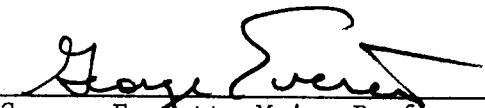
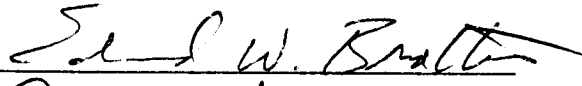


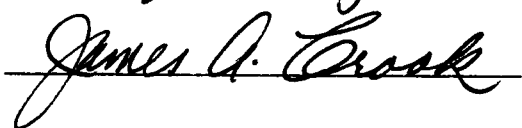
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Florence Clark Riffe entitled "Toward a Non-Hierarchical Structure for Newswriting: The Effects of Compound Sentences with Semicolons on Perceptions of Readability and Objectivity." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communications.

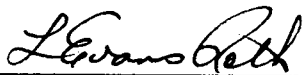

George Everett, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:





Accepted for the Council:


Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

TOWARD A NON-HIERARCHICAL
STRUCTURE FOR NEWSWRITING:
THE EFFECTS OF COMPOUND SENTENCES WITH SEMICOLONS
ON PERCEPTIONS OF READABILITY AND OBJECTIVITY

A Dissertation
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of non-hierarchical, or coordinated, structure in newswriting on readers' perceptions of readability and objectivity. To operationalize non-hierarchical structure, a news story was written in three versions, all with identical content but with structural differences as follows: Version One (control)--journalism's traditional inverted pyramid model of organization with no semicolons; Version Two (experimental)--coordinated model of organization using compound sentences with semicolons to juxtapose opposing arguments; Version Three (experimental)--coordinated model of organization identical to Version Two but with periods in place of semicolons between independent clauses to form separate simple sentences for juxtaposed, opposing arguments.

It was hypothesized that the coordinated versions would be perceived as more objective but less readable than and less preferable to the inverted pyramid version. Further, it was hypothesized that the coordinated version with semicolons would be perceived as more objective but less readable than and less preferable to the coordinated version with no semicolons.

An after-only laboratory experiment was conducted with 109 college students enrolled in a junior-level marketing class. Subjects were randomly but unobtrusively assigned to three groups for reading the three story versions.

Dependent measurement was via seven-step scales between twenty-one pairs of descriptions, opposites in meaning, that operationalized readability, objectivity, and preference.

One-way analysis of variance, coupled with Scheffé's multiple comparison test and the test of Least Significant Difference, showed significant differences between pairs of groups on the following measures: reading ease, simplicity, coherence, believability, and cumulative readability. To summarize findings, the coordinated version with semicolons was perceived as less readable and less believable than the other versions.

Though the data were insufficient for accepting the hypotheses on objectivity and on preference, findings did suggest that the semicolon alone caused lower scores on readability.

Both quantitative data and open-ended remarks requested from subjects suggest that the semicolon acts not only as a cue for complexity in writing that is cognitively simple, but also as a clue about the believability of a message.

Further research was recommended to test additional variables in the coordinated model that may impinge on readability and to explore more precisely the interaction of readability, objectivity, and believability as a function of newsreaders' fantasies about imagined writers based on stylistic cues.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Punctuation Paradox

A paradox exists in the state of newspaper writing that has too long gone unnoticed. While both editors and teachers exhort newswriters to be objective, the English language's prime tool for writing objectively is disdained in journalism's stylebooks, textbooks, and practice. Objectivity involves fairness, impartiality, balancing of equal elements; but the semicolon between independent clauses--the function of which is to balance equal elements--is eschewed as "literary," "scholarly," and inappropriate for mass messages.

The Semicolon: Focal Point of Bias

Look at this semicolon; think about it. Does it look literary? Is there prejudice against it? Certain editors and publishers have somehow divined that readers are averse to the mere presence of the semicolon in printed matter, regardless of the mark's use in context. The newest edition of the Associated Press Stylebook, for example, discourages newswriters from using the semicolon between independent clauses:

Unless a particular literary effect is desired, however, the better approach in these circumstances is to break the independent clauses into separate sentences.

The Stylebook entry is only one of many admonitions against the hapless semicolon. E. L. Callihan's Grammar for Journalists, which is used in newswriting classes at many U. S. universities, advises:

Journalists should use the semicolon sparingly. Its chief use is in compound sentences, and the reporter will avoid using sentences in which the conjunction is omitted between two independent clauses.

John Shuttleworth, editor and publisher of Mother Earth News, claimed (1977) in The Writer magazine that readers are rabid about the vertical juxtaposition of a period and comma:

Commas and colons are all right . . . [Ellipsis mark is Shuttleworth's.] but it has been our experience that the great portion of the reading public has a deep-seated and unyielding grudge, hate, and/or fear of semicolons. I don't know why . . . except that scholarly (or, usually, pseudoscholarly) authors always seem to try to impress their audiences with turgid prose that runs on and on and is frequently punctuated by what seems to be two-thirds of the world's lifetime supply of semicolons. "Ordinary" people get turned off by semicolons. Whatever the reason, we don't use semicolons very often here. If you want to sell to our magazine, you won't either.

Despite his experience, nowhere does Shuttleworth indicate that he has systematically determined what readers' attitudes toward semicolons are. No one has. Readability studies that have garnered data on readers' preferences for short sentences notwithstanding, no research has delved into the specific sentence structure under debate. Further, none has undertaken to find evidence for the supposed horror readers experience upon seeing semicolons.

What has been determined is that newswriters seem to adhere to the warning to avoid compound sentences. In a study by Riffe (1979), of 350 sentences in lead stories of The Knoxville News-Sentinel by AP, UPI, Scripps-Howard, and local writers from 1944 to 1978, a mere 14, or 4 per cent, are compound sentences. None contains semicolons.

Affective implications of the semicolon aside, neither has anyone sought to determine its cognitive effects. The semicolon's very function, after all, is to take a cognitive role by marking boundaries between grammatical units. Yet some editors would let the mark vanish from the fonts of the earth, justifying its passing on presumed attitudes of readers.

Shuttleworth, who suggests using other marks as substitutes for the semicolon, is not the first writer to advocate that alternative. According to New York Times guest columnist Reginald Skelton (1942), semicolon opponents view the mark as unnecessary, saying its duties could be performed by other punctuation marks--the dash, comma, period, and colon. Skelton, author of a book on punctuation, makes it clear in his 1942 Times article, however, that he deplores the "war that is being waged in some quarters on the semicolon. . . . There is actually an anti-semicolon cult, and the latest recruit is reported to be Somerset Maugham."

The semicolon has been under attack for some time now. Whether readers agree with these writers' attitudes is unknown. What is known is that usage in publication is determined by professional writers and editors, some of whom presume to know what readers want without actually finding out.

Significance of the Semicolon Problem

But why bother with this quirk of style in print media? On the face of it, researching a sole punctuation mark seems trivial. Indeed, the topic seems a likely nominee for Sen. William Proxmire's Golden Fleece Award, should some government agency award a grant. In the first place, if the alleged prejudice against the semicolon does exist, some editors would relish the information, if for no other reason than to justify what they already practice--that is, disallowing compound sentences that require semicolons.

But if research unveils a reader distaste for the mark, will professional writers and editors then abolish its use in other

constructions, too? Newspapers and magazines are full of semicolons--in series that contain commas within items. Yet no one ever assailed the semicolon in that role. To be or not to be--that will be the question if readers vote against the symbol per se.

The more far-reaching view, then, is to consider the "not to be" possible outcome and ponder the art of writing without the semicolon in the repertoire of guideposts. In addition to rethinking the marking of itemized series, the alternatives for constructing compound sentences are two: (1) to use other marks in place of the semicolon and (2) to refrain from writing sentences that require semicolons. The former option may create confusion; the latter entails "breaking the independent clauses into separate sentences," as the AP Stylebook advises.

The paradox of alternative #2 where newswriting is concerned is that the semicolon's function between independent clauses is to coordinate equal elements. The very term coordinate means "equal in rank or importance." When equal elements are divided into separate sentences, coordination may be lost in the finality of the period mark. The pertinence of such a potential effect to newswriting should not go unstated: To present information impartially--or as the journalists are wont to say, objectively--is to present it in coordinated constructions, for which purpose the semicolon exists. The argument, then, that the semicolon is literary or scholarly and not journalistic begins to look specious.

Furthermore, with alternative #2 the semicolon problem merges with that larger nemesis, the decline in verbal skills nationwide. In Simple & Direct: A Rhetoric for Writers, Jacques Barzun describes the semicolon's woes succinctly: "Some writers make little or no use of the

semicolon, usually because they deal in narrative composed of short sentences." (p. 161)

As a corollary, Merrill Shiels' 1975 Newsweek classic, "Why Johnny Can't Write," contains evidence that "the majority of Americans of all ages tend to use only the simplest sentence structure." According to the researchers cited by Shiels, verbal simplicity is one of the hallmarks of a population gone semi-literate in an increasingly complex world. And of course verbal simplicity is one of the hallmarks of a newspaper style gone overly simple in order to adapt to the decline in language skills. But some would say the adaptation becomes a contribution to the decline.

It will not be necessary to detail the debate that has persisted for centuries on the interaction of thought and language (Vygotsky, 1962). Suffice it to say that those in the behaviorist camp (language influences thought) would argue that some measure of complexity in language is required to organize thoughts about complex events in the environment, that language structures shape thought processes and not the opposite. Not that the fate of the world hangs by the semicolon's arched lower half, but it does seem worthwhile to test the mark's powers to coordinate related grammatical units, or if one prefers, to coordinate related thoughts.

Evolution of Punctuation Theory in English

To be thorough, though, it must be explained that semicolons (in fact, most punctuation marks) have created communication difficulties for three centuries. To suggest causes for the problem will entail a brief review of the evolution of English punctuation theory.

Ironical as it may seem, the semicolon was the mark that enabled punctuation to shift from a purely oratorical function to a predominantly grammatical one. Prior to 1620, punctuation in English was based mainly on time values rather than on grammatical units. Because most written material was intended to be read aloud, punctuation functioned primarily in a metrical, or rhythmical, way and therefore served the demands of breathing (Ong, 1944). Punctuation bore little relation to syntax until about 1610, when another style came into use, the purpose of which was "to outline the grammatical construction and stress the sentence as the basic component in writing, to show the relationship of each of the sentence parts to the whole and also show the connection in meaning between the various parts" (Treip, 1970).

Invented in 1566 by Venetian printer Aldus Manutius the Younger, the semicolon introduced a new element into punctuation. By permitting a finer grading of the stops, the mark initiated the logical system in use at the present. The semicolon was introduced into England in 1569 and began to be widely used about 1580 (Simpson, 1970). Metrical and grammatical styles of punctuation vied for a while until about 1620, when the grammatical punctuation became dominant.

The change in punctuation's function is not at all surprising in light of the history of the English language, which by the 16th century had evolved into a language without inflections, word-endings that communicate grammatical function. English syntax then became analytic, meaning that grammatical relations are indicated via word order, which is of course fixed (Baugh, 1957). A language's dependence on fixed word order increases the demand for some scheme of non-verbal marks to demarcate units.

Coupled with the syntactic change in English as an impetus for adopting logical punctuation was the 16th century spread of printing presses in England, followed by an increase in literacy. Printed material was increasingly intended to be read silently, thereby rendering time values of oratory less important.

This is not to say that since the turn of the seventeenth century English punctuation has succeeded in establishing meaning between writer and reader. In fact, by the turn of the twentieth century, punctuation had become so simplified that the major pauses were rarely expressed (Honan, 1960). And as one twentieth century writer put it:

We ought to deplore the growing tendency to use only full stops and commas. Punctuation is an invaluable aid to clear writing, and I suggest that far too little importance is attached to it by many journalists (Whitaker, 1939).

Semicolon Functions

From its beginning, the semicolon indicated a length of pause between that of the comma and that of the period, a time value it retains (Treip). Its original functions differ very little from the ones prescribed by stylebooks and grammar handbooks today. For example, the Harbrace College Handbook, one of the most widely used guides in college English composition classes nationwide, lists the following situations in which the semicolon may be used (examples are this author's):

1. Between two main clauses not joined by one of the coordinating conjunctions.

EXAMPLE: Cub reporters are told to be objective; star reporters are not told to be objective.

2. Between two main clauses not joined by one of the coordinating conjunctions in compound-complex sentences.

EXAMPLE: If a news story contains the value judgments of the reporter, it is not considered objective; if a news story contains the value judgments of "official sources," it is considered objective.

3. Before certain conjunctive adverbs and transitional phrases when they connect main clauses (e.g., consequently, on the other hand).

EXAMPLE: Complete objectivity in reporting is impossible; on the other hand, it is possible to attempt.

4. Between two main clauses joined by one of the coordinating conjunctions if the clauses have internal punctuation or reveal a striking contrast.

