To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Robin Head Intemann entitled "Letters to the Editor: An Analysis of the Differences in Letters Written by Men and Women and the Occurrence of Mobilizing Information." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communications.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: AN ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENCES IN LETTERS WRITTEN BY MEN AND WOMEN AND THE OCCURRENCE OF MOBILIZING INFORMATION

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

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ABSTRACT

A content analysis of letters to the editor was conducted to determine if there were any differences between those written by men and women. A sample of letters was taken from 24 newspapers published over a four month period in 1982. The newspapers, although non-random, include a range of medium to large circulations across the country. All letters were coded for theme, reference to authority, tone, and the occurrence of mobilizing information.

Mobilizing information has been defined as information that allows people to act on attitudes they already have.

The findings of this study indicate that of those letters published men wrote twice as often as women, while women were more positive in their outlook. Women tended to write more on a local level than men, while men wrote more about issues on a national level. Other differences noted were that women used personal pronouns more frequently than men, and women referred to good news more often whereas men referred to bad news more often. The issues most frequently addressed by both sexes were politics, war/defense, public services, economics, and the media. The rank order of the issues illustrates slight differences between the sexes. The occurrence of mobilizing information was less than 10 percent.

This study illustrates ways in which people use the media, specifically newspapers, as a resource for communicating personal opinion in a public forum.

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INTRODUCTION

Five days after its first issue appeared in 1851, the New York Times ran the first letter to the editor published in an American newspaper (Rosenthal, 1969 and Renfro, 1979). For many years afterward, the letters were printed on a random basis as space allowed. In 1931, the Times finally collected and printed the letters in a designated space known as "Letters to the Editor" (Rosenthal, 1969). This space has since become a regular feature of the editorial page of most newspapers.

While letters to the editor are nothing new, the functions they serve have only recently gained recognition among editors and mass communications researchers. An early function was to fill the space. Today the letters section is considered by many to be the one place where all sections of the newspaper come together (Stone, 1981). Letters are now considered by many editors, of newspapers and magazines alike, to be a reliable indicator of audience reaction (Lubar, 1979). Letters and other types of reader expression inform the press of what its audience is thinking ("Letting the Public In," 1974).

Of concern to researchers is the manner in which the audience uses the letters section. Public perception of the press may be reflected in the letters. The letters often represent public reaction to political and economic environments. Also, letters are an expression of personal opinion in a public forum. These concerns

and others provide an opportunity to examine a working communications model in the mass media: the sender, the message, the audience, and the channel.

In a study by Pasternack (1979) of Iowa newspapers, the letters were found to emerge as a forum for those who were "clearly above average--in areas such as income, education and political activity." Other studies to be discussed later substantiate this. Past studies indicate that persons writing to editors will discuss issues ranging from religion to civic events (Singletary and Cowling, 1979). Letters sections are generally well read if for no other reason than curiosity. In a study by Singletary (1976), readers were given a hypothetical situation where letters were one of five possible features that might have to be eliminated from a newspaper. Only 3.4 percent indicated that the letters should be the first to go. Since the early 1930's letters have been a regular feature of most editorial pages. The letters section thus serves as the channel for public views and opinions.

This study will concentrate on the message, specifically what is being communicated by men and women in the letters they write to editors of newspapers. The other aspects will be reviewed in an effort to understand further the role letters play in mass communication and society.

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine letters to the editor to determine if there are differences between those written by men and women. Attempts also will be made to identify the occurrence of "mobilizing information" (hereafter referred to as MI) contained within the letters. MI is information which allows individuals to act on existing attitudes (Lemert, 1973).

This study will make an effort to clarify the understanding of MI by identifying and analyzing its occurrence in letters to the editor. The literature on MI is limited and the studies concerned with it have not sought to determine the differences in how it surfaces in letters written by men and women. MI is often absent in letters because it is assumed by editors to be an endorsement and this is contrary to most letter policies of newspapers (Lemert and Larkin, 1979).

Previous studies of letter writers have been limited to the type of person who writes, the content of the letter, or the explanation for writing the letter. The conclusions drawn from these studies indicate that the writers of published letters are predominantly male (Vacin, 1965; Pasternack, 1979; and Singletary and Cowling, 1979). The ratio is as much as three to one.

A study of letter writers to the non-daily press by Singletary and Cowling (1979) provides the notable exception of studies dealing with differences in letters written by men and women. The differences cited by Singletary were that men tended to write about distant or non-local issues such as religion, politics, and economics. Women in the study tended to write more about personal issues such as discrimination, inhumanity, and local or civic events. However, the conclusions drawn from this study are general because they were taken from a limited sample. The sample included writers to the non-daily press only. The differences cited by Singletary may be accountable by the manner in which a person adopts a personal or socially defined sex role (Rosenau, 1974). This possible explanation may be applicable in the 1976 study only because of the limited sample. As more women discard the role defined by society perhaps more women will utilize the letters section as a means of communication.

An additional aspect of this study will examine the content of letters written by women 10 and 20 years ago. The letters will be compared with those written in 1982 to determine if differences occur over a span of time.

This study will not attempt to explain why more women are not writing, but will concern itself only with what they are writing about, the tone of the letters, and references to geographical level and authority as compared with those letters written by men.

The manner in which the public uses the media, specifically newspapers, as a resource for communicating personal opinion in a public forum will be an implicit aspect of this study.

The Problem

Question: What are the differences in letters to the editor written by men and women?

Subquestions: What is the occurrence of MI in letters to the editor? Do women include MI more often than men? Do certain issues lend themselves to the occurrence of MI more than other issues? What are the differences in letters written by women 10 and 20 years ago?

Definitions

Letters to the Editor--the section of a newspaper where space is reserved for the purpose of airing views, comments, or information from the paper's readership.

Differences--the variation in tone, theme, reference to geographical level, reference to authority, positive or negative direction, and the occurrence of MI between letters written by men and women.

Mobilizing information--information that allows individuals to act on existing attitudes (Lemert, 1973). MI does not motivate action, rather it is a facilitator of action (Bybee, 1982). Lemert (1973) defines three types of MI. "Informational" is that which identifies an event such as a meeting with specific data such as time and date. "Locational" provides additional data in the form of

an address or description of physical location. "Tactical" provides individuals an opportunity to acquire information such as recipes or workplans.

