

THE ROLE OF THE NEWSPAPER AS A COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL
BETWEEN A LOCAL COMMUNITY AND A REGIONAL GOVERNMENT



by

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THE NEWSPAPER: COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL
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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the results of a content analysis study of the extent and nature of Regional Government coverage in three newspapers. Two community weeklies and a metropolitan daily serving the town of Dundas in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region of Ontario were selected.

The probable maximum amount of coverage possible was estimated from personal interviews with production staff of other papers. For each of the sampled papers, the content measured was compared to these estimates and to the results for the other sampled papers.

The results showed that, contrary to some comments found in the literature, the weekly papers provided extensive coverage of regional government activities and displayed characteristics which other authors have identified as important to effective coverage. Based on these results it is concluded that the local newspapers are acting as communications channels between this local community and Regional Government, at close to their capacity to do so.

Similar amounts of coverage were not found in the daily, therefore it has not had this role. Some reasons for this are postulated in the conclusions.

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I am pleased to report that this thesis has been my own work in its entirety. The idea was mine, the data was collected and analyzed by myself, even the typing is my own. It follows of course that any errors or omissions must also fall on my shoulders and for these too I take credit.

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1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents the results of a content analysis study of three newspapers. The study was carried out to identify differences in the extent and nature of information, regarding a metropolitan scale government, present in these papers. These differences are related to the spatial scales over which the newspapers distribute information.

The need for such a study is predicated on two assertions: first, that the municipal system, as it exists in North America, requires a two way flow of information between the governing body and the citizens governed; and secondly, that the newspaper represents the logical choice of channel for the distribution of this information.

The question to be answered by this paper, then, is: if communication is to take place between local scale communities and metropolitan scale government, have local and/or metropolitan scale newspapers been used for this purpose, and if so, to what extent? Content analysis provides an objective measure of answering this question.

The geographical context of this paper relates to the two spatial scales: local and metropolitan. The

paper begins with a brief statement to confirm that both local and metropolitan scale communities can be identified within large urban areas by measuring social and economic variables. In the area selected for study, these two levels of community also have political reality in the form of a two-tier municipal government with local and metropolitan councils. The newspaper is shown to be an information channel which may also organize at these scales.

Before introducing the study itself in more detail, it is appropriate to briefly confirm the ability to identify the two scales of community with a brief discussion of the first assertion made above.

1.2 Local and Metropolitan Communities

When the words New York City are mentioned, some people will think of the sprawling eastern seaboard concentration of ten million people while others will think only of the core area, Manhattan. The division of large metropolitan areas into smaller local communities can be attempted in a number of ways.

Geographers often divide cities by functional areas: CBD, industrial and residential zones.¹ Sociologists prefer to locate neighbourhoods based on homogeneous groupings of ethnic, religious or income categories. These communities are often identified by local names such as Boston's Beacon Hill or Chicago's Gold Coast.²

Often, local communities within a metropolitan area can be identified as political units. Thus, a survey of 33 U.S. SMSA's with populations over 1,000,000 in 1972 showed an average of 268 local government units per SMSA. The average for 27 metropolitan areas under 100,000 population was twenty.³

This proliferation of communities within communities is a reflection of the spatial extent of individual travel patterns for various goods and services. The individual can identify, and identify with, a neighbourhood, a local community, and a larger "city".⁴ Each of these represents an area over which the search for particular goods may extend. It is not surprising or illogical to assume that public goods may also be distributed most efficiently over a variety of spatial scales, nor that government units should therefore also exist in a similar variety of spatial extents.⁵ The metropolitan community and the local community share the same physical space and must therefore take steps to do so harmoniously.

1.3 Objectives of Municipal Government

Although individual public services can be provided most efficiently at different spatial scales, overall coordination of services may require that certain services be grouped over the same area, which may be less than

optimal for particular services. The function of municipal government is to control the decision making process by which various trade offs are made to resolve the above problem. In theory, this decision process should reflect the wishes of the electorate. Thus local governments are viewed in terms of two values: access and service.

"By access we mean the most widespread participation possible on the part of... virtually all individual citizens... in terms of capacity to influence public policy decisions and to enforce responsive and responsible administration...

By service we mean...the achievement of technical adequacy in due alignment with public needs and desires...

Service and access...can indeed be blended in a state of equilibrium...widespread popular participation, will help to enhance the serviceability of government."⁶

What constitutes public participation has been the subject of some debate, especially when different values are held by various actors in the decision process.

In general, there are only three alternatives in a conflict situation: "separation of the parties, one party winning all and the other losing all, and, a new creative relationship-sometimes labelled compromise."⁷

The first two alternatives do not solve problems they just postpone them. Voting "with one's feet" is an example of the first alternative.⁸ Voting at the ballot box is an example of the second alternative. It is a poor measure of preference because of five basic limitations.

- a) It is an all or none rather than marginal choice situation.
- b) Benefits and costs of a program are indirectly tied to a vote for a candidate and are difficult to measure.
- c) Votes are of equal weight rather than by intensity of preference.
- d) The probability of an individual vote being outcome determining is low thus causes lack of participation.⁹
- e) "Citizens may not have access to sufficient information to render an informed judgement at the polls."¹⁰

Participation, therefore, requires more than just voting. It requires personal involvement by talking to councillors, writing letters, attending meetings, or taking an active role in political campaigns.¹¹ Arnstein saw increased participation as a kind of ladder, and access to information was the first step towards having a voice in political decision making.¹² Thus, the release of "publicity alone by local government is not participation, but it is the first step towards it."¹³ There is also a need for a flow of information in the other direction. within these flows is the rationale for a study of communications channels by a political geographer.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The second chapter of this paper is a literature review, indicating the types of work which have been done under the heading of communications theory. Specific attention is directed towards studies of the role of the newspaper in the political arena.

Chapter Three describes the study area with reference to: the communities present, the development of the two-tier political system, and an inventory of possible communications channels. Chapter Four presents the results of a pretest designed to confirm that the newspapers were the correct channel to investigate in detail.

Given a knowledge of the general contents of newspapers, it is possible to use a process of elimination to determine the approximate amount of space which could logically be expected to be devoted to the topic of metropolitan scale government in any given paper. The characteristics of this coverage, its nature and extent, can be estimated. The actual results of a content analysis study can then be measured against this standard to answer the question, have the local or metropolitan scale newspapers been used to their probable potential as communications channels for the distribution of information about metropolitan scale government to the local community and for the presentation of citizen feedback to government?

The process by which the expected characteristics were derived is explained in Chapter Five. This chapter also presents the methodology for the content analysis. The results of the analysis are presented in Chapter Six. An evaluation of these results and some general conclusions are presented in the final chapter.

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2: A REVIEW OF THE COMMUNICATIONS LITERATURE

Geographers have used content analysis to obtain data, but they have for the most part, failed to examine the content in terms of its producers and audience. For this type of information it is necessary to consult the literature from the branch of sociology which deals with communications theory. Practical applications of these concepts can be found in the marketing literature.

The relationship between government and the media has been examined by political scientists, but they have tended to neglect the spatial relationship between the media coverage areas and size of political units. This literature has shown that a full understanding of the significance of media messages requires an exploration of: the basic characteristics of the various media channels, the people involved with production of the message, and the factors affecting the message's influence on audience attitudes and behavior.

2.1 Channel Characteristics

Information channels are usually divided into two broad categories: personal (face to face) and non-personal (media). The basic differences include: the range and reach of the message, the production costs, objectivity, and provision for feedback. The geographer will recognize the first two variables as spatial.

Range is the spatial extent over which the channel distributes information. Reach refers to the proportion of the population within the range who are contacted. The range of personal channels tends to be quite small, eg. the work place or neighbourhood. Within this area the reach is quite high. In contrast, the media channels have much larger ranges but their reach is reduced by competition from other information sources and by greater heterogeneity in the audience.

Media channels can be subdivided into a continuum by using the characteristics listed above. Range defines local, provincial and national newspapers or television programs; objectivity distinguishes the national press from group specific publications; and the acceptance of feedback by newspapers differentiates them from movies in a theatre.

Linking the media and personal channels is a somewhat unique channel known as the community newspaper. It

"is seen as operating 'midway' between the mass media (the daily press) and informal communication (word of mouth)."

Studies concerned with the characteristics of channels rely on information from content analysis and from various media auditing firms. Often such studies are a first step in research projects designed to investigate one of the categories which will be discussed below.

Best known among the media characteristics authors is

Marshall McLuhan, however, similar work has also been done in the U.S. by Denis McQuail and in Britain by Colin Seymour-Ure.²

2.2 Producer Characteristics

The movement of messages through a particular channel is not only controlled by the physical characteristics of the channel, but also by the actors involved in the production process. Their role is generally referred to as the "gatekeeper effect".

The content of a given media channel directly reflects the internal and external pressures placed upon the message producers, that is to say, the content reflects both what producers perceive as their function in the community and what the community demands from the media.

The typical newspaper, for example, contains: news, advertisements (a special kind of news), opinions, special features for specific groups (sports, women), and entertainment material (comics, crosswords). This is not surprising given that studies have shown that newspaper producers identify four functions for themselves within the community:

a) Surveillance of the environment, ie. to collect and distribute information.

b) Correlation of response to the environment, ie., aid opinion forming and interpretation of situations.

c)transmission of the social heritage and community norms.

d)entertainment.³

This list closely matches the results of a reader survey taken in New York City which asked people why they read newspapers. The results were:

a)to obtain awareness of "world affairs" which could be useful in social interactions.

b)to obtain "information for daily living" through advertisements, listings and guides.

c)escape.

d)to learn the views of others for vicarious participation in activities.

Studies in this category are usually based on personal interviews or researcher participation in the channel process, therefore they tend to be restricted in scope to specific channels, events, or areas. Content analysis can be used to verify the statements made by producers as the end product will reflect the decision process which led to its creation.

2.3 Consumer Reactions

Behavioralists are interested in the effects of communications channels upon attitudes and actions of the people reached. Waples stated that response to information was affected by three factors: content of the

message, the characteristics of the receiver, and the environment in which the message is received.⁵ In most studies the characteristics of the receivers are defined by the location of the study or nature of the event being examined; attention therefore falls on the other two variables.

Seymour-Ure listed the controlling factors on receiver response as: frequency, intensity, and timing.⁶ Frequency refers to the number of times a message is repeated in a given time span. Intensity is the length of a single occurrence of the message. Timing relates to the willingness of the receiver to accept new information.

Cox and Morgan have identified two other characteristics of importance: ethnocentricity of the message, and competition from other sources.⁷

Conclusions reached from research studies have varied greatly. While it is true that "if a person does not know about something he will have no opinion on it,"⁸ McQuail has argued that an increase in information from media channels will not change attitudes or behavior.⁹ This is a position which advertising agencies would strongly refute.¹⁰ Greer concluded that information obtained from either personal channels or media channels could change attitudes, but, that the effects of contact with both sources for the same message was not cumulative.¹¹

Because of this diversity of results,

"A Theory of public communication sufficiently valid to support reliable predictions concerning even short run effects of public communications on public issues, is still far to seek."¹²

2.4 Newspapers and Municipal Government

2.4.1 Channel Characteristics

The three areas of investigation discussed above can be reviewed with specific reference to the relationship between newspapers and municipal governments. Wolfe examined a municipal election and after dividing communication channels into personal and media and subdividing these further, found the newspaper to be the most important media channel in terms of candidate expenditure and electors search for information.¹³

Detailed studies of the contents of local newspapers have been critical of the type of information that they provide. Cox and Morgan found that coverage of government tended to consist of snippets which were trivial and lacked in-depth explanation. Further, they felt that since the information was based primarily on material provided by council, it tended to discuss effects rather than causes of conflict.¹⁴

In Canada, Plunkett has also charged that newspaper coverage of personality conflicts on councils and reports of the trivialities of civic business are the main

types of item found and that these do not provide citizens with information of lasting value and do not represent the motives of elected officials properly.¹⁵ These shortcomings are in part due to the financial restraints placed on the newspaper as a small business. It usually can not afford sufficient staff for in-depth reporting, it often has to hire reporters with limited experience, and there is often a high turnover of employees, which causes discontinuity.¹⁶ The end results are further affected by the decisions of the producers.

2.4.2 Producer Characteristics

Examinations of producer attitudes towards local government have had mixed results. Janowitz, in a study of Chicago suburbs concluded that because of the close contact between the local paper and its readers and financial supporters, local papers were restricted to positions which were supportive of their relationship with the local community. Therefore, in a metropolitan area, the local paper would support the "rights and privileges of the local community with respect to the larger metropolis."¹⁷

Further, the paper would tend to comment on issues where the views of the two were in harmony, rather than try to suggest solutions to areas of conflict.

Another survey of 117 publishers in Washington State showed that 50% of them felt that their main purpose

was to develop community harmony.¹⁸ In Edmonton, Palitz, Reid and McIntyre concluded that news reports were edited so that decisions of council were reported without the background discussions. This gave an impression of council solidarity when in fact considerable debate and diversity of opinion had existed.¹⁹ A Canadian politician from a newspaper background has said that,

"a small-town paper has an obligation to express its community, but first it has to understand its community in a favourable way."²⁰

In contrast to the positions taken by these authors, Cox and Morgan have concluded that local papers prefer to report conflict within government or between government and citizens, rather than harmony.²¹ They, and McLuhan, have both attributed this to the fact that "news" must meet certain criteria, and "bad" news seems to do this more easily than does good news.²² A U.S. survey by Stevens showed that of 145 editors questioned, 75% felt that getting involved in a good controversy was a good way of expressing community leadership and therefore good for the paper.²³ In Canada, Tindal has concluded that local newspapers tend to be far more critical of local government than are the big daily papers.²⁴ Riker has also concluded that the best coverage occurs when there are a number of papers in competition with each other.²⁵

In order to be a force in the community a paper

must take a stand. The contents of the paper must show that it has evaluated and analyzed the events of the day not just reported them. The editorial is often seen as the key to this role, however this may not be the case. Sim pointed out that less than half of the weeklies in the United States publish editorials and Ford claimed that only about 10% of readers turn to the editorial page in any event.²⁶

The paper can however "editorialize" through its choice of what to print and in what manner. Factors such as location of the item within the paper, length of the item, and tone of the item, all affect its acceptance by the reader. These factors are established by the producers and are measurable by means of content analysis.

Several studies have shown that much of a local paper's power is held by the editor in the form of the threat of rebuke rather than the carrying out of that threat.²⁷ This will be discussed further in the next section.

2.4.3 Consumer Reactions

Studies researching the effectiveness of newspapers have focused on two groups: politicians and citizens. Based on interviews with politicians, Cox and Morgan concluded that local politicians expected the local paper to support their schemes and that politicians often tried to

approach the paper beforehand to ensure a positive report was forthcoming.²⁸ A study of 46 politicians by Edelstein and Schultz showed that 59% of them felt that the local newspaper should work with community leaders during the initiation stages of projects. All but one of the remainder felt that the paper should be prepared to promote any project once it had been initiated by council.²⁹ Janowitz also agreed that most politicians saw the community press as a force which could upset their plans if it came out against their proposals.³⁰

The newspaper is a channel to which citizens look for information and opinions and in which they can express themselves through letters or involvement in "newsworthy" activities. There is however, the possibility that some citizens will accept the availability of information as sufficient and will use it only for vicarious involvement in local government. This, clearly, would not constitute participation as defined in the first chapter. Further, it is this type of reaction which Rubin claimed was most dangerous to the democratic process.³¹

Rubin goes on to call for greater involvement on the part of the print media in local government. This is a recommendation also found in the works cited in section 2.4.1 of this paper.