EXAMPLE: One of the hallmarks of objective writing is to balance all sides of an issue impartially; but by avoiding the semicolon, newswriters reject the sentence construction that does the best balancing act.

5. In a series, between equal elements which themselves contain commas.

EXAMPLE: Among the conditions that affect the pursuit of objectivity are selective perception, through which events are filtered in different ways by different people; reliance on official sources, which excludes viewpoints of "unofficial" sources; and structural taboos, which make coordination of equal elements more difficult.

A Semicolon for the Ear

The historical account illustrates the roots of the confusion in modern punctuation: some of the marks never completely outgrew their oratorical function. George Summey, author of American Punctuation, writes that modern punctuation "is primarily for the reader's eye, with only partial correspondence to the movement, stresses, and inflections of speech." The eye/ear conflict has been particularly fierce in readers' semicolon encounters. Not long after readers had become accustomed to logical punctuation for the eye, a movement began that subverted the semicolon's grammatical heritage. At about the turn of

the 18th century, the semicolon was forced into an atavistic position as an oratorical stop. Eric Partridge describes the "literary semicolon" in Usage and Abusage: "That which produces the effect of a stressed pause or of a rhetorical break." In a later work on punctuation, You Have a Point There, Partridge explains that the literary, or 18th century, semicolon was revived about 1930 by "certain writers priding themselves upon variety, subtlety, fine grammatical as well as superfine elocutionary, or rhetorical, distinctions; occasionally an affectation or, at best, an archaism."

Though Skelton made no mention of the 1930's rebirth of the 18th century literary semicolon, it may have been one impetus for the formation of the anti-semicolon cult he exposed in 1942. It may even be the source of the AP Stylebook's warning that semicolons yield a "literary effect." Still, none of this explains editors' and writers' presumptions about readers' "grudge, hate, and/or fear of semicolons." Has anyone systematically polled readers about it?

Conservators of Coordination

The semicolon does have its defenders, and each cited below offers speculation about why the mark has opponents.

Summey maintains that the "useful and unjustly maligned semicolon is the most clearly specialized balancing and coordinating mark." He then goes on to say:

There is an obstinate notion that the semicolon is a stiff and formal mark that ought to be seldom used. With stiff wording it is stiff; with easy wording it is light and swift.

Esquire's John Simon (1978) also notes that the semicolon is confused with other punctuation marks. He attributes punctuation errors

of all types to shoddy proofreading. Simon argues in his February 1978 column that such minute attention to detail is becoming a lost skill.

"It may even be that human nature is changing toward greater basic inattentiveness, that there is a kind of endemic loss of concentration."

Another expert on punctuation echoes Shuttleworth in saying that the source of semicolon prejudice may be "guilt by association" with scholarly writing style. John Trimble, author of Writing with Style, contends that semicolons "tend to congregate in academic writing, which is often colossally ponderous." (The Latinate i.e.'s and e.g.'s preceded by semicolons immediately come to mind. It is interesting to note that at least one scholarly stylebook, that of the American Psychological Association, has abolished that usage, ruling instead that i.e.'s and e.g.'s be placed in parentheses, a construction that precludes the use of semicolons). Nonetheless, Trimble champions the semicolon, citing the following benefits that derive from its use: variety, greater compression and efficiency, tightened contrasts, and unity.

To paraphrase Skelton's defense would be an impertinence:

The semicolon is often the mark of an unfinished thought, and many thoughts are of that kind. The person who sees things clearly, either all black or all white, but never gray, has no need of the semicolon. He goes straight along from period to period, with short, crisp sentences.

But for the mind beset with doubts and given to "on the other hand" or its equivalents, the semicolon is indispensable. There is a balanced justice that can come only of relying on the semicolon. Without it the temptation is to state only one side of a case, your own. With it, the tendency is to be tolerant, impartial, to weigh one side and then the other.

It will not seem too lengthy a side excursion to focus for a moment on Skelton's gist--impartiality, balance, weighing equal elements--as it applies to semicolon use. Because the ultimate destination of this entire discussion is to show the relevance of coordinated constructions

to the attainment of journalistic objectivity, perhaps it is in order to compare Skelton's thoughts with those of John DeMott in a 1976 speech, "The News Media's Quest for Objectivity":

The social context and conditions that broaden perspective, breed second thoughts and nurse the tentative temperament need to be protected, strengthened and expanded throughout the journalistic establishment.

Skelton is talking about a punctuation mark; DeMott is promoting objectivity in journalism. Both seemingly disparate topics pivot on coordination, to the extent that the former is clearly one mean for achieving the latter's end.

To this point the discussion has noted journalists' avoidance of coordinated constructions (and the paradox thereof), then considered the semicolon per se as a potential troublemaker and hence a rationalization for avoiding coordinated constructions. It now remains to take a closer look at the role of newspaper style in perpetuating semicolon disuse.

Journalism's Solution--Simpler Sentences and Alternative Marks

Most semicolon defenders agree that one of their ward's most hostile fronts is the newspaper. It would not be fruitful to detail the countless ruses journalists concoct to avoid the semicolon. The alternatives in newswriting can be summarized instead into two categories: simpler sentence structure--and the dash.

Depending on one's predisposition on the issue, Rudolph Flesch is often blamed for, or credited with, the trend toward simple sentences in American newspapers. During his tenure as writing chairman for the Associated Press (1948-51), Flesch repeatedly insisted that complex and compound sentences should be broken up in order to achieve readability, a construct he measured quantitatively in violation of syntactic vagaries

of English. Nevertheless, even Flesch regretted the impact the trend toward simplicity had on punctuation. In How To Make Sense, he wrote:

Those beautiful semicolons and commas have practically disappeared, and what we get in most books, magazines, and newspapers is a steady succession of neatly complete, primly grammatical sentences, each ending chastely in the universal, standardized period.

As for the dash, G. V. Carey remarks in Mind the Stop (1940) that one could "count dashes by the daily dozen" in newspapers. The reason for this practice is undeniable--the dash's function is to emphasize.

Thirty-five years later Trimble elaborated on newswriters' use of the dash for emphasis. He said that many journalists substitute the dash for semicolons (as well as for colons, commas, periods, and parentheses) in order to animate sentences. Whether or not the compulsion to animate news style in print stems from competition with television's dynamism is an unknown in the recent history of punctuation. At any rate, Trimble listed four probable--and predictable--reasons for newswriters' using the dash: to break up grayness, to relieve congestion and monotony, to call attention to key words and phrases by dramatizing them, and to appear light and conversational.

John Robert Starr, executive editor of the Arkansas Democrat, candidly confessed in 1979 that newswriters use dashes instead of semicolons "to give the appearance that the writing is not complex." And so the spectre of complexity emerges. It almost seems as if the flap about semicolons is a mere smokescreen. The little punctuation mark may simply be a cue for complexity; therein may lie the real prejudice.

Semicolon Illness: Undiagnosed

Belaboring the fact that newspapers must make their fare readable, and therefore saleable, will not contribute to the effort to solve the semicolon problem. The economic health that results from increased circulation, on which advertising rates are based, is of course vital. It is a given that readability may enhance circulation. But just what is readability? Though the concept is generally accepted to mean ease in comprehension, Flesch introduced the notion that readability should subsume speed in comprehension, which is a different matter altogether (Klare, 1963). What is disturbing is that many editors, perhaps on the advice of "news doctors," have opted for copy that is quickly read, rather than for copy that better explains complex issues.

Following Flesch's lead three decades ago, newspaper editors' approach to readability has been to reduce sentence complexity, thereby catering to the quasi-literate who prefer broadcast news to print anyway. While looking over their shoulders at advertising lineage, editors prefer to argue that a simpler style is more "understandable." But in the process of reading "a steady succession of neatly complete, primly grammatical sentences, each ending chastely in the universal, standardized period," can there be information loss, albeit subtle? The nature of that information loss may be one of balance, coordination of equal elements. While America's journalists pine for the grail of objectivity, they snub as "literary" the punctuation mark whose very function is to act as the fulcrum of the scales.

Any further discussion must be aimed at going beyond mere speculation about semicolon effects to setting the stage for research. Following are two conclusions on directions for semicolon diagnosis.

The first premise is that tapping readers' attitudes about semicolons per se will have little applicability by itself. Because the semicolon's function is to aid comprehension and understandability, its cognitive effects must also be considered. Showing that the mark evokes feelings about the tone of writing in which it appears would be an interesting but less pressing endeavor.

The second proposition likewise follows from the very function of the semicolon to mark pauses at grammatical boundaries. Punctuation theorists insist that the semicolon's purpose differs from that of other pause marks, that its job is to balance or contrast equal elements. If the mark is achieving the function intended by its theorists for nearly five centuries, readers' cognitions at semicolon pauses will be different from cognitions at other pause marks. Of course, it may be that reader perceptions of the relatedness of clauses marked by a period, for example, are the same as the perceptions of relatedness marked by a semicolon. Herein lies the crux of the issue: What relationships between message units are readers inferring upon seeing semicolons?

To sum up, the silent partner of our written language implies meanings that have too long gone untested. As for the fate of the ailing semicolon in particular, perhaps the tentative temperament should prevail until the diagnosis has been completed. Perhaps its powers to coordinate should be balanced with the supposed prejudice readers have against it. Until such a scale has been constructed, let us withhold the death sentence of the mark.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL CONNECTIONS

Toward an Understanding of Journalistic Objectivity

Because the coordinated sentence structure that contains the semicolon has been recommended herein as one way to achieve journalistic objectivity, it is of course necessary to clarify the construction's goal. Alas! The explication of journalistic objectivity is nowhere written in stone. Indeed, the very history of the concept, in addition to its definition, has been the subject of scholarly debate.

The conventional historical approach places the beginning of something historians call objectivity in 1844, the year the telegraph was invented (Emery & Emery, 1978). Because telegraph fees were charged per word, reducing the number of words transmitted was obviously more economical for news organizations. According to Emery & Emery, the paring down occurred in "opinion and coloration," the reduction of which resulted in copy with less editorializing.

For chronology's sake, another stylistic spin-off of telegraph use must be mentioned at this point, though its relationship to objectivity will keep for a few pages. Emery & Emery also point out that vagaries of telegraph transmission gave rise to a journalistic practice that remains prevalent--the inverted pyramid model of story organization. Because Civil War correspondents were never sure when wires would be cut or preempted, they began to send the story's essentials first, details later. The adoption of the telegraph by the press in the mid-nineteenth century, then, is the starting point of two journalistic habits that

persist--a reduction in editorializing, if not modern objectivity, and a hierarchical model for organizing content.

In the same vein as Emery & Emery, Shaw (1967) analyzes the development of objectivity as the result of the Associated Press's (the first wire service) effort to sell copy to nineteenth century newspapers with varying political orientations. Pember (1977) describes the AP's motive as "offense to no one," even beyond the political realm, in order to boost sales. Whatever the reason, Shaw argues that the AP's practice was adopted by journalism at large. Neither of the conventional approaches, however, fully explains the rise of objectivity to its present-day pinnacle of importance.

Taking a new approach, Schudson (1978) makes a distinction between nineteenth century objectivity (the term was applied in retrospect) and the modern version. He defines the twentieth century concept as "consensually validated statements about the world," a definition born of the "distrust of facts" by journalists after World War I. Schudson marshals compelling evidence for his thesis that the "distrust of reason psychology had established," the success of war propaganda generated by George Creel's Committee on Public Information, and the concurrent achievements of Ivy Lee in public relations caused journalists to reassess the very nature of facts. If facts were mere opinions different on the dimension of selective perception, if opinions were to be subjected to the competition of the marketplace (as Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes argued), the press would have to respond.

And respond it did. Among the manifestations of the "distrust of facts" that Schudson cites are (1) an increase in signed news stories, which is a tacit admission that reporters are subjective; (2)

specialization, which enables reporters to analyze their sources' subjectivity; (3) interpretive reporting, which places a premium on providing background and explanation for complex events; (4) syndicated political columns, which present overtly an individual's interpretations; and (5) a reportorial attitude called objectivity, a term never used before World War I. The overarching concept entailed "allegiance to rules and procedures created for a world in which even facts were in question" (Schudson, p. 7).

The various historical approaches merely offer possible explanations for the existence of objectivity without attempting to define it. Bothered by the lack of a precise definition of the concept, Starr undertook as a graduate student in mass communications (1979) to review every word written on that term, from the texts of teachers to the pronouncements of media practitioners. Starr located a consensual definition that subsumes the following attributes: (1) accuracy, (2) separation of fact and opinion, (3) fairness, and (4) impartiality, or detachment on reporter's part, in presenting all sides of an issue in balanced form. As for achieving the attributes, journalists' "rules and procedures" are as follows: (1) Accuracy--documentation, enhanced by the inventions of the tape recorder and film. (2) Separation of fact and opinion--attribution, the practice of citing sources of information by name. Though quotes often result in conferring factual status on sources' opinions, the hurdle is considered cleared so long as the opinions are not the reporter's. (3) Fairness and (4) Impartiality--inclusion of all sides of an issue, emphasis on inclusion, because both fight an uphill battle for their places in a story organization that is

hierarchical and therefore assigns emphasis to those elements higher up in the story.

