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**A STUDY OF THE PRESENCE OF BIAS
IN REPORTING ON THE SOCIALLY
SENSITIVE ISSUE OF ABORTION**

by
Benjamin E. Martin

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division
of Rowan University
1997

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 6-11-97

ABSTRACT

Benjamin E. Martin

A STUDY OF THE PRESENCE OF BIAS IN REPORTING ON THE SOCIALLY SENSITIVE ISSUE OF ABORTION

1997

Anthony J. Fulginiti, M.A., APR, Fellow PRSA

Public Relations

In a content analysis of news articles and a survey of newspaper editors, this study determined if bias in print media can be detected through the content of news writing.

For the content analysis, news articles dealing with abortion were taken from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. The articles, which appeared between Oct. 5 and Nov. 5, 1996, are straight news stories and do not include editorial or opinion articles. Coders were given a series of ten questions to answer for each article. For the survey, editors in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania were surveyed about attitudes toward media bias.

It was concluded that educated readers of news articles about socially sensitive issues may not detect bias in an article as a whole. Rather, the readers can detect bias through an analysis of specific aspects of the article (ie. language, word use, attribution). It was also concluded that a large percentage of newspaper editors believed that their readership believed the editor's publication was biased. On the other hand, these editors felt their publications were objective in their reporting and that other publications did not exhibit bias.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Benjamin E. Martin

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1997

Anthony J. Fulginiti, M.A., APR, Fellow PRSA

Public Relations

In a content analysis and survey of newspaper editors, this study determined if bias in print media can be detected through the content of news writing.

It was concluded that educated readers of news articles may not detect bias in an article as a whole. In addition, newspaper editors felt their readers believe bias exists in their newspapers, while they felt their publications were objective and other publications did not show bias.

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Chapter 1
Importance of the Problem
Background

Print media bias is not a new phenomenon. Joseph C. Goulden, director of media analysis for Accuracy in Media (AIM) explains that reporters continually utter the refrain, "I might have my own opinions, but they do not affect what I report." He claims that this is completely opposite of what is evident in society. Goulden feels that few reporters can sit at a typewriter or stand behind a microphone and put their prejudices aside.¹ Journalism prides itself on its objectivity. But the printed matter released to the public may never be close to that notion.

One of the most prevalent sources of print media bias comes from the annual political races on a local, state and national level. Richard Harwood, the former assistant managing editor and ombudsman for the *Washington Post*, relates the fact that in his nearly half century in the newspapers, he has never known a political writer to be indifferent to the outcome of a political race.²

1. Goulden, J.C. (23 November 1996). In their own words: journalists and bias [On-line], ex.

Available: www.aim.org

2. Harwood, R. (8 March 1996). Daily op-ed column, *Washington Post*.

A May 1996 survey by the Times Mirror Center for the People & the Press, asked 248 members of the national media questions concerning their political lean. The survey showed that 20 percent of those surveyed classified themselves as liberal. A 1992 poll conducted by the Freedom Forum surveyed 1,400 journalists concerning their political party preference. The survey reported that 44 percent considered themselves Democrats, 16 percent Republican and 34 percent Independent.³ From these statistics, it is clear that the media identify themselves with a political preference. Are members of the media attempting to interject their feelings through their writing? Are reporters interjecting their political biases intentionally? Or do they interject partisan opinions to be fair to a situation?

Bias, a highly personal and unreasoned distortion of judgment, may enter into print journalism when reporter's personal opinions can be easily extrapolated from their writings. As asserted, many political-based stories need to be closely scrutinized to determine the purity of the information. Conversely, many political stories may need partisan information to accurately and fairly portray a specific message. If a story deals with a speech made at a Democratic event, it may be necessary for the reporter to speak to several Republicans to give equal time and opportunity.

The *New York Times*, often considered the prime newspaper of record, is considered liberal. From its reporting and writing style to format and distribution, the newspaper presents an outright liberal attitude. In the 1996 presidential election, the paper endorsed a candidate. Also, the *Washington*

3. Communications Institute, Rowan University (1996, November). The media and politics.

Post has made it quite clear that it takes the liberal point of view. In terms of the 1996 election, the *Post* endorsed President Bill Clinton. It is this constant political partiality which tarnishes our view of the print media, when editorial opinion leaks through to the news.

Richard Harwood wrote in a March 8, 1996 *Washington Post* op-ed column, "American journalists—probably a majority—try with varying degrees of success to keep their partisan allegiances out of their work. But the journalist without those allegiances is rare indeed." Harwood supports the idea that reporters may carry preconceived notions of how they personally feel about a specific issue.⁴ As Harwood suggests, reporters do their best to make their stories as pure and unbiased as possible. But as research shows (and this study will show) bias is often present in varying degrees. Second, according to Michael Parenti of *The Humanist* magazine, reporters are the gatekeepers of information.⁵ Studies show that reporters are agenda setters for the information dissemination. Many times, reporters indicate to publics what they should listen to and believe, rather than letting them make up their own minds.

Third, many papers are owned by a conglomerate or even a specific individual. Often it is this individual or group who arise as the gatekeepers and agenda setters. These people indirectly affect the information one sees in the newspaper. Finally, readership and circulation often are indirect gatekeepers of information. Though a large percentage of the revenue comes from the sale of

4. Harwood, R. (8 March 1996). Daily op-ed column. *Washington Post*.

5. Parenti, M. (January-February 1995). The myth of a liberal media. *The Humanist*, 7-9.

advertising space, newspapers do not wish to offend subscribers. If subscribers are offended, circulation plummets and leads to a decline in attention to the specific publication as valid source of news. For example, in 1994, the *St. Petersburg Times* (Florida) printed material which was viewed by the local congregation of the Church of Scientology, as biased and unflattering toward their institution. The paper saw a loss of revenue, and consequently acknowledged its harsh treatment of the Church.⁶ Newspapers seek to publish information their readership and target publics are interested in. This may be morally wrong. But in today's society, money is a controlling factor.

Importance

With the ever increasing death rates of newspapers nationwide, as well as the right of readers to be informed in an impartial and objective way, it is essential to identify bias in print media. Many newspapers try to put forth a sincere effort at complete objectivity, even printing negative information to preserve credibility. According to Michael Parenti of *The Humanist*, this has been going on for years. He explains that papers felt it necessary to expose the unpleasantness of life in Nazi Germany to combat the image put forth by official comments made by Hitler and his government officers. Credibility is a direct correlation of the degree of bias.⁷

The communications field will receive the biggest payoff from this

6. Giobbe, D. (6 August 1994) War of the words continues. *Editor & Publisher*, 18.

7. Parenti, M. (January-February 1995). The myth of a liberal media. *The Humanist*, 9.

study. If definitive criteria are found, reporters who produce news stories for newspapers will be able to prevent bias from the initial creation of the material. Oftentimes, bias results from unjustified and skewed opinions from the source rather than the media. On the other hand, bias may come from the reporter, putting legal liability on the shoulders of the paper. Being able to prevent any liability, including slander and libel, would prove both legally and financially valuable to the practitioner and the company.

Validity

Many media experts feel that bias in the media is not a new phenomenon in the field of mass communication. Bob Woodward, best recognized for his breaking of the Watergate scandal along with Carl Bernstein, told a capacity crowd at the 1996 Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) National Convention, "The truth and unbiased opinion of many reporters is often hard to find...Average readers perceive they are reading pure, objective fact. This proves that the media are significant gatekeepers of information and that they can lead readers to believe what they (the media) want them to believe."⁸ Woodward's comments may disturb many communication professionals and public relations practitioners. According to Woodward's viewpoint, reporters need to curb bias from their writing.

In 1986, *Chief Executive* magazine surveyed 1,700 corporate CEOs concerning the media reporting of corporate business. The survey found that most executives think that news media do not report business news accurately

8. Bob Woodward. "Telling the Truth." Public Relations Society of America. 1996 National Convention, St. Louis, 12 March 1996.

or objectively. Eighty-six percent of those who responded, felt that the media have the power to shape public policy, while 90 percent felt that the media uses that power to advance a decidedly political bias.⁹ This staggering statistic, dealing with corporate America's view of the media, illustrates the biased perception of the educated reader.

According Parenti, he claims that in America there is no free and independent press. He asserts that the idea of a "free market of ideas" is mythical, and the pattern of print media ownership often affects how news and commentary are manufactured. Press disregard accounts and opinions of their sources when they reflect poorly on the desired finished product.¹⁰ Parenti is decidedly set on the idea that pure, objective and unbiased media do not exist in today's society.

Thomas Sowell, an economist and senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, told readers in a July 20, 1992 article that "what doesn't fit the ideological preconceptions of the media isn't news." Sowell, in an effort to illustrate his idea, cites a *Reader's Digest* study that showed 57% of Americans over the age of 24 were married couples.¹¹ This idea greatly contrasted to the media opinion of the time which saw the decline and disappearance of the family. According to Sowell, little was ever said in the media concerning a totally opposite opinion.

9. (Winter 1986). CEOs blast liberal bias in news media." *Chief Executive*, 46-48.

10. Parenti, M. (January-February 1995). The myth of a liberal media. *The Humanist*, 7-9.

11. Sowell, Thomas (20 July 1992). What's news? *Forbes*, 98-99.

Effect

The effect of print media bias on the practice of public relations varies from case to case. Depending on the practitioner's industry, the effect of print media bias can be as small as a proverbial "slap on the wrist" or as far as jail time for legal liability, slander or libel. The old adage that a reputation takes years to build and minutes to destroy is no more true than when journalists are jailed for transgressing the civil rights of this country's citizens.

H. Joachim Maitre, a writer for *Current*, wrote in a March-April 1994 article that "the personal views of a journalist tend to affect, to a large degree, his or her style of news reporting." He advances the idea that many writers and journalists are more likely to possess political views that tend to be liberal in nature.¹² Though this may be the case, it is mostly the exception instead of the norm. The *New York Times*, according to many, maintains heavy liberal attitudes.

Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon, co-authors of *Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media*, said in the book's introduction, "Popular legends assure us that the American press is committed, above all, to seeking and speaking the truth—no matter who might be offended." They make the point that the news media, though subject to fault in reporting, are free to be the neutral protectors of the general opinions of society.¹³

12. Maitre, H. Joachim. (March-April 1994). The tilt of the news: liberal bias in the media. *Current*, 4+.

13. Lee, M. and Solomon, N. *Unreliable Sources*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990.

The presence of print media bias is also responsible for some of the negative feelings public relations practitioners receive. Many outside the sphere of journalism and communications view the PR practitioner as the one person who seeks to make the bad seem good and the good seem better. The practitioner is also viewed as underhanded and elusive when dealing with scandal, sensitive topics and negative publicity. More often, those outside the sphere of public relations feel that many practitioners slight the public and tell everything less than full disclosure of the truth.

Problem Statement

What criteria for determine print media bias when journalists cover social issues which conflict with their political philosophy ?

For the purpose of this study, this researcher used previous criteria for determining print media bias. As an illustrator for determining bias, the author used the idea of a social issue. This concept involves the opinion on specific issues which do not exist calmly within the minds of a certain public. Social issues cause animosity, concern and controversy within specific public, laying the groundwork for public debate and opinion. Opinion leaders often determine if an issue becomes widespread and debated within society.

It is important that the concept of political philosophy be thoroughly understood. This concept will be further developed in this chapter. For clarity's sake, political philosophy deals with ideas of political thought, not the propagandist ideas of the established political parties.

Delimitations

For the purpose of this study, the primary delimitation (as determined by this researcher) is the fact that it will only include print media. In terms of

print media, this researcher will utilize newspapers as the aspect of the print media.

The newspapers used for this study are similar in nature. The two publications, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, often agree on many social issues. Both papers are also considered “papers of record” and a well respected on the national level. As mentioned in the Problem Statement section of this chapter, this researcher used a social issue, as reported by these two newspapers, to determine the presence of bias.

