

Just when you think that meetings are over, another one pops up, but it involves fewer people. It concerns the 11 o'clock news. The procedure is much the same as for the morning meeting. They have less news time and much of it is devoted to update stories.

Television assignment editors, producers and news directors, take only a few minutes to decide what you and I will see tonight. Now you know what happens behind the scenes.

Research Briefs

Thomas Quaife "Media credibility as perceived by central Iowa farmers." Unpublished M.S. thesis, Iowa State University, 1983.

Credibility studies of the past twenty years have suggested that the public is more likely to believe televised news than news in newspapers. Television often is perceived to be more timely, less biased, and less opinionated than newspapers.

Many researchers have criticized credibility research citing methodological problems in data collection, question wording, audience type and subject matter. Two of these criticisms are addressed in this thesis—an examination of specific audiences and subject matter. Quaife examined the credibility question with a farm audience using both general news and agricultural information. The study randomly sampled 313 central Iowa farmers using a two-stage systematic sample. The mail questionnaire with two follow-ups received only a 49 percent response—considerably below what is generally desired.

Quaife's findings about general news support other credibility findings such as those of Gallup and Roper.

Quaife's data show that farmers, like the general public, perceive television as the most credible source for most general news. Newspapers follow as the second most credible source, with radio a distant third choice.

The most interesting finding of the study asked about the most credible source for agricultural information. More than 52 percent of the farmers in the study named newspapers as

the most credible source for agricultural information (magazines were not included in the study), and more than 33 percent named radio as the most credible source. Fewer than 15 percent named television as the most credible source for agricultural information. These findings are, of course, not surprising—of the three media, newspapers and radio typically contain considerably more agricultural information than television and would be expected to develop higher credibility for specialized information such as that needed by farmers.

For those involved in information operations that continue to serve newspapers through agricultural releases, this study would seem to offer some cautious justification for continuing that service.

Cliff Scherer

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Adi Widjono "Perception of Superiors' Openness to Upward Information in an Indonesian Food Crops Agricultural Development Organization." Unpublished M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986.

Widjono builds on previous organizational behavior research which demonstrates that subordinates tend to withhold negative information about their performance or problems when they perceive their boss to be authoritarian or not willing/interested to hear negative information from them. Further, the more involved subordinates are in organizational decision-making, the more open to upward communication they tend to perceive their bosses to be.

The study used a pretested, twenty-item questionnaire mailed to 200 middle managers (District Office heads for Food Crops) representing two-thirds of the officers at that level in the Food Crops division of the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture; 159 (59 percent) responded.

Widjono found that respondents perceived their bosses to be less open to upward communication from their subordinates than they saw themselves; he concludes that the situation exists for distortion in upward communication between respondents and their superiors. He was surprised to find that involvement in decision-making was not related to

perceptions of superiors' openness except on one type of decision (extension programs). There was evidence that bosses who were considered open to non-technical information were also seen as open in more formal situations. The author discusses some of the potential differences between previous findings in United States organizations and his study population.

The study is a good example of a short-form communication audit which can be used for identifying selected internal communication problems and providing information to help analyze them.

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Reviews

“Stamping Out Automatons.” Maria Braden in *Quill*, May 1986, pp. 26–27.

We can teach journalism students how to report. But can we teach them how to be skeptical? We must, says Maria Braden, a former reporter for the Associated Press and now assistant professor of journalism at the University of Kentucky.

Journalists should be skeptical; they must be the ones pursuing the point or asking the questions. Otherwise, journalists become part of the pack being manipulated by well-honed public relations folks. They are the ones allowing viewers and readers to be “conned.”

Braden refers to the results of a national study published as *The American Journalist: A Portrait of U.S. News People*. Results showed only 20 percent of the 1,001 news people randomly surveyed said it was “extremely important” that news media assume a skeptical role toward government; 15 percent agreed that journalists should be similarly skeptical toward business.