Telling Stories--To Inform? To Entertain? To Persuade?

Just how important is the attainment, or the attempt thereof, of objectivity to those in the news business? Virtually every textbook that mentions newswriting stresses it. Educators emphasize it because their students' future employers demand it. From DeMott's speech cited earlier to Charnley's assertion that "there can be no fair reporting without objectivity" (1966), the literature of journalism is rife with confirmations that objectivity is a worthy, necessary, noble goal.

The literature is just as copious with laments that the public does not perceive the mass media's news efforts to be objective. Novak (1974) says that "the working man hates the media" because of news organizations' elitism and failure to tell all sides of an issue. Novak even questions the adequacy of the story form used in news, though he does not elaborate beyond naming the form per se. Schudson, too, includes mention of this seeming incompatibility between an entertainment form of presentation that fiction relies on and an informational purpose that relies on non-fictional content.

Before pursuing an analysis of the tension between the fictional form and the factual content, it will be enlightening to point out another conflict between types of messages that also impinges on an understanding of objectivity--information versus persuasion. The *raison d'etre* of journalistic objectivity has been to assure news receivers that news senders are indeed informing and not persuading.

Ironically, however, it was the persuaders who found evidence for the value of a disinterested source in maximizing credibility.

McGuire's synthesis on source credibility (1973) concludes that "for maximum believability, the source must be perceived as not only knowing the truth [expertise] but being objective enough to be motivated to tell it as he sees it." In short, if a communicator wants to be believed, he or she should at least appear to be objective.

Some of the commentary cited herein laments that journalists are being beaten at their own game of achieving credibility via objectivity. No voices are raised in protest over the lack of objectivity in various persuasive messages. And rightly so, because of what Schramm (1952) calls the "contracts" between senders and receivers of differing message types, which he categorizes into (1) information, (2) entertainment, (3) education, and (4) persuasion. Only persuasion among the four is exempt from establishing "sets of expectations" between sender and receiver. On the other hand, information's contract involves an expectation on receivers' parts that the sender will make no attempts to influence. And to bring entertainment back into focus, only entertainment among the four is exempt from credibility, contracting instead with receivers for what Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1817) calls "a willing suspension of disbelief."

To sum up, news presentation--as practiced by today's journalists--claims an information purpose, uses an entertainment style of presentation, and relies on a hierarchical form of organization (the inverted pyramid) that may appear to be persuasive, that may be working against the attainment of the disinterestedness necessary for credibility by assigning greater importance to some "sides of an issue" than to others.

Now that the disinterestedness factor has been added to the problems inherent in journalism's inverted pyramid, the discussion of newswriting's story format can proceed more meaningfully. Brucker (1969) elaborates somewhat on the story format as an obstacle to impartiality. In "What's Wrong with Objectivity," he writes:

What critics denounce as objectivity is not objectivity so much as an incrustation of habits and rules of newswriting, inherited from the past, that confines the reporter within rigid limits.

Though Brucker, as well as Novak and Schudson, names news story format as a culprit, none analyzes the structure of the inverted pyramid. No one will come right out and say: A hierarchical organization, coupled with a taboo on coordinated constructions, precludes balanced treatment. General attacks on the story form per se have been grounded on the conflict between fictional-form and factual-content without drawing into the discussion the incompatibility between hierarchical-form and balanced-treatment.

Worse, research on objectivity to date has dwelt on subjectivity in newsgathering, which focuses on the process and not the product (Phillips, 1977). The lack of attention to newswriting variables may derive from a temptation to dismiss readers' complaints about subjectivity in news as a function of readers' subjectivity operating selectively on perception--in much the same way that gatekeeping studies have located points at which newshandlers' predispositions enter the news flow (Dimmick, 1974). Perhaps the kettle is not really as black as the pot. To wit, any newswriting text teaches would-be newswriters to arrange facts in a hierarchy, most important content first, after applying a set of news values that aids the writer in determining

importance. Tuchman (1978) has shown how the set of traditional news values (timeliness, prominence, conflict, consequence, proximity being among the foremost) generate newswriting decisions that favor those who benefit most from maintenance of the status quo. Though that tilting of the odds is of course a legitimate concern, efforts to alter the criteria for newsworthiness are insufficient for achieving balance. Regardless whose criteria prevail, criteria per se demand value judgments about importance and subsequent emphasis given to facts and opinions. It is the structure of newswriting, therefore, that deserves attention. To that end, the next section explains the research findings on verbal structure and their awesome implications for newswriting.

Theoretical Framework for Syntactic Research

American architect Louis Henry Sullivan is credited with the oft-quoted observation that "form ever follows function." Whether the form is architecture, art, music, or language--the truism is applicable. Where language is concerned, recent research suggests that structure alone embodies meanings not stated overtly in content. The following review explicates the relationship of structure and function in language. Because most mass communication researchers have ignored psycholinguistic studies in dealing with message research, implications of the studies for newswriting are incorporated throughout.

In the early 1950's, a theoretical gap existed between the mechanics of message channels and the meanings conferred on verbal messages by senders and receivers. Though attitudinal and behavioral theorists were already investigating social and psychological aspects of messages, the

area between the purely mechanical considerations of transmission ("information theory") and the social and psychological explanations of verbal meaning remained unexplained. Somewhere between message transmission and that point at which social aspects begin to impinge on meaning was a gray area--the strategies involved in encoding and decoding language. Simple linguistics was not adequate to explain language use, for grammar itself was a mere theory about language behavior. Psycholinguistics as a discipline arose to fill the theoretical gap (Cofer, 1978).

While mere linguistics codifies the competence (rules) of a language, psycholinguistics investigates actual performances of language use. In attempting to explain the how and why of language encoding and decoding, psycholinguists embarked on research to test the "psychological reality of grammar"; that is, to characterize the relationship between the "performance" devices psychologists investigate and the "competence" models grammarians study (Fodor, 1971).

The new discipline was soon subdivided into phonetic, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic areas of study--the last dealing with idiomatic functions of language and situational variance in meaning; the former three being self-explanatory. The concern herein is with syntax: those theories that explain how word order--the structure and arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs--influences both comprehension and memory of information.

Syntactic Research Findings

Distinction between syntax and semantics: It may be helpful at this point to explain just how syntax differs from semantics, or word

meaning. In decoding the following sentence, for example, the decoder uses certain decoding strategies--some semantic, some syntactic:

The dog was bitten by the man.

How does one hearing or reading that sentence know that the word man means human/adult/male and not the verb to furnish with men as in "man the battle stations"? What set of semantic components does one assign to the word man and how can one be sure one has selected the correct set? Here is where syntactic processing is operating, albeit unconsciously.

Even an illiterate person knows that a verb cannot follow the combination of a preposition and article ("by the") in English. Even a person who does not know an iota of grammar can be sure that a noun will follow the article "the"--unless there is intervening modification, which he will also anticipate. Nevertheless, the word "the" functions as a signal to the decoder that a noun will soon follow, certainly before a verb appears or is heard. The layman would describe this processing strategy as "figuring out the meanings and grammatical roles of words by their context." True, but there must then be rules governing such contextual decisions, rules that syntactic researchers have attempted to characterize (Clark & Clark, 1977).

Terms and concepts: Chomsky (1957) made the first breakthrough in analyzing syntactic effects by distinguishing between surface structure (arrangements of words, clauses, and phrases) and deep structure (underlying representations, or "meaning"). Since the two structures need not correspond on a word-for-word basis, the concept of transformations was introduced. Transformations are the syntactic rearrangements involved in converting kernel ideas (underlying representations) from

their simplest active form to other forms--such as passives, negatives, or questions (Chomsky, 1957).

Looking again at the example sentence on page 28, one can see that the kernel idea of the sentence is "man bit dog." The transformation applied in this case is passive voice. Transformations, then, are syntactic changes that do not change the deep, semantic representations of the words.

Constituent research: The surface structure of a sentence divides up into phrases and subphrases called constituents. As a general rule, a constituent is "a group of words that can be replaced by a single word without a change in function and without doing violence to the rest of the sentence" (Clark & Clark, 1977). A sentence can be broken down into a hierarchy of constituents, as the example below illustrates:

The old man lit his awful cigar									
the old man					lit his awful cigar				
the	old man				lit	his awful cigar			
	old	man				his	awful cigar		
							awful	cigar	

Looking at the first division, we see that the immediate constituents--"the old man" and "lit his awful cigar"--can each be replaced by a single word that does not change the function and that does not violate the sentence: "Amos" and "smoked," respectively. The hypothesis formulated about sentence comprehension is that people parse a sentence into its constituents and for each one attach the appropriate meanings (Clark & Clark, 1977).

The theory that either production or comprehension of sentences in English proceeds along the lines of phrase-structure has been widely

accepted, though it goes by a variety of names: "constituent" (Chomsky), "phrase-structure" (N. F. Johnson, 1965), "hierarchical chunking" (S. C. Johnson, 1967). Once the basic units of surface structure were defined, researchers proceeded to investigate the influence of constituent length, location (or order in the sentence), complexity, and number in the sentence on comprehension and memory of verbal information.

Fundamental to the operationalization of constituents was the introduction of the concept of constituent boundaries, the end points of constituents. Any given sentence has both major and minor constituent boundaries, as the example below demonstrates. "Ultimate" constituents--single words from the bottom tier of the diagram on page 30--are ignored.

((The old man)((lit)(his awful cigar.)))

The research technique first applied in constituent research was the "probe latency" technique, whereby the investigator posed a "probe" word to subjects who had heard the sentence, then asked subjects to recall the word following the probe. Using the above sentence as an example, suppose the investigator posed the word "old" as the probe. Subjects would be expected to supply the word "man." If the investigator posed the word "man" as the probe, subjects would be expected to be somewhat slower in supplying the word "lit" because it is across a major constituent boundary. Studies have shown that subjects have a more difficult time recalling words across major constituent boundaries and that subjects take more time recalling the word following a probe across major constituent boundaries (N. F. Johnson, 1965, 1966; Graf & Torrey, 1966; Garrett, Bever, & Fodor, 1966; and Ammon, 1968).

Once the "reality" of constituents had been demonstrated, researchers explored various aspects of constituents' effects (including their hierarchical arrangement) on sentence production and comprehension. By examining constituent length, number, location, and complexity, researchers have concluded that ease in comprehension seems to be a function of simple syntax. That is, short, simple constituents, few in number, arranged in a surface structure that corresponds to English active voice (agent/action/object) seemed to correlate positively with ease in comprehension (Clark & Begun, 1968; Foss & Lynch, 1969; Miller & McKean, 1964; Levelt, 1970; Hakes & Foss, 1970; Wang, 1970; and Schwartz, Sparkman, & Deese, 1970).

The study by Schwartz and others is of particular importance to the issue of readability. Though all the studies cited present evidence that comprehensibility is a function of syntactic simplicity, all required that subjects receive messages aurally and not via reading. Schwartz and others, however, compare their index for comprehensibility, which is based on syntax, to the Flesch Count Index, which is based on mere sentence length, or number of words. The correlation was low, not surprisingly, because mere length does not guarantee complexity. For example, subjects in the Schwartz study judged the sentences of James Gould Cozzens, who is known for his tangled syntax, to be difficult to comprehend; on the other hand, Cozzens' sentences got an acceptable Flesch Count because they are short.

To sum up, counting the number of words or syllables in sentences is less valid a method for determining ease in comprehension than is analyzing the syntax. Only in the past decade have efforts been made to apply syntactic research findings to readability formulas (Botel &

Granowsky, 1972; Botel, et al., 1973; Dawkins, 1975). Formulas that predate those nearly all rely on some form of quantification (Klare, 1963). Yet outdated counting procedures, chiefly those of Flesch and Gunning (1952), continue to be preferred at many American newspapers for deriving readable copy.

Furthermore, Schwartz and others demonstrate that judgments about comprehensibility are made by receivers prior to and independent of actual message interpretation, an hypothesis formulated by Deese (1969). Ironically, that hypothesis has been articulated in laymen's terms throughout the introductory chapter herein as justification for avoiding the semicolon--on the grounds that readers will flinch upon seeing the mark. More importantly, however, that finding has implications for writing as well as for speaking. First, initial judgments may change following message interpretation. Second, independent judgments about ease in comprehension may not be the sole criterion for receivers' judging the worth of a message.

To sum up the readability issue, research findings suggest the following conclusions: (1) readers or listeners may make judgments about a message's potential to be comprehended easily prior to and independent of actual interpretation; (2) speed in reading, a dimension of readability introduced by Flesch, is conceptually distinct from actual interpretation (also suggested by Deese), and (3) comprehension ease is correlated more highly with syntactic ease than with mere quantity of symbols.

