

ETUDES

SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE NEWSROOM : A CASE STUDY (*)

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The study suggests that the more experienced the staffer, the more likely he will conflict with the newspaper's news policy, and the less experienced the staffer, the more likely he will conform to the newspaper's news policy.

Social control, a central formulation in the origin and development of social sciences, has come to reflect increasingly the specialized interests of social scientists concerned with the study of social structure. Morris Janowitz postulated that social control, as the concept has developed, has supplied an appropriate level of abstraction for the study of social order, social organization, and the development of industrial society ⁽¹⁾.

Social control has served and continues serve as a shorthand notation for a complex set of views and viewpoints. The traditional notion referred to social control as "social adaptation," "social adjustment," "social conformity," "the capacity of a social group to regulate itself," and even "social repression." ⁽²⁾

Contemporary social scientists have come to recognize that social control always is a mutual affair, that the dominant individuals or groups in organizations have limitations in enforcing the desired norms and values and that informal groups have the capacity to modify norms and values and participate in redirecting goals. Social control, then, presents a format of influence based on the notion of mutual relations among groups and provides "some safeguard" against the concept of control by a "superman," for good and evil purposes ⁽³⁾.

(*) This is a summary taken from: Abderrahmane Azzi, "Social Control in the Newsroom," M.A., North Texas State University, USA, 1982.

(1) Janowitz, Morris, "Sociological Theory and Social Control," American Journal of Sociology, 81: 82-108 (1975).

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid, p. 96.

Social control in news media organizations has received less attention by comparison with research attention given to other components of news media ⁽¹⁾. Studies related to the social control of news media, have postulated that social control and communication in large news organizations "flow primarily down the organization ladder," and staffers "participate much less frequently in editorial decision-making" ⁽²⁾. Such a general view, which can be said of most any formal organization, has limitations when applied to news media organization, however.

Two basic elements, which tend to contradict each other, can probably be regarded as unique to news media organization: (a) the existence of a covert and indirect news policy set by the publisher and maintained by the editors, and (b) the existence of codes of journalism ethics which are highly valued by professional journalists. The two elements may interfere with the process of social control in the newsroom of the newspaper organization.

The few studies that dealt directly or indirectly with social control in the newsroom of the newspaper organization did not clearly define the concept of social control. Social control probably was used as a synonymous concept to that of conformity ⁽³⁾ or socialization ⁽⁴⁾.

Classical studies ⁽⁵⁾ on social control in the newsroom postulated that newspaper staffers tended to conform to the news policy of their newspaper and that relation between staffers and their newspaper is that of newsroom solidarity ⁽⁶⁾.

Many researchers ⁽⁷⁾ have become skeptical about the conclusions of classical studies. Rodney Stark observed that the newsroom probably is "full of 'embittered, estranged, and embattled' reporters in 'open, acrimonious' conflict with the management." ⁽⁸⁾ Johnston speculated:

(1) Wrights, Charles, *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective*, (New York, Random House, 1975), p. 61.

(2) Johnston, John, "Organizational Constraints on Newswork," *Journalism Quarterly*, 53: 5-13 (1976).

(3) Breed, Warren, "Social Control in the Newsroom," in Schramm Wilbur, *Mass Communication* (Urbana, Illinois, University of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 178.

(4) *Ibid*, p. 181.

(5) Stark, Rodney, "Policy and the Pros: An Organizational Analysis of a Metropolitan Newspaper," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 7: 11-31 (1962).

(6) Breed, p. 188.

(7) Stark, pp. 134-136.

(8) Stark, p. 142.

The strain which emanates from the conflict between the need of work organizations to regulate their operations and the needs for individual professionals for autonomy and a voice in organizational decision-making is becoming especially acute in American journalism because of increasing centralization in the news industry ⁽¹⁾.

Hence, classical studies, which followed Breed's formulation, have narrowed their focus to cases of conflict between staffers and their newspaper organization. There is a considerable body of postulations, since Breed published his study, that suggests that conflict is an important factor in the newsroom work-setting.

These conflicts can be expressed in various forms. First, the professional journalist may experience role conflict. As Lee Sigelman has pointed out, the journalist holds dual "citizenship," that is, he is, to a greater or lesser extent, committed to the norms and goals of both his organization and his profession ⁽²⁾. Says Sigelman, "This duality may present a potential for conflict which can be actualized when there is tension between organizational and professional standards" ⁽³⁾. Also, it has been suggested that the professional journalist tends to hold two sets of conceptions of the role the press plays: one set involving him only as a neutral reporter, providing information that enables others to play a part in the fashioning of policy, and another set that defines his active participation in the policy-making process ⁽⁴⁾. The two sets of conceptions have implications for the role the professional journalist plays in the newsroom. Stark distinguished between two types of reporters, the "pros," and the "locals." The "pros" are efficient, but antipolicy, and the "locals" are inefficient, but loyal to the newspaper's policy. Stark suggested that the "pros" have an arsenal of weapons and defenses that can be viewed as dysfunctional from the point of view of management since the arsenal limits the actual attainment of the goals of policy and efficiency ⁽⁵⁾.

Another source of conflict may be difference in political attitudes. Most studies, including those of Breed and Stark, have concluded that the policy of American newspapers generally is conservative and professional

(1) Johnston, p. 13.

(2) Stark, p. 142.

(3) *Ibid*, p. 142.

(4) Cohen, Bernard, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 19.