The social issue selected for this study is that of late-term abortion. Abortion, which was fully legalized by the *Roe vs. Wade* decision, involves the termination of a pregnancy anytime between initial gestation and birth. This issue involves the performance of surgical abortion within the final trimester (or last three months) of a pregnancy. Abortion advocates support the decisions of the woman in all aspects of the debate, but anti-abortionists feel late-term abortion reinforces their position. It is the belief of the anti-abortionists that life begins at conception, and an abortion at any stage is murder. An abortion within the final three months is the cessation of life, and may cause serious health consequences for the woman..

This issue came to the forefront of public opinion and public presence during the period between the 1996 presidential nomination conventions and the presidential election on November 5, 1996. This issue has brought various opinions from individuals within many arenas such as: political parties, ethnic groups, religious groups, activist groups and media operatives. A prolific and opinion-inducing issue will provide a good basis for study.

This researcher has not included other media channels differing from print media for a number of reasons. First, a study of journalistic media as a

whole would not be advantageous for the concept of this study. With respect to this study, electronic media (especially electronic journalism) is a totally different concept than the print concept being utilized. Electronic media utilizes audio and video technology, a significantly different channel of communication. The print media message is visual and can be reviewed at the reader's leisure. The electronic media message, though visual, is temporary and often highly perishable. These inconsistencies in commonality would void the efficacy of this study.

Purpose

This study is important because readers should know if they are getting the truth, rather than the writer's opinion or bogus fluff within a news story. Newspapers are one of the most common channels of information communication and their content should be as pure and unopinionated as possible.

This study extrapolates information which will prove useful to newspaper readerships and businessmen in deciding whether or not what they are reading or writing is skewed and biased. Valid criteria from this study can be used by individuals to screen writing, improve writing, or even be a useful tool for citing instances of bias.

Information gathered from this study will hopefully aid those in journalism, public relations and many of the communication arts in determining or preventing media bias. If newspapers try to prevent bias from entering their publication, their readership will give the conveyed message more credence.

The study demonstrates definitive criteria exist to determine the presence of bias in printed journalistic writing. The author will also draw conclusions concerning the criteria for media bias and their applicability to

the printed journalistic writing. The study will contribute to the general body of knowledge on bias in the media.

Procedure

Relevant literature on print media bias as related to this study was found in various locations. The original search criterion used was purposely limited to the topics of bias, media bias, news bias and journalistic bias. The CD-Rom database system in the Library at Rowan University was used to search for existing literature concerning these topics.

A search was conducted of the hard-bound volumes housed in the Library. A search using the phrase "bias" resulted in 70 sources, 11 of which were applicable to this study. When the phrase "media bias" was used, six sources were found. All six sources were applicable to this study. The search phrase of "news bias" resulted in three sources, two of these sources were applicable to this study. Finally, the search phrase of "journalistic bias" resulted in one source. That source was also applicable to this study.

A search was conducted of periodicals through the Library's Direct Random Access (DRA) search engine. A search utilizing the phrase "bias" resulted in over 2000 sources, a pool too large to successfully and adequately determine applicable sources. When the phrase "media bias" was used, 60 sources were found. Sixteen of these sources were applicable to this study. The search phrase "news bias" resulted in 47 sources, 16 of which were applicable to this study. A search using "journalistic bias" elicited seven sources, one of which applied to this study.

A search of the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) database was conducted to search for useful periodical and journal articles. The search phrase "bias" resulted in over 4,000 sources. This again was too

large to successfully and adequately extrapolate applicable sources. When the phrase "media bias" was used, nine sources resulted. Four of those sources were applicable to this study. The search phrase "news bias" resulted in four sources, one of which was applicable to this study. The phrase "journalistic bias" was altered to "journalists and bias" for the purpose of the ERIC search. The search resulted in 13 sources, four of which were applicable to this study.

Finally, a search of the Humanities Index (via the Wilson Disc CD-Rom search) resulted in a few usable sources. The search phrases of "bias" and "journalistic bias" resulted in either a too broad pool or no sources. When the "media bias" search phrase was used, nine sources were found. Three of these sources were applicable to this study. The search phrase "news bias" resulted in 15 sources, five of which can be applied to this study.

A review of this researcher's personal library of collegiate textbooks resulted in valuable information concerning this study. Consultations with this researcher's work supervisor and thesis advisor also presented valuable and applicable information.

Terminology

The following terms and their accompanying definitions will be used throughout this thesis report. Each use of these words or phrases should be interpreted using the definitions below:

Bias- a highly personal and unreasoned distortion of judgment

Fair- marked by impartiality and honesty: free from self-interest, prejudice and favoritism

Print media- channels of communications which include magazines, newspapers, academic and scholarly journals, and other journalistic, printed prose

Propaganda- ideas, facts or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause--a one-sided arguement.

News- a reporting of recent events usually for publication in newspapers or news periodicals

Journalism- the collection and editing of news for presentation through the media

Reporter- the paraprofessional or professional practitioner of journalism

Editor- the chief day-to day operator of a newspaper

Newspapers- the print media channel, usually released daily, which seeks to inform readers on news occurring in society

Chapter 2

Review of Related Studies and Literature

A computer search utilizing the electronic referencing system at the Library of Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ was conducted to determine previous studies and related literature concerning the topic of bias in the media. Key words and phrases including "bias," "media bias," "news bias," "journalistic bias" and "journalists and bias" were used to locate this related literature and applicable studies.

Searches were conducted in four general search categories available on the system. A search of the hardbound volumes located in the general holdings of the Library resulted in 20 applicable sources of information. A search of the Library's periodical holdings resulted in 33 applicable sources. A search of the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) database resulted in nine usable sources. Finally, a search of the Humanities Index database resulted in eight usable sources of information. Various pertinent studies and related literature arose out of this computerized search. A predominant number of these studies were found, as part of a collected volume, in two main publications. These studies were described and abstracted within these volumes, but full contexts of these studies were procured when available.

The first study was completed by S. Robert Lichter of George

Washington University and Stanley Rothman of Smith University in 1981.¹ The study entitled, "Media and Business Elites" examined the political attitudes and voting patterns of reporters. Lichter and Rothman conducted 240 interviews of reporters from various large-size newspapers. These reporters were considered by these two gentlemen to be members of the "media elite." The reporters interviewed included those from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the three major television networks (CBS,NBC,ABC). The study was conducted under the auspices of Columbia University's Research Institute on International Change, and the interviews were supervised by Response Analysis, a survey research organization.

The researchers were dismayed early in their study because members of the media were discounting the intent and need for the interviews. The reporters cited the fact that their personal opinions never enter their writing and news reporting as the cause for denying the efficacy of the study. After some revision of the study's intent and protocol the researchers began to see success. Conservatives, who believe that the media is inherently liberal, also began to use the lack of participation aspect of the study's early stages to strengthen their stand on the issues. This caused extensive resentment within the news media circle and participation further increased. This element of emotionally-driven attitudes has made this study one of the most cited media studies of the 1980s.

1. Lichter, S.R. and Rothman, S. (1986). *The media elite: America's new power brokers*. New York: Adler & Adler.

The study resulted in four key findings. First, through interviews it was determined that an average of 81 percent of those questioned voted for the Democratic presidential candidate in each election between 1964 and 1976. Second, 90 percent of those reporters questioned favored abortion and the woman's right to choose. Third, 80 percent of the subjects supported the mission and need for affirmative action. Finally, a large percentage of the reporters felt that it was actions by the United States which has caused Third World poverty.

Through the study, Lichter and Rothman concluded that many reporters have a generally liberal bias. They determined that the multi-election Democratic vote was consistent with the reporter's views on a wide range of social and political issues. On the issue of business and enterprise, 68 percent lauded the objectivity of private enterprise and 48 percent felt that the federal government should guarantee employment to those who desired a job. Forty-nine percent of the reporters felt that the "very structure of our society causes people to feel alienated," while 28 percent felt that the government needed to restructure its framework of basic rights and institutions.

Lichter and Rothman were amazed at the substantial percentage favoring the issue of abortion. According to their study, the reporters were close to unanimous opposition to government and traditional restrictions when dealing with sex and sex role issues. A startling 90 percent of those interviewed took the pro-choice stand and believed that it was the woman's choice to terminate the pregnancy.

This previous study applies to this research project in terms of both the presence of a liberal lean and the idea that reporters have a personal and certifiable stand on the issue of abortion. The entire study based itself on the

premise that the media has a political lean. The key findings of this study show that reporters, who ideally should be objective and fair, may have a predisposed notion of bias prior to writing a news story. The issues which these reporters were asked to give their opinions and partiality on, are issues of strong, societal controversy. They are social issues which provide large-scale and widespread debate on all levels of society. Also, this study scientifically measured the debate of abortion on those reporters surveyed. Here, it can be seen that there are strong viewpoints on the subject which may appear through the reporters' journalistic writings.

The second study was conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* in February 1995.² In the course of this multi-phase study entitled, "The Public, the Press, and the Liberal Agenda" the paper polled close to 3,000 members of the general public delineating them by whether or not they were college-educated individuals. Then, the *Times* asked the same sociopolitical questions to 2,703 reporters and editors from 621 newspapers. The media respondents were weighted depending on the circulation of the newspaper. That is, the larger the circulation, the larger the sample size from that paper. Five hundred eighty-seven newspapers of the papers consulted, included those opinions of the editor-in-chief.

Five key findings arose from this study, most of which held some surprising and startling statistics according to the *Times* researchers. The first key finding found that liberals drastically outnumber conservatives when it comes to reporters in the newsroom. Fifty-five percent of the reporters classified themselves as liberal while 17 percent said they were conservative,

2. "The Public, the Press, and the Liberal Agenda." *Los Angeles Times*, February 1985.

a three-to-one margin. The remainder of the respondents either refused to answer or considered themselves under neither choice.

The next key finding showed that the public is far less liberal than the newspaper reporters and editors. The study found that less than one fourth of the 3,000 citizens questioned classified themselves as liberal. Thirty-eight percent of the college-educated respondents considered themselves as liberal. Third, the newspaper reporters had a negative view of Reagan (a conservative) by a margin of two to one and voted for Walter Mondale in the 1984 presidential election.

Next, it was found that reporters and editors held outspoken views concerning foreign policy, including an 80 percent support for decreased defense spending and an 84 percent support for a nuclear freeze. Finally, it was determined that reporters and editors were predominantly liberal when dealing with social issues. In the genre of social issues, 82 percent favored the provision of abortion for women, while 81 percent supported affirmative action and 78 percent desired stricter gun control.

This bias study heavily roots itself in the basis of this research project in its maintenance of the notion of a liberal media. Much literature on the subject of media bias makes its claim that the media institutions in this country are inherently liberal. This study demonstrates that this notion is not only true, but also shows how the liberal tendency can enter into everyday journalism. The study shows that reporters may have a predisposed opinion on abortion prior to writing a story on the issue. The study also shows that, in addition to abortion, reporters may have preconceived views on a variety of highly controversial social issues.

The third study was conducted in 1988 by the Media Research Center.⁸ The study entitled, "Networks Choose Pro-Choice" dealt with the issue of abortion within the news media. During the last four months of 1988, the Media Research Center analyzed the abortion stories contained in four main network news shows. The shows analyzed were: *World News Tonight* (ABC), *CBS Evening News*, *PrimeNews* (CNN) and *NBC Nightly News*. The timing of this study was proper due to the fact that the latter portion of 1988 contained a presidential election and a Supreme Court challenge of the *Roe v. Wade* (the decision which legalized abortion).