Assumptions

1. The reserved space for letters differs from newspaper to newspaper because of such variables as circulation, number of letters received, and competition from other papers. Pasternack and Kapoor (1980) noted that a relationship existed between a newspaper's circulation and the volume of letters it receives. The larger a newspaper is, the smaller percentage of letters that will be published.

2. Editors publish those letters that best represent a cross section of the newspaper's readership (Lubar, 1974).

3. Letter policies for the different newspapers vary in terms of requirements for publication. The policies differ in areas such as the number of times a writer may submit a letter, the length of the letter, and the need for both a signature and address accompanying a letter.

4. Certain newspaper's editorial policies will not allow MI to be present in published letters (Lemert, 1979).

Limitations

1. The letters to be examined are those published in 24 daily newspapers available in The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, library (Appendix A). The newspapers are limited to those with medium to large circulations across the country. To qualify as a daily, the newspaper must be published seven days a week.

Delimitations

1. No effort will be made to contact letter writers to determine any further demographics.

2. No effort will be made to contact editors of the newspapers to account for the gatekeeping aspect (to be discussed) and its effect on letter publication.

Hypotheses

Based on a review of the literature related to letter writing, it is hypothesized that differences do exist in the types of letters written by men and women. The differences will be measured in terms of issues addressed and the manner in which they are discussed.

In addition, the occurrence of MI has an apparent history of low visibility in letters to the editor (Lemert, 1979). However, it is hypothesized that the occurrence of MI will be different in letters written by men and women. It is also hypothesized that certain issues will lend themselves to the occurrence of MI more than other issues.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Related Research

Most of the related studies in the past were content analyses of letters and surveys of letter writers. The majority of these studies were concerned with the content of the letters, the motivation for writing, and the letter writers themselves.

Public perception of letter writers in the past has viewed them as quacks or eccentrics. This is generally untrue. A number of studies indicate that letter writers are not representative of the population (Grey and Brown, 1970). Tarrant (1975) and others (Buell, 1975; Pasternack, 1979; and Singletary and Cowling, 1979) found that letter writers were above average in economic status and educational achievement. These conclusions were drawn from small to medium size newspapers. Letter writers generally share the following characteristics:

1. They are predominantly male.

2. They are predominantly well educated. Vacin's (1965) study included a sample with an average education of 14 years of formal schooling. A later study that surveyed 84 letter writers showed that 58 percent had attended college and half of those continued to graduate school (Singletary and Cowling, 1979).

3. They are predominantly middle-aged to elderly. The median age in Forsythe's 1950 study was 59. Pasternack noted that the

typical age of writers in his (1979) study of Iowa writers was over 50.

Other characteristics include a tendency toward conservatism in such areas as family, religion, and politics. Typically, the writers are members of white collar business and professional organizations, and are long time residents of their communities. Vacin (1965) found a correlation between the amount of time a writer had lived in a community and the number of letters written. Few letters were written by non-whites (Buell, 1975).

An early study concluded that letter writers had a tendency toward conservatism. As previously noted this was most evident in religion, family, and politics (Forsythe, 1950). Most of the literature substantiates this. One exception exists in the Converse (1972) study. This study compared a group of letter writers with non-writers. Both groups held similar beliefs toward legalization of marijuana, school busing, and government health programs. The letter writers were more liberal than were the non-writers. However, there were no further demographics or breakdown in voting patterns offered for the two groups.

The explanations for why a person writes a letter to the editor are limited. Some reasons that have been cited include a desire to influence public opinion, to inform the public, and a chance to "blow-off steam," commonly referred to as the "safety-valve" function (Foster and Friedrich, 1937). Other factors cited by Pasternack were an opportunity for the individual to demonstrate his writing expertise, and catharsis (1979).

The most common explanation for why individuals wrote in the Singletary and Cowling (1979) study was to influence public opinion. Other responses, in order of frequency, included informing the public, expressing personal views, "letting off steam," and to "fill gaps" in the media coverage. In the 1965 Vacin study, 77 of the 123 respondents thought that their letters might bring about a more informed citizenry. Only 13 said they wrote for self-satisfaction and the others wrote for miscellaneous reasons.

The safety-valve function was first applied by Foster and Friedrich (1937). Their study noted that most of the letters in their sample were strongly negative. The investigation showed that most writers were "agin" something more often than "for" something. This study involved a content analysis of the sample letters which had not been published. Fifty-three percent were classified as negative, while 31 percent were classified as "activist," or for something. Further, the activist letters contained identifiable MI. These letters offered "let us do this" suggestions.

A study that stands in contradiction to the safety-valve theory was conducted by Lander (1965). Following the killing of four Kent State University students, letters in the Kent Record-Courier were analyzed. The letters were overwhelmingly in favor of the action taken by the National Guard. The letters were "for" something and were not serving a function of letting-off steam. However, the letters did not necessarily contain MI in reference to the Kent State killings. Lander's study did not include demographics of the letter writers.

Recent studies show "a dramatic increase in writing to newspapers and magazines about political subjects has apparently taken place since the mid-sixties" (Rosenau, 1974). The single issue that elicited the largest response in the history of the New York Times was the Vietnam War (Rosenthal, 1969). Pasternack and Kapoor (1980) note that there has been an increase in letters in the last 10 years that might be attributable to such "letter generating topics as abortion, Watergate, gun control and Vietnam."

Another explanation for the increase in letters is the awareness of editors of the importance of such audience interest. A lack of reader interest may be measured in the number of letters received (Merriman, 1981). As editors become more aware of reader interest and participation, more efforts are made to encourage letters.

A relationship between editorials and letters to the editor was established by Davis and Rarick (1964). They determined that the function of an editorial "is to stimulate debate and discussion of important issues," while the function of the letters "is that of catharsis." Davis and Rarick conducted a content analysis of letters sent to 21 Oregon daily newspapers. The letters analyzed were those written in reference to the controversy that developed when a communist was to speak at state colleges and universities. Buell (1965) interpreted the results to indicate that the letters section provided "the irate, the antagonist, and the displeased a chance to speak out and be heard."