A number of studies can be mentioned which have confirmed that citizen response is related to factors of

message content and surrounding environment. In a recent study, Genova and Greenberg argued that given equal levels of available information, interest is the major factor controlling effect; even where personal differences such as age, sex and education are present.³²

A number of authors have examined the intensity factor and have shown that during newspaper strikes (a short term intensity of zero) marked differences in human behavior are evident.³³

2.5 The Current Research

Previous researchers have identified the factors which affect the extent and nature of newspaper coverage of specific topics. They have not, however, come to agreement as to the direction of some of these influences, in particular, those related to the human element in the production process.

Chapter Four presents the results of a pretest of the available channels in the study area in terms of the physical characteristics of range, reach, cost of access, and provision for feedback. This shows that the newspapers have a definite advantage over other media and over personal contacts.

The content analysis study provides details of the characteristics of the newspaper in terms of the extent and nature of coverage of regional government activities.

In particular, it looks at the frequency of appearance of items, the intensity of items, and the timing of the release of information. From these findings, comparisons can be made with the statements presented in this chapter, adding new insights in an area where agreement has not yet been achieved.

The examination of the physical characteristics of the information made available by the newspapers, of the expressed views of the producers of the newspapers, and of the background environment into which the information was placed; allows for the development of an answer to the question under study in this thesis. If communication between local scale communities and a metropolitan scale government is to take place, have the local and/or metropolitan scale newspapers been used to their probable potential for this purpose, as measured by the extent and nature of their coverage of regional government versus an estimate of that potential?

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3 DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

The previous chapter identified the general characteristics within which this thesis is framed. In this chapter an area which can act as a location for a case study is identified. This chapter shows why the Town of Dundas within the metropolitan community of Hamilton-Wentworth was selected by the presentation of:

- a) an outline of the development of the municipal government system in Ontario with special reference to changes made in 1973 in the Hamilton area in order to recognize its urban metropolitan character.
- b) identification of a time period which represents a period when governmental reform was being considered and citizens wanted both information and input.
- c) the identification of an established local community within the metropolitan area.
- d) the identification of the communications channels available within the above setting.

3.1 Developments in Ontario

The British North America Act gave the power to create municipalities to the provincial governments. In Ontario, a system created by the Municipal Act of 1849 was continued and is still the basic framework in use.

As the needs of urban municipalities have changed, demands for reform have been directed towards the provincial government. These demands have been strongest in areas where the demands of cities for expansion have been thwarted by strong local opposition to annexation on the part of established incorporated towns.

In the late 1960s the Ontario government attempted to resolve this conflict through the creation of metropolitan scale governments known as Regional Municipalities. These are two-tier units within which local communities maintain their control over local matters through elected municipal councils and members from these councils are chosen to form a second-tier Regional Council. The Region has control over all metropolitan scale matters.

From the material presented in Section 1.3, the logic of this plan is clear. The system should reflect the fact that certain matters within a large urban area are of concern only to the local community while others are of concern to the metropolis as a whole. Thus, the two-tier form should be appropriate.

The implementation of the system has met with considerable hostility, in part because the two level split is not always clear cut, and in part because there was a lack of public input into the organizational process and a lack of public understanding about the aims and objectives of the regionalization process.¹ This represents

what this paper would term a lack of information and a lack of citizen participation. While this is not the only cause for hostility towards the regional system, it has been identified as important by other authors.

Twenty years ago, Rowat charged that the Canadian public lacked background knowledge of local government, lacked awareness of changing times, and, lacked interest in politics in general. He went on to say that one of the problems was that municipal organization differs not only from province to province, but from city to city. General textbooks such as his own, had to leave out details relating to specific cities, while texts dealing with specific cities had too small a demand to be profitable as publishing ventures.²

With respect to the introduction of Regional Government in Ontario, Tindal has commented that,

"the reaction of the public must be described as unenlightened at best...they may be bringing local government 'from the horse and buggy days to those of the sleek motor car' but they have forgotten about retraining the driver."

This suggests that the need for information has not been satisfied, thus the problems described in the previous chapter could be explored with reference to one of the Regional Governments in Ontario as a case study. A review of the Hamilton area suggests that it constitutes a suitable area for research.

3.2 Developments In Hamilton

Wentworth County became an independent unit in 1854 comprising: the townships of East and West Flamborough, Beverley, Ancaster, Binbrook, Glanford, Saltfleet and Barton. Within these were the Town of Dundas and the villages of Ancaster, Waterdown and Stoney Creek. The City of Hamilton was not a part of the county.

As Hamilton grew it expanded by annexation. Eventually it had claimed all of Barton and parts of Saltfleet and Ancaster townships. In 1952 an annexation made the eastern boundary of Dundas and the western boundary of Hamilton coterminous. Dundas was a well established town, incorporated in 1847, thus further expansion of the city in this direction was all but impossible. A similar situation occurred to the east in 1962 when the city's boundary expanded to Stoney Creek.⁴

As early as 1960, Hamilton was calling for the establishment of a metropolitan municipality fashioned upon the highly successful Toronto model. The proposal was opposed by Wentworth County until 1967 and the province would not take action.⁵

The Hamilton-Burlington-Wentworth Local Government Review, chaired by D.R. Steele, presented a report in 1969 which called for the amalgamation of these three units in a new two-tier metropolitan government. Further, it recommended that the smaller communities be amalgamated

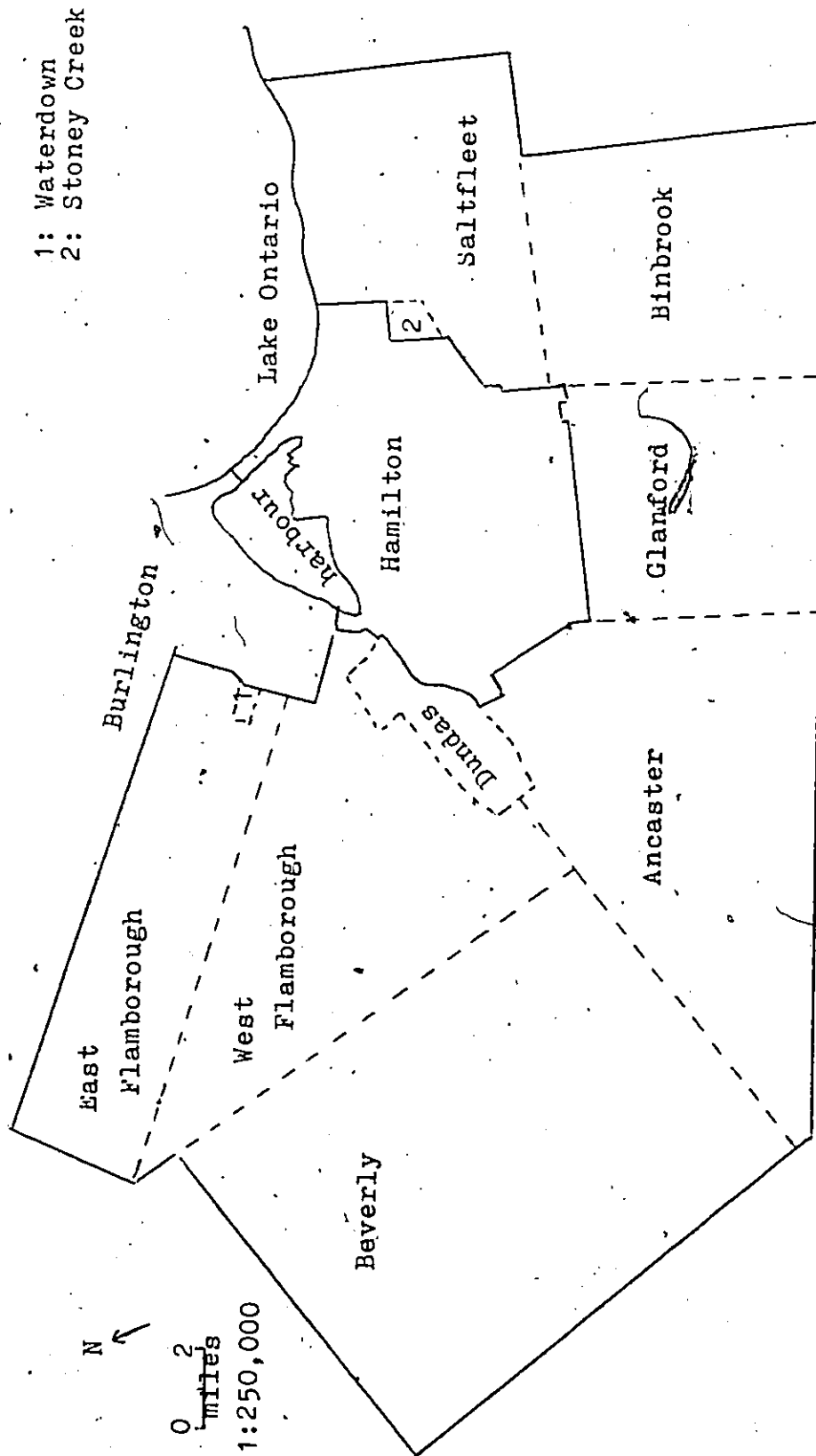
to reduce the total number of local units.⁶

The report met with opposition and no action was taken on the matter until 1973. At that time the provincial government announced proposals for the formation of three new Regions west of Toronto. These Regions, for the most part, followed old county boundaries, thus Burlington remained in Halton Region and only Hamilton and Wentworth were to be united.⁷ The findings of the Steele Commission and of the Lake Shore Urban Task Force on economic development both make it clear that there are many private sector links between Hamilton and Burlington.⁸ Thus the decision to follow the old county boundaries meant that the new Regions did not meet two of the criteria of a region as proposed by Smith.

"a governmental region should possess, to a reasonable degree, a combination of historical, geographical, economic and sociological characteristics such that some sense of community already exists and shows promise of future development. Further, a region should be structured so that diverse interests within its boundaries are reasonably balanced and give promise of remaining so in the foreseeable future."⁹

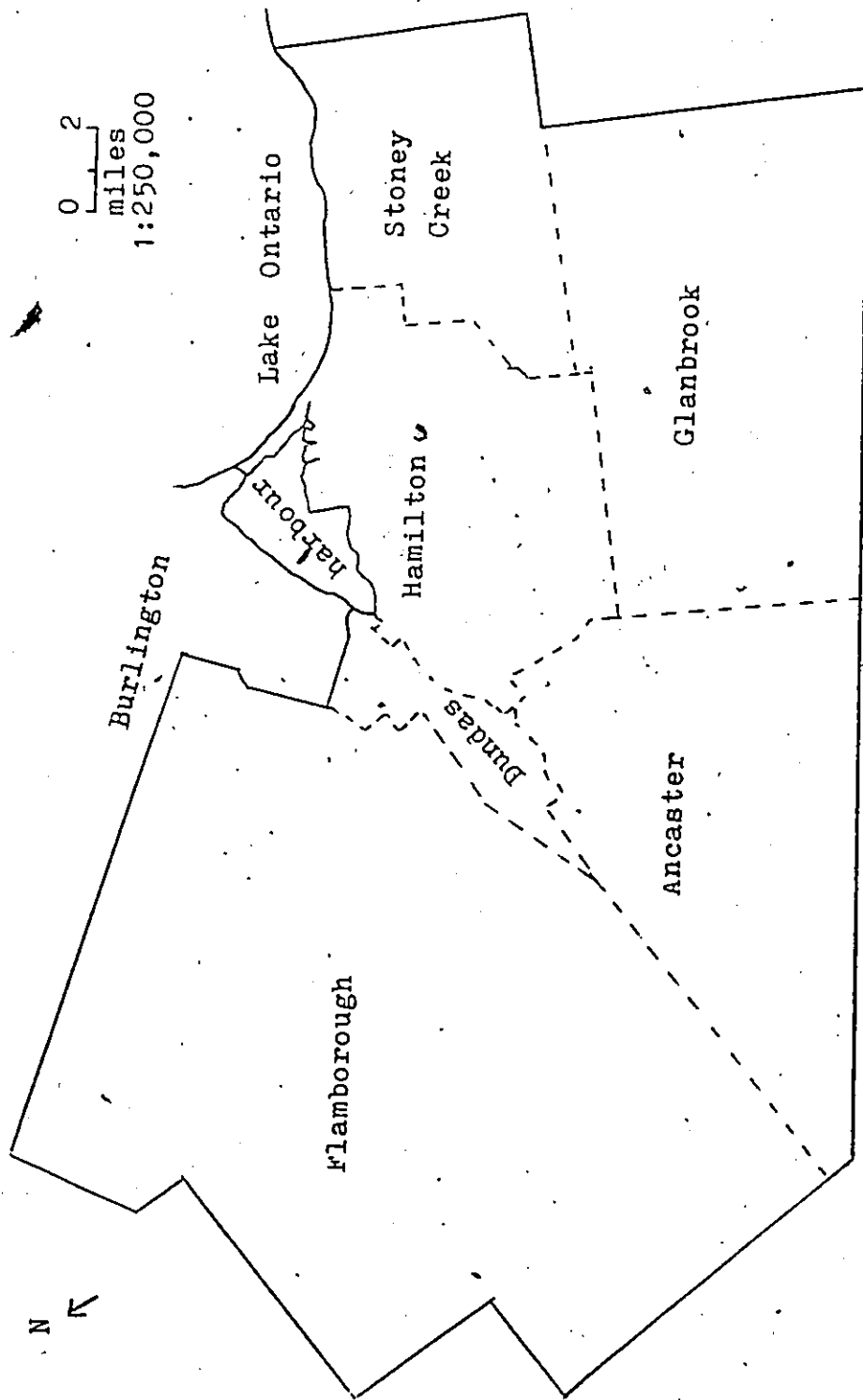
In 1973 the City of Hamilton and the ten municipalities in Wentworth County were reorganized into a new Region, the lower tier of which consisted of the city and five new suburban municipalities created through amalgamation of the county units. (Map 1, Map 2)

MAP 1 WENTWORTH COUNTY AND THE CITY OF HAMILTON 1962-1973



Source: "Hamilton-Burlington-Wentworth Local : Government Review" 1969

MAP 2 THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH



Source: Planning & Development Dept., Regional Municipality
Hamilton-Wentworth 1979

The details of the transformation process are of interest and will be reviewed briefly. The provincial Government's plan for the area was released on January 23, 1973 and a ten week period was set aside for presentation of rebuttles. The Bill establishing the Region was given first reading on June 13, 1973 and Royal Assent on June 22. It called for elections to be held on October 1 and for the new councils to take office on January 1, 1974.

During the summer of 1973 a questionnaire survey collected 125 responses from Hamilton and 75 from each of the new suburban municipalities on a range of questions dealing with the transformation. The results showed that 73% of those asked felt that the amount of information made available to them about the change process had been inadequate. Some 72% of respondents said that there had been insufficient chance for public input. The date of the forthcoming election was unknown to 70% of respondents and 68% did not know when the Region would come into being.

Asked where they had obtained information about the Region to date; 86% said from newspapers. Asked where they would go for further information; 28% said that they had no idea where to look.¹⁰

Conflicts between the City and its suburban neighbours did not end with the organization of the Region. In July 1977 the Regional Council passed a motion requesting

that the provincial government establish a commission to review the situation. This commission was established in September 1977 to examine the "organization, administration and functioning of local government in the Region."¹¹

The commission began with an information program concerning its purpose and encouraging public input. This was followed by public meetings and presentation of submissions throughout the fall of 1977. In February 1978 the commission retired to consider the evidence. In May a report was presented. This report recommended the abolition of the two-tier system and thereby raised considerable controversy within the suburban communities which viewed the decision as approval to allow Hamilton to annex them outright. The provincial government reacted by announcing in July 1978 that no action would be taken on the recommendations of the report.