The findings of this study concluded that "pro-choice" proponents had their ideas and issues mentioned 97 percent of the time. In addition, the phrase "anti-abortion" was used most often in these telecasts, leading with 87 mentions. The study also concluded that abortion discussions could be classified into three categories: judicial decisions, abortion demonstrations and medical developments concerning abortion. The telecasts highlighted numerous judicial decisions, but focused predominantly on federal abortion funding and *Roe vs. Wade*. The majority of abortion demonstrations discussed involved the abortion views of politicians or the actions of well-known activist groups like Planned Parenthood and Operation Rescue. Medical development stories dealt with the idea of aborting pregnancy to preserve the mother's life, the availability of abortion medications overseas and the use of aborted fetuses for research.

The Media Research Center came to a significant conclusion following

8. "Networks Choose Pro-Choice." Media Research Center. January 1989.

analysis of the hard survey data. First, they determined that the abortion issue deserves an “even-handed approach.” Next, they determined that the television networks are incapable of reporting fairly and objectively on touchy issues of a social nature. Finally, the Media Research Center determined that “by their biased use of labels to characterize the two sides of an issue, reporters have unfairly colored the national debate on abortion.”

The Media Research Center’s bias study provides a good basis for the use of abortion as the illustrating social issue for the proposed content analysis section of this research project. Through the MRC study, the researchers came to three conclusions which allow for an adequate basis for the use of the abortion issue. The study demonstrates that not only is abortion an issue which needs attention in the media, but it needs fair and objective attention at all levels. Next, though the study only involved the television news aspect of media, it showed that news agencies are not in the position to report the issue fairly. If the reporting of abortion is generally slanted and biased, what message are we conveying to the public and who and what are they supposed to believe? Finally the study concludes that reporters have “colored” the national abortion issue. If they have “colored the issue,” how is the public to know if they are getting the bottom line or not?

The fourth study was conducted by S. Holly Stocking of Indiana University and Paget H. Gross of Columbia University in 1989. The study, “How Do Journalists Think?: A Proposal for the Study of Cognitive Bias in Newsmaking,” interviewed members of the graduate seminar in newsgathering at Columbia as well as anonymous professional from the fields of psychology

and mass communication.⁴ The main premise of their study was to prove that the interjection of media bias is a cognitive process.

The study's interviews provided conclusions rather than quantitative data. First, the researchers found that journalists are the most visible and most prolific distributors of information and that their activities and viewpoints need to be carefully scrutinized for tendencies to inject bias. The researchers provided four generalizations as a result of their study. First, biased views are passively constructed while reality is often actively constructed. Second, the inner function of opinion and belief formation may or may not deal with personal attitudes, behaviors and values. Third, the beliefs and opinions that reporters derive when dealing with a news story are usually derived during the initial news gathering, otherwise known as the "first impression" analogy. Finally, the researchers determined that the environment in which the reporter gathers news and writes the story affects the content of the resulting news article.

This bias study goes to the root of the psychological cause for the creation of biased opinions by reporters and how it enters into their writing. The study answers the psychological side of the question concerning the presence of media bias. The researchers concluded that in a large number of cases, bias is rooted in the mental processes of the reporters and that opinions may consciously or subconsciously enter into the finished journalistic product. If this is so, is it possible that reporters can alter their psychological process

4. Stocking, S. H. and Gross, P. (1989). *How do journalists think ? : A proposal for the study of cognitive bias in newsmaking*. Indiana: ERIC Clearinghouse.

when dealing with a socially sensitive issue?

Other pertinent information was gathered from the computer search conducted. This information was cited within the text of books and periodicals, rather than being derived from a scientific study.

The first group of pertinent information concerns the idea that the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* are considered the papers of record in the United States. Martin A. Lee and Norman Solomon wrote in their book, *Unreliable Sources*, that these two papers have a tremendous impact on American political and everyday life. These authors state that both papers contain more comprehensive coverage of news and events than any other newspapers in the country. They claim that these papers are integral to the prevailing political power structure.⁵

Lee and Solomon have also concluded that the *Times* and the *Post* have overwhelming control of the primary news distribution in the Northeast. In addition, many articles which appear in the daily issues of both publications are reprinted in many other newspapers nationwide. These authors have also found conclusive proof that these papers control the agendas of the television news shows. National Public Radio even puts a *Times* and *Post* reporters on the radio to discuss high-profile or breaking news events. Jeff Cohen, founder of Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) states, "Those newspapers are sanctifying what is an issue, what isn't an issue, and who the experts are who

5. Lee, M. and Solomon, N. *Unreliable sources*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990.

should address each issue.⁶

With this research in mind, the use of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* for the proposed content analysis segment of this author's study is firmly justified. It is evident that through Lee and Solomon's research, that these two publications guide the public opinion of much of America. The use of these so-called "papers of record" affirms that the content analysis will use respected, model publications.

Lee and Solomon have also concluded that the media is fraught with a male dominance which may possibly provide grounds for the interjection of bias. According to a 1989 Gallup Poll, 94 percent of the top positions in American news media were occupied by men. A study of the front pages of the top ten newspapers showed that only 27 percent of bylines belonged to women. *USA Today* had the lead with 41 percent female byline content, while the *New York Times* took last place with 16 percent. Finally, a 1989 study found that the *Washington Post*, *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Chicago Tribune* forbade their reporters from taking part in any abortion activist activities including public demonstrations.⁷

The male dominance issue with respect to the ranks of media provides proof that there may be a basis for media bias in the nature of the sex of the reporter. Lee and Solomon's research argues quite effectively for the idea that the males and females may react or hold preconceived opinions on social issues

6. Lee, M. and Solomon, N. *Unreliable Sources*. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1990.

7. Ibid.

that are quite different. This author's study will consider if the sex of the reporter is an issue in journalistic writing.

Next, the media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) have devised a series of tests, which they call the Media Bias Detector, which can be applied to print and television news to determine if bias exists.⁸ These tests involve for specific areas of so-called "touchy reporting." The first, The "We We" Phenomenon, asks the question of whether the use of "we" in a story is the journalist speaking for the government. FAIR implores that individuals should be skeptical when journalists "shed their objective voice and become advocates for the U.S. government or military.

The second aspect of these tests, Politically Charged Labels and Loaded Language, is used to determine if the information contained in the media is skewed by utilizing complex information and word usage. FAIR explains politically charged labels and loaded language as that information which conveys complex images and information which results in the distortion, deception and reinforcement of traditional prejudice. The organization claims the use of phrases of "moderate," "extremists" and "special interests" are examples of this idea.

The third test, the Kissinger-Haig Syndrome, is used to determine information and quotations garnered from sources present a conflict of interest to the situation. FAIR explains this idea by the media's use of Henry Kissinger as an "independent foreign policy expert" when he had business interests in China. The group claims that readers and viewers need to be leery of what is

8. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (24 November 1996). FAIR Media Bias Detector [On-line], xx. Available: www.igt.org/fair.]

being reported, when stories quote a present or former government official without presenting the opposing side of the situation.

The final test, the “Sources Tell Us” idea, is meant to make the reader leery of journalistic stories which present unchallenged “official” or “expert” information. This parameters of this test include the idea that the use of this information without identifying the source behind the story should raise even more skepticism. FAIR claims that the media has an overreliance on corporate and governmental sources, often resulting in the release of erroneous, misleading or skewed stories no matter the truth it.

Gore Vidal, a prominent spokesperson for FAIR, offers a viewpoint which provides a good basis for FAIR’s Media Bias Detector. Vidal says, “Of course, it is possible for any citizen with time to spare, and a canny eye, to work out what is actually going on. But for many there is no time...even though it may not be news at all but a series of flashing fictions.”

FAIR’s Media Bias Detector is a unique application to place on today’s news media. It provides some proof for the idea of preconceived bias in many aspect of news writing. The Media Bias Detector lends itself to this author’s study by providing an intrinsic tool to determine if bias exists in news reporting. From the We-We Phenomenon to the Kissinger-Haig Syndrome, it is quite clear that FAIR’s tests are viable and allow for the determination of examples of bias in news media of either format.

The media bias issue lends only to disagreement when dealing with small issues between conservative and liberal-based publications. Communication professionals, as demonstrated by the aforementioned studies and information, demonstrate concurring opinion that there is a liberal-based bias in the media, more specifically when that media is of the printed genre. The existing studies and information, though applicable in many aspects, is outdated and only

lends credence to the need for a newer study.

This study is also perhaps the first in which a single, specific social issue has been considered as one of the leading causes of media bias. The previous studies completed in the field suggest that bias occurs as within the sphere of socially sensitive topics, but few (if any) studies have concentrated on a single issue. Abortion is a highly sensitive issue, and previous research demonstrates that it has a strong basis for a valid study.

Through this study, the author is not seeking to reinvent the wheel, rather to update and further the research previously completed in the field. Many of the studies completed, especially those alluded to in this chapter were conducted and completed during the latter part of the 1970s and during the 1980s. This author's literature search yielded no specific and detailed information beyond approximately the early part of 1990. The advent of online newspapers, the Internet and the World Wide Web has expanded the journalistic arena and therefore has enlarged the window of opportunity for the proliferation of bias. With ever-changing technology and expanding social debate, this study is necessary to bring the research of media bias into the present time. With a more up-to-date study, the research into media bias can be updated to facilitate its application into a technologically advanced age.

Chapter 3

Research Design

The research design for this thesis project required extensive background information covering the three broad categories of information, attitude and behavior. The information category revolved around the existence of previous studies and statistics that exist within the general body of knowledge. Attitudinal information rested in the hands of the editorial staffs of newspapers, who have firsthand experience with the dissemination of news information. The behavioral information exists within the reporters of the newspapers and their assumed objective stories.

Does extensive background information exist for the substantiation of a study of media bias? As alluded to in Chapter 2, extensive literature exists dealing with the topic of bias in the news media. Information contained in previous theses have proven helpful to the overall substantiation of this study. Limited literature exists about the depth of understanding by reporters concerning bias in their writing. The information that does exist is found in statistical data of previous studies.

Do newspaper editors have an existing attitude concerning bias? Do they feel that other publications release biased information in their publications? Do they think their reporters introduce bias into their news stories? These questions deal with attitudes of editorial staffs towards bias. Editors of newspapers were surveyed concerning their attitudes towards this topic. These

editors were also asked questions about their attitudes about bias in print. More definitively, the survey also sought to determine if the editors thought it was a problem in their publications or their competitor's newspapers.

Do newspaper reporters infuse their stories with bias? Does the bias exist within today's print media? Behavioral information and data was gathered from an investigation into the journalistic content of stories from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

The sources of data for this study were found in various segments of the communication field. These sources ranged from specific newspaper editors to media advocacy organizations. A myriad of information rested in the minds and practices of the reporters. Internet sources also provided extensive information concerning the bias issue.

A significant mailing list of newspapers was constructed using the *Burrelle's Media Guide*. The current edition of this guide provided a comprehensive listing of newspapers and their editorial staffs as well as pertinent information concerning the publications. The guide was organized in alphabetical order by state, and 50 newspapers were selected. The newspapers selected numbered 17 each from New Jersey and New York and 16 from Pennsylvania. A contingency list of newspapers was developed from the *Burrelle's Media Guide* for a second tier of respondents. The list comprised 15 papers, 5 from each of the three states. Only publications distributed to the readership on a daily basis were selected for this list. This mailing list served as the respondent list for the proposed survey.

Every fourth paper was selected. If the full number of newspapers for a specific state were not obtained from the first circulation through the listing, the author returned to the top of the listing and the balance of the papers were selected at the same rate, not including those papers already selected. Daily

papers printed in a foreign language format were eliminated from the eligibility list, to ensure full understanding of the intended inquiry.

A few significant organizations exist which have a basic mission of objectivity and advocacy in the media. These organizations served to demonstrate specific instances and channels of biased communication. Accuracy in Media (AIM) is a media advocacy organization which bases itself heavily upon the pristine, objective presentation of information. AIM served as a fruitful source for professional and interest group research and opinion about bias. These Internet and electronic mail sources assisted in the retrieval of previous study data and supplemental information.