Buell's conclusions are a contrast to the majority of studies that indicate that letter writers were found to be "clearly above average" (Pasternack, 1979). Singletary and Cowling (1979) suggest that writers use the letters section to influence public opinion and to "blow-off" steam. Buell's conclusions imply that irate letter writers are quacks. However, the opinion of letter writers is often used by letter readers as a "sounding board" for their own opinions (Singletary, 1976). For example, a reader who finds a letter concerning a topic about which he has not yet formed an opinion may use the letter as a sounding board. This implies that letter writers are granted some credence among some readers.

It is considered common practice for editors to encourage debate in the letters section as a means of maintaining high reader interest. This practice often involves the alternation of one or two letters <u>for</u> an issue and one or two letters <u>against</u> an issue (Foster and Friedrich, 1937). Thus generalizations have been made that the most frequent occurrence of MI stems from the newspaper itself.

Mobilizing Information has been defined by Lemert (1973) as that information which allows people to act on those attitudes they might already have. Lemert identified three types of MI:

1. Locational--this usually involves information concerning time and place of potential activity.

2. Identificational--this involves both locational information and physical description of potential activity.

3. Tactical--this type of information provides implicit or explicit behavioral models.

Lemert (1977) noted that the letters section of newspapers often contain a lower rate of MI compared with other sections of the paper. MI is most likely to be absent when the context is negative or controversial. Other possible explanations for its absence can be found in the editorial policies of many newspapers. The policies are "issue-centered" in that they place more value on information on public issues than on what the public can do to act on the issues (Lemert, 1979). Lemert also suggests that letter writers who include MI are an elite group appealing to another group of elitists, and the information may already be known among the group members.

Letter writing itself can be considered a form of MI. The writer is acting on his existing beliefs to inform others of ways they, too, can act (Rosenau, 1974). MI does not motivate one to act; it merely serves to facilitate action (Bybee, 1982).

Another facet of related research lies in the area of political letter writing. During the 1932 political campaign men outnumbered women writers four to one (Sussmann, 1964). Sussmann states further that during the same period women outnumbered men as writers of radio fan mail by three to one. The differences between the sexes is "Attributable to their well-known differences in political interest, rather than to any great propensity for letter-writing on the part of men" (Sussmann, 1964, p. 143).

Although it was not the major emphasis of the Singletary and Cowling (1979) study, attempts were made to identify the themes and issues addressed by sex. The letters were examined for differences in topics only. Women wrote on more personal topics while men wrote

on more distant or non-personal topics. Traditional sex roles defined by society may be one explanation for this difference (Rosenau, 1974).

A number of studies, unrelated to letter writing, exist on sex roles in society. For example, Komarovsky (1946) identifies two roles assumed by women. One is referred to as the "feminine role." This role reflects attributes "defining the proper attitudes to men, family, work, love, etc., and a set of personality traits often described with reference to the male sex role" (p. 184). The other sex role identified by Komarovsky was a "no sex role," one that partially obliterates the differentiation of sex.

Stereotypes for behavior of women and men in society exist (Maccoby and Jackln, 1974). Women are encouraged to be passive, friendly, and to inhibit aggression. Because of these attributes, which are considered favorable, the expression of anger is a problem for women (Emmott, 1978). Women who express anger are often perceived as "bitchy and unfeminine." Yet research by Sherriffs and Jarrett (1953) suggests that there is little difference in the behaviors and characteristics found in men and women. They contend "that virtually no behavior or quality escapes inclusion in either a female or male stereotype."

Traditional roles, as perceived by men and women in the work force, still exist in the context of work skills and ability (Gallop, 1976). However, recent research on sex roles indicates that few differences exist in areas such as political behavior

(Rapoport, 1981). That is, men and women share similar characteristics in voting behavior and participation in the electoral process.

Theoretical Research

Past studies indicate that analyses of letters to the editor as an unobtrusive measure of political behavior and public opinion are minimally effective (Grey and Brown, 1965). The study of public opinion is an important area of mass communications research. Hill (1981) speculates that the "similarity between letter opinion and public opinion indicates that letter writers share the opinions of their neighbors who do not write letters" (p. 391). The public opinion process reflects not only that information provided through the mass media, but also that which is developed through the behavioral process of a given society (Blake and Haroldsen, 1975).

Singletary and Cowling (1979) noted that influencing public opinion was the most frequent explanation for why individuals write letters to the editor. In this vein letter writers assume the role of opinion leaders. Opinion leaders were defined by Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1948) as the informed individuals in a community who influence others in making decisions and forming opinion.

Opinion leaders were first identified as a means of illustrating the two-step flow model of communication theory. The two-step flow theory showed the receiver of a mass media message reacting to the message and often passing it on to others (Blake and Haroldsen, 1975). This theory suggests that opinion leaders actively search for information while other members of the mass media audience remain passive. The role of opinion leader is most

often viewed in the context of political elections. Blumer (1966) notes that public opinion is a collective product. It is "always moving toward a decision even though it is never unanimous," (p. 48). Blumer continues to note that the formation of public opinion requires discussion.

Bogart (1972) cites three types of shifts in public opinion: "broad secular trends, responses to major ongoing political development, and short-run reactions to what is in the news of the moment" (p. 75). Letters illustrate these shifts.

Grey and Brown (1970) indicate that many letters that have appeared were in response to other letters, editorials, or other items in the newspaper. The media thus provide topics of salience or interest to the letter writers. This is known as a form of the agenda-setting process. This theory of mass communications has been credited with setting a public agenda for audiences of the mass media to follow. The agenda-setting process involves the relationship between the "emphasis of mass communications and the salience of these topics to the individuals in the audience" (McCombs and Shaw, 1977, p. 12). Access to the media provides the audience with an opportunity to demonstrate the salience of a topic through feedback or forums such as the letters section.