The above conclusions can then be applied to the problem of whether or not compound sentences with semicolons should be abolished. First, reader antipathy at the sight of semicolons may indeed trigger the

initial judgment that the writing will be difficult to comprehend. However, the negative initial judgment may ameliorate if (1) actual interpretation proves to be easier than first thought and (2) if something else the reader values is satisfied (e.g., objective treatment of news). Compound sentences are not necessarily complex; indeed, they can be fashioned into the simplest of syntax. Aiming at ease in comprehension, then, does not preclude the use of compound sentences in writing.

But what of ease in comprehension? Is it, or should it be, the sole measure of stylistic worth? Though the sum total of the findings on comprehension suggests that simple syntax results in easy comprehension, the subject was not a closed book, as later research on syntax and memory was to show.

Syntax and memory: Research that deals with the influence of syntax on memory falls into two categories: short-term and long-term memory. Studies have shown that since analyzing syntax is crucial in decoding, subjects tend to remember the verbatim syntactic structure of sentences for the short term. But for the long term, word-for-word constructions are forgotten, and only the deep structure, or kernel, is remembered (Sachs, 1967; Mehler, 1963; Jarvella, 1970; and Bregman & Strasberg, 1968).

Only recently have researchers taken a new approach to the syntax/memory effect by manipulating surface structure within similar semantic content to compare the effectiveness of various constructions on memory. Though verbatim surface structure is, again, lost in the long-term store, the comparative studies showed that surface structure does affect long-term memory of content.

Since earlier research showed that hierarchy, or the level of constituents, impinged on comprehension, Kintsch and Keenan (1973) tested hierarchical variance at the sentence level and found that hierarchical relationships among constituents were a powerful determinant of recall. That is, certain constructions in certain locations underscore the importance of elements within a sentence. If the surface structure "matched" the thematic importance, subjects were more likely to recall important content (Kintsch, 1974; R. E. Johnson, 1970; Meyer, 1975).

Some more explanation of this "matching" may clarify the point. When semantic representations are held constant across various types of constructions, some constructions better convey the relationships and order of importance of the underlying representations. A simplistic example involves placing an identification of an agent (in the sentence below) in the appositive form:

The man, brother of the newspaper editor, bit the dog.

Another way to state the information, one that uses fewer constituents per sentence, would be as follows:

The man bit the dog. The man is the brother of the newspaper editor.

Placing the identification next to the agent, as in the first example, is a better way to insure that the reader or listener will remember the man's relationship to the newspaper editor than is separating the identification and making it another sentence. The two separate sentences may get a better rating for sheer ease and speed in comprehension, but the one longer sentence may better aid long-term memory of grammatical and conceptual relationships.

An analogy may clarify the implications of the effects of hierarchical organization in sentence structure on memory. When a researcher elects to derive nominal-level measures in a study that could yield ordinal-level data, information is lost. Whereas ordinal-level data specify that one datum is greater or lesser than another datum, nominal-level data simply categorize. The former data characterize relationships among numbers in much the same way that certain grammatical constructions convey relationships among constituents. When these structural connectors are removed and the information is reduced into a series of simpler, but disjointed, constructions, information may be lost. For example, in reducing compound sentences with semicolons to separate sentences with periods, the information that may be lost is that of coordination, a relationship of equality between the independent clauses.

To return now to structure's effects on memory, Thorndyke (1975, 1977) has demonstrated that structure as an independent variable seems to affect long-term memory of content in longer passages as well. For experimental messages that are lengthy narratives, Thorndyke's major finding is that the presence of constructions that serve solely to outline relationships of content sections influences not only which parts of a narrative are more likely to be retained, but also how much of the content will be retained. Thorndyke is introduced here to emphasize that as an independent variable, structure at all levels--sentence, paragraph, and entire passage--affects receivers' retention of verbal information.

Directions for Research

The hierarchy studies' implications for newswriting warrant some explanation beyond the obvious. By forcing content into a structure described as an inverted pyramid, journalists force content into a hierarchy that assigns relative importance to various elements, depending on location in the story. If the work of the nation's foremost psycholinguists is indeed valid, perhaps the working man who hates the media for not telling all sides of a story (Novak, 1974) has a case. Rather than readers' selective perception being the sole reason for charging the media with bias, it could very well be that the hierarchical presentation of news causes readers to remember only those statements of fact that appear higher up in a story. Newspaper readers, however, could hardly be aware of the subtle effects of hierarchical organization of content on memory of information. It may be a case of readers' knowing intuitively that all is not objectively stated in the newspapers.

Readers' possible uneasiness aside, there is the more likely possibility that readers do detect the in-story emphasis given to certain aspects or sides. The constant exposure to the inverted pyramid may have elevated it in readers' perceptions to the level of an overt index (Tannenbaum, 1955). Indeed, other indexes of emphasis in newspaper style (page number, story location on page, headline size, length of story, and accompanying illustrations and sidebar stories) are readily recognized as such. The host of studies conducted under the aegis of agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1967) are based on the hypothesis that positive correlations exist between the emphasis given to issues in the news and rank-ordering of issues' importance by readers.

Whether one argues against using hierarchical organization in news on the grounds that it affects retention of information (of which readers may be unaware) or on the grounds that it affects perceptions of importance (of which readers may be aware), neither approach is sufficient justification for altering newspaper style in favor of a more coordinated organization. The matter of reader preference still remains. And in nearly all readability studies that ask subjects to cite preferences for writing style, simpler, less complex writing always wins (Klare, 1963). The explanation for reader preference for simplicity probably lies in the ample evidence from both lines of investigation--syntactic and readability studies--that ease in comprehension, or understanding of content as measured by immediate recall, is positively and highly correlated with simple syntax. Said correlation and reader preference data are the heart and soul of the Goliath of simplicity in mass messages. But readability studies have compared reader preference for a writing style with only two dependent variables: (1) ease in comprehension, or understandability, and (2) human interest (Klare). The latter is what communication scholars call salience (Carter, 1965).

Where newswriting style is concerned, objective treatment of content should be tested as a correlate to reader preference, if for no other reason than news consumers castigate the media for not being objective. However, a non-judgmental news style has as little worth in and of itself as does a readable style. The twin concerns of the press in a democratic, free-enterprise setting--producing an information product that is judged by readers to be non-persuasive and producing a

product that is readable and therefore saleable--must be weighed against each other to derive reader preference criteria.

Two question marks then beg to be recognized in a discussion of achieving an objective product via writing structure: One, is the structural organization of news stories affecting readers' perceptions of objectivity? Two, can a structural alternative be devised that is perceived as more objective?

Addressing the first question involves summarizing the potential effects of the inverted pyramid model of news story organization. As a hierarchy, the structure itself may affect which parts of the content are remembered by readers, as syntactic studies have shown. In a story where two or more sides of an issue are covered, readers may remember only the side emphasized by its placement higher up in the story and forget that other side(s) were even included. Furthermore, the prevalent hierarchical organization may act as an index whereby readers--aware or unaware--detect that one side of an issue is deemed more important by the writer. Whatever the reason, the inverted pyramid model may affect reader perceptions of objective treatment.

The second question can be addressed only by re-introducing to the discussion the sentence structure whose function in theory is to balance and coordinate equal elements--the compound sentence using a semicolon between independent clauses. Currently a taboo in newswriting, such a sentence structure could serve as a framework in which to organize content. By introducing opposing sides of an issue in a news lead that aligns all sides in a coordinated sentence structure, the writer could then elaborate throughout (again, using the coordinated structure) to produce a story whose organization is better described as rectangular

than inverted pyramidal. The independent clauses bounded by the semicolon can be just as simple and just as readable as those ended by a period. The sole problem, then, is the possibility that the mere punctuation mark is a cue for complexity that will cause readers to judge the construction as less readable and less preferable.

Therefore, to designate structural organization as the only independent variable acting on reader perceptions of the three dependent variables--objectivity, readability, and preference for a newswriting style--would be to ignore the potential effects of a punctuation mark that many writers, at least, say incurs reader antipathy. The abundant commentary on the negative associations surrounding the semicolon compels the researcher to treat it separately. Because one of its functions--to imply equality between independent clauses--has remained the same for three centuries, it is likely that readers will judge it on its face value where objectivity is concerned and perceive writing with semicolons between clauses to be objective. Yet the complexity the semicolon suggests via mere sentence length (i.e., the sheer number of verbal symbols between periods) will doubtless cause readers to judge writing with semicolons as less readable and less preferable.

Hypotheses

Based on the conclusions from research and commentary on objectivity, readability, and preference for writing style, the following hypotheses were formulated for subsequent testing:

Hypothesis 1: When content is held constant in two print news stories, the story whose organizational structure is non-hierarchical (coordinated) will be perceived as more

objective by readers than will the story whose structure is hierarchical (inverted pyramid).

Hypothesis 2: When content is held constant in two print news stories, the story whose organizational structure is non-hierarchical (coordinated) will be perceived as less readable by readers than will the story whose organizational structure is hierarchical (inverted pyramidal).

Hypothesis 3: When content is held constant in two print news stories, the story whose organizational structure is non-hierarchical (coordinated) will be perceived as less preferable by readers than will the story whose organizational structure is hierarchical (inverted pyramidal).

Hypothesis 4: When content and non-hierarchical structure (coordinated) are identical in two print news stories, the story that uses semicolons between independent clauses (where grammatically appropriate) will be perceived as more objective by readers than will the story that uses periods in place of the semicolons.

Hypothesis 5: When content and non-hierarchical structure (coordinated) are identical in two print news stories, the story that uses semicolons between independent clauses (where grammatically appropriate) will be perceived as less readable by readers than will the story that uses periods in place of the semicolons.

Hypothesis 6: When content and non-hierarchical structure (coordinated) are identical in two print news stories, the story that

uses semicolons between independent clauses (where grammatically appropriate) will be perceived as less preferable by readers than will the story that uses periods in place of the semicolons.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Methodological Procedure

The research design selected to test the hypotheses was an after-only laboratory experiment with two treatment groups and one control group. Experimental subjects were 109 students at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIU-C) enrolled in a section of Marketing Management in summer, 1982. The experiment was conducted during the last 20 minutes of one of the regularly scheduled 50-minute class meetings.

A female confederate gave a brief oral description of the experiment (see Appendix D). Rather than reveal the actual purpose of the research (to investigate syntactic variables), the oral description contained instead the stated purpose that word choice (semantic variables) in newswriting was under investigation.

After the oral explanation, three other confederates and the researcher acted as monitors to distribute the four pages of materials (stapled together), which included the following (see Appendices B and C): Page 1--news story (three different versions typeset in standard news columns), Page 2--instructions for marking evaluation of the story (similar to instructions used for semantic differential), Page 3--seven-step scales between pairs of bipolar opposite descriptions, Page 4--demographic categories and an open-ended question.

Pages 2, 3, and 4 were identical for all three groups. The news story on page 1 was identical in semantic content for all three groups, but the versions differed syntactically as follows: Version 1

(control)--traditional inverted pyramid organization of content,
Version 2 (experimental)--coordinated organization of content with
opposing arguments constructed in compound sentences with semicolons,
Version 3--same as Version 2 except that compound sentences were broken
into separate simple sentences by removing the semicolon and substituting periods at the end of the first independent clause of a pair of
opposing arguments and capitalizing initial letters of the second
independent clause of a pair of opposing arguments.

Page 1 contained no numbers or numerals that might have been
scrutinized by subjects. So that the researcher could easily distinguish among versions without alerting subjects to differences in the stories, the following scheme was employed: At the top of Page 1 for all three groups the words "The following news story is fictional" appeared. Differences in punctuation after the word fictional matched version numbers as follows: Version 1--period (one mark), Version 2--dash (two marks), Version 3--ellipsis (three marks).

The four-page packets of materials were arranged sequentially (Versions 1, 2, 3; 1, 2, 3. . .) in order to ensure unobtrusive randomization of subjects into three groups via distribution of the packets by the four monitors.

After reading the news story, subjects turned the page to read the instructions for marking the scales, then turned to the next page to mark the scales, and last turned to the page with demographic categories and the open-ended question. Upon finishing, subjects raised their hands for a monitor to collect the papers. The entire data-gathering process took 20 minutes.

Rationale for Methodology

Design: An experimental design was chosen for its ability to test the cause-and-effect relationship hypothesized (i.e., that the independent variables of (1) overall organization and (2) punctuation affect the dependent variables of (1) perceptions of objectivity, (2) perceptions of readability, (3) preference for written matter, and (4) perceptions of similarity of experimental writing to the real-life model. An after-only laboratory experiment was chosen.

Though laboratory experiments are not generalizable because of their lack of external validity, a controlled field experiment employing naturalistic reading conditions and offering opportunities for exposure to treatments and measures devoid of force was impossible to design and execute. Placing experimental messages in actual newspapers would not only be difficult, but would also undermine the control of the researcher over possible intervening variables--newspaper reputation and conditions under which reading occurred being the most serious two. The laboratory experiment, on the other hand, provides control over such threats to internal validity as history and maturation.