Related literature, described in Chapter 2, served as the basis for substantiation of this study. Previous research and studies have occurred on the topic, items which have provided supportive information to the project. Books, periodical articles and journal information, also alluded to in the previous chapter, have provided valuable and useful information. The primary source of the information for this study lies within the news stories of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* articles studied for their bias content. The articles dealt with the issue of late-term abortion and were analyzed for the perceived presence of bias.

Acquisition of data for this study involved two separate research methods. To obtain information concerning existing attitudes towards bias, a regional small-universe survey was conducted. To obtain data and information concerning the actual behavior of reporters in the month prior to the 1996 presidential election (October 5-November 5, 1996), a content analysis was conducted of 17 articles from newspapers during that period for elements of biased writing. These two methods of data acquisition provided a competent

and justifiable compilation of data.

The small-universe survey used the mailing list derived from the *Burrelle's Media Guide*. The survey was sent to the selected newspaper sample based in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. An initial set of surveys was sent out in late February. Because of poor returns, a second set of surveys, using the contingency list, was sent out in late March. The survey, a copy of which is found in the appendix of this thesis, comprised semantic differential questions, open-ended questions and demographic information questions. The quantity of each was:

- Likert type - Nine (9) Questions
(Strongly Disagree-Disagree-Neutral-Agree-Strongly Agree)
- Open-ended Questions - Two (2) Question
- Demographic Information - Four (4) Questions

The use of the semantic differential format of the questions was intentional. By using this format, editors of newspapers were not required to commit themselves to one answer or another. Rather, editors were able to commit to a specific answer in varying degrees. The semantic differential also provided for a better return on the surveys because the respondent was not required to ponder a positive-negative answer set.

The two open-ended questions determined if editors thought papers, other than their own, were biased in their reporting of the news. It also allowed respondent editors to list the papers which he/she thought were content biased. The demographic information—in the form of political lean, circulation, quantity of reporters and percent of editorial content—was requested to develop a profile of these publications.

The survey questions attempted to answer the following generalized questions:

- Is bias prevalent in today's print media?
- Do reporters exhibit a liberal bias in their writing? A conservative bias?
- Is news writing politically partisan?
- Do readers think bias exists in the print media?
- Do reporters present both sides of an issue (even though they exhibit bias)?
- Do reporters of specific publications present information objectively?
- Is the news reporting of a specific publication fair?
- Do the editors feel other publications are biased in reporting? Which ones?

The second segment of the study involved a content analysis of news articles taken from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. These two newspapers were selected for a number of reasons. First, both of these publications are assumed to be, through substantiating research, liberal in their viewpoint. Second, these two papers often exhibit polar views on specific issues. Lastly, these papers have a large, nationwide circulation and are considered "papers of record."

The issue of abortion met with great public discourse and was fought out for many weeks prior to the presidential election of 1996. The content analysis of actual writing was needed, because it was assumed that reporters will not admit their writing was biased. Other reporters may have been ignorant of the fact that their writing was biased. The thrust of this study rested within the parameters of this content analysis.

The articles selected from these newspapers were required to satisfy

certain criteria before they could be considered eligible for the study. These criteria range from general restrictions to finely detailed descriptions. First, these articles must have appeared between October 5, 1996 and Election Day (November 5, 1996). Next, the articles must have dealt with the topical issue of abortion. Third, the articles must not have appeared on the editorial or opinion pages of these publications. Finally, the articles were taken from the two papers and none other.

Utilizing the UMI CD-Rom computer search at the Library at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ, a listing of all articles dealing with abortion were obtained for both publications in the delineated time period. Actual copies of the articles were obtained through the microfilm holdings of the same library. The articles were cataloged and coded and for tracking purposes. A complete set of articles were then duplicated for use by each of four coders. A coding sheet was developed by the author for use by the coders after reading each article. On the sheets, the coders were asked to categorize each article in terms of various aspects of the abortion issue. Copies of the coding sheet are included in the appendix of this thesis.

The coders for the pool of articles included two public relations/media relations professionals and two graduate students from Rowan University, who are pursuing a Master's degree in public relations. These individuals have been certified through an inter-coder reliability test. They had a correspondence percentage of 95.3 percent, and were tested using articles dealing with abortion and taken from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* during the same time period. Each of these individuals were given a packet containing the articles and a coding sheet and instructed to conduct their analysis as soon as possible and without interruption. All coders understood that they were performing a research study and were given adequate orientation to the study itself. The coders were not

given any remuneration or incentive prior to their service to eliminate any study contamination.

In terms of data analysis, the data from the survey and content analysis were compiled separately. With respect to the survey, the data from the different types of questions were compiled separately and in different formats. The results of the semantic differential questions were compiled as an average. The differential scale involved a range of 1 to 5, with the level of agreement being greater with the lower end of the range. The differential scale was also compiled as a frequency and percentage figure to determine levels of agreement.

The open-ended question was meant to generate a list of newspapers believed to be biased by non-affiliated editors. The resulting answers to the question were compiled into an alphabetical list delineated by the "biased" paper's dissemination format. Finally, the demographical information was compiled into frequencies and percentages for use in profiling and cross-tab purposes.

With respect to the content analysis, the data were categorized in tabular format and delineated by paper of origin and section location within that paper. The articles were also compared mutually common section location within both papers (with no regard for paper of origin). The articles were also compiled in various percentages and frequencies for the purpose of comparison. Cross-tabs of categories versus paper of origin were derived from the existing data.

All data were compiled using Microsoft Excel for Macintosh. All electronic retrieval equipment in the collection of the newspaper articles can be found in the Library at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Background

In this study of media bias in the reporting of socially sensitive issues, two study instruments were used. The first instrument, a content analysis, looked at articles pertaining to the issue of abortion. These articles appeared in either the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* between October 5 and November 5, 1996. The articles selected were considered "straight" news. Articles on the editorial or opinion pages of either newspaper were eliminated from the analysis. These opinion and editorial articles contain preconceived notions of bias and did not serve the research design of this thesis.

The second instrument was a small-universe survey of 65 daily newspaper editors in New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania. It sought to determine the attitudes of these editors concerning bias. The survey comprised of nine Likert-type questions, two open-ended questions and four questions concerning the "demographic" information of the newspaper. A copy of the survey appears in the appendix.

The Content Analysis

The content analysis used a four-person panel of coders. Two coders were practicing public relations professionals and two were graduate public relations students at Rowan University in Glassboro. All coders passed an intercoder reliability test with above 95 percent agreement.

Each coder was given a full packet on news articles which appeared in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* between October 5 and November 5, 1996. The packet did not include those articles which appeared on the opinion or editorial pages of the publications. Each coder was also given an article coding packet and cover memo instructing them how to code the articles and answer set for each of ten questions for each article. A copy of the cover memo and a sample answer packet can be found in the appendix. The questions and correlating answers contained in the coding packet include:

1. Do you think this article is biased?
Extremely biased Somewhat biased Can't detect bias
2. In your opinion, is this article propogandizing the issue of abortion? Yes / No
3. How many references, in this article, are there to the unborn as:
Fetus _____ Child _____
4. How many references, in this article, are there to the female parent of the unborn as: Woman _____ Mother, _____
5. In your opinion, in this article, whose rights are most important?
Mother's Rights Fetus Rights
6. Does the article sound as though it's speaking for the government? Yes / No
7. Does the article use complex information and word usage? Yes / No
8. Does the article quote sources who have a special interest in the story? Yes / No
9. Does the article present unchallenged "official" or "expert" information? Yes / No
10. Do you feel the article is: Pro-Choice / Anti-Abortion / Neither

The coders were instructed to read each article, then answer the ten questions for each article. In addition, coders were asked to underline phrases in each article which they construed as biased. The first question asked the coders for an immediate, overall reaction as to the degree of bias of the article. The second question asked the coder to decide if the article propagandized the issue of abortion. The third and fourth questions asked the coders to actually count the references to the unborn and the female parent in two forms for each. Question 5 asked the coder to determine if the article took the side of the mother or the fetus in its portrayal of the abortion information. Questions 6 through 9 were formulated from the Media Bias Detector devised by the watchdog group, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.¹

The sixth question determined if the article possessed the attributes of the "We-We Phenomenon. In other words, was the article speaking for the government. Question 7 determined if the article used politically charged labels and complicated language. The eighth question asked coders to decide if the article exhibited attributes which correlate with the Kissenger-Baig Syndrome. In other words, the question asked if the coders felt the article quoted sources who had a conflict of interest in the story. Finally, the ninth question asked coders to determine if the articles quoted unchallenged sources. Lastly, the tenth question asked coders to determine if the article sided with one side of the abortion debate or the other or neither.

1. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (24 November 1996). FAIR Media Bias Detector

(On-line), xx. Available: www.ige.org/fair.

The following content analysis data to follow express the majority opinion of the panel of coders. In the questions dealing with number of references, the data are expressed in the form of an average. The data are expressed in tabular format by article for ease of discussion and comparison.

The first article, "Business Dispute May Delay Introduction of Abortion Pill," dealt with the the situation where a California-based company filed a civil lawsuit against the United States manufacturer of RU-486, the so called "abortion pill."² The plaintiff is suing the manufacturer on the basis that the manufacturer holding the RU-486 production license is a convicted criminal. The results for the first article are shown in Table A-1.

Table A-1

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't Detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=0	7	Yes
	Child=0	8	Yes
4	Woman=0	9	No
	Mother=0	10	Neither

For the first article, the majority of the panel could not detect any bias within the article and felt that the article did not propagandize abortion. Furthermore, the coders could not find any references to the unborn or the female parent in any of the requested forms. The majority of the panel did feel that the article supported the rights of the mother. For questions

2. Kolata, G. (1996, November 1). Business dispute may delay introduction of abortion pill.

New York Times, pp. A20.

six through nine, the majority of the coders felt that the article did not speak on behalf of the government, used complex information and word usage, the article quoted sources with a conflict of interest, and did not offer unchallenged information. The majority also felt that the article took neither side of the abortion debate.

The second article, "Woman Who Took Girl for Abortion Is Guilty in Custody Case,"³ involves a Pennsylvania woman who took her son's 13-year-old girlfriend to New York State for an abortion.³ The woman was found guilty of interfering with custody of a minor. Table A-2 outlines the resulting data for the second article.

Table A-2

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't Detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No
8	Fetus=0	7	No*
	Child=0	8	Yes
4	Woman=0	9	No
	Mother=0	10	Neither

* denotes unanimous agreement

Here, as in the first article, the majority of the coders could not detect bias in the story and did not feel there was any propagandizing of the issue. The panel did not find any references to the unborn and female parent in any of the requested forms. The majority of the coders determined that the article took the side of the mother. For the sixth, eighth and ninth questions respectively, the majority of coders felt the article did not speak on behalf

3. Stout, D. (1996, October 31). Woman who took girl for abortion is guilty in custody case.

New York Times, pp. A15.

of the government, presented sources with a conflict of interest and presented no unchallenged information. In addition, the coders were unanimous in their opinion that the article did not use overly complex information. The majority found no partiality to either side by the article.

The third article, "Despite Pope's Protest, Polish Deputies Vote to Ease Abortion Law," outlined actions taken by the Polish Parliament to ease the constraints of the country's abortion law.⁴ The actions by the Polish government drew immediate displeasure from the Vatican. Table A-3 contains the resulting data.

Table A-3

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Extremely biased	5	Fetus
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=1	7	No*
	Child=1	8	Yes*
4	Woman=1	9	Yes
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-3 shows the majority of the coders felt that the article was extremely biased. While the article was found to be extremely biased, the majority of the panel felt there was no propaganda in the content of the article. The coders found an average of one reference each of the unborn as a fetus and as a child. The coders found an average of one reference of the

4. Reuters News Service. (1996, October 25). Despite pope's protest, Polish deputies vote to ease abortion law. *New York Times*, pp.A4.

female parent as “woman.”