Early studies on public opinion and letters to the editor suggest that most letters were propagandistic (Foster and Friedrich, 1937). Foster and Friedrich's definition of the term was not concerned with the manipulation of attitudes, but rather that which "is manifested in the organized activities involved in efforts to

get people to take a particular step" (p. 91). Bogart (1981) states that "no attempt at persuasion can be meaningful unless it is channeled to encourage a specific action" (p. 102). MI can also be seen as an indication of persuasion since it is a facilitator of action (Bybee, 1982). The fact that many letters are not published because MI is considered an endorsement intimates that MI is considered a form of propaganda.

Some researchers argue that "letter opinion" may be biased by the editorial policies that govern the selection process of letters for publication. Editors, acting in a gatekeeping role, must often choose to publish only a small portion of the letters they receive (Hill, 1981). Nearly two million letters are published in the letters section of newspapers each year (Hill, 1981). The New York Times, for example, publishes only six percent of the 75-200 letters they receive each day (Rosenthal, 1969).

The gatekeeping operation as defined by Schramm (1960) is an important aspect of social communication. A gatekeeper is one who determines if and how a message will be transmitted (Blake and Haroldsen, 1975). Editors serve in the role of gatekeeper for their newspapers in that they decide on the channels for the flow of news. Editorial policies established by newspapers are a function of the gatekeeping process. Many policies are explicit regarding the length of letters accepted, the need for a signature and an address, and the limit on the number of letters a paper will publish by a single writer over a given period of time (Pasternack and Kapoor, 1980). Other policies are implicit and they appear to

be a larger function of the gatekeeping process. This function appears to exist in the selection of letters as well as in other sections of the newspaper (Renfro, 1979).

Grey and Brown (1970) suggest that it is necessary to have access to all letters received by a newspaper. The researcher must know what letters discuss, whether letters are published or not, and the process through which the gatekeeper selects or rejects letters. Once both sides are more thoroughly examined, then letters may be a more viable form of gauging public opinion (Grey and Brown, 1970). Implicit in this aspect of letter opinion as public opinion is a better understanding of gatekeeping in the mass media.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Sample

Letters to the editor in 24 daily newspapers published in the United States comprised the units of sampling. A content analysis was conducted to determine the differences in the letters written by men and women.

The newspapers were those received by The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, library. They were representative of those with medium to large circulations across the country (Appendix A). To qualify as a daily newspaper the paper must be published seven days a week. The newspapers were selected solely on the basis of availability, thus creating a convenient sample.

The letters of each newspaper were coded over a period from August 1 to December 15, 1982. Dates were arranged over the coding period so that each day of the week created in effect an artificial, or composite, week. Because the newspapers are dailies, published seven days a week, each date was purposively selected to represent each day of the week. The method was judgmental as a means of insuring a variety of themes and issues within the letters.

The numbers of letters varied from newspaper to newspaper, with some containing as few as one per day and as many as 17 for a given day. The typical number of letters was seven a day. All

letters for all papers were coded. This resulted in 1051 units for analysis.

A secondary sampling unit was established to determine if there were any differences in letters written by women over a period of time. Six newspapers (Appendix B) available on microfilm were examined over the same four month period (August to September) during 1972 and 1962. Only those letters written by women were coded, although the total number of letters written was recorded as a means of comparison. The total number of letters coded for the secondary aspect of the study was 173. Ten and 20 years ago were chosen because they provide major changes in economic and political attitudes in the country.

Coding Procedures

A coding form (Appendix C) was used for analyzing each letter read. Each letter was identified on the form by the name of the newspaper, the day of the week, and the date. Each letter was then coded for 13 variables.

A pretest was conducted to determine if other variables needed to be included or deleted. Approximately 80 letters were read for the pretest. The letters were drawn randomly from the sampling unit. The letters examined in the pretest were not counted in the final analysis because the coding form required revisions as a result of the pretest. For example, the variable concerned with reference to authority required the inclusion of an additional variable. It became obvious during the pretest that many writers referred to

themselves, family members, or friends as authorities in the context of the letters. Consequently, this possibility was added.

Changes were also made in the variable concerned with themes or issues. City-state services appeared to overlap with public services so that they were eventually counted in the same category. An additional category, that of sports and recreation, was also added. Some themes were eventually deleted.

The rationale for applying the variables coded to determine any differences in letters written by men and women was developed from previous studies on letter writers. Most of the studies in the past analyzed topics and positive or negative direction of the letters. Other variables were derived from studies on sex roles such as expression of tone and references to geographical level.

Thirteen variables were coded for each letter.

1. Sex of writer--each letter was coded male or female where clearly indicated by the signature accompanying the published letter. When letters were signed by both men and women, they were coded twice. Letters signed with initials or with names that might have been male or female were assigned to the "not indicated" classification.

2. Writer affiliation--any letter whose writer included an organization or position of authority following his name was coded as being affiliated. References within the context of the letter to one's relationship with an organization did not constitute affiliation.

3. Mobilizing Information--information that allowed writers to provide others with information upon which they could act was coded.

4. a. locational MI--information about the time and place of potential activity.

b. identificational MI--information describing physical locations and information about potential activity.

c. tactical--information providing implicit or explicit behavior models (Lemert, 1979).

5. Direction--the attitude of the writer toward the theme or issue discussed. A letter was considered positive if it expressed praise or support. The letter was coded as negative if it expressed criticism or was opposed to the topic. The direction was considered neutral if the letter was strictly informative or did not provide enough information upon which to make a judgment (Renfro, 1979).

6. Reference to authority--any citation of quotes; other articles including letters, editorials, and columns; officials; events such as elections; history; and personal references, those referring to one's personal experience. Letters with references to an authority that were unclear, or letters that did not specify a reference were assigned "other." Many letters contained more than one reference; in these cases each reference was recorded.

7. Bad news--defined by Haskins (1982) as:

> excessive emphasis--at every stage of a communication system--on messages that are critical, pessimistic, conflict-producing, tension arousing, fear-inducing, punitive, threatening, unpleasant and in short, over-emphasizing the negative as conceived in the everyday usage of the term.

8. Reference to geographical level--the social formations in society (Lasswell, 1948) dependent upon the geographical importance to the writer. The letters were coded as referring to local, state, regional, national, or international. A letter that addressed a local issue, but mentioned a national issue in passing was coded "local." Letters with references to areas outside of the continental United States were assigned to the "international" category.

