once a week or less
____ Don't know, no answer

9. What type of information do you like better in the newspapers?

_____

10. In general, how much do you trust in the newspapers?

____ Very much
____ A fair amount
____ Little
____ Not at all
____ Don't know, no answer

11. Would you feel well informed by only reading the newspapers?

____ Yes
____ No
____ No answer, don't know

12. Which of these two media, newspapers or television, do you think does a better job of informing the public?

____ Newspapers
____ Television
____ Both
____ None
____ Don't know, no answer

13. If you first become informed of a news item on TV, do you later look for it in the newspaper?

____ Yes
____ No
____ Don't know, no answer

14. And if you first become informed of a news item in the newspaper, do you later hope to find it in a TV news program.?

____ Yes
____ No
____ Don't know, no answer

15. If a news event of great interest to you takes place, to which of these two media, television or newspapers, would you go first to be well informed?

____ Television
____ Newspapers
____ Both
____ None
____ Don't know, no answer

16. And now . . . Could you tell me the name of the President of the United States?

____ Correct (Nixon)
____ Close (e.g., Johnson, Agnew)
____ False
____ Don't know, no answer (*)

17. . . . the name of the President of Russia?

18. . . . the name of the President of Chile?

19. . . . and the name of the President of France?

20. What is the capital of North Vietnam?

21. Do you know which country in the Far East did President Echeverria visit a fews months ago?

22. What international meeting did President Echeverria go to recently in Chile?

(*) Questions 16 to 33 have the same answer codes, therefore only the question will be entered.

23. With regard to the recent world monetary crisis, do you know if the Mexican peso has been devalued?

24. In what state of the Republic do the Tarahumara Indians live?

25. What is the most important city in the Yucatan peninsula?

26. At present, who is the mayor of Mexico City?

27. Do you know which labor union is Fidel Velazquez the leader of?

28. Could you tell me what was the sector in Mexico City most affected by the recent storm?

29. Do you know who is the featherweight boxing champion of Mexico?

30. Which are the leading teams in Group A of the national soccer league?

31. What is the name of the artist whose death was commemorated in April, on the 15th anniversary of his tragic death?

32. Do you know which Mexican actress is popularly known as "La Doña?"

33. Do you know which product has the slogan "Aguanta, aguanta, todas las pruebas" in its advertising campaign?

And now . . . I would appreciate your answers to a few important final questions:

34. What is your age?

____ Less than 18 years
____ 18 - 25
____ 26 - 34
____ 35 - 49
____ 50 - 65
____ 66 or more
____ No answer

35. What was the last year of school you finished?

____ Illiterate
____ Grade school or less
____ 7th to 9th
____ 10th to 12th
____ "Commerical" studies
____ College or professional
____ Don't know, no answer

35. What is your occupation or profession?

____ Professional, business
____ White collar
____ Blue collar, skilled
____ Blue collar, unskilled; manual laborer
____ Student
____ Housewife
____ Other _____
____ Don't know, no answer

37. Would you tell me, according to this card///HAND CARD TO RESPONDENT///in which group is your approximate monthly income. Please, tell me the number of the group only.

1. Less than 1000 pesos a month
2. From $1000 to $2499
3. From $2500 to $4999
4. From $5000 to $9999
5. More than $10000

__ Don't know, no answer

38. Sex

____ Male
____ Female

THANK YOU very much for your cooperation.