The majority of coders felt the article promoted the rights of the fetus. For the sixth and ninth questions respectively, the majority of the coders found nothing that would make the language in the article speak for the government and the article did not use any unchallenged and unsourced information. The coders demonstrated unanimous agreement on the ideas that the article did not use complex information, but that it did use sources which have a special interest in the story. The majority felt that the article took neither side of the abortion debate.

The fourth article, “After the Storm, Still No Calm,” is a profile of former Surgeon General Dr. Joycelyn Elders.⁵ It discussed the present status of Dr. Elders and what went on following her quick exit from office following some remarks on abortion which were met with great public discourse. Table A-4 shows the resulting data.

Table A-4

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't Detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No*
3	Fetus=1	7	No*
	Child=0	8	No
4	Woman=0	9	No*
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement.

As also shown in Tables A-1 and A-2, the majority of the coders could

5. Witchel, A. (1996, October 24). At home with: Dr. Joycelyn Elders, *After the storm, still no calm*. *New York Times*, pp.C1

not detect any bias within the article. As in the first three articles, the majority of the coders found no propagandizing in this article. The coders found an average of one mention of the unborn as a fetus, while they found no references as child. In addition, the coders found no references to the female parent in any of its requested forms.

The majority of the coders felt the article promoted the rights of the mother, while they also felt the article did not present any conflicts of interests in its attribution. The coders had unanimous agreement that the article did not speak for the government, use complex information or present unchallenged or unsourced information. The majority of the coders did not feel the article took either side of the abortion debate.

The fifth article, "Ads Showing Dead Fetuses Stir Uproar," involved the public displeasure of the citizens of Chicago when ads showing dead fetuses were broadcast on two local television stations.⁶ The stations asserted that they had no choice but to broadcast the commercials because they were paid political campaign advertisements. Table A-5 shows the resulting data.

6. Johnson, D. (1996, October 28). Ads showing dead fetuses stir uproar. *New York Times*, pp. A16.

Table A-5

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Somewhat biased	5	Fetus
2	No*	6	No*
3	Fetus=2 Child=2	7	No*
4	Woman=0 Mother=0	8	Yes
		9	No
		10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-5 shows that the majority of the coders felt that the article was somewhat biased. The coders unanimously felt that the article did not propagandize the abortion debate. Coders found an average of two references to the unborn each as a fetus and child, while no references were found to the female parent in either request form. The majority felt that the article sided with the rights of the fetus. Unanimous agreement on the idea that the article demonstrated no government proxy or complex information and word usage. The majority of the coders did feel that the article used sources who presented a conflict of interest, while the majority felt that there was no presentation of unchallenged information.

The sixth article, "A Hazardous Profession," is a book review of *Lovejoy: A Year in the Life of an Abortion Clinic*.⁷ According to the article, the book is a novel outlining the daily dilemmas facing one of the nation's busiest abortion clinics. Table A-6 shows the resulting data.

7. Gordon, M. (1996, October 20). A hazardous profession. *New York Times*, sec. 7, pp25.

Table A-6

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Somewhat biased	5	Fetus
2	Yes	6	No
3	Fetus=1 Child=0	7	No [*]
4	Woman=3 Mother=0	8	Yes
		9	No
		10	Anti-Abortion

*denotes unanimous agreement

As in Table A-5, this table demonstrates that the majority of coders felt that the article was somewhat biased. The majority also felt as if the article propagandized the issue of abortion. The coders found an average of one mention of the unborn as a fetus, and an average of three mentions of the female parent as woman. The majority of coders felt that the article promoted the rights of the fetus. The majority also determined that the article was not speaking for the government or using unsubstantiated information in its content. The majority of coders did feel the article was using sources who had a special interest in the subject matter, while they were unanimous in the determination that the article did not use any complex information or word usage. The majority of the coders determined that the article was anti-abortion.

The seventh article, "Abortion Is an Issue In Group's Support," discussed the abortion groups in Westchester County, N.Y. and their support and endorsements of specific political candidates.⁶ The article addressed the actions of both pro-life and pro-abortion groups in that area. Table A-7

8. Greene, D. (1996, October 20). Abortion is an issue in groups' support. *New York Times*, Westchester County, pp. 5.

shows the resulting data from the analysis of this article.

Table A-7

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Somewhat biased	5	Fetus
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=0	7	No*
	Child=0	8	Yes*
4	Woman=1	9	No*
	Mother=0	10	Pro-Choice

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-7 shows the third consecutive article, to which the majority of coders determined to be somewhat biased. The majority also found no evidence of propaganda within the content of the article. No references to the unborn were found in any of its requested forms, while an average of one reference to the female parent as woman was found. The majority determined that the article did favor the rights of the fetus over that of the mother.

The majority felt that the article was not speaking for the government, while the coders unanimously agreed that there was no complexity in the information expressed or any unchallenged information. The coders unanimously agreed that the article did quote sources who had a vested interest in the message of the article. The majority determined that the article was pro-abortion.

The eighth article, "Court Hears Challenge to Anti-Abortion Curb," dealt with a challenge to the First Amendment right to free speech and the right to unimpeded access to abortion clinics.⁹ The challenge stemmed from repeated interchanges between protesters and patients at upstate New York abortion clinics. Table A-8 shows the resulting data for this article.

Table A-8

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't Detect	5	Mother*
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=0	7	No
	Child=0	8	No
4	Woman=2	9	No
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-8 demonstrates the majority of the coders could not detect bias, nor was there any propagandizing of abortion within this article. No references to the unborn in any of its requested forms were determined, while the references to the female parent resulted in an average of two references as woman. Coders unanimously determined that the article supported the rights of the mother. The majority answered "no" to the Media Bias Detector questions, while they could not determine any partiality on the abortion issue through the article.

9. Greenhouse, L. (1996, October 17). Court hears challenge to anti-abortion curb. *New York Times*, pp. A16.

The ninth article, "Supreme Court Roundup," is a weekly compilation (found in the *New York Times*) of the results of cases which received United States Supreme Court attention during the previous week.¹⁰ A small section of this article dealt with issue of protesters blocking patient access to abortion clinics.

Table A-9

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Fetus
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=0	7	No*
	Child=0	8	No
4	Woman=0	9	No
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-9 shows the continued lack of the detection of bias by the majority of the coders, as well as the determination that no propagandizing of the issue was taking place within the content of the article. No references were found to the unborn and the female parent in any of its requested forms. The majority felt that the article favored the rights of the fetus, while the majority answered "no" to each of the questions designed to detect bias and found no partiality on abortion.

10. Greenhouse, L. (1996, October 8). Supreme court roundup. *New York Times*, pp. A22.

The tenth article, "Dole Hopes Whitman's Magic Works for Him," dealt with an appearance of presidential candidate Bob Dole in Hackensack, N.J.¹¹ The article explains the need for Dole to get a large percentage of New Jersey voters in order to win the election. The article related to the surprising election of Whitman to the state's highest office, and issues surrounding a successful bid for election.

Table A-10

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No*
3	Fetus=0	7	No*
	Child=0	8	No
4	Woman=0	9	No*
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Once again, Table A-10 shows that the majority of coders could not detect any bias within the article. The majority could also find no propagandizing as well as no references to the unborn and the female parent in any of its requested forms. The majority did find that the article promoted the rights of the mother. The bias detector questions resulted in "no" answers, with three of the four resulting in unanimous agreement. The majority of the coders felt that the article demonstrated no partiality on the abortion

11. Apple Jr., R. (1996, October 5). *dole hopes Whitman's magic works for him*. *New York*

Times, sec. 1, pp. 1.

issue. Table A-10 also shows a logical answer flow where coders could not detect bias, answered “no” to the bias detector questions and found no partiality in the abortion debate.

The eleventh article, “Agreeing to Disagree...,” dealt with a meeting of pro-choice and anti-abortion advocates in Washington D.C.¹² The meeting of this group, the Common Ground Network for Life and Choice, was to get the individuals on polar sides of abortion at the table to talk and listen.

Table A-11

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No*
3	Fetus=0	7	No*
	Child=0	8	Yes*
4	Woman=1	9	No
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-11 shows the continuing lack of bias detection as well as the lack of the determination that the article is propagandizing abortion. Of the references to the unborn and the female parent in their requested forms, the coders found an average of only one reference to the female parent as woman. The majority did feel the article promoted the rights of the mother. All bias detector questions did result in unanimous “no” answers, except for a unanimous “yes” on the idea that the article utilized sources with a

12. O'Hanlon, A. (1996, October 27). Agreeing to disagree, abortion advocates and foes gather to talk and listen. *Washington Post*, pp. A2.

conflict of interest. Finally, the majority of the coders found no partiality within the article.

The twelfth article, "Skirting Abortion Ban Proves Lucrative in Poland," deals with the lucrative abortion business in Poland following a relaxation of abortion laws by the Polish Parliament.¹³ Table A-12 shows the resulting data from the coder analysis of the article.

Table A-12

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No*
3	Fetus=1	7	No*
	Child=0	8	Yes*
4	Woman=6	9	No
	Mother=1	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-12 demonstrates that, like numerous other articles highlighted already, no bias or propagandizing was detected. An average of one reference to the unborn as fetus was determined, while references to the female parent resulted in an average of six references as woman and one as mother. The majority of coders determined that the article supported the rights of the mother. The coders were unanimous on the ideas that the article was not speaking for the government or used complex information. They were also in unanimous agreement that the article did use sources with a conflict of interest. The majority felt that the article used no unchallenged information

13. Spolar, C. (1996, October 22). Skirting abortion ban proves lucrative in Poland.

Washington Post, pp. A1.

and that the article took no sides in the abortion debate.

The thirteenth article, "Justices Question Buffer Zone at Abortion Clinics," also dealt with the buffer zone separating abortion clinic patients and protesters.¹⁴ This article also dealt with the interchanges between patients and protesters at upstate New York abortion clinics. Table A-13 shows the results for this article.

Table A-13

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Fetus
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=0	7	No*
	Child=0	8	No
4	Woman=6	9	No*
	Mother=0	10	Anti-Abortion

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-13 shows that the majority of coders could not detect bias or propagandizing in the article. No references were found to the unborn in any of its requested forms. The coders did find an average of six references to the female parent as woman. The majority of coders felt that the article supported the rights of the fetus. "No" answers were received for the bias detector questions, with unanimous agreement on the ideas that no complex information was included and no unchallenged information was used.

14. Biskupic, J. (1996, October 17). Justices question buffer zone at abortion clinics.

Washington Post, pp. A8.

The fourteenth article, "High Court to Hear Abortion Protesters' Appeal of 'Buffer Zone' Order," is an article published prior to the thirteenth dealing with the same subject.¹⁵ Table A-14 offers the resulting data.

Table A-14

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=0	7	No*
	Child=0	8	Yes*
4	Woman=5	9	No*
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

For this article, Table A-14 shows that the majority of the coders again could not find and bias or propaganda in the article. No references to the unborn in its requested forms were detected. In the female parent category, coders found an average of five references to woman. The majority of the coders felt the mother's rights were promoted in the article. With the bias detector questions, coders only felt that sources with a special interest in the story were utilized. The majority also felt that the article supported neither side of the abortion debate.

15. Biskupic, J. (1996, October 15). High court to hear abortion protesters' appeal of 'buffer zone' order. *Washington Post*, pp. A8.

Article 15, "Ad on Christian Radio Touts Clinton's Stands," dealt with Bill Clinton's campaign commercial which aired on Christian radio stations.¹⁶ The article dealt with the ad which promoted Clinton's anti-abortion views and attitudes. Table A-15 expresses the resulting data.

Table A-15

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Fetus
2	No	6	No
3	Fetus=1	7	No*
	Child=1	8	Yes
4	Woman=1	9	No*
	Mother=1	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Once again, the majority of coders could not find any bias or propaganda in this article. Coders did find one reference each to the unborn as a fetus and as a child. In addition, they found an average of one reference each to the female parent as woman and as mother. The rights of the fetus were reported by the majority as most important in this article. The coders unanimously agreed that no complex information or word usage was utilized and that no unchallenged information was presented.