9. Concrete or abstract--letters were considered concrete when the preponderance of the content was informational rather than abstract. Abstract letters were those containing philosophies and/or ideas not based in pragmatic terms. Concrete letters refer to specific events.

10. Personal or nonpersonal--this category coded the number of personal pronouns to indicate the personal voice in contrast to the lack of such pronouns.

11. Twenty-one possible themes were selected after the pretest was conducted. The preponderance of the theme was the determining factor in assigning letters to specific categories. Several letters contained more than one theme where it was difficult to distinguish the preponderance of one theme over another. In rare instances two themes were coded. A few of the themes require further clarification:

a. crime/violence--any aspect of the law related to the disruption of civil order, the enforcement of law and judgments related to legal order.

b. war/defense--this category includes letters with references to any aspect of military conflict, defense spending, registration for the draft, and efforts toward peace as a contrast to war.

c. discrimination/human rights--an obstruction to exercise one's right to an unrestrained life or lifestyle. Abortion is considered an issue of human rights.

d. public service--any aspect of city, state or government policies that affect management of public money for the express purpose of serving the people. Public transportation and social security are included in this category.

e. economics--aspects of business, taxes, welfare, and social systems such as capitalism and communism.

f. politics/legislation--this category includes any letter about a political candidate, political party, political policy, or the legislation of bills that are affected by the same.

The remainder of the themes were considered to be self-explanatory. The themes clarified above were those that were questioned for further understanding during the reliability check (to be discussed later).

12. Tone--the manner of expression indicating one's emotion toward an issue. Seven choices for tone were possible: anger, fear, humor, happiness, neutrality, satire, and disappointment. Statements

such as "I am sorry," or "it pleases me" were used to measure tone within the letter.

13. Persuasive or nonpersuasive--letters with a preponderance of information intended to bring about a possible change in attitude toward an issue discussed (Bogart, 1972). Letters were considered nonpersuasive if there was no intent implied, or not enough information upon which to form an opinion.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 1051 letters were coded from 24 available newspapers. The average number of letters per paper per day was seven. Some papers had as few as one letter per day and others had as many as 17. All letters from papers for the selected days were coded. The dates were selected on a purposive basis. They were chosen on the basis of availability. Some papers share similar dates, but not in all cases. The total figure represents the number of letters published by the newspapers over a non-concurrent seven-day period for each newspaper.

Sixty percent of the letters published were written by men, 31 percent were written by women, and 9 percent were coded as not classifiable by sex (Table 1). The conclusions drawn from this variable indicate that typically men write twice as often as women. Vacin (1965) noted a three to one ratio. One explanation for the difference between the present study and Vacin's may lie in the circulation size of newspapers examined. Vacin and others (Pasternack, 1979; and Singletary and Cowling, 1979) relied on small to medium size papers. The present study relied on medium to large papers.

Writer affiliation (Table 2) was coded as an attempt to determine whether one's relationship with an organization might serve as a motivating factor for writing letters to the editor. Sussmann (1964) indicated that letter writers were twice as likely

Table 1. Sex of Writer.

Sex of Writer	Total	
	No.	%
Male	632	60
Female	322	31
Not Indicated	97	9
Total	1051	

Table 2. Writer Affiliation.

Sex of Writer	Affiliation	
	No.	%
Male	103	16
Female	41	13
Not Indicated	11	11
Total	155	15

as non-writers to be members of organizations that take stands on issues. This was in the context of political letter writing which might explain the low number of affiliated writers in the present study. Only 15 percent of all letter writers indicated affiliation. Differences between male and female affiliated writers were slight at 3 percent. While affiliation may account for some motivation it is not important enough to warrant further speculation on its value.

The occurrence of mobilizing information was less than 10 percent (Table 3). MI surfaced in letters by male and female writers in a similar manner. Female writers tended to include MI slightly more than men. Locational MI was most frequently cited by both sexes. Identificational and tactical MI followed respectively. In a study of 11 metropolitan newspapers conducted by Larkin and Lemert (1979), the occurrence of MI was 6.8 percent for letters to the editor. Editorial policies on letters were one explanation that was offered for the low occurrence of MI.

Table 3. The Occurrence of Mobilizing Information in Letters.

Type of MI	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Locational	38	6	23	7
Identificational	15	2	7	2
Tactical	3	0.5	4	1
Total	56	8.5	34	10

Women were typically more positive in their direction toward an issue than men (Table 4). Fifty-two percent of the women indicated a positive direction while only 39 percent of the men indicated a similar direction. Grey and Brown (1970) found that letters were more often negative than positive although no information was provided on the number of male writers compared with female writers. This difference may be accounted for by the social behavior of women

Table 4. Direction in Letters.

Direction	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
For	248	39	168	52
Against	301	48	118	37
Neutral	83	11	36	11
Total	632		322	

as noted by Wine et al. (1980). Females, in general, tend to be more positive in social behavior, they "smile more and tend to adopt more pleasant, positive facial expressions" (p. 159). "Expressive" is another term that has been used to describe positive social behavior by women (Parsons and Bales, 1955). Women in traditional family roles generally serve as family mediators, and often comfort and console other family members. Expressive personalities put others at ease by concentrating on positive aspects of a situation or event.

Typically, the most frequent reference to "authority" was to articles, such as other letters, editorials, columns, features, and other items found within the newspaper. Male and female writers both referred to articles more than any other type of authority (Table 5). The high number of references to articles would suggest that the medium does provide its audience with topics of salience (McCombs and Shaw, 1977). The second most frequent response to reference was to officials. This would indicate that writers may feel they are enhancing their sense of credibility by referring to

Table 5. Reference to Authority.

Type of Authority	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Quotes	24	3	15	4
Articles	326	43	160	43
Officials	144	19	56	15
History	18	2	2	0.5
Events	121	16	41	11.5
Personal	48	6	51	14
Other	73	10	44	12
Total*	754		369	

*Many letters contained more than one reference, each reference was coded for each letter.

persons in positions of authority. Overall differences in this variable between male and female writers were slight.