In November 1978 the regular municipal elections were held. The ballot in Hamilton included a question asking voters to state a preference between one-tier and two-tier Regional government. This unofficial plebiscite forced politicians to express their opinions on the subject during the campaign.

The period from July 1977 to December 1978 was one during which citizens were being asked to express their opinions about the future form of municipal government in their area. Any rational decision requires information.

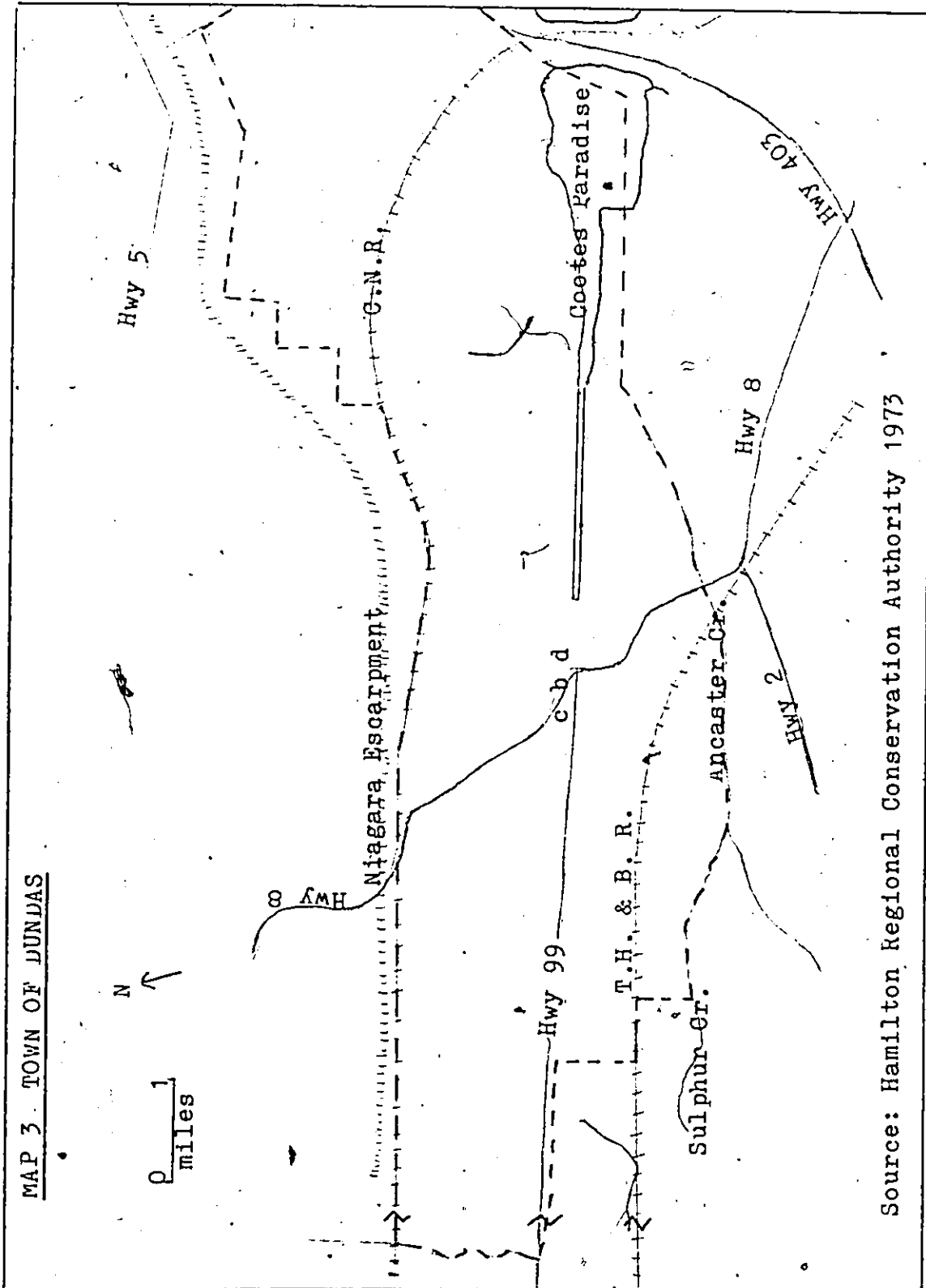
At this time, citizens needed information about the municipal government system, as well as an opportunity to express their views. Since this is the concern of this thesis, the period July 1977 to December 1978 was selected as the time frame for the content analysis study.

3.3 Identification of the Local Community

In 1977 Hamilton-wentworth Region consisted of: the City of Hamilton with a population of 312,000, Stoney Creek (32,000), Flamborough (23,600), Dundas (19,300), Ancaster (15,000) and Glanbrook (10,200). Of the five suburban municipalities, Dundas was selected as the one for use as a local community within a metropolitan area because of the following factors.

First, of the units formed in 1973, the external boundaries of Dundas underwent the least change. (Map 1,2) This reflects the clear physical boundaries around much of the town: the Niagara Escarpment, Cootes Paradise, and Ancaster Creek. (Map 3) The Dundas-Hamilton boundary has been described as one of the strongest in the Region.¹²

Secondly, the town has a long history. John G. Simcoe laid out a plan for a community at the end of his Dundas Road in 1793. The first commercial enterprises were built on Spencer Creek, just west of this site. The community was given the postal designation "Dundas" in 1814 and was incorporated as a town in 1847.¹³



Thirdly, the local community is identifiably different from Hamilton in terms of its social makeup. In 1971, 71.8% of Dundas residents were of British origin and 67.6% were protestant, while the corresponding figures for Hamilton were 57.3% and 50.1%. The average income in Dundas was second highest in the Region and 13% above the figure for Hamilton.¹⁴ Politically, the town is the only unit in the Region to have an at-large elected council, reflecting its compactness and homogeneity.

Finally, Dundas has a long tradition of local newspapers dating back to 1846. During the study period it had two weeklies, the Dundas Star and the Valley Journal. The Star was owned by Roger Brabant of Grimsby and the Journal by John Scoffield of Hamilton.

Despite the above facts which indicate the presence of a strong local community, Dundas is also a part of the larger metropolitan community. In 1971, 52.4% of the labour force resident in Dundas worked in Hamilton. Further, Hamilton dominates the Region in the provision of goods and services except for food and recreation.¹⁵

3.4 Identification of Available Channels

In the previous chapter communication channels were divided into personal and media and it was noted that there were differences in range and reach between these two classes. It was then noted that information

within the individual channels could be classed in terms of intensity, frequency, and objectivity. The costs of access and the provisions for feedback represent measures of the opportunities for governments and citizens to present information and/or opinions via these channels. Indirectly, this is a measure of the degree to which the channel promotes participation in municipal decision making.

An inventory of media channels in the Hamilton metropolitan area in 1977-78, identified a commercial television station, a cable television system, four radio stations (one FM and three AM), and a metropolitan daily newspaper.

Seven weekly newspapers serve parts of the Region. In addition to the Star, the Brabant chain also operates papers in Ancaster, Stoney Creek and the area of Hamilton known as the "Mountain". The Valley Journal was published with a different front page as the Ancaster Journal and Mr. Scoffield also published a paper called the "West Hamilton Journal", serving the area adjacent to Dundas and Ancaster. The two chains were amalgamated in 1979 after this study was completed.


Personal contact channels related to citizen participation in ~~municipal government~~ could best be identified in terms of public participation at various meetings.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has identified a metropolitan area (Hamilton-Wentworth) within which a well defined local community (Dundas) exists. A time when citizen-government communication was especially important (July 1977 to December 1978) was pointed out, and the channels through which this communication could take place were identified.

By holding the information topic (the Region), the message (the events of the period), and the receiver (the community of Dundas) constant, differences in the information presented in various channels can be more clearly linked to differences among the channels themselves.

Before undertaking a detailed analysis of the newspapers operating at different spatial scales (local and metropolitan), it was necessary to conduct sufficient research to identify these channels as more important to the distribution of information about the Region than are the other available channels listed above. This is the intent of the next chapter.



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¹⁴Stewart Report, p32. Hamilton had 77.1% of the population of the Region and had 71.6% of the dollar value of sales in the Recreation category and 79.9% of sales in the food category. Values for all other categories for Hamilton were over 82%. Based on 1971 Census.

¹⁵Ibid., pp30-31.

4: PRELIMINARY STUDY OF CHANNELS

This chapter examines the various communications channels in the Hamilton area. This is done in terms of their range, reach, cost of access, degree to which they allow for feedback, and other factors which may affect the intensity and frequency of municipal government coverage.

The personal channels, face to face contacts and direct mail are discussed first. This is followed by a report on the media channels: television, radio, and the press.

4.1 Personal Contact

Personal contact is the most effective form of information distribution as the reach is 100% and feedback can be immediate. As stated in Chapter Two, the range of this channel is however, small. Sociologists have suggested that personal contact works well up to the range of the defended neighbourhood, ie. 150 households, but it is not effective at the range of the average political community or planning district, ie., 500 to 1500 households.¹

In 1977, Dundas had a population of 19,300 and was represented on Regional Council by two members. While this ratio of citizens per councillor may be sufficient

for occasional contacts concerning specific problems, it is an unrealistic ratio for close contact on a broad range of topics.

The closest alternative to one-to-one contact is participation by citizens in public meetings. This still allows for immediate feedback although time constraints may prevent some people from having an opportunity to speak. Attendance is a surrogate means of measuring citizen participation of this kind. Preliminary investigations reveal low attendance figures for most political events.

The Stewart Commission held seven public meetings across the Region and attracted a total of just over five hundred people or about .1% of the population. Only about one fifth of those who attended took an active part in the discussions held. In Dundas, eighty people attended and fourteen spoke, giving participation rates of .4% and .09% of the total population, respectively.²

The Spectator reported attendance at the first two public meetings held with respect to the Draft Official Plan had averaged about two dozen people in attendance.³ The Dundas Star reported that no one had turned up for a meeting regarding the location of a garbage transfer site in the community. Total voter turnout at six candidates' meetings was reported as less than four hundred. This is less than 3% of eligible voters in the Town and just over

6% of all those who voted in the December 1978 election.⁴

The Regional Council sits in a chamber which can hold three hundred people. The Regional Clerk reported that average attendance during the fall and winter is about one hundred people including school groups. In the summer attendance falls off to as low as two dozen.⁵

The events of this time period, which will be discussed in more detail at a later point, suggest that there was concern about the state of municipal government in the community, thus it would seem that this should have been a period of maximum citizen participation. Attendance however, requires effort, and it would appear that most people either had not reached their action threshold, or else felt that their participation would not affect outcomes. If the figures presented above represent a maximum, it is clear that personal contact is not the most appropriate method of distributing information because of its low reach at the desirable range.

4.2 Private Mailings

Bulk mail can insure delivery to every household in a given area and is a popular method of distribution for commercial information. Provincial and federal politicians periodically send out "newsletters" paid for through public and party funds. These can be quite informative.⁶ The Canadian municipal system is for the

most part non-partisan, thus local councillors do not have such resources at their disposal.

The Regional Council has on occasion used "Householder letters" to distribute information, as for example when the Draft Official Plan was being discussed. This action was taken in conjunction with newspaper ads and public meetings.⁷ The Stewart Commission also sent out a householder letter in November 1977. This too was done in conjunction with press releases and public meetings.⁸

Feedback from bulk mailings tends to be low. A commercial operation expects 1-3% response rate on return-by-mail offers. The most likely use of this channel appears to be in conjunction with other channels, for example, to provide written material for radio, television or public meetings.

4.3 Television

Commercial television is primarily an entertainment medium. Public affairs programming is usually limited to times when audience levels are low. Even a local station has its audience distributed over such a wide range that [community level subjects are unattractive as topics of programming. The Hamilton station must compete for viewers with stations in Toronto and Buffalo.

The production costs for television programs are high and there is little opportunity for feedback. The

members of the Stewart Commission appeared on only one television program. This was a mid-day talk show on the Hamilton station and its purpose was to generate interest in the Commission's activities.⁹

Regional Council meetings are broadcast live by the local cable channel on Tuesday nights and rebroadcast on Wednesday afternoons.¹⁰ Given that the seven to ten o'clock period is prime time entertainment programming on other channels and that most adults work during the afternoon, it is unlikely that the reach of these broadcasts is anywhere near the 100,000 people connected to the system. No actual viewer statistics were available, but it is interesting to note that Wolfe, in her study of Guelph, pointed out that the local cable station was all but ignored by the candidates.¹¹

4.4 Radio

Radio has a number of advantages over television, for example, lower production costs and a greater opportunity for feedback through open-line shows. The two major disadvantages are the lack of a visual image and the highly fragmented nature of the audience. BBM figures for average quarter hour adult audiences show that the Hamilton stations drew 37,500, 19,300, 10,000, and 5,700 listeners respectively in the Census Metropolitan Area on an average weekday morning, which is radio's "prime time!"¹²

In total, these stations attract less than 15% of the Region's population at the best of time. This is due in part to strong competition from the Toronto stations.

The Stewart Commission took part in two open-line shows on Hamilton stations during which a total of sixteen calls were answered. It is interesting to note that they also appeared on a Toronto morning talk show program (CBC).¹³ Observations made of the broadcasts of council meetings in the city of Guelph indicate that a considerable amount of information is lost because items are discussed by agenda number; speakers are not always identified, and much of the debate has been completed at the committee level.

The low listenership levels for individual stations and the clarity problems suggest that radio is not the best distribution method for information about municipal government.

4.5 Metropolitan Daily Papers

From a cost standpoint, the metropolitan daily is a cheaper form of information distribution than either of the broadcast media. It also has the advantage of presenting the information in a lasting form. Further, there is a potential for feedback through letters to the editor. In many cities the newspaper's range and reach

may also be most satisfactory.

In 1978 the Hamilton Spectator had an average Monday to Friday issue reach in the Hamilton CMA of 72.9% among adults. This is of course due to a lack of competition. The nearest dailies in Guelph, Brantford and St. Catharines are much smaller, thus the Spectator's main competition comes from the provincial evening paper, the Toronto Star.¹⁴ This poses a number of problems with respect to the Regional news coverage found in the Spectator.

First, the Spectator devotes much of its space to international, national, and provincial news, and uses editorials and comments available to it as a member of the Southam chain. Thus it has a format similar to that of the Star, with a limited amount of space available for "local" news.

A second problem is that the "local" area of the Spectator extends beyond the Region to include the City of Burlington, the Town of Grimsby, and large rural areas in Haldimand Region. This means that Hamilton must compete for space with its neighbours.

The third observation made during a preliminary study of the paper was that newspapers in this general size category seem to seek out sensationalism; stories of crime, disaster and human tragedy do overpower stories of newsworthy but less horrific events, as McLuhan stated.¹⁵

Despite these problems, it is clear that the daily metropolitan paper is within the parameters of range, reach, cost of access and provision for feedback to make it worthy of further study.

4.6 The Weekly Newspaper

In terms of cost, the local paper is even less expensive than the metropolitan paper. In terms of feedback it is usually easier to have a letter to the editor published in a weekly. In terms of reach, the weekly can equal the daily within the local community range.

Exact distribution figures are hard to obtain because circulation is by free distribution rather than audited. The two Dundas papers provide free distribution and both papers print enough copies to reach every household in the community.¹⁶ A survey done in Los Angeles, found that 94% of 1800 respondents received a weekly paper and 81% said that they read it regularly.¹⁷

The major problem may be that Regional news would be considered too broad (ie., not ethnocentric enough) to be of interest to a community based paper. This may be offset by the fact that the local papers are members of chains. This is the case in most Canadian cities.