Last, the after-only design avoids potential pre-test effects that can occur when measures are taken prior to administration of treatments. Following is a notational view of the research design.

Notation

After-only laboratory experiment

Legend

P=undergraduate students at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

P1=undergraduate students enrolled in Marketing Management during summer 1982, n=109

Pl_{a-c}=randomized samples of P1 based on treatments received; n_a=38, n_b=35, n_c=36

T0=news story with traditional inverted pyramid organization of content

T1_a=same as T1 but with coordinated organization of content using compound sentences with semicolons

T1_b=same as T2_a but with compound sentences broken into separate simple sentences with periods

fx=forced exposure

M1_{a-i}=subjects' perceptions of story's objectivity, via 7-step interval-level scale between bipolar opposites

M2_{a-j}=subjects' perceptions of story's readability, via 7-step interval-level scale between bipolar opposites

M3=subjects' preference rating for the story, via 7-step interval-level scale between bipolar opposites

M4=subjects' perceptions of story's similarity to actual newswriting, via 7-step interval-level scale between bipolar opposites

M5_{a-d}=subjects' demographic characteristics, via nominal categories

M6=subjects' additional reactions to story, via open-ended question

t₁=time before experiment

t₂=time treatments administered, about 10 minutes

t₃=time measures taken, about 10 minutes

	t ₁	t ₂	t ₃
Pl _a	--	T0 (fx)	M1-6
Pl _b	--	T1 _a (fx)	M1-6
Pl _c	--	T1 _b (fx)	M1-6

Subjects. Given that the laboratory experiment lacks generalizability, it then remained to obtain subjects who could be readily assembled for the forced exposure to treatments and measures that the design permits. Relying on students enrolled in a college course (as this one did) has advantages beyond the obvious one of logistical ease: (2) They are presumed to be literate, which was requisite for participating in this study. (3) They are oftentimes assembled in courses with enrollments large enough to ensure sub-groups of at least 30 members, thereby approximating unit normal distribution according to the law of large numbers (Champion, 1970). (4) They exhibit a commonality in certain interests that allows a researcher to fashion treatments (in this case, messages) that are salient to the subjects.

Treatments. The three versions of the news story were designed to alter two variables: overall organization and punctuation.

Version 1 (see Appendix B) uses the inverted pyramid model of overall organization. The arguments presented first in the fictitious conflict follow the tenets of journalistic newsworthiness; that is, a rally, though a staged event, is nonetheless a definable event fraught with timeliness, formality, and purpose. Regardless of media critics' denunciations of the press's proclivity to play up pseudo-events (Boorstin, 1962), the practice continues. Therefore, the first message is in keeping with the press's event-orientation and justifiably places statements made at the rally first in the story. Likewise, those statements made at the impromptu, unstructured, post-rally discussion get second billing.

Version 2's semantic content is identical to Version 1's except for the lead. However, Version 2's overall organization is altered so that information about the opposing groups and statements made at the rally and post-rally discussion are rearranged. Opposing but related content is juxtaposed throughout in compound sentences with semicolons between independent clauses. The sole exception to the semicolon use in juxtaposition is in opposing direct quotations. To separate quotes with semicolons would violate the rules of standard written English, which are not called into question in this study.

Version 3 is identical to Version 2 except that semicolons are replaced with periods throughout the story and initial letters are capitalized to begin a new sentence for the second independent clause of a pair.

The three versions therefore control the intervening variable of semantics, differences in which could confound the study.

Two reasons underpin the selection of the story topic, which is the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. First, because SIU-C students have a long-standing reputation for indulging in alcohol, the topic was likely to generate reader interest, thereby increasing the level of subjects' participation and, further, approximating the "human interest" correlate to preference for writing style that readability researchers have located. Second, because salience (i.e., psychological closeness) of an issue can act as an intervening variable in perceptions of messages (Carter, 1965), the topic was selected as the one having the highest salience for the most students.

The topic was then fashioned into pro and con arguments in order to achieve a level of controversy that (1) is typical of actual newspaper practice in emphasizing conflict and (2) affords the conflict on which objective handling could be called into question.

One final hurdle remained. To devise pro and con arguments about alcohol per se would have necessitated additional controls on the possible intervening variable of selective perception. As Kocher (1979) found, belief-discrepant content can distort subjects' perceptions of message accuracy and reporter bias. Assuming that most SIU-C students do drink alcoholic beverages, including an anti-alcohol argument (i.e., one discrepant with subjects' beliefs) might affect subjects' perceptions of the story's accuracy, which is of course one dimension of objectivity--at least in news practitioners' viewpoint.

The options for controlling belief-discrepancies would have been (1) to increase the number of sub-groups in order to include three more versions of the story, thereby measuring potential primacy-recency effects in ordering pro and con arguments and (2) to include measures in the study aimed at determining subjects' predispositions on the topic, pro or con. The former option would have reduced sub-group size; the latter might have confused subjects on the purpose of the research, thereby confounding findings. Therefore, the arguments chosen were on-campus versus off-campus sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages. That proponents of both sides presented in the story drink alcoholic beverages was deemed the most effective way to avoid the intervention of subjects' predispositions while maintaining the necessary conflict level.

Though the event in the story is fictitious, specifics surrounding it are either factual (as in place names) or plausible (as in possible repercussions cited by antagonists). Using an actual event as the topic of the story would not only have precluded the aforementioned controls, it would also have demanded additional accuracy checks and also might have affected subjects' prior knowledge and subsequent attitudes about the event.

Names of people in the story are fictitious as well. Because uncommon names carry a distinctiveness with which various associations may be made, names selected were among the most common Anglo-Saxon surnames and Christian names in order to avoid associations (e.g., John Smith, Susan Davis).

The story was typeset to give the appearance of a newspaper clipping. No headline was added, nor was a by-line, newspaper nameplate, photos, or any other verbal or visual symbols that might activate associations--negative or positive--subjects might have held about content related to a newspaper clipping.

Subjects were told that the purpose of the exercise was to gauge their views on word choice, thereby disguising the true intent to measure the effects of syntax. If certain words were indeed perceived as biased and therefore affected perceptions of objectivity, the effect should have occurred in all three groups because wording was identical for all three.

Subjects were of course cognizant of their participation in research; but to minimize Hawthorne effects, they were not told that the story had three versions, two of which were experimental. Last, because subjects sitting within reading range of each other were in different treatment

groups, the page with the news story was made to appear identical for all three groups. The punctuation scheme after the word fictional (described in preceding section on Methodological Procedure) was devised for the researcher's convenience, of course, but was deemed the least detectable distinguishing marks possible.

Measuring instrument: In order to derive interval-level data, a scale was used that measures degree of perception; namely, seven steps between pairs of descriptions that are opposites in meaning. The 21 pairs selected appeared on Page 3 of the experimental packets. (The rationale for descriptions selected follows in the next section.) Each subject rated each pair by marking the step that best indicated the subject's perception of how well the description characterized the news story just read. Utilizing the guidelines for the semantic differential scale (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957), the researcher alternated ameliorative and pejorative descriptions so that neither left-hand nor right-hand column represented all-good or all-bad terms. Further, descriptions that pertained to objectivity, readability, preference, and similarity to newswriting were likewise alternated so that subjects could not easily detect the constructs being operationalized.

Page 4 of the experimental packets called for the following demographic data: (1) gender (male or female), (2) class standing (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate, other), (3) grade point average (0-1., 1.-2., 2.-3., 3.-4.), (4) major subject.

The last item on Page 4 was the question: "What in particular did you like or dislike about the story?" The open-ended question was included to see whether the subjects' comments focused on the topic or on stylistic matters. To the latter end, it was hoped that those

subjects who did comment on style would reveal why they liked (or disliked) certain stylistics and, more obviously, to see whether any subjects noticed the coordinated organization in Versions 2 and 3.

Developing measures: As was pointed out in Chapter Two, "nowhere is the ideal of journalistic objectivity written in stone." Further, though the dimensions of readability have been scrutinized by researchers, neither has that construct enjoyed empirical validation, as was pointed out in Chapter Two's discussion of the disparate independent variables in readability research (quantification versus syntactic analysis) as well as the confusion in dependent variables (speed in reading versus ease in reading versus long-term understandability). Most important, because the measures in the study tap subjects' perceptions of objectivity and readability, it seemed wise to probe what existing perceptions SIU-C students might hold on those two constructs. The procedure described forthwith was undertaken to develop measures with at least face validity for operationalizing those two constructs. Preference, too, was put through the procedure.

In October, 1981, 25 SIU-C students enrolled in advertising copy-writing were asked to write down all the words they thought defined objectivity, readability, and preference. Despite the fact that the advertising students had had exposure to the ideal of journalistic objectivity in their prerequisite courses, they were chosen because they do not hold allegiance to the ideal as do news-editorial majors. Therefore, accepting the advertising majors' awareness of but non-allegiance to the term objectivity was preferred to choosing subjects either ignorant of it or loyal to it. Results are as follows, with the number of people who named each term in parentheses.

<u>OBJECTIVITY</u>		<u>READABILITY</u>		<u>PREFERENCE</u>	
unbiased	(17)	legible	(16)	choice	(13)
fair	(13)	understandable	(12)	like	(8)
balanced	(6)	sentences		prefer	(4)
neutral	(4)	correct	(8)	rather	(3)
open-minded	(3)	well-organized	(7)	selective	(3)
honest	(3)	clear	(7)	taste	(3)
unopinionated	(3)	comprehensible	(5)	want	(3)
factual	(3)	thoughtful	(5)	favored	(3)
third-person		interesting	(4)	interesting	(3)
narration	(3)	easy to read	(4)		
straight-		quickly read	(3)		
forward	(3)	easy vocabulary	(2)		
truthful	(2)	simple	(2)		
two-sided	(2)	coherent	(3)		
just	(2)				
impersonal	(2)				
logical	(2)				
unemotional	(2)				
credible	(2)				
clear	(2)				

The following semester (in February, 1982), the terms above were rated by a separate group of advertising students (N=36). Because this second group was also enrolled in the advertising copywriting courses, there were no repeat subjects (i.e., none had to repeat the course the following semester). The only omissions from the above lists were the terms legibility and interesting under readability--the former because it describes graphic readability and not comprehension, the latter because it was dealt with as a separate variable, preference. However, it is worth noting that the subjects gave a high rating to interesting as a dimension of readability, as readability researchers say it is.

The second group of subjects then rated the terms on a scale of one to ten (ten being best) for how well each term described the concept heading under which it appeared (see Appendix A). No revelations whatsoever were made to the subjects in either group about the purpose of the procedure. After subjects finished, however, the researcher

explained that such an exercise is typical of the ones used by advertising researchers in measuring product or company image.

It was decided that the measuring instrument would include those terms that earned a mean score of 5 or better on subjects' rating.

Results follow:

<u>OBJECTIVITY</u>		<u>READABILITY</u>		<u>PREFERENCE</u>	
unbiased	7.75	understandable	7.4	choice	7.3
fair	6	sentences		like	6
balanced	6.5	correct	5.7	prefer	8
neutral	6.5	well-organized	6.1	rather	5.6
open-minded	6.25	clear	6.85	selective	5.7
honest	5.8	comprehensible	7.5	taste	5
unopinionated	6.6	thoughtful	4	want	5.5
factual	5.5	easy to read	6.5	favorable	6.9
third-person		concise	6.5	interesting	4.25
narration	4	quickly read	5.3		
straight-		easy vocabulary	5.4		
forward	4.3	simple	5.1		
truthful	5.25	coherent	6.7		
two-sided	4.6				
just	4.4				
impersonal	4				
logical	4.4				
unemotional	4.25				
credible	5.8				
clear	4.4				

Again, those terms that earned a mean score of at least 5.0 were included on the final instrument, with several adjustments. Under the heading objectivity, factual and unopinionated were collapsed into one pair in order to make opinionated the opposite of factual. Also under objectivity, the term neutral was changed to derive the pair of opposites slanted/not slanted in order to avoid potential confusion with the middle step on the scale, which characterizes neutrality in subjects' ratings. Another alteration in the objectivity list was the term credible, a word readily associated with objectivity by any mass communication student, but probably not as widely understood as the word

believable, which was substituted. Last in the objectivity list, the terms balanced/unbalanced were included on the final instrument despite the potential for confusion with the neutral step in the middle of the scale. The term is the essence of journalistic objectivity.

As for readability terms, the only alteration was to collapse understandable and comprehensible to derive the pair of opposites understandable/incomprehensible.

The various terms in the preference category posed severe problems in selecting bipolar opposites devoid of additional meanings (e.g., the term choice, when converted to its modifier, yields choosy, hardly a viable word to include as a measure of whether subjects liked the story). A sole pair was selected to measure preference: liked the story/disliked the story.

Last on the instrument was the pair similar to most newspaper stories/unlike most newspaper stories in order to determine whether subjects noticed the radical organization of the two coordinated versions.