Letters written by both male and female writers contained more references to "bad news" than "good news." Typically men tended to include references to bad news 10 percent more often than women. Although the difference is only 10 percent in this variable, it does serve to support the suggestion that women possess a more positive nature than do men (Table 6).

The (1976) Singletary study indicated that men wrote on distant or non-personal issues while women were more concerned with local issues. The sample from which this information was drawn was

Table 6. Good News/Bad News in Letters.

Type	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Good News	90	14	78	24
Bad News	542	86	244	76
Total	632		322	

small and limited to the weekly press. In the present study, male and female writers frequently wrote about issues on the local level (Table 7). However, female writers wrote 20 percent more often about issues on the local level than did men. Concern for one's community was suggested in Vacin's (1965) study in which a correlation was established between the amount of time a writer had lived in a community and the number of letters the writer wrote over a period of time.

Table 7. Reference to Level.

Level	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Local	254	40	196	61
State	115	18	41	13
Regional	9	1	2	1
National	166	26	61	19
International	88	14	22	7
Total	632		322	

The second most frequent reference to level was national for both male and female writers. Male writers referred to issues on the national level 7 percent more often than did female writers.

Letters were typically more concrete for both sexes than abstract (Table 8) with very slight differences between male and female writers. One possible explanation is that writers may be demonstrating their writing expertise through clear, precise statements of their opinions (Pasternack, 1979). The letters appear to serve a utilitarian function. The point is that the letters typically address specific, identifiable issues, not remote philosophies and abstractions.

Female writers had a tendency to use more personal pronouns than did men (Table 9). Men were equally divided in their use of the personal and nonpersonal variable. Expression of self, as through the use of personal pronouns, is consistent with female self-esteem with regard to their perception of social competence (Wine et al., 1980).

Table 8. Concrete and Abstract Letters.

Type				
Concrete	562	89	297	92
Abstract	70	11	25	8
Total	632		322	

Table 9. Use of Personal and Nonpersonal Pronouns in Letters.

Type	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Personal	318	50	229	71
Nonpersonal	314	50	93	29
Total	632		322	

The most frequently discussed themes or issues for both sexes were politics, war/defense, public services, and the media. Differences are noted in the rank order (Table 10). A total of 21 categories were possible in coding the themes or issues of the letters; however, several categories proved to be superfluous and were combined in the "other" classification.

The tone of the letters was typically neutral for both sexes (Table 11). Anger was the second most frequently indicated tone. Women expressed anger 5 percent more frequently than men. This stands in contrast to the literature that indicates that the expression of anger is problematic for women (Wine et al., 1980). However, 14 percent of the women indicated a tone of happiness, while only 6 percent of the male writers indicated a similar tone. Women wrote less often, but when they did write, their letters were on topics close to home involving the expression of personal feeling.

Male and female writers were consistent in their persuasiveness as contained in their letters (Table 12). The low occurrence of MI and the high indication of persuasiveness indicated in the

Table 10. Issues Addressed in Letters.

Issue	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Public Services	89	14	56	17
Politics	126	20	52	16
War/Defense	100	16	28	9
Media	30	5	32	10
Economics	56	9	13	4
Health Safety	21	3	20	6
Arts/Culture	26	4	15	5
Crime	25	4	17	5
Sports/Recreation	23	4	12	4
Schools/Education	22	3	19	6
Church/Religion	20	3	17	5
Employment	22	3	7	2
Family	6	1	14	4
Environment	18	3	12	4
Consumerism	14	2	3	1
Other*	34	6	5	2
Total	632		322	

*Includes themes for which no categories were offered.

letters suggests a possible misunderstanding of MI on the part of editors. MI allows a person to act on an attitude he might already have. Persuasion can be viewed in the same way except that MI is

Table 11. Tone in Letters.

Tone	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Anger	67	11	50	16
Fear	5	1	3	1
Humor	13	2	3	1
Happiness	37	6	46	14
Neutrality	479	76	207	64
Satire	22	3	5	2
Disappointment	9	1	8	2
Total			322	

Table 12. Persuasion and Letters.

Type	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Persuasive	512	81	167	83
Nonpersuasive	120	19	55	17
Total	632		322	

more specific in the ways one might act. Persuasion only indicates a need for change of opinion or attitude.

Certain issues did contain MI more than other issues (Table 13). Male and female writers both included MI in letters dealing

Table 13. MI and Issues.

Issue	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Politics	25	45	18	53
Public Services	8	14	5	15
Environment	5	9	1	3
War/Defense	3	5	3	9
Schools/Education	3	5	2	6
Economics	2	4	-	-
Family	1	2	2	6
Arts	-	-	2	6
Employment	1	2	-	-
Health	1	2	-	-
Energy	1	2	-	-
Media	1	2	-	-
Other*	5	9	1	3
Total	56		34	

*Includes themes for which no category was offered on the coding form.

with political issues. However, female writers included MI 8 percent more often than male writers in letters of a political nature. A possible explanation for the high indication of MI in letters concerned with politics is the time period used in the study. Typically, August, September, and October are months of great political discussion due to political conventions and elections (Grey and Brown, 1970).

A reliability check was conducted by another graduate student in the College of Communications at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Reliability between coders was 91 percent. The second coder was provided with letters from a composite week of newspapers (Appendix D). The newspapers were purposively selected to best represent all papers and all dates used in the study. Reliability for certain variables was as low as 85 percent with others as high as 100 percent (Table 14). Reliability was determined on the basis of the number of variables coded in the same way by both coders.

Table 14. Reliability.

Variables	Reliability %
Sex of Writer	95
Affiliation	100
Mobilizing Information	88
Direction	85
Reference to Authority	95
Good News/Bad News	93
Reference to Level	85
Concrete or Abstract	85
Personal or Nonpersonal	90
Themes	93
Tone	88
Persuasive or Nonpersuasive	85
Average	91

Letters written by female writers 10 and 20 years ago were also coded. The same procedure of creating a composite week was established for each of the six newspapers available on microfilm (Appendix B). All letters were counted for each day examined as a measure for comparison, however, only those letters written by women were coded. The purpose of this aspect of the study was to determine the differences, if any, in the letters written over a span of time. Ten and 20 years ago were chosen because they provide major changes in economic and political attitudes in the country.