In Ontario, twenty companies operate a total of 300 weeklies. The two largest are Metrospan, owned by the

owned by Douglas Bassett, with fourteen papers in the Toronto area. In Vancouver, Sterling Newspapers, owned by Conrad Black, has nine papers; and in Winnipeg six papers are owned by one firm. Three weeklies in Edmonton are owned by the London Free Press which also has papers in Ottawa and Victoria.¹⁸ The Dundas Star began in 1890 and was purchased by the Brabant chain in 1967. The Journal began operation in 1972. In 1979 the two chains amalgamated reducing the total number of papers in the Region from seven to five. The Dundas paper became known as the Star-Journal.

For the same reasons that the daily newspaper was accepted as a possible distribution channel for information about Regional government, the local weekly papers must also be considered worthy of further study.

The study done in Hamilton in 1973 and referred to earlier did not differentiate between local and metropolitan newspapers. It reported that asked where they had obtained information about the Region to date 86% replied newspapers, 49% television, 13% radio, and 10% public meetings. (more than one choice was allowed) This result tends to confirm the reach statements made in this chapter. When the study asked people where they would go for more information only 2% chose newspapers, while 55% said a local councillor and 28% admitted that they had no idea where to look.¹⁹

These results suggest that contact with the press can increase the likelihood of personal contact with politicians, if not the actualization of that contact. The final figure quoted also suggests that some people still require more information before they will reach an action threshold point and begin to participate in local government. The next chapter explains the methodology of the content analysis study and the way it could be used to answer the questions posed about the distribution of information about metropolitan scale government.

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5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper began by stating two assumptions. The first of these was that municipal government as it exists in North America requires a two way flow of information between the governing and the governed. This statement was expanded upon in Chapter One.

The second assumption was that the newspaper represents the logical choice of distribution channel for the required information exchange. This was shown to be the case via the comments of other authors presented in Chapter Two and by a pretest in the study area, described in Chapter Four.

This chapter explains what is meant by extent and nature of regional government coverage and describes how it can be measured using content analysis.

5.1 Elements of Extent

Extent refers to the proportion of available space devoted to a specific topic. Estimation of probable extent can be made through a process of elimination, described below.

Before undertaking this research project, the author spent a year working as a writer for a community newspaper. During this time period ample opportunities

arose for discussion of the composition of local newspapers, not only with senior staff members of this particular paper, but also with the editors of three other weekly papers and a daily paper, all of which served the same geographic area. The following premises are based on this involvement with the production process.

The newspaper is assembled via a process of elimination which has the effect of controlling the amount of space devoted to given categories of items. The economics of publishing require that on average approximately half of the total space available be devoted to advertisements.

The demands of specific interest groups for specialized news and for escape value material, forces the editor to devote over half of the remaining space to such things as: sports news, entertainment guides, women's features, horoscopes, crosswords and comics. This leaves about 20% of the entire paper available for news, editorials and letters; the categories within which items about municipal government are most likely to be found.

Within each of these categories a metropolitan scale government must compete with other news sources. These would include: the local council and municipal affairs, the school system and Board of Education, a wide variety of social, religious, and service organizations, and, special events of the week such as disasters, festivities, and new attractions in the community.

Thus, the Regional Government is one of five major sources of news. However, because of its spatial extent, some stories will be considered not of local interest, thus its total allotment of space in both news and editorials will be something below 20%, on a typical week.

Letters to the editor tend not to be devoted to governmental issues unless a citizen has a specific concern or the letter is from a politician. Regional space in this category can be expected to be less than in the previous two.

Similarly, special features which provide background information about the Region are not particularly attractive as "human interest" items unless a specific issue is at hand. Since the Region is not likely to get any space in other areas of the newspaper, its total allotment is likely to be somewhat less than 20% of the 20% of the newspaper devoted to news, editorials, and opinion, plus, some features space. This would be a value of 3-5% of available space in a given week.

5.2 Elements of Nature

The information presented in the literature review indicated that characteristics of the content and of the setting in which the information appeared could affect reactions to the material. Further the producers of the distribution channel would tend to act as gatekeepers and

filter the information transmitted. Thus, it is important to know more about the information than just the absolute amount present.

The following characteristics of the content should be examined in order to properly understand the "nature" of the information available to the public.

a) The location of the material within the paper and the length of items (content intensity measures).

b) The distribution of the information over time with reference to background events (a setting and frequency measure).

c) The topics of editorials and the slant (bias) of news items (a producer filtering measure).

e) The specific topics covered (a measure of the relationship between the information made available and the major events of the time period).

5.3 Coverage Characteristics

Based on the information presented in the previous two sections, the following descriptive characteristics can be proposed as likely to outline the extent and nature of regional government coverage in a typical community newspaper or in that portion of a metropolitan paper devoted to coverage of its circulation range area.

5.3.1 Quantity Characteristics

Characteristic I: Total Regional Space will constitute 3-5% of total space within a given newspaper on average.

Characteristic II: Regional News space will constitute at least 15% of all news space within a given paper on average. (See page 54)

Characteristic III: Regional Editorial space will constitute at least 15% of all editorial space in a given paper on average.

Characteristic IV: Letters to the Editor including prepared statements by politicians and organizations, which discuss the Region will constitute at least 10% of space available for such items, in a given paper.

Characteristic V: Special features which provide background information about the Region will constitute at least 10% of space available for feature items in a given paper.

5.3.2 Nature Characteristics

Characteristic VI (Frequency Characteristic) The distribution of Regional items will be such that at least 50% of all newspaper editions have at least one item.

Characteristic VII: (Intensity Characteristic) The events related to the Region are of sufficient importance that news items will appear in prominent locations within the papers, specifically before the editorial page in the local papers and on the front page or the local news pages.

of the metropolitan paper (ie., pages 7 - 11).

Characteristic VIII: (Timing Characteristic) The reform of government is an issue of special importance thus the amount of space devoted to the Region will increase during the active stages of the Stewart Commission, specifically from July 1977 to January 1978, during May and June 1978, and during the election campaign of November 1978.

Characteristic IX: (Timing Characteristic) A breakdown of Regional items by topic will show the reform of the government system to be the major category during the times listed in the previous statement and will show planning and administration to be the other major topics.

Characteristic X: (Producer Influence Measure) The newspaper will be seen as taking a clear stand on major issues via the slant of its news coverage, ie. Regional news items will discuss only one side of a situation. (see Section 5.6 for further detail)

Characteristic XI: (Producer Influence Measure) The newspaper will be seen as taking a clear stand via its editorial statements about the Region.

Characteristic XII: (Reaction Measure) The content of letters to the editor will provide evidence that citizens and politicians are reading other parts of the newspaper and are prepared to use the newspaper as a means of expressing their views on particular issues and to reply to statements made by others in this channel.

5.4 Hypotheses

The general question to be answered has been stated as: if communication is to take place between local scale communities and a metropolitan scale government, have the local and/or metropolitan scale newspapers been used for this purpose to their probable potential?

Through a process of elimination it has been possible to describe a series of characteristics which present a reasonable estimate of the typical newspaper's probable potential as a distribution channel for information about regional government. This can be used as a standard against which the actual contents of a newspaper can be compared. To answer the overall research question in a positive manner requires that the following two hypotheses be proven true.

Hypothesis I: Each of the papers examined will exhibit the characteristics outlined above.

Hypothesis II: There will be no significant difference among the papers sampled with respect to their coverage of Regional Government.

5.5 Geography and Content Analysis

Content analysis has found applications in the economic, historical, urban, and physical branches of geography, thus the methodology set forth below is but a logical extension of the methods of other geographers.

These studies have shown that content analysis can be used both as a means of obtaining detailed description, as was done by Catchpole, and, as a means of identifying issues or problems, as was done by Taylor.¹ Symanski showed that content analysis provided an important adjunct to the journalistic method proposed by Bordessa and Cameron, bridging the gap between science and social science.²

Johnson credited newspapers with constant social contact with their service area and he therefore felt that they were important in the distribution of information about goods and services and about political outlooks. He stated that newspapers helped to build community spirit and to strengthen local connections of other kinds. He goes on to provide examples of how content analysis studies of local newspapers can be used to determine the area of influence of the community in which they originate.³

Geographers clearly, have been more interested in gaining information from the content of newspapers, than in the analysis of the content itself. It is for this reason that this paper has had to rely on the work of authors in other disciplines for comments on the nature of the content. (See Chapter 2)

The methodology used in this analysis is derived from instructions provided in the works of Taylor, Corn and Morgan, and Janowitz.⁴

5.6 Methodology of Analysis

The data source used to test the hypotheses made in Section 5.4 consisted of the material from newspapers published in the seventy seven week period from 77:6:5 to 78:12:21. The analysis included all issues of the two weekly papers in Dundas, the Star and the Journal. It also included a sample of one paper per week, selected on a rotation of Monday to Friday editions, of the Hamilton Spectator. The analysis included all items in the local newspapers, and a sample of the Spectator's "Metro" edition consisting of pages six through eleven. This choice was made on the assumption that these pages are the pages most likely to contain items related to regional government and are the pages where the reader would look first for such items. (This assumption was confirmed through a pretest described in Chapter Six. The analysis also showed that there was no difference in coverage on any particular day so that the Monday to Friday selection was appropriate.)

For the purposes of this study an "item" was defined as one complete piece of material, for example, a news story, display advertisement, editorial, letter, or photo with no attached story. Seven steps were involved in the analysis. Each step breaks down the item into a more detailed category.

The first step was the categorization of all items into one of the following totally inclusive and mutually exclusive types of item.

a) News: items related to specific decisions or events which have occurred during the last seven days or items which update previous news stories.

b) Editorials: items appearing on the editorial page or the page following which present a comment with or without a by-line.

c) Political Opinion: prepared statements by politicians printed as such.

d) Letters to the Editor printed as such.

e) Display and classified advertisements.

f) Feature Articles: items providing background information about a specific topic which does not qualify as any of the previous categories.

g) Other: material regularly found in a newspaper such as sports news, entertainment guides, announcements, and space taken up by the paper for headings and self promotion.

The second step divided all items into Regional and non-Regional items, where a Regional item was one in which the Regional Government, one of its departments, or one of its personalities was directly referred to. All references to the Stewart Commission were considered to be Regional items.

A number of regionally based organizations which are not directly a part of Regional Government exist. References to these organizations were not considered to be Regional Items. The main organizations in this class were: the Conservation Authority, the Assessment Office, the Library Board, the Board of Health, the Health Council, and the Childrens Aid Society. Stories involving incidents on the Hamilton Street Railway and the investigations of the Regional Police force were not considered as Regional Items, however, stories related to the policies of these two organizations were counted as Regional items.

As a third step, the total number of items was recorded and the space which they occupied was measured in column inches. A column inch is an area one column wide by one inch deep based on a standard column width used by the paper being measured. The width of a column varies slightly, being 4 cm. in the Spectator and Journal and 3.5 cm. in the Star. This results in total column inches per page figures: the Journal, 108 for the Star, and 178 for the Star. The weekly papers use tabloid size pages and the daily paper is broadsheet.

The location of all items was recorded by page number as the fourth step. Next, the Regional items were read carefully. The Regional items were then classified by topic with the following categories selected.

- a) Governmental reform.
- b) Planning, exclusive of (a)
- c) Public Works: i) roads and transit
ii) water and sewage
- d) Administration: i) Council decisions and activities not related to any of the above categories.
ii) Administration and Finance Committee decisions.
- e) Social Services
- f) Other: Any item not in one of the above categories.

Provision was made for the further separation of any of the above categories if a topic with more than 1% of all Regional space became evident.

The sixth step was the identification of the major sources of the information published. The following were selected as probable categories and provision was made for further subdivision if necessary.

- a) Regional Council or government departments.
- b) Local Councils or government departments.
- c) Stewart Commission.
- d) Ratepayers associations and private citizens.
- e) Specific politicians including provincial members.
- f) Other; any item not from the above.

The final step in the analysis was the categorization of Regional items in terms of their support of the

Regional Government system, its decisions and actions.

The three categories used are named from the point of view of the Regional Government as it existed at the time of the study.

a) Positive: items which support the Region and show that it is acting on the behalf of citizens or the wishes of local councils, also items which support the two-tier option.

b) Negative: items which attack the Region and show that it is acting against the views of citizens or local councils, or which favour change in government organization.

c) Neutral: Items which report actions and decisions of the Region: without mention of local opinion, or where local opinion is divided, or where both sides of the situation are discussed without coming to a conclusion, and general discussions of municipal government in Ontario which do not support or attack the two-tier system.

The results of the analysis carried out using this methodology are presented in the next chapter.

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- ³James Johnson, Urban Geography: An Introductory Analysis, (Oxford, 1967) pp84-86.
- ⁴Taylor, supra. Harvey Cox and David Morgan, City Politics and the Press, (Cambridge, 1973). Morris Janowitz, The Community Press In An Urban Setting, 2nd.ed. (Chicago, 1967).

6: RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

6.1 Overall Size and Item Categories

The analysis of the three newspapers looked at the entire contents of the two weekly papers and at a portion of the daily. It was assumed that the average reader of a weekly would read it cover to cover but that a similar reader of a metropolitan daily would be selective in his search for Regional information.

Because the Spectator sample consisted of the front page and pages six to eleven, it had a constant size of 1246 column inches per edition. The size of the weekly papers fluctuated from week to week, within narrow limits.

For the first eight months of the study period the Star editions were either sixteen or twenty pages in length and the Journal was equal in size or larger. In March the Star expanded to thirty two and twenty eight page editions through July. For the last six months the majority of Star editions were twenty eight pages in length. The Journal expanded to twenty four pages during the last three months of the study. (Table 1)

The overall composition of the three papers in terms of the seven categories identified in step one of

the methodology remained constant despite the changes in overall size noted for the weekly papers.

As expected, approximately half of the total space in the weeklies was devoted to advertisements. (Table 2) The Journal devoted more space to advertisements than did the Star, primarily at the expense of features. This is probably attributable to the combined effects of three factors.

First, the Star earned additional income from the distribution of "flyer" supplements which were not counted as part of the sample. Secondly, production costs for the Star are probably slightly lower as the Brabant chain owns its own printing facilities while the Journal contracted this work out. Finally, the Star had access to features written by the staff of the other chain papers, in particular a number of items were identified as being written at the Stoney Creek News.

Also as expected, the remaining space in the paper was divided up with approximately 30% devoted to sports, entertainment, features and other material; and 20% left for news and opinion items.

Comparable figures for the Spectator were not possible to calculate because of the nature of the sample taken. The sample was designed to include all of the editorials and letters and most of the local news, while leaving out sports, classifieds, and non-local news.

TABLE 2
COMPOSITION OF NEWSPAPERS BY CATEGORY
PERCENTAGES

<u>Category</u>	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
News	15.9	17.1	71.6
Editorials	2.4	3.2	8.6
Comment	2.7	0.6	2.8
Letters	1.1	1.8	2.9
Features	17.3	7.1	n/a
Advertisements	49.9	57.7	14.1
Other Space	10.7	12.5	n/a
Total Column			
Inches Examined (100%)	198,768	138,515	95,942

Note: Spectator values based on sample taken. See text for clarification.
Definitions of Categories may be found in Chapter 5

The figures for the Spectator in Table 2 are to identify the nature of the sample only and are not for comparison with the figures for the weekly papers.

6.2 Size and Categories of Regional Items

The second step of the analysis consisted of the separation of the Regional items from the remainder. This provides a value for the total volume of Regional material and a breakdown into the seven categories used above.