To sum up, the constructs objectivity and readability were operationally defined as follows: The mean score of the scores on the nine objectivity descriptions is the measure of objectivity. Likewise, the mean score of the scores on the ten readability descriptions is the measure of readability.

Pre-test: In April, 1982, the completed materials (see appendix) were put to a practice run. Subjects were 103 students enrolled in the Principles of Advertising course at SIU-C. Because that course was required of all students majoring in either advertising or news-editorial (the two sequences in the School of Journalism) and because at

least half the students were majoring outside the School of Journalism, it was deemed the best forum for testing the understandability of the news story, the instructions, and the measures. And of course the enrollment approximated that desired for the actual experiment, thereby permitting a realistic forum for practicing logistics.

Though the results of the pre-test were not analyzed statistically, it was apparent that no subject had difficulty completing the task as explained by a confederate and in the written instructions. However, two news-editorial majors were adamant in pointing out in writing that the pair truthful/untruthful was not pertinent to a fictional story. Nonetheless, truthfulness of the story was dutifully marked by all 101 other subjects, as were the pairs factual/opinionated, honest/dishonest, and believable/unbelievable. The terms were not removed on the final instrument. Indeed, differences between groups on those measures would be highly noteworthy as an indicator of the role of syntax in shaping perceptions, fictional content notwithstanding.

The pre-test procedure took 20 minutes. Because it was conducted at the beginning of the 50-minute class meeting, ample time remained to discuss with subjects the purposes of the research and the understandability of the materials. No other changes were recommended; none were made.

Controlling pre-test effects: Because the possibility loomed that some of the subjects in the pre-test might appear in the actual experiment, the researcher enlisted the aid of a loyal student who had been enrolled in Principles of Advertising and who also planned to take the Marketing Management course summer session. The confederate, who knows

most of the students in all her classes, spent the first week of summer session unobtrusively searching for students who would be repeats in the experiment. She located one, who was removed from participation but who also agreed to serve as a confederate. The two repeats-turned-confederates were unsure about two others, but had been instructed not to approach any student unless both of them were sure the questionable students were repeats, too. Rather than alert the questionable repeats to the ensuing experiment and thereby risk their telling other students in the Marketing class about the purpose of the research, the two students in question were not approached by the two confederates. As a result, the possibility still exists that two subjects in the pre-test were also subjects in the actual experiment.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Findings

The seven-step scale on the measuring instrument was not intended to assign "dimensions within an hypothesized semantic space," as is the function of the semantic differential scale on which the instrument was modeled (Darnell, 1970). Rather, the steps were meant to allow subjects to indicate the degree of their opinions between two extremes, negative and positive. Therefore, instead of assigning the steps numerical values on a continuum of minus 3 to plus 3 (as does the semantic differential), the values one to seven were assigned--one being most negative, seven being most positive. In this way, the zero representing no value on the middle step was avoided. Group means were then computed for each measure, as Tables 1, 2, and 3 (on pages 53-55) detail.

Though the open-ended comments proved to be a rich source for speculation about reasons for responses, no attempt was made to code the comments into categories beyond the simple breakdown that follows: (1) comments about the issue or topic, (2) comments about the writing style, (3) comments about both the issue and the style, (4) other comments, which included those remarks not pertinent to either the issue or the style and suggestions for improving the story that focused on content omitted. Further scrutiny of the open-ended responses would have been justified had hypotheses been generated about their outcomes or had it been within the scope of the study to achieve reliability in categorization of open-ended responses. Disclaimers aside, frequencies for each

category for each story version treatment group were as follows in Table 4 (on page 55).

TABLE 1
GROUP MEANS FOR PERCEIVED READABILITY
BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Perception Measure	Group					
	Inverted Pyramid		Semicolon		No semicolon	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Reading ease	5.3	1.5	4.3	1.9	4.5	1.9
Organization	4.3	1.7	3.7	1.5	4.0	1.4
Simplicity	4.6	1.7	4.0	1.6	4.3	1.6
Conciseness	3.6	1.6	3.6	1.5	3.5	1.9
Vocabulary ease	5.2	1.6	5.1	1.5	5.6	1.3
Reading speed	4.4	1.9	4.1	1.6	3.7	1.8
Clarity	4.6	1.8	4.1	1.5	4.8	1.7
Coherence	4.7	1.8	4.1	1.2	4.7	1.5
Sentence correctness	4.2	1.5	4.6	1.3	4.6	1.3
Understandability	5.2	1.8	4.8	1.5	4.9	1.4
Cumulative	4.7	1.1	4.2	.98	4.4	1.0

TABLE 2
GROUP MEANS FOR PERCEIVED OBJECTIVITY
BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Perception Measure	Group					
	Inverted Pyramid		Semicolon		No semicolon	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Truthfulness	4.4	1.3	4.5	1.2	4.7	.98
Factuality	4.0	1.5	3.4	1.6	3.9	1.7
Slantedness	4.5	1.4	4.0	1.4	4.6	1.3
Fairness	4.8	1.3	4.7	.97	5.0	1.2
Non-bias	4.1	1.3	4.2	1.5	4.1	1.3
Balance	4.5	1.4	4.0	1.5	4.1	1.5
Open-mindedness	4.9	1.7	5.0	1.4	4.9	1.0
Honesty	4.6	1.3	4.5	1.1	4.8	1.2
Believability	5.1	1.7	4.6	1.2	5.3	1.3
Cumulative	4.6	.65	4.4	.84	4.6	.79

TABLE 3
GROUP MEANS FOR PREFERENCE AND PERCEPTION
OF SIMILARITY TO NEWSWRITING
BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Perception Measure	Group					
	Inverted Pyramid n=38		Semicolon n=35		No semicolon n=36	
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.
Liked the story	4.2	1.72	3.9	1.2	3.8	1.5
Perception of similarity to newswriting	4.2	1.8	3.8	1.45	4.3	1.7

TABLE 4
FREQUENCIES OF OPEN-ENDED CATEGORIES

	Issue	Style	Both	Other
Inverted pyramid	10	10	2	5
Semicolon	6	12	1	6
No semicolon	6	7	1	12

A report of findings on hypothesis-testing, followed by an interpretation of those findings, is now in order. To test the hypothesized effects on perceptions of readability and objectivity, the ten measures of perceived readability and the nine measures of perceived objectivity were combined to derive two cumulative indices, respectively. The data

were then tested using one-way analysis of variance from Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), subprogram ONEWAY (Nie, et al., 1975), with the cumulative indices of readability and objectivity and the sole measure of preference as dependent variables and the three story version treatment groups (inverted pyramid, semicolon, no-semicolon) as independent variables. Though no hypothesis were devised predicting outcomes on perceived similarity to newspaper writing, it was also tested. The level of significance was established at the .05 level. Both the Least Significant Difference test and the Scheffé multiple comparison test were used to find significant differences between pairs of groups. The former is the most powerful among the SPSS ONEWAY tests; the latter is the most conservative. Tables 5, 6, and 7 report the findings on the three dependent measures of readability, objectivity, and preference.

TABLE 5

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: CUMULATIVE PERCEIVED
READABILITY SCORES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	F-prob.
Between groups	4.4689	2	2.2344	1.996	.1411
Within groups	115.3241	103	1.1197		
Total	119.7929	105			

Bartlett-Box F: P=.648

TABLE 6

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: CUMULATIVE PERCEIVED
OBJECTIVITY SCORES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	F-prob.
Between groups	1.4598	2	.7299	1.25	.2909
Within groups	57.7901	99	.5837		
Total	59.2499	101			

Bartlett-Box F: $P=.336$

TABLE 7

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: PREFERENCE
SCORES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	F-prob.
Between groups	6.0786	2	3.0393	1.494	.2293
Within groups	211.5845	104	2.0345		
Total	217.6631	106			

Bartlett-Box F: $P=.178$

Though there were no significant differences between groups on perceptions of cumulative objectivity or on preference, a significant difference did appear on perceived cumulative readability, the semicolon version being judged less readable than the inverted pyramid version but not less readable than the no-semicolon version.

Additional analysis was then conducted to determine whether significant differences had occurred on any of the separate ten measures of

readability and the nine of objectivity. After all, the hypotheses and research design had merely assumed face validity of those separate measures as locators of the overarching constructs. Further, the lack of sufficient homogeneity of variance within groups, using Bartlett-Box F (from SPSS), suggested that some aspect of the methodology--be it treatments, subjects, or measures--was causing scores to vary widely. Again, the Least Significant Difference and Scheffé procedures were used to look for significant differences between groups. The same .05 level was applied.

Significant differences were found on four separate measures: reading ease, simplicity, coherence, and believability. Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11 (on pages 59 and 60) report the analysis on those four measures.

On the readability measure of reading ease, the inverted pyramid version was significantly different from both the semicolon and the no-semicolon versions. That is, both the coordinated versions were judged less easy-to-read than was the inverted pyramid version. On the two readability measures of simplicity and coherence, the inverted pyramid version was significantly different from only the semicolon version. That is, the semicolon version was judged less simple and less coherent than was the inverted pyramid version, but not than the no-semicolon version. On the sole objectivity measure with a significant difference, believability, both the inverted pyramid version and the no-semicolon version were significantly different from the semicolon version. That is, the semicolon version was judged less believable than were the inverted pyramid and no-semicolon versions. Table 12 (on page 61) provides a summary of the above.

TABLE 8

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: PERCEIVED READING
EASE SCORES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	F-prob.
Between groups	27.0059	2	13.5030	4.697	.0111
Within groups	304.7363	106	2.8749		
Total	331.7419	108			

Bartlett-Box F: P=.059

TABLE 9

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: PERCEIVED
SIMPLICITY SCORES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	F-prob.
Between groups	10.0386	2	5.0193	2.054	.1333
Within groups	259.0067	106	2.4435		
Total	269.0452	108			

Bartlett-Box F: P=.903

TABLE 10

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: PERCEIVED
COHERENCE SCORES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	F-prob.
Between groups	9.2792	2	4.6396	2.300	.1053
Within groups	213.8581	106	2.0175		
Total	223.1373	108			

Bartlett-Box F: $P=.178$

TABLE 11

ONE-WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE: PERCEIVED
RELIABILITY SCORES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F-ratio	F-prob.
Between groups	9.7886	2	4.8943	2.808	.0648
Within groups	184.7615	106	1.7430		
Total	194.5501	108			

Bartlett-Box F: $P=.385$

TABLE 12

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT GROUP DIFFERENCES ON
PERCEPTION MEASURES BY STORY VERSION TREATMENT GROUPS

Perception Measure	Group Mean	S.D.	Group	Significantly Different Group
Reading ease	5.3	1.5	Inverted pyramid	**Semicolon
	4.3	1.9	Semicolon	*No semicolon
	4.5	1.9	No semicolon	
Simplicity	4.6	1.7	Inverted pyramid	*Semicolon
	4.0	1.6	Semicolon	
	4.3	1.6	No semicolon	
Coherence	4.7	1.8	Inverted pyramid	*Semicolon
	4.1	1.2	Semicolon	
	4.7	1.5	No semicolon	
Believability	5.1	1.7	Inverted pyramid	*Semicolon
	4.6	1.2	Semicolon	
	5.3	1.3	No semicolon	*Semicolon
Cumulative readability	4.7	1.1	Inverted pyramid	*Semicolon
	4.2	.98	Semicolon	
	4.4	1.0	No semicolon	

*According to Test of Least Significant Difference at .05 level

**According to Scheffé's Test and Test of Least Significant Difference at .05 level

Interpretation

Turning now to the six hypotheses on pp. 34-36 of Chapter Two, one can readily see that all decisions about their acceptance or rejection must be tentative indeed. To reject H1 (that coordinated organization is more objective than inverted pyramid organization) because there were no significant differences between groups on the cumulative index of

objectivity would be in error given the lack of homogeneity of variance and the lack of validation of the index's nine separate measures. Yet the significant difference on the objectivity measure of believability (that is, the semicolon version was judged less believable than both the no-semicolon and inverted pyramid versions) leads one to lean in the direction of rejecting that hypothesis. Conversely, accepting the hypothesis is out of the question.

There was some evidence for accepting H2 (that coordinated organization is less readable than inverted pyramid organization). But the significant difference on the cumulative index of the ten readability measures occurred between the semicolon version and the inverted pyramid version only. Validity problems notwithstanding, both the coordinated versions (semicolon and no-semicolon) must be significantly different before the hypothesis can be accepted. Such a pairing did occur on one readability measure--reading ease. Both coordinated versions were judged less easy-to-read than was the inverted pyramid version. Though both significant differences named (on cumulative readability and reading ease) tilt the scales in favor of acceptance of H2, the evidence is insufficient. Conversely, rejecting H2 is out of the question.

The third hypothesis (that coordinated versions will be judged less preferable to the inverted pyramid version) can be dealt with more boldly. There were no significant differences between groups based on the sole measure of preference. Subjects seemed to like or dislike the story for its content rather than for its stylistics or ethics. One may assume, then, that salience of the topic was stable across groups and was not altered by structural variations in writing. The rejection of

H3, however, is tentative in light of the recurring and troublesome variance problems within groups.