The majority of the coders felt that the article did not speak for the government, but the article did present sources who presented a conflict of interest. The majority felt that no partiality to either side of the abortion issue was detected.

16. Kurtz, H. (1996, October 15). Ad on Christian radio touts Clinton's stands. *Washington Post*, pp. A9.

The sixteenth article, "Review of 23 Studies Links Abortion and Breast Cancer," highlighted a finding where 23 studies were considered in the determination that women who have abortions are at a slightly higher risk of developing breast cancer.¹⁷ Table A-16 shows the results of the coders' analysis.

Table A-16

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Can't detect	5	Mother
2	No	6	No*
3	Fetus=0	7	No
	Child=0	8	Yes
4	Woman=10	9	No
	Mother=0	10	Neither

*denotes unanimous agreement

Here, Table A-16 shows that the majority of coders could not detect bias or propaganda in this article. No references to the unborn were detected in any of the requested forms. An average of ten references to the female parent as woman were detected, with none to the woman as mother detected. According to the majority, the mother's rights were promoted by the article. The bias detector question resulted in a positive response that the article presented sources who had a special interest in the story. There was unanimous agreement among the coders that the article was not speaking for the government. The majority of the coders felt the article did not favor any side of the abortion debate.

17. Brown, D. (1996, October 12). Review of 23 studies links abortion to breast cancer.

Washington Post, pp. A3.

The final article, "In Case Against Alcoholic Mother, Underlying Issue Is Fetal Rights," was a feature article which discussed the alcoholism of an expectant mother and the subsequent birthing problems she faced when the baby was born.¹⁸ The baby was born with symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome and was placed in foster care. Table A-17 shows the resulting data.

Table A-17

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Answer</u>
1	Somewhat biased	5	Fetus
2	Yes	6	No
3	Fetus=5	7	No*
	Child=5	8	Yes*
4	Woman=6	9	Yes
	Mother=2	10	Anti-Abortion

*denotes unanimous agreement

When analyzing this final article, the majority of coders felt the article was somewhat biased and that this feature article propogandized the issue of abortion. In references to the unborn, coders found an average of five each for the fetus and for the child. In references to the female parent, coders found an average of six for woman and two for mother. The majority felt the fetus' rights were promoted by the article. The coders felt the article was not speaking for the government and that it did not use complex information or word usage. The coders did feel that the article quoted sources with a special interest as well as used unchallenged information. The majority felt that the article put forth an anti-abortion point-of-view.

18. Walsh, E. (1996, October 7). In case against alcoholic mother, underlying issue is fetal rights. *Washington Post*, pp. A4.

Table A-18

<u>Article #</u>	<u>Question #1</u>	<u>Question #2</u>	<u>Question #10</u>
1	Can't detect	No	Neither
2	Can't detect	No	Neither
3	Extremely biased	No	Neither
4	Can't detect	No	Neither
5	Somewhat biased	No*	Neither
6	Somewhat biased	Yes	Anti-Abortion
7	Somewhat biased	No	Pro-Choice
8	Can't detect	No	Neither
9	Can't detect	No	Neither
10	Can't detect	No	Neither
11	Can't detect	No	Neither
12	Can't detect	No	Neither
13	Can't detect	No	Anti-Abortion
14	Can't detect	No	Neither
15	Can't detect	No	Neither
16	Can't detect	No	Neither
17	Somewhat biased	Yes	Anti-Abortion

Table A-18 represents a crosstab between Questions 1,2 and 10. The purpose of the crosstab is to compare the perception of bias, the perception of propaganda and the idea of whether the article supports a specific side of the abortion debate. Table A-18 shows, in two cases, that when the majority of coders felt a specific article was somewhat or extremely biased, they also felt it was propagandizing the abortion issue as well as taking the pro-choice or anti-abortion stand on the issue.

For example, the sixth (see Table A-6) and seventeenth (see Table A-17) articles were considered by a majority of the coders as "somewhat biased." Furthermore, the majority determined that the articles were propagandizing abortion. Lastly, the majority felt that the articles took the anti-abortion side of the issue. The majority of the coders considered the seventh article (see Table A-7) as "somewhat biased" and taking the pro-choice side of

the issue, but they found no propaganda within the article.

In the third (see table A-3) and fifth (see Table A-5) articles, the majority of the coders felt that the articles were “extremely biased” and “somewhat biased” respectively. On the other hand, in both articles, there was no propaganda detected and the majority of coders found no partiality to either side by the articles. For the remainder of the articles, the majority could not detect any bias or propaganda as well as not find any partiality within the articles.

Table A-19

<u>Article #</u>	<u>#6</u>	<u>#7</u>	<u>#8</u>	<u>#9</u>
1	No	Yes	Yes	No
2	No	No*	Yes	No
3	No	No*	Yes*	No
4	No*	No*	No	No
5	No*	No*	Yes	No
6	No	No*	Yes	No*
7	No	No*	Yes*	No*
8	No	No	No	No
9	No	No*	No	No
10	No*	No*	No	No*
11	No*	No*	Yes*	No*
12	No*	No*	Yes*	No
13	No	No*	No	No*
14	No	No*	Yes*	No*
15	No	No*	Yes	No*
16	No*	No	Yes	No
17	No	No*	Yes*	Yes

* denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-18 shows a crosstab between questions six through nine from the coders coding sheets. These four questions were constructed from Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting’s (FAIR) Media Bias Detector. Though FAIR’s detector works on a point system, the questions asked of the coder

sought to determine if the article contained those attributes. A "yes" in any category means that there is some type of detectable bias in the article.

Question #6 asked the coder to determine if the article, at any point, was speaking on behalf of the government. In no article, did the majority determination result in a positive response. Question #7 asked coders to determine if the article used complex information or word usage. Only one article of the seventeen resulted in a majority determination of "yes."

Question #8 asked coders to determine if the article used sources which had a special interest (ie. conflict of interest) in the story. according to the majority determination, 70 percent of the articles contained sources which fit this description. Question #9 asked coders to determine if the article used unchallenged "official" or "expert" information. Here, the majority of the coders only found one article to contain such unsubstantiated information.

Twenty-nine percent of the articles resulted in a majority response of "no" for each of the four questions. Fifty-eight percent of the articles yielded a majority response of three "no" responses and one "yes" response. Twelve percent of the articles yielded a majority response of two "no" and two "yes" responses.

Table A-20

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Article #8</u>	<u>Article#13</u>
1	Can't detect	Can't detect
2	No	No
5	Mother	Fetus
6	No	No
7	No	No*
8	No	No
9	No	No
10	Neither	Anti-Abortion

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-19 shows a crosstab between the eighth and thirteenth articles. The third and fourth questions were eliminated purposely from the table for this specific comparison. Both articles dealt with the so-called "buffer zones," which separates abortion clinic patients and clinic protesters. The only thing different between these two articles was their paper of origin. Article #8 (see Table A-8) was taken from the *New York Times*, while article #13 was taken from the *Washington Post*.

As Table A-19 shows, the profile of both articles is essentially the same except for the attention to mother or fetus rights and the partiality of the article within the abortion debate. The majority of the coders could not detect any bias within the article, and the subsequent majority answers to the bias detector questions were "no." These answers correlate with the lack of detection of bias in the article.

Table A-21

<u>Question #</u>	<u>Article #3</u>	<u>Article#12</u>
1	Extremely biased	Can't detect
2	No	No
5	Fetus	Mother
6	No	No
7	No*	No*
8	Yes*	Yes*
9	Yes	No
10	Neither	Anti-Abortion

*denotes unanimous agreement

Table A-20 is a crosstab of the third and twelfth articles. Again, questions #3 and #4 have been eliminated for this comparison. Both articles deal with the changes in Polish abortion law made in late October 1996. The laws were relaxed allowing more females to access abortions. Consequently, abortion became a lucrative business in just a short time. Article #3 (see Table A-3) is from the *New York Times*, while article #12 comes from the *Washington Post*.

As opposed to Table A-19, the articles highlighted in this table are quite different in their profiles. Here, the third article was found to be extremely biased, supporting the rights of the fetus and took no sides in the abortion debate. The twelfth article was found not to be free from bias, but supported the rights of the mother and was found to support the anti-abortion point-of-view.

The Survey

The survey consisted of an initial tier of 50 editors from across the three states. Because of a lack of response, a second tier of 15 surveys was distributed across the three states. In total, 20 surveys were returned from the pool of 65. This sample size and its quantity of responses makes the 60

survey non-probable. But it is enough to indicate editor attitudes.

From the survey, a profile of the responding newspapers was developed. The average paper within the survey had the following attributes:

- Average circulation of 67,442 on a daily basis
- Average staff of 28 reporters
- Average editorial content (self-reported) of 53.84 percent
- The majority identified their political lean as Independent

Papers located within the New York and New Jersey boundaries tended to have the larger circulation and consequently larger staff of reporters. The circulation tended to approach or exceed 100,000 as the papers' city of origin approached the suburban and downtown areas of major regional cities.

Table S-1
Likert Question #1 by Response
"Bias is prevalent in today's print media."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	0 %
Agree (2)	20 %
Neutral (3)	15 %
Disagree (4)	60 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	3.25

The first Likert-type question demonstrated that newspaper editors felt almost neutral on whether bias was a problem in today's print journalism. A 60 percent result in the "Disagree" response demonstrates that a majority of the newspaper editors surveyed disagreed that bias was prevalent problem in today's print media. In addition, approximately one-third of those editors surveyed did feel that bias exists within the print media genre.

There was a three-to-one ratio between those editors who disagreed with the question as opposed to those who agreed that bias was a problem.

Table S-2
Likert Question #2 by Response
"Most reporters show a liberal bias in reporting."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	0 %
Agree (2)	10 %
Neutral (3)	5 %
Disagree (4)	75 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	5 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	3.60

The second Likert-type question demonstrated that editors slightly disagreed with the idea that reporters hold a liberal bias. Seventy-five percent of editors did correlate with the mean average when discussing the liberal bias of reporters. Because the majority of those editors disagreed that reporters hold liberal biases, one-tenth of those editors agreed with slightly lower percentages for all other categories.

Table S-3
Likert Question #3 by Response
"Most reporters show a conservative bias in reporting."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	0 %
Agree (2)	0 %
Neutral (3)	10 %
Disagree (4)	75 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	10 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	3.80

The third Likert-type question resulted in slight disagreement of editors on the idea of reporters holding a conservative bias. One-tenth of the

editors surveyed strongly disagreed with the idea of a conservative bias by reporters, and another tenth had no opinion on the subject. With the large percentage of editors responding in disagreement, there is a correlation between the same percentage of disagreement concerning reporters holding a liberal or conservative bias.

Table S-4
Likert Question #4 by Response
"Reporters generally keep personal views out of stories."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	20 %
Agree (2)	70 %
Neutral (3)	0 %
Disagree (4)	5 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	1.80

The fourth Likert-type question resulted in the virtual agreement of those editors surveyed on the idea that reporters keep personal views out of their news stories. Ninety percent of those surveyed expressed some degree of agreement on the idea of objective news stories by reporters. The resulting percentages demonstrated only slight disagreement on the question, and the idea that some editors do feel reporters use personal views in their writing.

Table S-5
Likert Question #5 by Response
"Most straight news is politically partisan."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	0 %
Agree (2)	5 %
Neutral (3)	5 %
Disagree (4)	35 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	50 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	4.15

The fifth Likert-type question demonstrated a large percentage of disagreement with the statement. Eighty-five percent of those editors surveyed felt that most straight news in modern print journalism show no political partiality in their content. A small percentage of those surveyed claimed they had no opinion or somewhat agreed with the statement.