A total of 173 letters were coded (Table 15). This represents 33 percent of all letters contained in the newspapers examined. The rest of the letters written during the period examined were either written by men or did not indicate sex of writer. Eighty-seven letters were coded for the 1962 period and 86 were coded for 1972. The consistency of letters written by women in 1962, 1972, and 1982 may be attributable to the circulation size of the newspapers examined. The higher figure for 1972 may have been due to the Vietnam war.

Table 15. Letter Totals.

Sex of Writer	1962		1972		1982	
Female	87	32	86	35	322	31
Male and Not Indicated	186	68	166	65	729	69
Total	273	100	252	100	1051	100

Writer affiliation was consistently low for 1962 and 1972. A slight increase is evident in 1982 (Table 16), and 1972 from 1962. A possible explanation is that as more women enter the work force, they are also becoming more involved in social activities such as organizations that are likely to take a stand on an issue.

The occurrence of MI was also low during the additional period examined (Table 17). Only 5 percent of the total number of letters coded during 1962 and 1972 contained references to MI.

A major difference in letters over the years is found in the direction of the letters (Table 18). In 1982 women were more positive

Table 16. Writer Affiliation.

1962		1972		1982	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
4	5	11	13	41	13

Table 17. Mobilizing Information.

Type of MI	1962		1972		1982	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Locational	6	7	4	5	20	6
Identificational	-	-	-	-	7	2
Tactical	2	2	-	-	5	1.5
Total	8	9	4	5	32	9.5

Table 18. Direction in Letters.

Direction	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
For	37	43	20	23	168	52
Against	41	47	63	73	118	37
Neutral	9	10	3	4	36	11
Total	87		86		322	

in their direction than were men. However, in 1962 and 1972 the letters were more negative than were the 1982 counterparts. The Vietnam war may be one explanation for the higher occurrence of negative direction in 1972. This would provide an example of letter opinion reflecting public opinion. Suggestions that women are more positive in their social behavior (Wine et al., 1980) are not applicable because there is not any indication that this is the result of changes over a period of time.

Few differences appear in other variables that were coded for 1982 and 1962. More differences exist between the variables coded for 1982 and 1972. For example, 76 percent of the letters contained references to bad news versus good news in 1982. In 1962, 75 percent of the letters referred to bad news, and in 1972, 91 percent referred to bad news. One possible explanation is the Vietnam war and its influence on the political nature of this country during the 70's. While the difference is noteworthy, it is difficult to explain (Table 19).

Table 19. Good News/Bad News.

Type	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Good News	22	25	8	9	78	24
Bad News	65	75	78	91	244	76
Total	87		86		322	

Other differences, although slight, are noted in Tables 20-26. Differences between 1972 and 1982 might be attributable to changes in sex roles assumed as more women enter the work force, politics and other more visible positions in society. However, this possible explanation would not account for the similarities between 1962 and 1982.

Table 20. Reference to Authority.

Type	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Quotes	4	5	7	8	15	4
Articles	30	34	47	55	160	43
Officials	24	28	30	35	56	15
History	4	5	5	6	2	0.5
Events	15	17	16	17	41	11.5
Personal	19	22	15	17	51	14
Other	12	14	5	6	44	12
Total*	108		125		369	

*Many letters contained more than one reference to authority; in these cases all references were coded.

Table 21. Reference to Level.

Type	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Local	38	44	39	45	196	61
State/Region	8	9	4	5	41	13
Regional	1	1	-	-	2	1
National	31	36	36	42	61	19
International	9	10	7	8	22	7
Total	87		86		322	

Table 22. Concrete or Abstract.

Type	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Concrete	74	85	75	87	297	92
Abstract	13	15	11	13	25	8
Total	87		86		322	

Table 23. Personal or Nonpersonal.

Type	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Personal	58	67	49	57	267	83
Nonpersonal	29	33	37	43	55	17
Total	87		86		322	

Table 24. Issues.

Issue	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Politics	15	17	21	24	52	16
Public Services	4	5	8	9	56	17
Media	6	7	4	5	32	10
War/Defense	10	11	10	12	28	9
Health/Safety	-	-	3	4	20	6
Schools/Education	7	8	4	5	19	6
Church/Religion	3	3	4	5	17	5
Crime	3	3	4	5	17	5
Arts/Culture	5	6	7	8	15	5
Family	5	6	3	4	14	4
Economics	7	8	5	6	13	4
Environment	-	-	3	4	12	4
Recreation/Sports	-	-	-	-	12	4
Other*	6	10	10	12	15	5
Total	87		86		322	

*Includes themes for which no category was offered on the coding form.

Table 25. Tone.

Type	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Anger	-	-	15	17	50	16
Fear	-	1	1	1	3	1
Humor	1	2	-	-	3	1
Happiness	10	11	10	12	46	14
Neutrality	75	85	55	64	207	64
Satire	1	2	-	-	5	2
Disappointment	1	2	4	5	8	2
Total	87		86		322	

Table 26. Persuasive and Nonpersuasive.

Type	1962 No.	1962 %	1972 No.	1972 %	1982 No.	1982 %
Persuasive	50	57	62	72	267	83
Nonpersuasive	37	43	24	28	55	17
Total	87		86		322	

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The content analysis of letters to the editor indicates that typically differences, although often slight, do exist between male and female letter writers in the newspapers examined. The differences exist in the number of letters written by men, which is twice as many as women in this study. Differences were also noted in writer affiliation, direction, good news and bad news, reference to geographical level, the concrete nature of the letter, the use of personal pronouns, and tone. The hypothesis that differences do exist in letters written by men and women is therefore supported.

Additional results involving the occurrence of MI indicate that no differences exist. MI surfaces in approximately the same manner, that is the type of MI and its occurrence, in letters by male and female writers. MI also appears to be used in similar contexts by both male and female writers in terms of the issues addressed that include MI.

Differences in letters written by women 10 and 20 years ago do exist, although not as might be expected. Letters written during the periods examined in 1982 and 1962 contained fewer differences than between those written in 1982 and 1972. The Vietnam war, which would have been reflected in the 1972 letters, is one possible explanation for the differences between 1972 and the other periods examined.