(Table 3)

The largest category in all three papers was news. Values for the two local papers were almost equal. The three opinion categories constituted 30% of items in the Star and 33% of items in the Journal, although the distribution within this group was not the same for both papers. As with total coverage, the Star devoted more space to Regional features than did the Journal.

The Spectator sample clearly accents news coverage even though it included space in which advertisements, comments or features may have appeared. It is known that some such items did appear in other parts of the paper which were not sampled, the volume of such material is however, apparently small.

The calculation of Regional coverage as a percentage of total space by category provides the figures required to test the extent characteristics. (Table 4)

TABLE 3
COMPOSITION OF REGIONAL COVERAGE
PERCENTAGES

<u>Category</u>	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
News	48.2	48.5	88.9
Editorials	11.9	19.5	8.4
Comment	12.9	4.9	0.0
Letters	5.5	8.9	2.7
Features	13.7	8.6	n/a
Advertisements	7.8	9.7	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Column Inches Examined (100%)	6284	5140	1612

Note: Spectator values based on sample taken.
See text for clarification.
Definition of categories may be found
in Chapter 5

TABLE 4
REGIONAL COVERAGE AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
BY CATEGORY FOR THREE NEWSPAPERS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
News	9.6	10.5	2.8
Editorials	15.7	22.4	1.5
Comment	15.1	31.3	0.0
Letters	15.6	17.9	1.6
Features	2.5	4.5	n/a
Advertisement	0.5	0.6	0.0
Other	0.0	0.0	n/a
Total Space	3.2	3.7	2.0

Note: All Values Calculated as
Table 3/Table 2

Table 4 shows the extent to which Regional items were able to capture space within each category. Since the sample included all of the editorials, comments, and letters published by the Spectator these values are directly comparable with those for the weekly papers.

In the other categories, some adjustments must be made as all possible items were not included in the sample taken. These adjustments are specified in the following sections which deal with the individual categories in turn and provide details related to each.

6.3 Regional News Items

News items were the largest category of Regional items in all three newspapers in absolute terms. (Table 3) In this section the regional news coverage is examined in detail in terms of: total quantity, distribution over time (frequency), location within the newspaper (intensity), apparent producer slant, news sources, and the information value of the material as data for helping to understand the decision making process used by municipal government.

6.3.1 Total News Quantity

The most objective measure of news coverage is the count of the total number of items and the number of column inches used by these items. This measurement was made for each of the three newspapers as specified by step three of the methodology.

The Spectator sample contained 28 editions with one Regional news item and 22 with more than one item, thus 65% of all editions sampled had Regional news items. The total number of items was 93 and they had a mean size of 8.7% of a full page.

It will be shown below (Section 6.3.3) that the sample taken probably includes 90% of all Regional items published by the daily thus the value for "news" in Table 4 is comparable with the figures given for the weekly papers as a measure of Regional news to total local news. The percentage which Regional news would be of all news, including international, national, and provincial, would of course be much smaller.

The Star published 59 editions with at least one Regional News item during the study period. This was 77% of all editions examined. The mean size of these items, of which there were 132, was 21% of a full page. As shown in Table 4, Regional news items represented 9.6% of total news space available in the entire paper during the study period.

The Journal published 51 editions with items. This was 66% of all editions examined. The total number of items found was 129. They had a mean size of 20.3% of a full page. Table 4 shows that in total they represented 10.5% of all news space in the paper during that time period.

From a quantitative standpoint, the above analysis shows that between the two local papers there was just over a 2% difference in terms of total number of items and less than a 2% difference in terms of mean size of items and proportion of total news space available used. In contrast, the values for the daily paper showed that items commanded a smaller proportion of individual pages and a much smaller proportion of total news space.

6.3.2 Distribution Over Time

An important measure of the frequency of coverage is the manner in which the material is distributed over time. Several measures of this characteristic were made. First, the weekly calculations of proportion of space devoted to Regional news were collected and the mean and standard deviations over the seventy seven issues were calculated. Secondly, the distribution of zero values was examined, and finally the distributions were graphed after aggregation to monthly values.

The Spectator sample showed a weekly mean of 2.8% of local news space devoted to Regional items with a standard deviation of 3.68, suggesting considerable variation. However, only two months were found in which more than two weeks contained no Regional items and these months were not consecutive. This suggests a lack of concentration of item during any one segment of the study

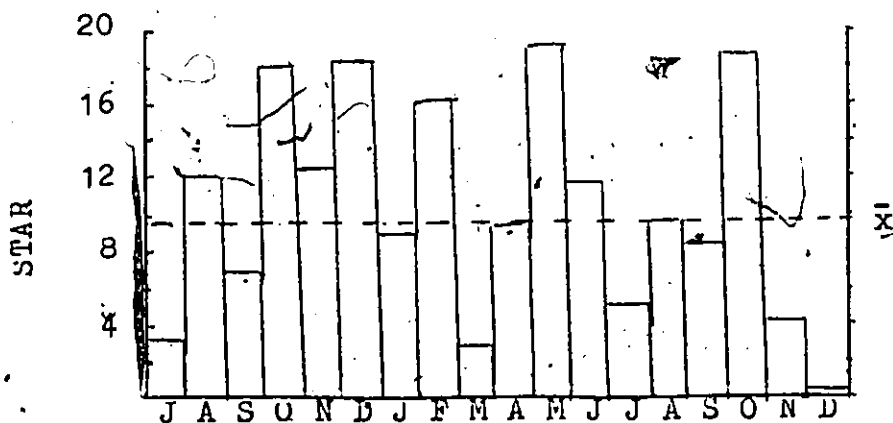
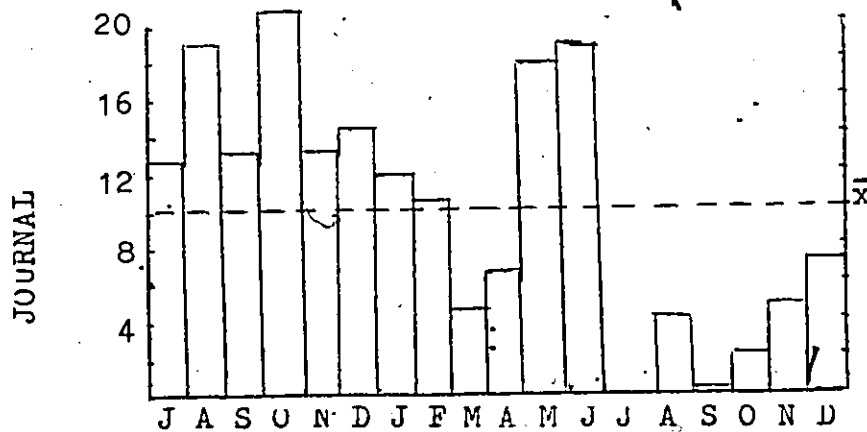
period.

The Star sample had a mean weekly value of 9.88% with a standard deviation of 10.09, again suggesting considerable variation from week to week. No months contained more than two weeks without Regional items. The sample from the Journal had a mean and standard deviation which were not statistically different from those for the Star (\bar{x} 10.2, s.d. 11.19). The Journal, however, had three consecutive months with more than two weeks with no coverage which suggests a concentration of its news items during part of the analysis period.

On a monthly basis some of this variation was removed. (Figure 1) The Journal sample showed clear high and low periods. Although the pattern was not as clear for the other two papers, a regression analysis showed positive correlation coefficients of .46 for the Journal and Star, and, .31 for the Journal and Spectator.

Characteristic VIII suggests that these fluctuations would occur and would be due to the activities of the Stewart Commission. The data was therefore divided into four groupings based on the four stages of the review process (information gathering, examination, report, post) and a chi-square test showed significant variations from the values of an expected table which assumed no effect from the review process. More will be said about this below.

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NEWS SPACE DEVOTED TO REGIONAL NEWS ITEMS BY MONTH



6.3.3 Location of Items Within the Paper

The location of items within a newspaper is an indication to the reader of their relative importance versus other items of the same type. The location is established by the editor of the newspaper and in this respect is a form of "editorializing" although not necessarily a conscious effort to promote or ignore a particular subject.

The study found only two Regional news items on the front page of the Spectator sample. These represented .2% of the total front page space examined. It should be noted however that the sample did not include the day on which the Stewart Report was released. That edition and the one following did have considerable front page space devoted to the event. Federal improvements to the Mt. Hope airport and provincial involvement with the disposal of dangerous chemicals at the Ottawa St. dump, and with the proposed Glanbrook dump, brought these topics to the front page, but no reference was made to the role of the Regional Government in these matters, in the stories examined.

Since the analysis only looked at the local news pages it was not possible to tell from the study results how many stories were located in other parts of the paper. A surrogate measure was available however. The McMaster University Urban Documentation Centre had an index of Regional news items from the Spectator covering the period

July 1977 to April 1978. The index listed only eighty seven items for the period, suggesting a more restricted definition than that used in this study. The index did however confirm that 90.5% of the items were located on the pages which had been chosen for the content analysis study. (Table 5)

The distribution of Regional news in the local papers was quite different. The Star's front page contained 15.9% of all Regional News items and pages two through five contained a further 21.2%. The Journal had 31% of all Regional News items on the front page and a further 41% on the following four pages.

The Spectator clearly sees the Regional Government as a "local" issue and confines its coverage to five specific pages. Both local papers give far more front page prominence to the topic but tend to spread the rest of the items throughout the paper. The Journal, with 72% of items on the first five pages, was apparently more interested in suggesting that Regional government was a topic of importance, than was the Star with only 37% of items on those pages.

6.3.4 Issues Covered

There was a sufficient amount of material in the news sample to divide it up by specific topics covered.

(Table 6) The reform issue obtained just over one third

TABLE 5
 PERCENTAGE OF REGIONAL NEWS ITEMS LOCATED
 ON SPECIFIC PAGES FOR THREE NEWSPAPERS

<u>Pages</u>	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
1	15.9	31.0	1.3
2-5	21.2	41.0	0.0
6-10	19.7	7.8	67.1
11-15	17.4	11.7	21.1
16+	25.8	8.5	10.5
Number of Items (100%)	132	129	87

Note: Values for Spectator based on examination
 of clipping file index McMaster University
 Urban Documentation Centre.

TABLE 6
 PERCENTAGE OF REGIONAL NEWS SPACE DEVOTED
 TO SPECIFIC TOPICS FOR THREE NEWSPAPERS

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
Reform	<u>36.0</u>	<u>34.7</u>	<u>39.1</u>
Administration	<u>19.0</u>	<u>11.7</u>	<u>8.2</u>
Waste Disposal	<u>9.7</u>	2.3	<u>21.2</u>
Planning	<u>9.7</u>	<u>10.2</u>	<u>8.9</u>
Sewage Plant	<u>7.6</u>	<u>15.4</u>	n/a
Taxes/Services	2.6	<u>12.1</u>	n/a
Police	0.3	1.1	<u>9.8</u>
Roads	4.8	3.2	3.8
Water/Sewers	2.1	2.5	2.1
Elections	0.7	3.3	2.4
Airport	1.6	2.1	1.2
Welfare	1.5	0.5	2.9
Transit	2.8	0.8	n/a
Hospital	1.6	n/a	0.4
Number Column Inches (100%)	3029	2493	1433

Major Issues (values over 5%) underlined

of the total Regional News space in all three newspapers. This explains in part the strong influence which it had on the distribution of news items, discussed above.

Among the other issues, each paper had four major issues for which values were over 5% of total news space, and a number of minor issues. The activities of the Planning Department, and of the Administration (Council as a whole and the Administration and Finance Committee) were the only topics to be classed as major issues in all three newspapers.

✓ The Dundas sewage plant was a major issue for both of the local papers but was mentioned only once in the Spectator. This story was placed in the "water/sewage" category. Both the Star and the Spectator devoted large proportions of space to the solid waste disposal issue, but the Journal devoted very little space to this topic. The daily paper was the only one to discuss the Police force at length.

A major issue in the Journal was the problem of residents apparently having to pay for services from the Region which they did not want and the relationship of this to ever increasing taxes. The Star discussed the tax issue in a slightly different manner, commenting on the amount of money contributed to the Region by Dundas versus the amount of grant money returned by the Region. No similar issue was found in the Spectator.

Among the minor issues, the various road problems constituted the largest category. In general, hard services such as roads, piped services, waste disposal and transit; obtained more coverage than did health, welfare and police services.

6.3.5 Producer Slant of News

All news stories present a limited number of facts. By selective omission, intentional or unintentional, of other facts, the story leaves the reader with a positive or negative impression about the topic. Using the criteria established in the methodology, the news slants of the three newspapers were examined by topic.

As stated above, about one third of all news space was devoted to the reform issue. Of this, about one third was used to present material of a neutral nature: (Table 7)

Of the four options available, the status quo, two-tier system received the largest proportion of space in all three papers, however, the percentage for this class in the Spectator was only half the value of the corresponding value for the Journal and a third of the Star's figure. Conversely, the proportion of space devoted to the one-tier option in the Spectator was over twice as large as the corresponding values for the weekly papers.

The desire for a modified two-tier system or some other unspecified change was expressed in all three papers.

A desire to return to the old county system received very little space, all of which was found in the early months of the inquiry.

The breakdown over time shows that support for the two-tier option was highest while the Commission was deliberating and after the release of the report. Complaints about the system resurfaced after the issue had been decided.

The presentation of other topics also seems to be balanced in all of the newspapers with the largest proportion of space in the neutral category and the remainder split equally between positive and negative items. (Table 8)

The Spectator had the highest neutral values in all categories but the residuals tended to be negative except for Police and Planning stories. The Star was the most positive of the three papers and the Journal was the most negative.

It would appear that there is a relationship between the papers' stance on the reform issue and on the other issues. The Spectator which was the most neutral, allowed the widest range of discussion of the reform issue. The Star, which was most positive, provided the most space to pro two-tier stories. The Journal, although critical of the operation of the Region still supported the two-tier system in principle as will be seen in the discussion of editorials in Section 6.4.

TABLE 8: NEWS SLANT BY TOPICS
PERCENTAGESJournal

<u>Topic</u>	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Sewage Plant	28.6	15.5	55.9
Taxes/Services	0	39.7	60.3
Administration	42.3	47.2	10.5
Planning	16.1	63.7	20.2
Other Issues	25.3	35.8	38.9
ALL ISSUES ¹	23.0	38.2	38.8

Star

Administration	27.2	43.2	29.6
Waste Disposal	53.2	20.9	25.9
Planning	22.5	55.7	21.8
Sewage Plant	55.8	32.0	12.8
Other Topics	23.8	42.0	34.2
ALL ISSUES	32.0	40.8	27.2

Spectator

Waste Disposal	4.0	64.8	31.2
Police	60.3	39.7	0
Planning	4.7	95.3	0
Administration	28.0	31.8	40.2
Other Topics	15.3	65.0	19.7
ALL TOPICS	18.8	61.2	20.0

¹All Topics excluding Reform Issue

6.3.6 News Sources

One factor which controls what news is published is the availability of information. The limited resources of a small paper tend to restrict the number of sources which it can call upon for information. A small number of sources may, by the nature of their opinions, contribute to the editorial slant described above. In this case however, the Spectator did not appear to have a broader base of information sources than did the local papers. (Table 9)

The largest proportion of Regional news items in each paper was derived from reports on the activities and decisions of the Regional Council. This was followed in each case by reports on the actions and reactions of the local councils, and by stories derived from the observations of reporters present at specific events.

All three papers had a series of minor sources such as: local politicians, provincial politicians, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Conservation Authority. The Journal presented more material derived from these other sources, for example, it obtained the reactions of rate-payers to council decisions. The Journal also printed more of the press releases issued by the Stewart Commission without editing them, than did the other papers.