Table S-6
Likert Question #6 by Response
"Readers generally believe bias exists in your publication."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	5 %
Agree (2)	60 %
Neutral (3)	15 %
Disagree (4)	15 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	2.30

The sixth Likert-type question demonstrated that those editors surveyed agreed with the idea that their readership distinguished bias within the content of their publication. A significant percentage of editors surveyed showed either no opinion towards the statement or felt that the readership

believed that the publication asserted no bias. Five percent of the editors strongly agreed with the statement.

Table S-7

Likert Question #7 by Response
"Your reporters fairly present both sides of a story."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	15 %
Agree (2)	70 %
Neutral (3)	0 %
Disagree (4)	10 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	1.95

In the seventh Likert-type question, the mean average demonstrated that those editors surveyed agreed that their reporters fairly present both sides of a news story. Eighty-five percent of the editors affirmed that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Ten percent of the editors surveyed disagreed with the statement.

Table S-8

Likert Question #8 by Response
"Your publication is usually objective in its reporting."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	30 %
Agree (2)	60 %
Neutral (3)	0 %
Disagree (4)	5 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	1.70

The eighth question showed a large percentage of agreement on the idea that the editor's specific publications are objective in the reporting of

the news. Only a slight percentage, some five percent, demonstrated that they felt their reporting may sometimes be skewed.

Table S-9
Likert Question #9 by Response
"Your publication is usually fair in its reporting."

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	40 %
Agree (2)	50 %
Neutral (3)	0 %
Disagree (4)	5 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %
No Answer	5 %
Mean	1.60

The final Likert question demonstrated that there is strong agreement on the idea that the editor's specific publications are fair in their reporting. Ninety percent of those editors surveyed affirmed the agreement to the statement. Slight disagreement, as with the eighth question, can be seen.

Table S-10
"Do you think most publications (other than yours) exhibit bias in their reporting?"

<u>Response</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Yes	10 %
No	80 %
No Answer	10 %

As in the Likert questions concerning bias in the editors' specific paper, those editors surveyed felt that for the most part newspapers other than their own tended to be objective and fair in their news reporting. Ten percent of the respondents felt that newspapers other than their own contained bias, while another 10 percent did not answer the question.

Table S-11
Likert Question #2 crossed with #3

<u>Response</u>	<u>#2</u>	<u>#3</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	0 %	0 %
Agree (2)	10 %	0 %
Neutral (3)	5 %	10 %
Disagree (4)	75 %	75 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	5 %	10 %
No Answer	5 %	5 %
Mean	3.60	3.80

When the questions concerning the liberal or conservative bias in the print media, those majority of editors surveyed disagreed that is a liberal or conservative bias. A small percentage (10 percent) of the editors felt that reporters have a liberal bias while zero percent of those surveyed saw any conservative bias. The mean average of the responses show that there is a moderate level of disagreement to both statements.

Table S-12
Likert Question #5 crossed with #7

<u>Response</u>	<u>#5</u>	<u>#7</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	0 %	15 %
Agree (2)	5 %	70 %
Neutral (3)	5 %	0 %
Disagree (4)	35 %	10 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	50 %	0 %
No Answer	5 %	5 %
Mean	4.15	1.95

Table S-12 shows a cross between the Likert questions dealing with the idea of news writing being politically partisan and the statement made concerning the fair presentation of both sides to a specific story. Here, the

mean demonstrated that the majority of editors surveyed disagreed with the idea that straight news writing is politically partisan, while the majority agreed that both sides of a story are presented in stories in their newspapers. A significant percentage of the editors disagreed that news writing is politically partisan, while a small percentage did feel that reporters do not always present both sides of a given story.

Table S-13
Likert Question #8 crossed with #9

<u>Response</u>	<u>#8</u>	<u>#9</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	30 %	40 %
Agree (2)	60 %	50 %
Neutral (3)	0 %	0 %
Disagree (4)	5 %	5 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %	0 %
No Answer	5 %	5 %
Mean	1.70	1.60

Here, the statements concerning the ideas of objective reporting and fair reporting are crossed to compare the editors' feelings concerning the difference between the two descriptors. As the data show, almost all editors surveyed agreed with both statements. Both questions resulted in 90 percent agreement with the statement. The mean average of the responses of both statements show that there is slightly strong agreement with the idea that the newspapers reporting is fair and objective.

Table S-14
Likert Question #6 crossed with #8

<u>Response</u>	<u>#6</u>	<u>#8</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	5 %	30 %
Agree (2)	60 %	60 %
Neutral (3)	15 %	0 %
Disagree (4)	15 %	5 %
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %	0 %
No Answer	5 %	5 %
Mean	2.30	1.70

Table S-14, shows the cross of the statements concerning the perception of bias by readers with the statement in which editors assert the objectivity of their reporting. Here, editors felt that readers believed bias existed in their publications while at the same time they agreed that the reporting is objective. An equal percentage of editors (60 percent) gave the same opinions for both statements as demonstrated by the mean.

Table S-15
Multi-cross between Likert #8 & #9 with #10

<u>Response</u>	<u>#8</u>	<u>#9</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>#10</u>
Strongly Agree (1)	30 %	40 %	Yes	10 %
Agree (2)	60 %	50 %	No	30 %
Neutral (3)	0 %	0 %	No Answer	10 %
Disagree (4)	5 %	5 %		
Strongly Disagree (5)	0 %	0 %		
No Answer	5 %	5 %		
Mean	1.70	1.60		

Table S-11 shows a multi-question crosstab between the Likert questions dealing with the fairness and objectivity of the reporting contained in the respondents' newspapers with the yes/no question which asked the

editors if they felt other publications were biased. The data show considerable agreement between the editors that their reporting is fair and objective, while a large percentage (80 percent) feel that newspapers other than their own are unbiased in reporting. The data demonstrate that there is widespread agreement among colleagues with mutual respect for objectivity in reporting the news.

The "Bias" Phrases

In both the content analysis and survey, coders and respondents respectively were asked to determine specific bias phrases which they feel skew the news. In the content analysis, coders were asked to determine specific phrases in the articles which they felt were not objective in their context. For the survey, respondents were asked to give examples of words which they thought were biased.

The following phrases were determined to be biased by the coders participating in the content analysis:

- "He was concerned about harassment or worse from abortion groups"
- "If they cannot tell their parents about pregnancy, it may not be safe for adults to give advice."
- "A nation that kills its own children is a nation without a future."
- "...the anti-abortion sentiment has been rising."
- "... a love affair with the fetus."
- "How long must the killing go on? How long must the blood be on our hands?"
- "Disgusted..Horrrified"
- "...a lab technician sorting out and shipping tiny livers, brains and

other body parts.”

- “...feeling unsettled by the stories of women aborting babies...”
- “The questions were puzzling...”
- “...(Supreme Court) Justices were in a testy mood...”

The editors who responded to the survey determined that the following words conveyed bias when used in news articles:

- | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| • Believed | • Very | • Only | • Extremist |
| • Radical | • Claimed | • Presumably | • Indignantly |
| • Denounced | • Blasted | • Hounded | • Presumed |

Chapter 5

Summary and Interpretation

Summary

This study investigated the presence of bias in print media through a content analysis of news articles and a survey of newspaper editors. The purpose was to determine if bias in print media can be determined through the content of news articles. The content analysis of the news articles covered ten articles from the *New York Times* and seven articles from the *Washington Post*. The articles were found within local, national and international news sections of both papers. The articles, which appeared between October 5 and November 5, 1997, dealt with the socially sensitive issue of abortion. Articles which appeared on the editorial or opinion page were eliminated from the pool of articles. This was necessary due to the fact that op/ed articles contain a preconceived notion of bias.

The articles were reviewed by a panel of four individuals who met the qualifications outlined in the research design. The articles were analyzed by two media/PR professionals (one male, one female) and two PR graduate

students at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ. A coding sheet was developed in cooperation with the author's thesis advisor. The coders were asked to answer a series of ten questions for each article. The questions asked for a determination on the level of bias, if any, they could detect in the article, a determination on detectable propaganda and references to specific individuals within the article. Four questions were constructed from the Media Bias Detector derived by Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), a media watchdog group. Furthermore, coders were asked to determine if the article favored a specific side of the abortion debate. A copy of the coding packet can be found in Appendix A.

A survey of newspaper editors was also taken to determine their attitudes towards bias. Through nine Likert-type questions, two open-ended questions and four demographic questions, a accurate profile of editors' opinions was obtained. The survey was distributed among daily newspapers throughout the New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania areas. Each newspaper was selected randomly from *Burrelle's Media Guide*. A cover letter (Appendix B) along with a coded survey (Appendix C) was sent to each newspaper on the mailing list. Also included was a self- addressed, stamped envelope for the editors to return the survey. In the survey, the author did not guarantee anonymity to the editors. A listing of the participating newspapers can be found in Appendix D.

An initial mailing of 50 surveys was sent out in early February 1997. Because of a lack of response, a second mailing of 15 surveys was sent. For both mailings, an equal number of surveys were sent within each state in order to give equal representation to each state. A total of 20 surveys were returned. This lack of response makes this survey non probable, but there was enough responses to allow for an accurate and useful analysis of attitudes.

Summary of Data

The following is a summation of the primary findings which have stemmed from both the content analysis and survey carried out through this study:

Content Analysis Findings

- Coders could not detect bias in 12 (70 percent) of the 17 articles.
- Coders found 4 (23.5 percent) of the articles “somewhat biased.”
- Coders found 1 (6 percent) of the 17 articles “extremely biased.”
- Coders could not detect propagandizing of abortion in 15 (88 percent) of the articles.
- Articles made more references to the unborn as fetus than as child.
- Articles made more references to the female parent as woman than as mother.
- Articles tended to support the rights of the mother more than the fetus.
- Articles tended to use sources which hold a conflict of interest in the subject of the story.
- Articles were written to all audiences and in language they could understand.
- Articles rarely used unchallenged “official” or “expert” in their reporting on abortion.
- Coders determined that 13 (76.5 percent) of the articles did not favor any side of the abortion debate, while 3 (17.5 percent) of the articles were determined to be “anti-abortion” and one (6 percent) of the articles was “pro-abortion.”

Survey Findings

- 60 percent of the editors “disagreed,” 20 percent “agreed” and 15 percent were “neutral” that bias is prevalent in today’s media.
- 80 percent generally disagreed that reporters possess a liberal bias.
- 85 percent generally disagreed that reporters have a conservative bias.
- 90 percent generally agreed that reporters keep personal views out of stories.
- 85 percent generally disagreed that most straight news is politically partisan.
- 65 percent felt that their readers believed bias existed within their publication.
- 85 percent generally agreed that their reporters fairly present both sides of a story.
- 90 percent agreed that their publication is objective in reporting news.
- 90 percent agreed their publication is usually fair in reporting news.
- 80 percent felt that publications other than theirs exhibit bias in their reporting of the news.

Conclusions

The college-educated coders for the content analysis could find only a modest amount of bias in the reporting of news concerning abortion. They did not find wholesale bias. Either the writing is truly objective or that it was carefully written to disguise bias. The editor of *The Press-Enterprise* of Bloomsburg, PA told the author, “News stories are as carefully constructed as Haiku to throw of any suspicion of bias.” This could possibly be the case.

For the most part, news writing, more specifically on abortion, does not use any propaganda. Generally, propaganda is not commonplace for news articles, but may enter into the writing now and then. Does the terminology to specific individuals cause bias to be present in news writing? In this specific analysis of news writing, references to the unborn as a fetus and references to the mother as woman were found. The personal viewpoint of a reader may construe these references as insensitive or slightly objectionable, but it may mean nothing to another reader.

When the coders were asked to apply FAIR's Media Bias Detector to the articles, it became clear that though they detected no bias in the article as a whole, they did find specific terminology and information that could be construed as biased. In addition, the coders could not find any partiality (within the abortion debate) by article analysis, but often found bias through the Media Bias Detector test.