There was no evidence to support H4 (that perceptions of objectivity will be greater in the semicolon version than in the no-semicolon version). The function of the mark to balance equal elements was not manifest in subjects' perceptions of objectivity. Indeed, the findings on the believability measure suggest that the opposite effect may occur, with the no-semicolon and inverted pyramid versions judged more believable than the semicolon version. Therefore, H4 cannot be accepted. Conversely, to reject H4 would be to ignore the variance problems repeated throughout this discussion.

The fifth hypothesis predicted a less readable judgment by subjects for the semicolon version than for the no-semicolon version. It cannot be accepted. No significant difference whatsoever occurred between the two coordinated versions on any readability measure, cumulative or separate. A tentative rejection of H5 is therefore proffered, along with the repeated caution that validity of measures is not guaranteed and variances in scores within groups was too wide to be emphatic in rejecting H5.

The last hypothesis (that the semicolon version will be less preferable than the no-semicolon version) can be addressed in the same terms as its companion H3. No significant difference between groups on the preference measure calls for H6's rejection on the grounds that salience of a topic to its readers may supersede perceptions of readability and objectivity. That rejection likewise holds the potential for error, given the unacceptable homogeneity of variance in scores within groups.

To sum up, all decisions on the six hypotheses as they were stated remain tentative. The disclaimers, born of the methods of statistical inference used, must be duly considered to prevent possible errors in interpretation.

Correlations

But to go beyond the analysis required to test the six hypotheses, the following report on additional testing may help to shed light on what was happening among variables. When Pearson correlation coefficients were computed across all three groups on the ten and nine scales of readability and objectivity, respectively, the following resulted: Readability: coefficients ranged from $r=.0616$ to $r=.6997$ with only two of the 45 coefficients not significant at the .05 level. Objectivity: coefficients ranged from $r=.0155$ to $r=.5696$ with nine of the 35 coefficients not significant at the .05 level.

The findings above are certainly not offered as evidence of construct validity, nor should they be construed as proof of a treatment effect. They were, however, encouraging enough to justify proceeding to additional correlations between those measures that were significantly different between groups by analysis of variance: ease of reading, simplicity, coherence, and cumulative readability compared to believability. Pearson correlation coefficients and levels of significance across groups and within groups are in Table 13.

For the semicolon and no-semicolon groups, associations between those readability measures and believability are not even significant (except for cumulative readability as a predictor of believability in the no-semicolon group). That is, the relationships are not only woefully low, but may also be due to chance.

TABLE 13
PEARSON CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS OF
BELIEVABILITY BY READABILITY MEASURES

Group	Readability Measures	Believability
All Three	reading ease	$r=.2949, P=.002$
	simplicity	$r=.1989, P=.038$
	coherence	$r=.3949, P=.000$
	cumulative readability	$r=.4488, P=.000$
Inverted pyramid	reading ease	$r=.5730, P=.000$
	simplicity	$r=.3476, P=.032$
	coherence	$r=.5435, P=.000$
	cumulative readability	$r=.5827, P=.000$
Semicolon	reading ease	$r=.1780, P=.306$
	simplicity	$r=.1100, P=.529$
	coherence	$r=.3093, P=.071$
	cumulative readability	$r=.2557, P=.144$
No-semicolon	reading ease	$r=.1237, P=.472$
	simplicity	$r=.0273, P=.874$
	coherence	$r=.1749, P=.307$
	cumulative readability	$r=.3694, P=.032$

But for the inverted pyramid group, Pearson r 's are significant, though not shown to be linear by further testing. To single out cumulative readability as a predictor of believability in the inverted pyramid group (and assuming linearity), one sees that 34 percent of the variation in believability may have been accounted for by cumulative readability ($r=.5827$, $r^2=.340$). It is beyond the present purpose to take on an explanation of the remaining 66 percent not accounted for. Rather, the task at hand is to explain why readability and believability may have moved together in some way for the inverted pyramid version group at the same time that significant differences between groups pivoted on the semicolon.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Failure to find significant differences on certain measures seems at first glance to contradict the significant differences that were found. The following discussion aims to explain why the seeming contradictions occurred.

Readability

That no significant differences occurred between groups on the organization scale (well-organized/poorly organized) suggests that subjects did not notice the unusual overall organization of the coordinated versions. Further, failure to indicate differences in perceived similarity to most newspaper writing may be evidence that overall organization goes unnoticed. It is of course possible that adherence to various newswriting stylistics in all three story versions--summary lead, tie-back paragraph, sources, and source-identification--may have coaxed subjects to judge even the coordinated versions as similar to what appears in most newspapers. This is not to say that overall organization may have no effects. The research cited in Chapter Two shows that effects of overall organization are measurable when memory of content is the dependent variable. Such was not within the scope of this study. And to stray a bit from the data, the failure of college students to attend to overall organization comes as no surprise to anyone who has ever taught a writing course.

But what of semicolon effects? Is the semicolon noticed? Apparently. Except for the reading ease scale, only the semicolon

version group was significantly different on cumulative readability, simplicity, and coherence. Furthermore, individual subjects in both coordinated version groups remarked in the open-ended responses that they had difficulty keeping up with sources' group affiliations, TAP or DOC. Yet that confusion about group identification did not carry over to subjects' scores. It seems the semicolon alone caused scores on simplicity and coherence to be lower than scores in the identical version with no semicolons. In short, the semicolon may indeed be a cue for complexity.

That no significant difference occurred on the reading speed and understandability scores may be viewed as some evidence (albeit a shred) that those two dimensions may be unrelated. Though the Pearson correlation coefficient for understandability by reading speed was $r=.2444$, $P=.011$ across groups, the coefficients for separate groups were insignificant and remarkably low, as follows: inverted pyramid $r=.2961$, $P=.071$; semicolon $r=.1902$, $P=.281$; no-semicolon $r=.1893$, $P=.269$. Therefore, Flesch's introduction of speed as a dimension of readability may have little to do with actual comprehensibility, or understanding.

Objectivity and Credibility

The lack of significant differences between groups on the cumulative and separate measures of objectivity (save believability) is most troublesome. To dismiss the matter quickly by disclaiming measures as invalid or treatments as ill-designed is too easy.

News practitioners view the two concepts of objectivity and credibility as separate, assigning objectivity the role of keeping the news product from appearing to be persuasive and of restricting the news

product to its proper information niche (Boyer, 1981). News consumers, however, may have a different idea. Subjects in the development-of-measures phase of this study named credibility (or believability as some called it) as a dimension of objectivity. To conceptualize the two as separate leads one to what may be a faulty assumption: one predicts the other. To think of the two as dimensions of each other calls forth the possibility that both objectivity and credibility are dependent on or predictive of other phenomena. What is crucial is whose viewpoint is incorporated into research--news practitioners or news consumers.

Indeed, both concepts may simply be constructs, ideas accepted by mass communication researchers on referral from practitioners in the media. Novak's working man aside, perhaps journalistic objectivity is grossly misunderstood by news audiences, maybe a function of practitioners' own confusion about what this thing called objectivity is supposed to be and do, as Boyer found. And as Schudson alludes, the pursuit of objectivity seems to be more for the benefit of practitioners than for news audiences, a "strategic ritual" Tuchman calls it, by which news-writers cope with forces working against objectivity.

Credibility, too, is a research artifact that may be misapplied, as Shaw (1976) demonstrated when various dimensions of credibility of different media were compared. In commenting on Shaw's research, Schramm (1977) concedes that "credibility may merely mean popularity." Of course both scholars were discussing the popularity of different media as sources. The very term popular, though, may hold the explanation for the difficulty in differentiating objectivity and credibility. Messages and media may not be evaluated as objective or credible at all, but merely as popular. Or is it people reflected in messages and media

who are popular or unpopular? To suggest, then, that a writing style's popularity pivots on the popularity of the writer reflected in the style puts a discussion of credibility where it more properly belongs--the source.

Readability and Popularity--The Interaction

Readability, unlike objectivity and credibility, is usually treated in mass communication research as an independent variable. Psycholinguists, on the other hand, have a different idea. They measure readability as a dependent variable; specifically, the function of syntactic and semantic variation. The semicolon study also assigned readability to dependent status, as a function of variations in overall structure and in punctuation. Though the evidence is insufficient for making conclusive interpretations, this much can be said. The semicolon seems to cause readers to make some negative judgments about the readability of writing in which it appears. Perhaps the mark is a cue for complexity. Or perhaps the semicolon is hated and feared, as Shuttleworth said. But a punctuation mark hardly merits anyone's hatred.

Other research leads one to the conclusion that what may be unpopular is the user of semicolons and not simply the punctuation mark. Greenberg and Razinsky (1966) found that objective errors (grammar, spelling, and punctuation) in a message may reduce the credibility of a message because its writer is judged incompetent. Singletary and Carragee (1980) found similar results for subjective errors (logic, omissions, and word choice). The underlying assumption in both studies is that writing errors cast aspersions on the writer, whose message is subsequently judged less credible.

Of course the compound sentence with semicolons is not an error. The point to emphasize is that the semicolon is only one aspect of writing style, which in turn may be an indicator of the writer, whom readers then evaluate.

One study that deals directly with writing style as a predictor of credibility must be cited before going further. Burgoon and others (1981) found that ease of reading, lexical diversity, and story length are related to readers' evaluations of competence and trustworthiness of a newspaper. Though lexical diversity and story length were controlled in the semicolon study, reading ease was measured--but as a perception of readers. Burgoon and others chose Flesch's formula to judge reading ease themselves, an approach that precludes tapping readers' affective reactions. Further, the Burgoon study used actual newspapers for analysis. Readers may have already formed opinions of those newspapers coincidental to the papers' readability. The semicolon study, however, avoided mention of a specific newspaper and a specific writer on which judgments of credibility could be made. Or did it?

Another study gets closer to what may be the link. Ruffner and Burgoon (1981) delved into the relationship between writing style and writer personality. Using the thirteen dimensions of personality in the Omnibus Personality Inventory to categorize subjects, Ruffner and Burgoon content-analyzed subjects' writing on seven stylistic features, one of which was reading ease as determined by Gunning's formula (which relies, as does Flesch's, on quantification of verbal symbols). Two findings from that study are congruous with what anyone literate has long suspected: "People who used longer sentences were more theoretical and had higher ratings of intellectual dispositions." (p. 32) "People

with a theoretical orientation and high intellectual disposition tend to produce messages that are less easy to read." (p. 34) That compound sentences with semicolons are technically longer misses the point. That compound sentences with semicolons were judged to be less simple, less coherent, and less believable than their simple-sentence identical twins in the no-semicolon version focuses attention on stylistic cues. What does the semicolon, then have to do with writer personality? Maybe naught.

Maybe, though, subjects in the semicolon version group viewed the unknown writer as having "a theoretical orientation and a high intellectual disposition." As such, the semicolon may be a cue for more than complexity, but for a type of writer as well. If writers imagine audiences, as Pool and Shulman (1959) demonstrated, surely audiences can imagine writers. In short, stylistic cues may cause readers to imagine writers, the associations and images of whom then spread to areas beyond readability.

The correlations in the inverted pyramid group between readability and believability therefore do not contradict the significant differences based solely on the semicolon, but rather complement them. Subjects in both coordinated version groups confessed confusion about source affiliations within the story, TAP or DOC. Subjects were perhaps searching for source clues on which to base believability judgments. The semicolon may simply have provided enough additional clues about the primary source, the writer, to have generated significant differences in that coordinated version group. Was it a theoretical intellectual the readers imagined upon seeing semicolons? Without an inkling of data on which to base his speculation, Trimble (1975) said the semicolon may

suffer "guilt by association" with scholarly writing styles. He is probably right. But it is not writing style per se that is popular or unpopular, but the person reflected in the style. The ultimate decision readers may make in evaluating communication is whether sources of a message are popular. For subjects in this study, at least, maybe the user of a semicolon is too unlike them.

Conclusions

The study produced evidence too scant and too potentially flawed to recommend application of its findings to newswriting practice. What can be recommended is further research.

The major obstacle in any research with syntactic variations as independent variable is to control semantics, as the body of syntactic research in psycholinguistics has shown. Content must be identical for all experimental groups in order to detect structural effects. The story versions in this study did that. But in so doing, a precious bit of reality was lost. A hierarchical organization, like the inverted pyramid, provides emphasis for certain aspects of content by meeting two structural criteria: space and time. That is, not only is the order of arguments a manifestation of emphasis (time at which an argument is mentioned), but also the amount of space devoted to the arguments. Aspects to be emphasized in a hierarchy appear higher up (earlier in time) and are granted more space.

To achieve the space criterion of emphasis, the inverted pyramid version herein would have had additional content that could not have been juxtaposed with counterparts in the coordinated versions. To incorporate the leftover content into the coordinated versions would be

to make all three versions unbalanced on the space criterion in favor of one argument over the other. To eliminate the inverted pyramid's leftover content would be to produce non-identical content in the coordinated versions, thereby sacrificing semantic control.