TABLE 9

MAJOR INFORMATION SOURCES FOR NEWSPAPERS

<u>Source</u>	Per Cent Total News Space From Source		
	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
Regional Council	45.6	24.0	50.0
Local Councils	20.0	16.3	19.7
Events Covered	21.9	20.9	6.2
Ratepayers	.9	10.2	4.2
Stewart Commission	.8	11.9	9.5
Other	10.8	16.7	10.4
Total Number of Sources Identified	15	15	15

6.3.7 Information Role of News

As mentioned in Section 2.4.1, not all news items are of equal value in helping the reader to understand his municipal government better. Stories which explain events or decisions are of more value than reports of isolated events. Further, the type of event can affect its value. The most damaging type of item is of course the one which presents misleading information. This can happen unintentionally when stories are slanted or when one information source is relied upon for data. Examples of the above conditions are supplied below.

During the first part of the study period the Journal printed a number of front page items about taxes and services. On 77:07:20 the paper charged that the Region was about to provide services to an area even though half of the residents did not want these services provided. The Region was quick to notify the Journal that the project had been undertaken upon the request of the Dundas Council who were in turn acting on a citizen's request. The law requires that the project be stopped if a majority of the property owners who also own a majority of the property by assessed value, in the area, protest. The petition in question was signed by eight of sixteen owners who owned 49% of the assessed value, therefore the Region had decided to continue with the project. This

information was published by the Journal on 77:08:03.

In its issue of 77:12:07 the Star charged that the Stewart Commission was wasting taxpayers money by delivering material by taxi. The Commission informed the paper that it had priced alternatives and the taxi was in fact the cheapest. The Star printed a retraction on 78:01:04.

Stories about the various forms of protest against the Review Commission's recommendations filled all three papers. News stories outlining the formal rebuttle process were also published and letters from various sources added to the information available. The papers, however, carried stories of events which were of dubious value in terms of their effect on the final outcome of the issue. The decision of Dundas Council to allow the construction of a "bridge" in a local park so that it could be burned in effigy was reported in both the Star and Journal on 78:05:17. The Spectator reported that helicopters were flown over Ontario Place, to protest the commission's report, in its 78:05:23 edition.

Isolated events, especially those carried out for public relations purposes, are probably of little lasting informational value. The formal "opening" of a repaved section of King Street in Hamilton received more attention than it would seem to warrant. The same can be said about

the annual New Year's Levee; an historic relic which was given considerable space in the Journal.

In contrast, the sod turning at the Dundas sewage plant in July 1977 led to stories about the construction process and the future of the plant. These continued until the official opening in October 1978. Among the issues raised were the following.

The Region required land owned by the Town of Dundas and there was disagreement between the two bodies as to how much land was needed and what price would be paid for it. Then, the Conservation Authority charged that the Region was illegally dumping fill into Spencer Creek as part of the construction process. Local citizens complained that the site was not properly fenced to keep children from using it as a play area.

The effects of the plant on the future of development in the area became an issue. Dundas Council wanted to use the plant's capacity to allow for further local growth within the Town but the Region wanted the plant to be connected to serve the Clappison's Corners area in Flamborough. This led MPP Eric Cunningham to say that the plant would be obsolete in terms of capacity before it was even open.

A final question raised by the project was the effect of the plant's discharge on water quality in Cootes Paradise. The Ministry of Environment felt that the plant

would improve water quality, but Mr. Cunningham doubted this claim. This type of follow-up coverage falls into information of the most useful kind.

This discussion also shows that the evaluation of individual items must in part be based on hindsight, therefore no attempt has been made to quantify this aspect of news coverage.

6.4 Regional Editorial Items

Although news coverage is sometimes referred to as editorial material because its content and location are established by the editor, for the purpose of this study, "editorial items" consisted only of specific comments made by the newspaper's staff on the editorial page or the page following it.

Editorials take three formats. The most obvious is a series of unsigned statements under the heading "Editorial". The second item is the cartoon found on the editorial page and usually concerning a topic of political interest. Finally, there is often a comment which appears under a byline. This may be of a satirical nature. In some cases these comments appear on the page following the unsigned editorials.

Of the seven headings used in the discussion of news coverage, two can be eliminated: location within the paper, and source of the material. Thus the following

discussion looks at: quantity, distribution over time, issues covered, positions taken, and information role. Under each of these headings the material is subdivided into unsigned items, cartoons, and items with a byline.

6.4.1 Quantity of Coverage

It was shown earlier that editorials make up a much smaller proportion of the newspaper than do news items. (Table 2) Regional Editorial items as a percentage of total editorial items, however, had higher values than did Regional News items as a percentage of all news space in both of the weeklies, but a lower value in the daily paper. (Table 4).

The Spectator devoted a mean of 40% of page six to unsigned editorials, 20% to a cartoon, and 20% to a signed comment. The sample taken contained only eight editorials, with no cartoons or signed comments, devoted to the Region. Total editorial space devoted to the Region amounted to 1.5% of the editorial space available. The average length of items was 15% of the available space within the issues in which they appeared.

The Star had unsigned editorials about the Region in twenty one editions. These items averaged 20.5% of editorial space in the issues in which they appeared. The Star also devoted four cartoons to the Region and published a series of satirical "Regional Christmas Carols" on the

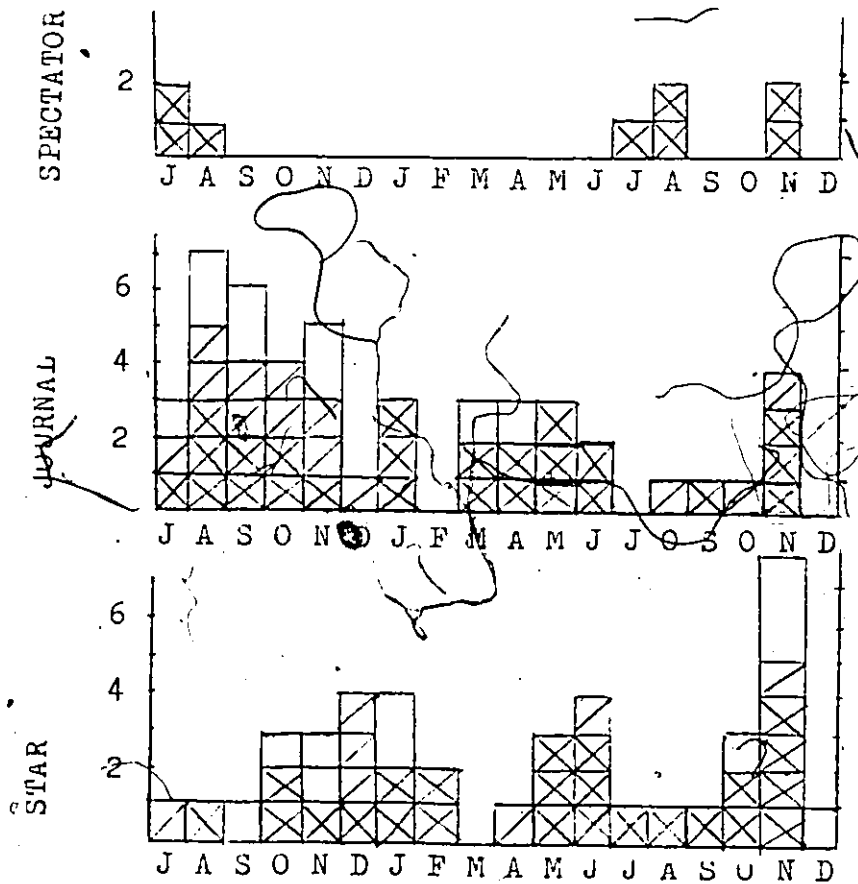
editorial pages of 77:12:21 and 78:12:20. The paper also published five signed items by Michael Davies, for a total of thirty two major items. The Star also published weekly series of "smiles and frowns". The Region received four smiles and two frowns, however one of the frowns was repealed. These were single sentence comments relating to news or editorial items. Total Regional space amounted to 15.7% of the total editorial space available. (Table 4)

The Journal had unsigned editorials about the Region in twenty four editions. These averaged 29.9% of editorial space in the issues with items. The paper had cartoons in only 65 editions, but of these thirteen were devoted to the Region. The paper had two sources of by-line comments both were of similar length to the unsigned items. Doug Phippen wrote five items about the Region and satirist Ian Thurston devoted four of his weekly items to the Region. This provided a total of forty six major items about the Region. In total, it received 22.4% of the total editorial space available.

6.4.2 Distribution Over Time

The Spectator's eight editorials appeared in clusters at times when news coverage was also high, ie., August-September 1977, July-August 1978, and November 1978. The unsigned editorials in the weeklies were spread across the study period with peaks in the same periods. (Figure 2)

FIGURE 2: NUMBER AND TYPE OF EDITORIAL COMMENT BY MONTH FOR THREE NEWSPAPERS



Legend

5mm. = 1 Item

- ☒ Unsigned Editorials
- ☒ Editorial Cartoons
- ☐ Signed Editorial Comment

Signed editorials in the Journal appeared primarily in the first five months studied as did 77% of the cartoons. Signed editorials in the Star were split between the first six months and last three months of the study period. The reason for this distribution pattern appears to be linked to the issues covered.

6.4.3 Issues Covered

The Spectator's editorials all dealt with the major issues identified in the news coverage: three concerned the review process, two each were devoted to waste disposal and administration, and one was about the police force.

Fifteen of the Star's twenty two unsigned items were on the topic of reform. All of the cartoons and three of the four smiles were also about reform. Mr. Davie's articles and the remainder of the unsigned editorials covered a wide variety of topics and no major or minor topics were evident.

Ten of the Journal's twenty four unsigned items discussed government reform. Regional planning was the topic of six editorials, administration, taxes and the election were each the topic of three items. The reform issue also predominated in the cartoons, but taxes, the "opening" of King Street in Hamilton, and the domination of Hamilton over the rest of the Region were also issues.

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Three of the signed editorials by Doug Phippen are of special interest to this research. On 77:08:03 he offered the Region as much space as it wanted free of charge so that it could express its point of view. Phippen reported on 77:08:24 that Regional Chairperson Anne Jones had responded to this offer and had agreed to provide material. When the Region held a debate about the "bad press" that it was getting, Phippen pointed out that as of 77:11:02 he still had not received any material in response to his offer.

Because the values presented in this section have been small, it was decided that presentation of percentages in tabular form would not add to their understandability.

6.4.4 Editorial Slant

The editorial slant of the items followed closely the pattern found in the news category. The Spectator remained primarily neutral. It supported the need for a new dump in Glanbrook and praised the police force, but its three editorials dealing with local government review did not support any alternatives. On the topic of administration, one editorial was critical and one was positive.

The Star continued its support of the Region. It published four pro two-tier and two neutral editorials on the reform issue during the Commission's study period. After the release of the Report it ran pro two-tier items

for five consecutive weeks, by the sixth week the province had made its decision and the Star printed a "time to move ahead" editorial. Three further editorials on this topic appeared during the election campaign. These attacked Hamilton for its continued interest in one-tier.

Of the four cartoons in the paper on the topic, two supported two-tier, one supported the old county system, and one was neutral. Mr. Davie's articles all supported the Region.

The Journal continued its critical stance on the editorial page. Only two editorials were pro two-tier, four were anti one-tier, one supported the old county system, two proposed other schemes, and one was neutral. Five of the six items on planning were critical of the Region as were the comments in five of the nine other unsigned editorials.

The cartoons followed a similar pattern. None were directly supportive of the Region but four did take stands against one-tier and against Hamilton in particular. None of Mr. Thurston's articles were supportive of the Region but it is difficult to measure how negative his proposal of 78:05:17 to turn Hamilton-Wentworth into a monarchy, should be taken to be.

Two topics were found in the unsigned editorials on which the Star and Journal took opposing views. The Journal supported the idea that Dundas should share the

costs of Hamilton's cultural facilities via the Region, while the Star said that Hamilton should pay all of the costs. The Journal supported industrial expansion in Stoney Creek in contrast to the Star's interest in maintaining the area for fruit cultivation.

6.4.5 Information Role

Once again, any comments in this section must be somewhat subjective, however the general impression of the unsigned editorials in all three newspapers was that they tended to be well argued, factual statements, of sufficient length to be informative. The statements made by Mr. Davie and Mr. Phippen were also well organized, although they tended to present only one side of a situation.

Cartoons tend to be limited in the amount of information they can convey, particularly with reference to why a certain position is being taken. Often they related back to news stories which could be consulted for clarification. The same was of course true for the "smiles". As mentioned above, Mr. Thurston's opinions tended to be somewhat obscure, therefore his material was not considered to be informative in the sense the term is being used here.

In the next section, the opinions of others who have been given access to the newspapers will be examined.

6.5 Regional Opinion Items

Most newspapers provide space to others so that they can have an opportunity to express their opinions. This type of material can be divided into two categories. The first consists of prepared statements by politicians, and the second, consists of unsolicited letters to the editor from private citizens, politicians, or organized groups.

As was the case with editorial material, the Comment and Letters categories constituted a small proportion of the total space available in the newspapers examined. (Table 2) Regional opinion items, however, as a percentage of total opinion items, had higher values than Regional news items as a percentage of total news space, in both weekly papers, but a lower value in the Spectator. (Table 4) This was the same trend observed in the editorial material.

6.5.1 Political Statements

No items were found in this category in the daily paper. Although it provided space to politicians during the election campaign, none of this space was on the "local news" pages, and therefore was not measured. At other times, the Spectator tended to edit political statements and present them as "news" items.

The Journal also tended to present political

statements in the form of "news" or "letters", thus the total value for this category of .6% was primarily the result of statements made during the election campaign. (Table 2) This also contributed to the large value recorded for Regional items of 31.3%. (Table 4)

The Star was the only paper to consistently present politicians' statements as such throughout the study period, thus the Regional comment value of 15.1% is probably a better reflection of the extent to which politicians were using the paper for their own purposes.

The most obvious political statements in the Star were the regular "Queen's Park Report" by Eric Cunningham, and the "Town Hall Report" by Mayor Bennett. Mr. Cunningham devoted twelve such columns to the Region. This included seven items about reform, on which he shifted from pro the old system to support of two-tier. He also supported a number of suburban "causes" such as: more industry for Flamborough, an east end hospital for Stoney Creek, extended water services in Waterdown, and support of the anti-dump movement in Glanbrook.

Mayor Bennett tended to be non-political in his weekly column, ie. it was primarily community boosterism. He did however present year end reviews in both 1977 and 78 which included comments about the Region. Although the Mayor stated that he preferred the old county system, he

stated that he had put his support behind the two-tier system as the best alternative. Many of the Mayor's statements also appeared as news items.

Statements made by Regional Chairperson, Anne Jones, at her weekly press conferences were printed as items in the Star on six occasions. All of these items came from the Stoney Creek News. Mrs. Jones spoke about the reform issue on three occasions, administration twice, and planning once. As would be expected, she was supportive of the system as it existed.

M.P.P. Ian Deans and Dundas Councillor Carswell also made statements in the Star about the Region. Mr. Deans was pro two-tier and Mrs. Carswell supported the recommendations of the Stewart Report.

Three of Mayor Bennett's statements and two of Mr. Cunningham's "Reports" appeared in edited form in the Journal as "news" items and were recorded as such. The Journal did publish political statements on the reform issue by M.P.P. Stuart Smith and by Mayor Sloat of Ancaster. An article under the byline "Concerned Citizens of Ancaster" was published on the editorial page on 78:06:07 and was included as part of this category.