Additional investigation is warranted to account for the differences that were noted in 1972 and 1962. The literature that supports sex role differences is inconsistent and cannot be applied as a possible explanation for the differences between 1962 and 1972, and the similarities between 1982 and 1972. Further, studies on sex roles indicate that few differences can be attributed to one sex stereotype at the exclusion of the other (Sherriffs and Jarrett, 1952).

The newspapers used in this study represent those with medium to large circulations across the country. Newspapers with large circulations generally serve areas with large populations. Pasternack (1980) noted that the larger a paper's circulation the less likely a high percentage of letters would be published. In the future, studies should use an equal distribution of papers representing as many circulation sizes as possible. This might provide additional differences as well as insight into media use in cities of various sizes throughout the country.

An examination of differences by region might provide information about cultural use of the media. The present study did not attempt to disaggregate the results to study regional differences. Appendix A provides information on the ratio of male writers to female writers in addition to the circulation of the newspapers examined.

It is also recommended that different time periods be used in future studies. One possible explanation for the high preponderance of letters discussing political issues is the period examined. August, September, and October generally indicate months of high interest in political matters due to such events as conventions and

elections (Grey and Brown, 1970). This is also a possible explanation for the high occurrence of MI in letters discussing political issues. Perhaps if the time frame were enlarged this would provide a greater sample of letters from 1962 and 1972. A larger sample might provide variations in the differences other than those cited in this study.

Additional research in this area should include more emphasis on both published and unpublished letters as a means of understanding letter opinion as public opinion. This would serve a dual purpose in providing a better understanding of the gatekeeping process. Of particular interest in this area should be the gatekeeping process as it effects the occurrence of MI in letters to the editor. An examination of MI in other media, such as radio and television, might enhance the understanding of MI. Identification of its occurrence in other media will also provide insight into the gatekeeping process.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table A-1. Daily Newspapers Available at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville (w/circulation* and letter ratio).

Paper	Men	Women	Men to Women Ratio
BOSTON GLOBE 502,868	24	8	3.0
CHARLOTTE OBSERVER 169,222	22	6	3.7
CHATTANOOGA NEWS-FREE PRESS 58,923	35	15	2.3
CHICAGO TRIBUNE 770,798	28	15	1.9
CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER 405,842	34	13	2.6
DALLAS MORNING NEWS 308,649	21	16	1.3
DENVER POST 258,376	38	27	1.4
DETROIT NEWS 629,392	21	11	1.9
HOUSTON POST 376,833	22	11	2.0
JOHNSON CITY PRESS CHRONICLE 22,496	9	6	1.5
KNOXVILLE NEWS-SENTINEL 100,910	14	12	1.2
LOS ANGELES TIMES 1,062,707	51	23	2.2
LOUISVILLE COURIER-JOURNAL 182,843	24	16	1.5

Table A-1. Continued.

Paper	Men	Women	Men to Women Ratio
MIAMI HERALD 435,071	37	10	3.7
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL 308,764	32	20	1.6
NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN 127,296	10	12	0.8
NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE 280,655	13	9	1.4
NEW YORK TIMES 947,681	33	8	4.1
PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER 471,496	48	26	1.8
PORTLAND OREGONIAN 249,720	23	20	1.2
RALEIGH NEWS AND OBSERVER 129,240	12	6	2.0
ST. LOUIS POST DISPATCH 261,329	22	9	2.4
SEATTLE TIMES 256,888	24	10	2.4
WASHINGTON POST 760,950	35	13	2.7

*From SRDS Newspaper Rate and Data, Vol. 64, #10, October 12, 1982.

APPENDIX B

NEWSPAPERS AVAILABLE ON MICROFILM USED IN THIS STUDY

Chicago Tribune

Los Angeles Times

Louisville-Courier Journal

Nashville Tennessean

New Orleans Times-Picayune

Washington Post

APPENDIX C

CODING FORM

NAME OF PAPER_____

DATE/DAY OF WEEK_____

SEX OF WRITER_____ F M N/I WRITER AFFILIATION_____ Y N

MOBILIZING INFORMATION_____ Y N TYPE_____ L ID T

CONTENT OF LETTER_____

_____

DIRECTION_____ FOR AGAINST NEUTRAL

REFERENCE TO AUTHORITY_____ QUOTES ARTICLES OFFICIALS

HISTORY EVENTS PERSONAL OTHER

GOOD NEWS_____ BAD NEWS_____

GEOGRAPHICAL LEVEL_____ LOCAL STATE REGIONAL NATL.

INTERNATIONAL -

CONCRETE_____ ABSTRACT_____

PERSONAL_____ NONPERSONAL_____

THEMES: (circle one)

church	porn./sex	public services
crime/violence	health/sciences	consumerism
schools/education	health/energy	labor/unions
discrimination/rights	sports/recreation	politics/legislation
culture/arts	family	vice (gambling)
employment	media	environment
war/defense	economics	other

TONE_____ ANGER FEAR HUMOR HAPPINESS NEUTRALITY

SATIRE DISAPPOINTMENT

PERSUASIVE_____ NONPERSUASIVE_____

APPENDIX D

NEWSPAPERS USED IN RELIABILITY CHECK

St. Louis Post Dispatch
Sunday, October 31, 1982

Milwaukee Journal
Monday, December 13, 1982

Chattanooga News-Free Press
Tuesday, November 30, 1982

Portland Oregonian
Wednesday, October 13, 1982

Boston Globe
Thursday, October 21, 1982

Denver Post
Friday, October 1, 1982

Washington Post
Saturday, October 30, 1982

VITA

Robin Head Intemann was born in Los Angeles, California on June 16, 1956. She was graduated from Wasson High School in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in January 1974. She attended The University of Northern Colorado where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in March 1978 in Individualized Education with a major in Early Twentieth Century British Literature. In the fall of 1980 she began graduate studies in the College of Communications at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She received the Master of Science degree in March 1983.

The author has contributed articles to The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Daily Beacon and the Volunteer Yearbook. She has also been published in "Facing South," a syndicated column. She is employed with The Oak Ridger newspaper in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

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