As the story versions were designed, then, all three were balanced on the space criterion, with the time criterion operationalized as entire first argument first/entire second argument second versus coordination of parts of both arguments. The impasse in operationalizing true emphasis could even explain the failure to find differences between groups on the measures of objectivity.

But in practice, emphasis is achieved in newspapers daily, even if unintentionally. The dangers of continued reliance on the hierarchical, inverted pyramid model are worth summarizing at this point, the semi-colon data utterly notwithstanding. When one side of an issue is deemed more newsworthy and therefore is developed first and at greater length in a news story, two outcomes may occur. One is overt, that readers duly note organizational emphasis and its lack of balance. The second is covert, that readers may not remember those sides developed later and at shorter length, as psycholinguistic studies have already shown. Neither possible outcome argues for hierarchical organization.

Another danger in postponing development of supposedly less newsworthy sides is more obvious. Readers may not read an entire story--even if they want to. For it is most often the latter paragraphs of a news story that are eliminated when newshole space does not permit inclusion of an entire story and when deadlines force hasty editing. That practice alone surely reduces the justification for continued hierarchical development of opposing sides of an issue in newswriting.

The information needs of a democratic society are not served by such a barrier to balanced treatment, not to overlook the credibility ratings of newspapers either.

When an entire story is squeezed into the newshole, it is wishful thinking to assume all readers will finish reading it. And remedying the problem by eliminating advertising to expand the newshole is unthinkable. Alternatives to newswriting's hierarchical organization, then, are the more practical solution.

The non-hierarchical alternative suggested herein, a coordinated model that juxtaposes opposing but related arguments, needs further examination before it is dismissed as unviable. Open-ended remarks by subjects in this study pointed out two flaws in both coordinated versions that can be corrected. Identifications of sources within the story were not repeated after a source was initially named. Subjects were confused about a source's group affiliation, TAP or DOC, in subsequent source references. Also, there were no introductory sentences at places where related arguments changed topic. Subjects were confused about the direction of the story at such admittedly abrupt turns. Both are content variables, true, and both resulted from the effort to make content identical in all three story versions.

Neither sin of omission in the coordinated versions, however, explains the lower scores the semicolon alone generated. Based on this study, should the compound sentence with semicolons remain a taboo in newswriting? No. Chapter I included a caution about abolishing that construction on the grounds the punctuation mark may produce negative affective reactions. The semicolon's cognitive effects were not measured--but should be. Where memory of the relationships between

clauses is a dependent measure, future research may reveal that the compound sentence with semicolon is an effective tool for communicating equality between arguments.

Providing those answers, however, is justified only so long as press practitioners provide the motivation for such research by their continued insistence on attaining a balanced news product in the guise of that term objectivity. Future explorations on objectivity face a host of preliminaries: (1) determining the dimensions of objectivity held by news audiences; (2) assessing the value, or lack thereof, attached to it by news audiences; and (3) anticipating its relationship to other things. For one, objectivity and credibility may be too closely related to ferret out precise differences via measurement of perceptions. What readers learn, what they remember, may be a more worthy measure of the effects of messages with varying spatial and temporal emphasis.

Conversely, readability should perhaps be subjected to additional affective dependent measurement in future research. No existing readability formula could have accounted for the semicolon's apparent power to shape perception in realms beyond readability. Indeed, other stylistic vagaries may at this very moment be coaxing readers to conjure up negative or positive associations about sources, named or unnamed, within or without the content. Besides punctuation, the variance may reside in mood, voice, tense, person, case, gender, or number. Writing grammatically, then, may not be as sure a path to the goals of readability or credibility as is writing in a grammatically popular style.

Maybe grammatical popularity can win readers; maybe it can enhance believability; maybe it cannot lead a writer to the grail of objectivity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT FOR RATING DESCRIPTIONS OF CONSTRUCTS

Below are several words that describe the concepts objectivity, readability, and preference. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 is best), please rate each word for how well you think it describes the concept to which it applies.

OBJECTIVITY

unbiased _____
fair _____
balanced _____
neutral _____
straight-forward _____
third-person narration _____
factual _____
unopinionated _____
honest _____
open-minded _____
clear _____
credible _____
truthful _____
two-sided _____
unemotional _____
logical _____
just _____
impersonal _____

READABILITY

understandable _____
coherent _____
simple _____
sentence correctness _____
well-organized _____
easy vocabulary _____
clear _____
quickly read _____
comprehensible _____
concise _____
easy to read _____
thoughtful _____

PREFERENCE

choice _____
like _____
prefer _____
rather _____
selective _____
taste _____
want _____
favored _____
interesting _____

APPENDIX B

THREE VERSIONS OF NEWS STORY TREATMENT

The following news story is fictional.

Members of a student organization calling itself Twenty-first Amendment Proponents (TAP) spoke last night at a rally they sponsored in front of the Student Center to muster support for the Student Senate's recent proposal to allow the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages on-campus.

TAP takes its name from the U.S. Constitution's Twenty-first Amendment, which was adopted in 1933 to repeal prohibition of alcohol.

The Senate's proposal, passed Monday, requests the university administration to permit Student Center sales of alcoholic beverages and to allow consumption of alcohol in university housing. An administration spokesman, who asked not to be identified, said Tuesday that the proposal is being considered but that no decision will be made until opinion on the issue has been determined.

TAP President John Smith, senior in psychology, pointed out a contradiction between the university's other offerings and its refusal to permit liquor on-campus.

"We want pool tables, we get them," said Smith. "We want snack bars, we get them. Why does the administration work so hard to supply us with things to keep us on-campus, but then deny us the one thing that is sure to keep us off-campus?"

"Students age 21 or over have the legal right to drink alcohol," said Smith. "And we do drink. To force us off-campus for alcohol is hypocritical."

Joe Jones, senior in English who sponsored the Senate proposal, said that his bill could prevent Carbondale citizens from complaining about rowdiness on The Strip, the section of Illinois Avenue dominated by drinking establishments.

"Those bars simply supply brew to meet student demand," said Jones. "If townspeople don't like that, they should join us in asking the administration to allow liquor on-campus."

TAP Secretary Susan Davis, junior in economics, said it was "folly" for the administration to pass up the chance to profit from sales of alcoholic beverages.

"I'm tired of hearing about cutbacks due to tight money," said Davis. "The university could rake in thousands of dollars by selling beer along with sandwiches." She also said that the university would do a much better job of keeping under-age students from drinking.

Following the rally, about 150 students of the 300 who had attended remained to discuss the issue informally. Present were several members of Drinkers Off-Campus (DOC), whose members drink alcoholic beverages but prefer to keep the campus dry.

"The legislature, which decides how much tax money the university gets, may frown on SIU's inconsistency in failing to restrict behavior that is restricted by society outside the university," said DOC Information Officer Bob Johnson, graduate student in educational administration. He added that some parents may view an on-campus drinking policy as a sign that SIU is not

serious about academics and that they may send their college-age children elsewhere to study.

"The university could have a blackened image if it appears to condone student drinking," said Johnson. According to Johnson, such a policy is inconsistent with society's expectations about higher education.

DOC President Bill Lee, senior in marketing, said that allowing alcohol on-campus may simply shift the tension about drinking from "townspeople-versus-students" to students-versus-students."

"I drink," said Lee, "but in places designated for it and not where my rowdiness will disturb others who may be sleeping, studying or just plain enjoying sober company. When I do study, I want peace and quiet."

Responding to the argument that the university would profit from alcohol sales, junior in management Cindy Brown said that it was just as bad for townspeople to lose money.

"I can't see townspeople promoting the death of healthy businesses," said Brown, DOC treasurer. "The city benefits from those watering holes' property tax, not to mention the individual owners who would be out of business."

According to Brown, private businesses have a greater incentive to enforce the 21-year-old legal age for drinking alcohol.

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE

WHEN YOU FINISH READING

The following news story is fictional--

Members of two student organizations expressed opinions last night in front of the Student Center on the Student Senate's recent proposal to allow the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages on-campus.

The Senate's proposal, passed Monday, requests the university administration to permit Student Center sales of alcoholic beverages and to allow consumption of alcohol in university housing. An administration spokesman, who asked not to be identified, said Tuesday that the proposal is being considered but that no decision will be made until opinion on the issue has been determined.

Twenty-first Amendment Proponents (TAP) favor the Senate's action; Drinkers Off-Campus (DOC) oppose the measure. TAP takes its name from the U.S. Constitution's Twenty-first Amendment, which was adopted in 1933 to repeal prohibition of alcohol; DOC members drink alcoholic beverages but prefer to keep the campus dry.

TAP arguments were presented at a TAP-sponsored rally to muster support for the Senate's proposal; DOC views were expressed in an informal discussion after the rally had ended.

About 300 people attended the rally; about 150 stayed for the post-rally discussion.

TAP President John Smith, senior in psychology, said the university is inconsistent in its present policies; DOC Information Officer Bob Johnson, graduate student in educational administration, said on-campus alcohol is inconsistent with society's expectations about higher education.

Smith pointed out a contradiction between the university's other offerings and its refusal to permit liquor on-campus.

"We want pool tables, we get them," said Smith. "We want snack bars, we get them. Why does the administration work so hard to supply us with things to keep us on-campus, but then deny us the one thing that is sure to keep us off-campus?"

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PLEASE TURN THE PAGE

WHEN YOU FINISH READING

APPENDIX C

MEASURING INSTRUMENT AND INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARKING EVALUATION

On the next page are pairs of descriptions that are opposites in meaning. Between each pair are seven blanks. For example:

good bad

For EACH pair of descriptions, please indicate how well you think the words describe the fictional news story you just read by marking the appropriate blank. Any writing implement will do for making marks.

For example, if you thought the story was very bad, mark this way:

good X bad

If you thought the story was somewhat good, mark this way:

good X bad

If you thought the story was neither good nor bad, mark the center line:

good X bad

Please make only ONE mark for each pair of descriptions. Also, make sure your mark is CENTERED on the line you choose.

THIS: good X bad

NOT THIS: good X bad

Remember, only ONE mark for each pair, but please mark every pair.

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE

truthful	_____	untruthful
difficult to read	_____	easy to read
factual	_____	opinionated
poorly organized	_____	well-organized
liked the story	_____	disliked the story
slanted	_____	not slanted
simple	_____	complex
unfair	_____	fair
concise	_____	wordy
biased	_____	unbiased
easy vocabulary	_____	difficult vocabulary
unbalanced	_____	balanced
read it slowly	_____	read it quickly
open-minded	_____	closed-minded
unclear	_____	clear
honest	_____	dishonest
incoherent	_____	coherent
sentences correct	_____	sentences incorrect
unbelievable	_____	believable
understandable	_____	incomprehensible
unlike most newspaper stories	_____	similar to most newspaper stories

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE

Please check the blank beside the item that applies to you.

male _____
female _____

gpa 0-1. _____
gpa 1.-2. _____
gpa 2.-3. _____
gpa 3.-4. _____

freshman _____
sophomore _____
junior _____
senior _____
graduate _____
other _____

Your major subject is _____.

In your own words, what in particular do you like or dislike about the news story you read?

THANK YOU. WHEN FINISHED, PLEASE RAISE YOUR HAND.

APPENDIX D

ORAL INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this research is to determine opinions of word use in news stories. The aim is to gain insight into how newswriting can be improved.

You will be given a news story to read about drinking on- and off-campus. Both the quotes and people named in the story are FICTIONAL. But the story itself is written in news style.

When you get the papers, please check to see if you have all four pages (hold it up to show them): page one--fictional news story, page two--instructions, pages three and four--evaluation form. After you read the story, turn the page (hold it up to show them) and read the instructions for marking the evaluation form. Any writing implement will do for marking--pen or pencil, any color.

Please do NOT put your name anywhere on the papers. Your responses will be completely anonymous. The entire process takes about 20 minutes. You are of course under no obligation to participate, but your participation will be greatly appreciated. If you want to know the results of the study, please contact the Mass Communication Research Center in the School of Journalism after August 1.

When you finish reading and marking the evaluation, please raise your hand and a monitor will pick up your papers.

Any questions?

Thank you.

VITA

Florence Clark Riffe was born in Clarksdale, Mississippi on April 19, 1949. She graduated from Clarksdale (Mississippi) High School in June 1967 and entered the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa in September 1967. She graduated from that university in August 1971 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism.

For the next three years she was employed in Montgomery, Alabama, first in the Office of the Governor and later at Leavell, Wise and Ticheli Advertising Agency.

In 1976 she was a copy writer in the Information Office of Radford (Virginia) University, where she also received a Master of Arts degree in English in December 1977.

She entered the doctoral program in communications at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in January 1978. She received the Ph.D. degree in August 1982.

After leaving The University of Tennessee, Riffe assumed a position as visiting lecturer in journalism at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, where she became assistant professor and acting head of the advertising sequence in August, 1982.