During the election campaign both weeklies offered space, free of charge, to the candidates for statements. Regional contenders Harper and Ward of Flamborough and

Orme and Southall of Dundas, took advantage of this to make "must make Region work" statements for both papers. Brief position statements were also made in both papers by Councillor Blackadar, who was positive about the Region, and hopefuls Bill Westoby and Mike DiCenzo, who were negative about the Region.

Councillor Courtney restricted his positive comment to the Journal while Bill Burniston placed a negative statement in the Star. After the election, Mr. Orme was the only candidate to comment on the feelings of the voters about the Region. His comment appeared in the Journal.

From an information standpoint the most important function of this type of material is to make it clear to the voters how particular politicians feel about specific issues. This provides the voter with information needed to make a rational decision at the polls.

6.5.2 Letters To The Editor

The examination of the three newspapers found seven letters about the Region in the Spectator, sixteen in the Star, and twenty eight in the Journal. Closer study revealed that there was a duplication of eight letters in the two weeklies and that one letter appeared in all three papers.

The Spectator devoted a mean of 20% of its editorial page to letters. Regional items took up an average of

18% of space available for letters in the issues in which they occurred and represented a total of 1.6% of all the space available for letters in the sample taken.

The seven letters found were distributed with two in December 1977, one in February 1978, three in June and one in December. Five of the letters dealt with the reform issue, two supported two-tier, two supported one-tier, and the other was neutral. The other two letters presented negative statements about water services and waste disposal. Six of the letters were from private citizens, while the other one, which was the one duplicated in all three papers, was from a ratepayers group.

Of the nine letters which appeared in both local papers, six dealt with reform and appeared on either 78:05:31 or 78:06:07. Five of these were pro two-tier and the other was neutral. Planning was the topic of two letters and the remaining one supported the new sewage plant as a needed facility. Four of these letters came from organizations, four from private citizens, and one from Mr. Cunningham.

All of the letters in the Star appeared before 78:06:21. Their mean size was 20% of a full page and in total they represented 15.6% of all the space devoted to letters. On occasion the letters were carried over to pages other than the editorial page and the one following.

Six letters appeared only in the Star. Five of these were pro two-tier statements. Four of the letters were from private citizens and two were from Dundas Council members. Two of the letters were direct feedback based on items previously published by the Star. One letter was a response to a letter which had appeared previously in the Journal!

On 77:10:26 Councillor Orme wrote to the Star and praised its news coverage while at the same time attacking the Spectator for misquoting him, and the Journal for printing the Spectator story without checking it out.

All of the letters which appeared in the Journal were published before 78:07:26. Their mean size was 17.5% of a full page and in total they represented 17.9% of all the space devoted to letters.

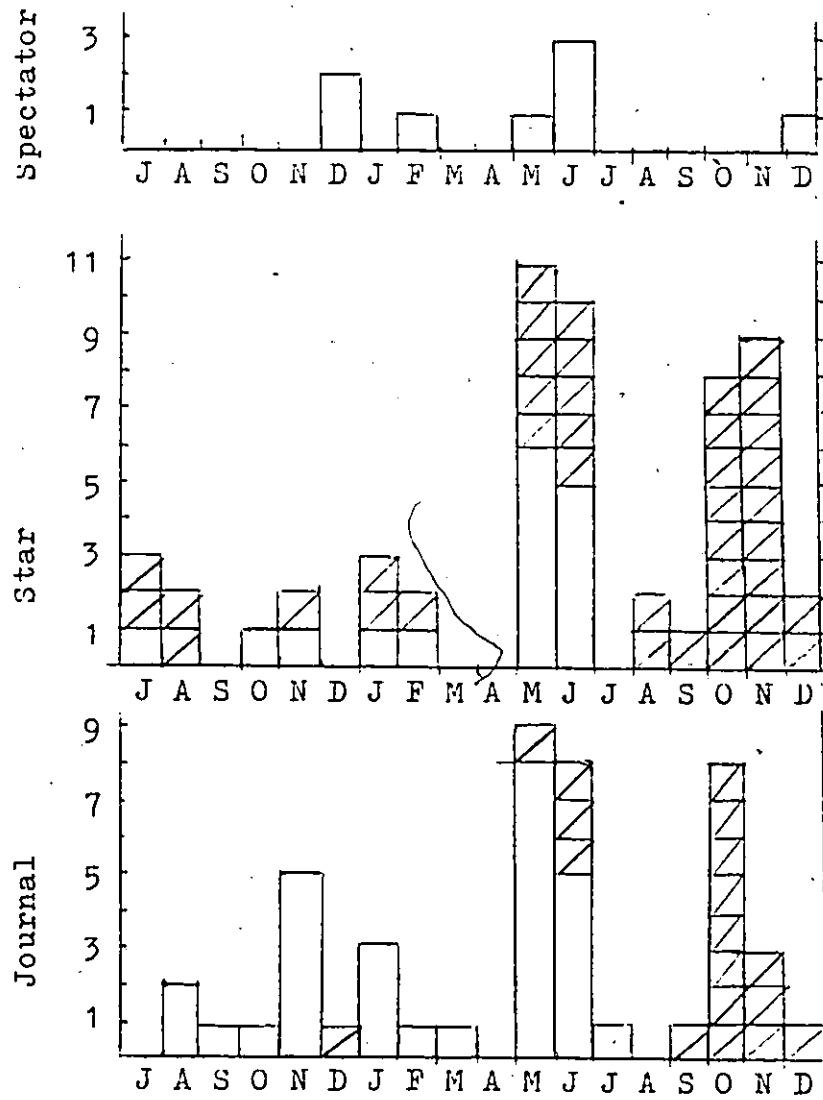
Nineteen letters were unique to the Journal. Ten of these dealt with the reform issue, six were pro two-tier while the rest were neutral. Three letters discussed administration, two concerned taxes, and there was one letter each on the topics of planning, housing, transit, and Regional leadership. These were divided into three positive, two neutral, and four negative. Ten of the letters came from private citizens, two were from organizations and seven were from politicians, including Mayor Sloat, Chairman Jones, and two M.P.P.'s.

Six letters were received which commented on Journal items from previous issues; five of these were positive. This group included four letters written by politicians. On 78:01:11 the Star printed a letter from Mr. Cunningham critical of the official plan procedures. The Journal published this same letter the following week but it also printed a "reply" from Anne Jones.

In summary, 59% of all of the letters came from private individuals and this group represented the major source in all three newspapers. Eight of the ten letters from politicians appeared in the Journal and four of the seven letters from organizations appeared in more than one paper. Letters appeared primarily at times when important decisions were being made, thus their distribution was highly clustered. (Figure 3)

On the reform issue, two thirds of the letters supported the status quo. On other issues there was an even split between positive and negative statements. The information value of individual letters varied greatly from emotional and unsupported presentations to factual arguments. Possibly of greatest importance, the letters provide proof that politicians were reading the local papers and were of the opinion that sufficient numbers of voters also read the papers to warrant commenting whether in an informal letter or a prepared statement.

FIGURE 3: NUMBER AND TYPE OF PUBLIC COMMENTS
BY MONTH FOR THREE NEWSPAPERS



5mm. = 1 item

- ☐ Letter to the Editor
☒ Prepared Political Statement

6.6 Regional Features

A feature item was defined as one which provided background information. It would not qualify as "news" because it was not related to a specific event which occurred within the previous seven days, and it would not qualify as "comment" because it presented factual information without a direct statement of opinion. It was felt that this category might provide important information to the public about the operation of municipal government, however, no items were present in the sample taken from the daily paper and the proportion of total features space devoted to the Region in the weeklies was quite small. (Table 4)

The examination of the material held by the McMaster University Urban Documentation Centre suggested that the Spectator probably had not published any features about the Region. If any had been published, it is unlikely that they would appear on the local news pages, as no features of any kind were found in the sample taken.

The Star carried ten Regional features in the first six months, however after that period only four more were published. In editions with coverage, Regional items amounted to 17.1% of all features. Over the entire study period the Regional features amounted to 2.5% of all features space.

Councillor Orme was the source of four features. He submitted two articles outlining the history and financing of Regional Government but an expected third article was never published. Possibly because the Star received a letter critical of the second item. This letter was an example of the misunderstanding of the system felt to be present in the community and the very reason that such features were needed. Two other items were based on interviews with Mr. Orme, one of these took the form of a "debate" with Mr. Cunningham on reform proposals.

Staff writer Michael Davie presented two reports on the two-tier system in July and August 1977. The Star also engaged Byward Statistics to collect data about the operation of the Region. Their reports appeared in October and November 1977. The last feature included a mail back questionnaire to which sixty two replies were received. This represents about a 1% response rate.

The Star also ran interviews with each of the Dundas Council members but only Mr. Orme and Mr. Southall mentioned the Region. An interview with Anne Jones was also published. In May 1978 the Star's "You Asked Us" feature surveyed the Dundas Council and found seven members supporting two-tier and two supporting the Stewart Report recommendations. The following week eight citizens

were polled, six supported two-tier and two were opposed. The Star presented year end reviews in the last editions of 77 and 78.

The number of Regional features in the Journal was less than the total for the Star, however, the ten items averaged 34.4% of features space in issues with items and 4.5% of total space devoted to features. (Table 4)

Six of these items appeared on consecutive weeks and reported on the progress of a questionnaire survey conducted by the paper. The ballot was published between 77:10:19 and 77:10:16 and two final reports followed. A total of 240 responses were received giving a response rate of about 1%.

The Journal claimed that 95% of the respondents were in favour of a change from the current system. Support for the one-tier option, however, was small: 23% in West Hamilton and 10% in Dundas.

On the eve of the release of the Stewart Report the Journal polled the local politicians and all indicated an interest in the continuation of the two-tier system. On 78:06:14 the paper presented a debate on the issue between Councillor Carswell and John Washington of "People For Dundas".

The only feature not centred on the reform question presented the highlights of the Draft Official

Plan. No features appeared during the last six months of the analysis period.

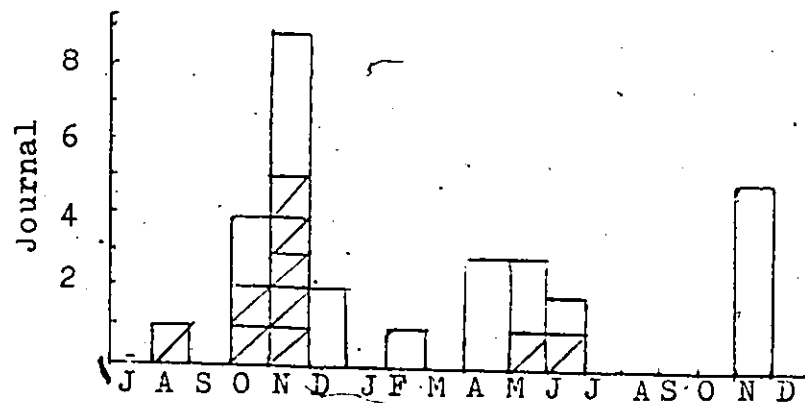
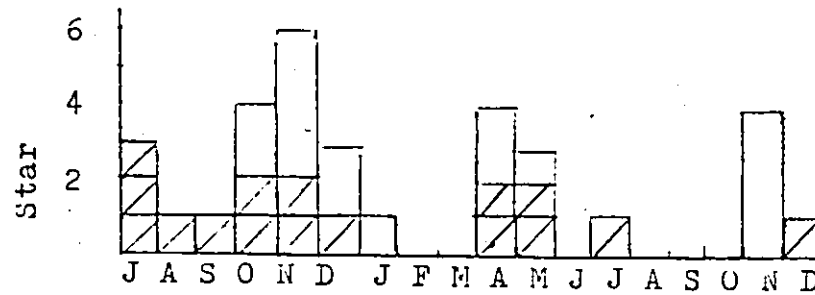
The features in both papers tended to be compilations of opinions rather than facts, therefore their information value was probably similar to that of the individual opinions mentioned in the previous section. Their value as background to the news seemed limited, although a small number of the items suggested that such a role was possible for features. Another clear problem was the infrequency with which features appeared. (Figure 4)



6.7 Regional Advertisements

Advertisements were not anticipated as a category for Regional items, however, the analysis showed that there was a need to consider them. The Reform Commission used ads extensively to inform the public about their activities. The Region also resorted on occasion to the use of ads to distribute information. The Regional Clerk in a personal communication, said that it was not the policy of the Region to place ads other than those required by law, eg., tender calls, by-law notices, and expropriation notices.

No Regional ads were found in the Spectator sample, although the sample did include some ad space. It is known that the Reform Commission and the Regional Government both used this paper, but their ads were not in the

FIGURE 4: REGIONAL FEATURES AND ADS IN LOCAL PAPERS BY MONTH



 Features
 Advertisements
 5mm. = 1 item

local news pages. The Draft Official Plan was distributed as a supplement to the Spectator on 78:04:11.

Advertisements dealing with the Region were found in twelve editions of the Star and fifteen editions of the Journal. This is less than 1% of total ad space in the study. (Table 4)

The major source of ads was the reform commission with eight ads in each of the weeklies. A half page ad announcing the formation of the commission and its mandate appeared on 77:10:19 in both papers and was repeated on the following two weeks. The ad represented a mean of just over 5% of total ad space in the issues involved.

The commission also purchased ads in both papers to announce its public meeting schedule. These appeared on 77:10:09, 11:23, 12:07, and 12:14. These ads were about two thirds the size of the earlier insertions. A final ad announcing the presentation of the municipal briefs appeared in the Star on 78:01:25 and in the Journal the following week.

The Dundas Council purchased space for an "open letter" in support of two-tier government which appeared as a half page ad in both papers on 77:11:30. When the commission's report was released the council purchased another half page in the Star on 78:05:24. Stoney Creek Council also purchased an ad in that issue.

The Journal advertising staff saw an opportunity to capitalize on the release of the Stewart Report and used it to generate a full page "support two-tier" message from local merchants for their 78:05:24 issue. A smaller version of this ad appeared the following week as well. The Journal was the only paper to receive a "thank you for your support" ad. This came from Mayor Sloat.

The Regional government itself used the local papers for two announcements during the analysis period. Both were in April 78. The first item announced open house and public meetings for the Draft Official Plan. This ad was a third of a page in size and appeared on three weeks in the Journal and two in the Star. The other item was a notice warning of rabid animals in the area. It appeared in the Star only. These advertisements averaged less than 2% of total ad space in the editions concerned.

The election campaign provided an opportunity for local politicians to express their opinions on the Region. The ten Dundas hopefuls did not mention the Region at all in the twenty one ads which they placed in the Star and the nineteen in the Journal. The Regional candidates did devote some of their ads to comments about the body which they hoped to join. Mr. Southall placed three ads in the Star and two in the Journal, of these, one in the Journal

and all of the ads in the Star mentioned his Regional experience. Mr. Orme, who was on bad terms with the Journal at this time, placed six ads in the Star, three of which discussed Regional problems. Mayor Harper placed three ads in each paper with one mentioning his Regional experience in each paper. Mrs. Ward placed two ads in each paper but only the ones in the Journal mentioned Regional problems.

most of the ads had limited amounts of copy, with the exception of the commission's entries. As with the features, the ads were scattered and used sparingly as a method of information distribution. (Figure 4)

6.8 Summary of Analysis

The overall characteristics of the local newspapers were much as predicted. The decision to take a sample from the Spectator posed some problems with direct comparison at this scale, however, when the material was broken down by category of item it became possible to compensate sufficiently to allow comparison.

News items represented the largest category of Regional item in absolute terms in all three papers and it was possible to break this category down by topic, editorial slant, and source, on a percentage basis. The reform of government was the largest topic in all papers and all of the papers supported the two-tier system.

Stories which were neutral in their presentation comprised about one third of all news items on the reform issue in all three papers. Higher neutral values were found for other topics.