An overall look at the content analysis gives specific conclusions on the presence of bias in the print media. First, media bias in general everyday news may go virtually undetected. But the reporting of news concerning socially sensitive issues, such as abortion, demonstrates that bias can be detected in small amounts. Second, FAIR's Media Bias Detector is an excellent test for determining bias within a specific news article. As demonstrated by this content analysis, coders could not detect bias within the article as a whole, but did detect bias through the FAIR questions asked of them. Though the FAIR test uses a point system in its pure form, a simple yes/ no format gives a profile of the article.

The survey also elicited significant findings on which conclusions can be drawn. First, newspaper editors felt that their reporters hold neither a liberal nor conservative bias in reporting. Previous research, as highlighted in

Chapter 2, has conclusively demonstrated that reporters hold one or the other, with most carrying a liberal bias. Are newspaper editors oblivious to proven fact?

Second, editors disagreed with the idea that straight news writing is politically partisan, while they agreed that most reporters fairly present both sides of a story. This may be the case, but the content analysis demonstrates, in a small number of cases, that one side of a story may take precedence over the other.

Third, can reporters be both objective and fair? Previous research has shown that in some news writing, objectivity may prevail or fairness may prevail. Not often do both hold the same rank. Often, these two words (with distinguishable differences in their definitions) are used interchangeably. Fairness and objectivity are two entirely different sons born from the same monster.

Next, the survey has caused the author to conclude that in the reader/editor relationship, one side is not totally forthcoming with truth. The survey demonstrated that editors believe their readership feels that bias exists within their publication, but that they nevertheless present objective news. It is disappointing to see that our primary gatekeepers of information, the media, will not acknowledge that humans are humans. Reporters are people. They are the same as everyone else. They hold values, emotions and attitudes on many aspects of society as everyone else does. Because society does not operate in a vacuum, the personal views of a reporter enter their news writing.

This study has led to this conclusion. It has demonstrated that editors feel their publications are objective and fair and that other publications do not exhibit bias in reporting the news. Are these editors excusing their colleagues? Are they seeing things differently than readers? Are they living in a fog of

bias? It is discouraging that some of the editors cited publications which were biased in their content. But these were publications which were purportedly biased—for example, the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *National Spectator*. If these editors are excusing their colleagues or seeing other things, it provides the basis for the existence of media watchdog groups like Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting and Accuracy in Media.

Overall, this two-part study demonstrates that, depending on who is asked (reporter or editor), media bias may lie within the content of news articles. The content analysis demonstrated that readers can detect bias from reading and analyzing a specific news story. Often, everyday readers will not take time to ponder an article in their minds. They will rather read it for its informative content and not pay attention to the potential for skewed information. The survey demonstrated that, for the most part, bias cannot be found in content.

The editor of *The Press-Enterprise* in Bloomsburg, PA added, “You’re barking up the wrong tree here. The bias is not in the stories themselves or the choice of words. The bias is in the choice of topics.” Whether this contributes to the bias or not, the 19 other editors did not express such sentiment. On the other hand, the editor of *The Press of Atlantic City* of Pleasantville, NJ provides another unique view on bias. He wrote, “Bias, like beauty, is in the minds of the beholders quite often. What a great many people call bias is, in fact, unwelcome or unappreciated reporting that is otherwise fair, accurate, and thorough.” Does this editor have it right? Is a large percentage of perceived bias not bias at all?

Evaluation and Recommendations

Knowing the attitudes and perceptions of educated readers of newspapers and newspaper editors, public relations practitioners will be able

to create news releases and other media events with more objectivity. They can decrease bias from the onset, and thereby decrease the degree of bias within the communication process.

This study is a great asset to decrease bias within corporate communication, especially in the format of Grunig and Hunt's four models of communication.¹ In the press agency/publicity model, correct information on flyers and advertisements will aid in getting the message across. The main focus of the model is propaganda. But at least with the lessons learned through this study, corporate communicators will release accurate and objective information. In the public information model, eliminating slightly biased or skewed information from news releases and media kits will allow for a more objective and favorable story if it is placed.

Corporate communicators who use the the two-way models will benefit greatly from this study. In the two-way asymmetric model, pure and objective information will decrease the level of displeasure when the message is eventually received by the public and feedback is recognized. This will help corporate PR professionals decrease the chance of a problem or crisis developing. In the two-way symmetric model, businesses will be able to filter out skewed information which could prove hurtful. They can release information which will create an honest picture in the minds of the public, and use the favorable feedback to advance the organization and possibly their careers. Every corporation looks to the bottom line of profits and perhaps even the bottom line of reputation. Many times, PR professionals are called in to protect the latter. Lessons learned through this study may contribute to

1. Grunig, J. And Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers.

maintaining corporate identity and a favorable public opinion in the marketplace.

The author makes the following recommendations for further study into the subject of media bias:

- The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* are considered, through previous research, to be liberal newspapers. A content analysis of articles from a conservative, liberal, and moderate newspaper may provide a broader picture of bias perceived through news writing.
- Research into political slant of news articles dealing with election campaigns, campaign financing and other political issues may provide an additional basis for the detection of media bias through the analysis of the content of news articles.
- This study was only concerned with the detection of bias through the content of news articles of the print genre. Additional study into the reporting of socially sensitive issues within the electronic media may extend this research.
- Further research, using the same protocol, using other socially sensitive issues (e.g. gun control, smoking, drugs) may provide a firmer foundation for the idea that media bias can be detected through an analysis of news content.
- A larger and broader survey, perhaps nationwide, of newspaper editors might yield more candid and straightforward responses than offered by editors in this study. And perhaps not.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MEMORANDUM

TO: Coders
FROM: Benjamin Martin
DATE: April 4, 1997
RE: Articles to read and coded

Let me first take this opportunity to thank you for participating in this study. Your help is greatly appreciated and the prompt attention to these articles is essential.

I've enclosed a packet of articles which appeared in two separate newspapers between October 5 and November 5, 1996. All articles, which you'll soon realize, are on the subject of abortion. Please read each article and, on the enclosed "Article Coding Packet," answer each question as it pertains to that specific article. The questions, which correspond to the question numbers highlighted on your coding sheet, are:

1. Do you think this article is biased?
Extremely biased Somewhat biased Can't detect
2. In your opinion, is this article propagandizing the issue of abortion? Yes No
3. How many references, in this article, are there to the unborn as:
Fetus _____ Child _____
4. How many references, in this article, are there to the female parent of the unborn as:
Woman _____ Mother _____
5. In your opinion, in this article, whose rights are most important?
Mother's Rights Fetus Rights
6. Does the article sound as though it's speaking for the government? Yes No
7. Does the article use complex information and word usage? Yes No
8. Does the article quote sources who have a special interest in the story? Yes No
9. Does the article present unchallenged "official" or "expert" information? Yes No
10. Do you feel the article is: Pro-Choice Anti-Abortion Neither

In addition, please highlight words or phrases within the text which you feel are biased. Once you've completed reading the articles and answering the corresponding questions, please hand deliver the article packet and coding sheets to me. Please return all materials to me no later than Monday, April 14. Thank you for your cooperation.

APPENDIX A (continued)

ARTICLE CODING PACKET

Please answer each question by circling or filling in the requested information. For each article, you will find a separate set of responses. Please make sure you are using the answer set which corresponds to the correct article. Article numbers can be found on the lower right of each article. Please return these sheets and the article packet no later than Monday, April 14.

Questions

1. Do you think this article is biased?
Extremely biased Somewhat biased Can't detect
2. In your opinion, is this article propagandizing the issue of abortion? Yes No
3. How many references, in this article, are there to the unborn as:
Fetus _____ Child _____
4. How many references, in this article, are there to the female parent of the unborn as:
Woman _____ Mother _____
5. In your opinion, in this article, whose rights are most important? Mother's Rights Fetus Rights
6. Does the article sound as though it's speaking for the government? Yes No
7. Does the article use complex information and word usage? Yes No
8. Does the article quote sources who have a special interest in the story? Yes No
9. Does the article present unchallenged "official" or "expert" information? Yes No
10. Do you feel the article is: Pro-Choice Anti-Abortion Neither

Answer Sets

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-1	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

APPENDIX A (continued)

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-2	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-3	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-4	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

APPENDIX A (continued)

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-5	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-6	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-7	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

APPENDIX A (continued)

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-8	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-9	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-10	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

APPENDIX A (continued)

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-11	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-12	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-13	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

APPENDIX A (continued)

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-14	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-15	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-16	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

APPENDIX A (continued)

<u>Article</u>	<u>Question #</u>	<u>Response (Circle or Fill in)</u>		
A-17	1	Extremely Biased	Somewhat Biased	Can't Detect
	2	Yes	No	
	3	Fetus _____	Child _____	
	4	Woman _____	Mother _____	
	5	Mother's Rights	Fetus Rights	
	6	Yes	No	
	7	Yes	No	
	8	Yes	No	
	9	Yes	No	
	10	Pro-abortion	Anti-abortion	Neither

APPENDIX B

Date

Editor-in-Chief

«Name»

«Address»

«City», «State» «Zip»

Dear Editor:

The media have the ability to direct the views and opinions of many in society. As part of a research project at Rowan College in Glassboro, NJ, I am seeking the opinions and attitudes of newspaper editors on the issue of bias in print media.

Carole Simpson told an audience of CNBC's *Equal Time*, "I think people kind of really want you (the media) to help direct their thinking on some issues." Some media analysts feel that bias has its place in today's print journalism. Bernard Goldberg even wrote in a February 1996 issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, "We don't sit around in dark corners and plan strategies on how to slant the news. It comes naturally to most reporters."

Are the media biased? Does bias really exist in media reporting? My study afford you the opportunity to express your opinion about this issue.

Thank you for participating in this study. I've enclosed a postage-paid, return envelope for your responses.

Sincerely,

Benjamin E. Martin
Rowan College - Graduate Division

enclosure

SURVEY: Media Bias

Readers of newspapers expect that what they read is free from bias. Research at Rowan College in Glassboro, NJ, seeks to determine the attitudes and feelings of the editorial staff of newspapers concerning media bias. Your time and candid responses are appreciated.

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
1. Bias is prevalent in today's print media.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Most reporters show a liberal bias in stories.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Most reporters show a conservative bias in stories.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Reporters generally keep personal views out of stories.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Most straight news writing is politically partisan.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Readers generally believe bias exists in your publication.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Your reporters fairly present both sides of a story.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Your publication is usually objective in reporting.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Your publication is usually fair in reporting.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Do you think most publications (other than yours) exhibit bias in their reporting? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If you answered yes, which publications can you cite?					
11. Which words do biased writers generally use to slant their stories?					

Please supply the following information about your publication.

Political Leaning: (Circle your choice.) *Democrat* *Republican* *Independent* *None*

Total Circulation: _____ **Number of reporters:** _____

Percent of editorial content in whole publication: _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE

APPENDIX D

The editors of the following newspapers chose to participate in the survey portion of this study. Their participation is greatly appreciated.

<u>Paper</u>	<u>City of Publication</u>
Asbury Park Press	Neptune, NJ
Bedford Daily Gazette	Bedford, PA
Bradford Era	Bradford, PA
Bridgeton Evening News	Bridgeton, NJ
Burlington County Times	Willingboro, NJ
Butler Eagle	Butler, PA
Camden Courier-Post	Cherry Hill, NJ
Corry Journal	Corry, PA
Courier-Express	Du Bois, PA
Daily Messenger	Canandaigua, NJ
Daily News	Batavia, NY
Daily Record	Parsippany, NJ
Gloucester County Times	Woodbury, NJ
Home News & Tribune	East Brunswick, NJ
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Pittsburgh, PA
Press & Sun Bulletin	Binghamtown, NY
Press-Enterprise	Bloomsburg, PA
Press of Atlantic City	Pleasantville, NJ
Star-Gazette	Elmira, NY
Times-Union	Albany, NY