The Journal tended to be more critical of the Region than did the other two papers. The largest source of items was the Regional Government itself. Reports of the reactions of the local councils were also important news sources. The Journal presented the reactions of ratepayers to a larger extent than did the other papers.

Material in the three opinion categories: letters, comments and editorials, represented a smaller amount of space in absolute terms than did Regional news items, however, in terms of proportion of space available within these specific categories for Regional items, the Region had higher values in the opinion categories than in the news category in both weeklies, but lower values in the daily paper.

Governmental reform was the major topic in the three opinion categories. The low number of total items made the calculation of the importance of other topics on a percentage basis of questionable value: thus actual figures were presented.

The slant of the opinion material was similar to that found in the news material. Information provided in

the editorials and in the letters showed that politicians were reading comments in the press and were taking an active role in the discussions presented in this medium. The Spectator's contribution was small. It published only eight editorials and seven letters on Regional topics.

The analysis also showed that the local papers had been providing additional information about the Region in the form of special features and to a limited extent in the form of paid advertisements.

The information which was collected in this analysis was sufficient to test the hypotheses proposed in the last chapter and to allow for further discussion of the ideas presented in the literature review. This is the purpose of Chapter Seven.

7: EVALUATION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Summary

A number of Ontario Government reports have identified the need for interaction between municipal governments and citizens so that policies can be explained, needs expressed, and decisions based on compromise reached. These reports have been reviewed in Section 1.3.

Based on the characteristics of: distribution range, proportion of the population reached within the range, the cost of transmission of a message, and the provision for two-way communication or feedback; the newspapers were identified as the most likely available channel able to provide the required government-citizen communication. This was shown with a pretest presented in Chapter Four.

The major constraints which control the amount of space within the newspaper devoted to this communication need were identified in Section 2.2 as: the economics of production, the demands of the readership for other types of material, and the desires of the producers.

Based on researcher participation in the production process and conversations with the producers of a number of papers, it was possible to estimate likely

values for the extent of regional coverage within a typical newspaper. This was done in section 5.2.

In addition to the total volume of material, the work of other authors has shown that the characteristics or "nature" of the material is also important. From Chapter Two the important characteristics were identified as: frequency of appearance, intensity of presentation, and timing of presentation. A set of probable extent and nature characteristics was presented in Section 5.3.

The actual measurement of extent and nature via the content analysis tested two hypotheses:

- I: Each of the newspapers will exhibit the characteristics proposed in Section 5.3 (and discussed below)
- II: There will be no significant difference among the papers sampled with respect to their coverage of Regional Government.

Varification of these hypotheses would suggest that the newspapers are in fact fulfilling their role as communications channels between regional government and local community to the best of their ability.

7.2 Evaluation of Results

The results can be divided into characteristics of extent and characteristics of nature for each of the papers examined.

7.2.1 Extent Characteristics

The column differences in Table 10 are such that the results of a statistical analysis can be readily predicted. With reference to the extent characteristics described in Section 5.3.1, it will be noted that only the weekly papers achieved the expected values for Characteristic I: Total Regional Space will constitute 3-5% of total space available within a given newspaper.

Characteristic II: Regional News space will constitute at least 15% of all news space available in a given newspaper, proved to be an over estimate. The actual values for the Star and Journal were 64% and 70% of the estimated value, respectively. The value for the Spectator was only 19% of the predicted value.

The weekly papers achieved the values predicted for Characteristic III: Regional Editorial space will constitute at least 15% of all available editorial space in a given newspaper. This value was not achieved in the daily.

Characteristic IV: Regional letters and comments will constitute at least 10% of available space for this type of item in a given paper, showed the same results as the previous characteristic.

Characteristic V: Regional features will constitute at least 10% of all features proved to be an over estimate for all three papers.

TABLE 10
PERCENTAGE OF SPACE BY CATEGORY DEVOTED
TO REGIONAL ITEMS VERSUS ESTIMATIONS

<u>Category</u>	<u>Estimate</u>	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
News	15	9.6	10.5	2.8
Editorial	15	15.7	22.4	1.5
Opinion	10	15.3	21.3	0.8
Features	10	2.4	4.5	0.0
ALL ITEMS	3-5	3.2	3.7	2.0

Statistical analysis of the values in each of the columns of Table 10 showed no difference between the values for the Star and those for the Journal. Nor was there a difference between the estimated values and either of the weeklies. The Spectator values however, were different from those calculated for the weekly papers and also from the estimates. Therefore, it was concluded that with respect to the extent of coverage, the two hypotheses could be accepted for the two community newspapers but would have to be rejected with respect to the Spectator. as the values for the daily were significantly lower than the estimates and significantly lower than those for the community newspapers.

7.2.2 Frequency Characteristic

The awareness which the audience has with respect to a given topic is related to the number of times that it is presented to that audience over a given time period. Wolfe, for example, found that candidates who had been in the news for a longer period of time had a better chance of election.¹

For this study, it was assumed that a reasonable frequency distribution would exist if it could be shown that Characteristic VI: The distribution of all Regional items will be such that at least 50% of all editions have at least one item, was true for all papers. The analysis

showed that in fact a much larger proportion of editions had regional items. (Table 11) With respect to the frequency characteristic the two hypotheses would be accepted for all three newspapers.

Further examination of the frequency results indicate that news items were the most frequently found items in all three newspapers. Editorials about the Region appeared far more frequently in the community papers than in the daily, and opinion statements were highly clustered. These results suggest that the flow of information from the public via letters and editorials, may not be as well distributed over time as is the flow of information in the opposite direction, via news coverage.

7.2.3 Intensity Characteristic

Intensity is measured in terms of the location of items within the newspaper and the length of individual items. Plunkett, Paletz et.al., and Cox and Morgan, all concluded that newspapers ignore municipal government by giving it short items on back pages.²

The content analysis showed this not to be the case in Hamilton-Wentworth. (Table 5) Characteristic V: The events related to the Region are of sufficient importance that news items will appear in prominent locations within the paper, specifically before the editorial page in the weeklies and on the front page or local news pages.

TABLE 11
PERCENTAGE OF EDITIONS WITH REGIONAL ITEMS
AND ESTIMATION

<u>Category</u>	<u>Estimated</u>	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
ALL ITEMS	50	95	82	70
News	--	77	66	65
Editorials	--	39	48	10
Opinion	--	10	17	9
Features	--	19	12	0

of the Spectator, was verified. Such items made up 37.1% of items in the Star, 72% of items in the Journal, and 68.4% of Spectator items. Further, the average length of these items was 23 col. in. in the Star, 19 col. in. in the Journal, and 15.5 col. in. in the Spectator. These indicate stories of noticeable length; 20% of a tabloid page and 9% of a broadsheet. With respect to the intensity characteristic, the two hypotheses would be accepted for all three newspapers.

7.2.4 Timing (Setting) Characteristic

Genova and Greenberg found that the effects of information depend on the interest level of the public, i.e., timing of the release of information with a period when people are willing to accept new data.³ For maximum effect therefore, the levels of coverage should increase during times when the reform of government issue was of greatest concern. These times were identified as July 77 to December 77, May and June 1978, and November 1978.

The bar graphs presented as Figure One through Four each show definite peaks in each of these time periods. In addition, a chi-square test of the distribution of news items as reported in Table 7 indicated that values during each time period were not proportional to the length of that time period, i.e. there were clusters of items during the active periods mentioned above.

Characteristic VIII: The reform of government is a special issue, thus the amount of space devoted to Regional items will increase during the active periods of the Stewart Commission and during the municipal election, was shown to be true for all three papers thus the two hypotheses can be accepted with respect to the first timing characteristic.

It follows from the above result that if the timing variable is to have maximum effect than it should also be true that Characteristic IX: A breakdown of Regional items will show the reform of government to be the major category during the active time periods of the Stewart Commission and planning and administration to be major topics at other times.

The reform issue was the leading topic in all categories of items in all three newspapers. The extent to which planning and administration followed varied both from category to category and from paper to paper. These were the only two categories to obtain more than 5% of news space in all three papers, although they did not always place second and third to the reform issue. (Table 6) The number of items in other categories in the Spectator was too small to identify major and minor issues. In the Star the items were too diversified to identify major and

minor issues in other categories. Only in the Journal did planning and administration clearly follow reform as the leading topics for editorials and letters. Because of the strong lead of the reform issue and because news items were the major category of items and planning and administration were major topics in all three papers in this category, Characteristic IX was considered to be present in all of the papers; therefore with respect to the second timing characteristic, the two hypotheses can be accepted.

7.2.5 Producer Characteristics

The effects of the producers can be measured with respect to both news and editorial material. Therefore Characteristic X: The newspaper will take a clear stand on major issues in its news coverage, ie. stories will discuss only one side of given issues.

With respect to the reform issue the stands of the papers were evident (Table 7). The Star had 60% of items classed as positive with 33% neutral, the Journal 47% positive with 33% neutral, and the Spectator 40% negative with 37% neutral. Values of over 50% in the positive and negative columns of Table 8 also suggest that all of the papers took clear stands on specific issues. Over all, however, the various stands tended to cancel each other out, thus the Spectator had 61% neutral with 19% positive

and 20% negative. Similarly, the Star had 32% positive and 27% negative. The Journal with values of 39% negative and 23% positive was the only paper with a strong over all slant. Acceptance of the presence of this characteristic in the sample must therefore be made with some reservation.

Characteristic XI: The newspapers will take a clear stand on major issues via statements made on the editorial page. The number of editorials published which discuss the Region probably reflects the interest which the paper's producers have in this topic. The Spectator with eight items would appear to be in a different class from the Star with thirty two and the Journal with forty six.

The three editorials in the daily on the reform issue called for change, yet four of the five remaining editorials were positive, thus no clear stand was apparent. The Star had only one negative editorial thus its stand was very clear. The Journal was critical of the day to day operations of the Region but clearly anti one-tier. The over all impression was that the paper supported the two-tier concept but thought that it was being poorly implemented.

With respect to producer influences on the information flow, Hypothesis 1 would be accepted for the local

newspaper but rejected for the Spectator thus there would be a difference between the weeklies and the daily calling for rejection of Hypothesis II.

7.2.6 Reaction Measurement

The role of the newspaper as a communications channel is only complete if the messages transmitted are received by the intended audience and are acted upon. Some indication of the extent to which this occurred was found during the research.

The interest which politicians have in the press is indicated by actions such as the following:

- a) The Regional Government maintains a clippings file of items from the local newspapers.⁴
- b) The Regional Chairman holds weekly press conferences, reports of which were found in six issues of the Star.
- c) In November 1977 the Council discussed the "bad press" which it had received as an agenda item.
- d) A number of politicians submitted material to the local papers, most notably, Councillor Orme, Mayor Bennett, and M.P.P. Eric Cunningham.
- e) Ten letters to the editor were printed from politicians. Eight of these were in the Journal and four commented favourably on items previously printed by the paper.

With respect to the transmission of information from citizens to government, 59% of letters were from

private citizens and most of these were reactions to government decisions or actions. Organizations such as ratepayers groups tended to submit their letters to more than one paper and represented 56% of all duplicated letters. The ratepayers groups also received news space in the Journal.

The Star received two letters commenting on previously published items and one letter which was a reaction to an item in the Journal. There were no letters from politicians in the daily, further, any political comments which might have been published were not on the local news pages.

With respect to Characteristic XII: The content of the papers will indicate that citizens and politicians are reading other parts of the paper and are prepared to use the newspaper as a means of expressing their views on particular issues, it can be stated that the results from the community papers showed this to be true, but this was not the case for the Spectator.

7.3 Hypotheses Decision

The acceptance of Hypothesis I: Each of the newspapers will exhibit the characteristics proposed, and of Hypothesis II: there will be no significant differences among the papers with respect to their coverage of Regional Government, would suggest that the conclusion that the

newspapers are fulfilling their roles as communications channels between Regional government and local community to the best of their ability, is valid.

A review of the degree to which the papers did in fact meet the characteristics shows that the local papers met the majority of characteristics in terms of both extent and nature. (Table 12) The shortcomings for the most part can be attributed to producer effects, discussed further below. The daily paper, however, met only five of the twelve characteristics, displaying in particular, a marked lack of participation in the citizen-government communications process in terms of extent of material.

With respect to the second hypothesis, no significant differences were found between the two weekly papers in terms of extent or nature of coverage. Again, the Spectator was significantly different from the other papers. Therefore one could conclude that the local papers are acting as communications channels for government-citizen information exchange at close to their capacity to do so, but that the daily metropolitan paper has not provided evidence of a similar state of affairs. The reasons for this can only be speculated upon and may provide some direction for further research. Clearly, a number of questions remain unanswered.

TABLE 12

RELATIONSHIP OF CHARACTERISTICS PROPOSED
TO CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS OBTAINED

<u>Characteristic</u> Extent	<u>Star</u>	<u>Journal</u>	<u>Spectator</u>
I	M	M	D
II	D	D	D
III	M	M	D
IV	M	M	D
V	D	D	D
Nature			
VI	M	M	M
VII	H	M	M
VIII	M	M	M
IX	M	M	M
X	H	M	H
XI	M	M	D
XII	M	M	D

Legend

- M Characteristic clearly evident in paper
H Characteristic present but not clearly identifiable
D Characteristic not present in paper

7.4 Conclusions and Future Research

The performance of the newspapers with respect to the two functions identified in Section 2.2: surveillance of the environment and correlation of the environment can be discussed at this time.

The content analysis study indicated that with respect to Regional Government the metropolitan paper has not carried out these two roles. Some reasons for this can be postulated, specifically, the comments made about the paper in Chapter Four seem relevant, ie. the paper sees its "local" area as extending beyond the Hamilton-wentworth Region, the paper sees a need to compete with the Toronto Star in terms of national and international news content, and, the paper has no local competition.

The content analysis study indicated that citizen interest in municipal government was high during the study period, eg. a large number of letters to the editor were received, yet, examples of citizen lack of awareness were also found, eg., complaints to the Region about water services which were the responsibility of the local municipality. At this same time, news and features coverage in the weekly papers was low (surveillance) while editorials and opinion (correlation) were higher than expected. This imbalance is probably due to the inability of the local papers to employ as a staff writer a person who has a

knowledge of municipal government and can be given the time to examine it. This is a problem not uncommon to the industry. (See Section 2.4.1) This may suggest that Regional Governments should consider providing assistance to the local papers in the form of prepared material.

Arnstein's ladder concept makes it clear that information flows are but the first step towards full citizen participation in government.⁵ The fact that the analysis showed actual citizen involvement in municipal government, ie., attendance at meetings, to be very low, even with optimal information flows in the press, suggests that there are other factors which can be examined.

Within the communications field, the extent to which adequate information leads to apathy (vicarious participation) instead of action is worth further study. Rubin provides some interesting initial comments in this area.⁶

With respect to the effects of information flows on attitudes held about the community, the literature on territoriality suggests some further questions; can more information create a feeling of community at the metropolitan scale and breakdown some of the defence behaviors related to the local community.⁷ As an extension of this, what is the role of information flows in the creation of harmony in areas where the political units do not match

the social and economic interaction areas, eg. what has been the effect of the exclusion of Burlington from the Hamilton Region, and could information flows alter the effect of this decision. A similar question has been studied in Peel Region.⁸

The findings of the current research are specific to the Hamilton-wentworth Region but it is hoped that they are not unique to that area. Yates^a has shown that most metropolitan areas have local communities within them and Fetherling has shown that most of these communities have local newspapers available as communications channels. The intent of this paper has been to bring to attention the significance of the community newspaper in particular as a channel with the potential for improving information flows between municipal governments and citizens, an event which is seen as the first step towards greater harmony based on decision making through discussion and compromise.

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