(5) Stark, p. 27.

journalists generally are liberal in their political views. The professional journalists can be asked "not only to violate the value of their profession, but also their own political attitudes." (1)

Evidence of possible conflict between staffers and their newspaper organization is found in these studies: (a) Ruth Flegel found that reporters tend to be strongly directed in their reporting by their own opinion; and the view of their editors were much less influential (2); (b) Bernard Cohen suggested that newspaper staffers have an important influence on the shape of reality as it is perceived by the publisher; (3) and (c) Sigehman postulated that the absence of written set policy guidelines may create uncertainty or conflict in the behavior of reporters (4).

Marquita Moss and Johnston suggested that turnover on newspapers was fairly high, (5) and that newspaper staffers generally were dissatisfied (6). They attributed turnover and dissatisfaction to the excessive specialization and impersonality of the contemporary bureaucracy. Hence, it might be suggested that turnover and dissatisfaction were results of conflict between staffers and their bureaucratic organization.

The problem of this study is to analyze how news policy in a middle-size newspaper staffers tend to conform to or conflict with the newspaper's news policy.

Method

The daily newspaper used in this study was the **Denton Record-Chronicle** (circulation: 14,872). The **Record-Chronicle** was selected because of accessibility and because it is a middle-size newspaper, as defined by Breed, with 10,000 to 100,000 daily circulation (7). The study

(1) Breed, p. 11.

(2) Flegel, Ruth and Steven Chaffee, "The Influence of Editors, Readers, and Personal Opinion on Reporters," *Journalism Quarterly*, 48: 645-651 (1971).

(3) Cohen, p. 113.

(4) Sigehman, Lee, "Reporting the News: An Organizational Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology*, 79: 132-151 (1973).

(5) Moss, Marquita, "Reporter Turnover on Texas Daily Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly*, 55: 354-356 (1978).

(6) Johnston, p. 356.

(7) Breed, p. 181.

was a case study, "a comprehensive description and explanation of the many components of a given situation." (1) The case study method was selected because it permits determination of various components of social control in the newsroom. Social control was examined in terms of (a) mechanisms by which news policy is maintained and (b) ways by which newspaper staffers attempt to bypass news policy of the newspaper organization.

Fifteen staffers of the **Record-Chronicle** were interviewed from December 1 to December 15, 1981. The staffers consisted of five editors, five reporters, three sport writers, and two photographers. The interviews were conducted separately in the **Record-Chronicle** conference room during working hours.

Findings

Generally, the **Record-Chronicle**' staffers tend to share similar characteristics: a typical staffer is young, has a college degree, holds liberal attitudes, and comes from middle-class background. However, considerable differences exist among the staffers as to the level of experience. Such differences seem to play an important role in how each staffer perceive the newspaper's news policy. For the purpose of this study, staffers were divided into two categories: the new and the experienced staffers. New staffers are individuals who had been at the **Record-Chronicle** for less than one year and/or had just graduated from college. Experienced staffers are individuals who had worked for the **Record-Chronicle** for more than one year or had worked for other news media organizations prior to joining the **Record-Chronicle**.

New staffers usually go to the **Record-Chronicle** through the aid of someone they know at the newspaper. Their job at the **Record-Chronicle** usually is their first one in the newspaper business and their main aim usually is to gain experience. Experienced staffers either are recruited from the ranks of the **Record-Chronicle**'s staffers or are hired from outside. Most new staffers are reporters and most experienced staffers are editors, but because of the relatively small size of the staff and the high turnover, an experienced staffer can be a reporter and rarely a new staffer can be an editor.

(1) Babbie, Earl, *Survey Research methods*, (Belmont, California, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1973), p. 37.

Staffers and the Denton Record-Chronicle's News Policy

Most staffers said that they were not aware of the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy when they joined its staff. They joined the **Record-Chronicle** for reasons not related specifically to the news policy, including, in rank order: a) the **Record-Chronicle** had a good reputation; b) The staffer knew someone at the newspaper who helped him get his present position; c) the newspaper's proximity to the two universities: North Texas State University and Texas Woman's University; d) the Denton area is a good place to live, and e) personal reasons.

That the news policy was not a major factor in the staffer's selection of the **Record-Chronicle** may suggest that staffers do not actually exercise self selection, and thus self control, by gravitating to only those newspapers that have news policies they agree with.

The **Record-Chronicle** is dependent partially on voluntary applications in filling its positions. However, it may solicit applicants, and thus exercise organizational control in the process of recruitment. Many new staffers go to the **Record-Chronicle** through someone they knew at the newspaper, usually the managing editor (The managing editor used to be a faculty member at NTSU. He had the opportunity to know students whom he considers qualified for the job at the **Record-Chronicle**). Thus, the managing editor may be most likely to hire those who can perform the job according to the newspaper's expectations.

The staffer is hired on a ninety-day probationary period. During this period, he is "expected to demonstrate his ability to perform his work to the **Record-Chronicle's** expectation." In the event the **Record-Chronicle** is dissatisfied with the staffer's performance, the staffer is terminated during or at the end of the ninety-day period ⁽¹⁾.

The **Record-Chronicle's** expectation are not defined clearly. However, the Denton Publishing Company's booklet, provided to the new staffers, states that the company "hires personnel on the basis of their abilities, experience, and attitudes. An individual's personality and character are also considered to assure a harmonious working atmosphere for all employees." ⁽²⁾

(1) Denton Publishing Company and Grapevine Publishing Company, "Booklet," n.d., p. 22.

(2) Ibid, p. 17.

Most staffers said the **Record-Chronicle** had a news policy, but few could define it without difficulty. Although the news policy may mean different things to different individuals, there is a clear distinction between the new and the experienced staffers as to what the news policy is predominantly concerned with. To the new staffer, the dominant news policy issue centers upon the idea of whether the **Record-Chronicle** emphasizes local news or national and international news. To the experienced staffer, the issue is whether the **Record-Chronicle** plays a passive or an aggressive role in the community.

Although the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy is not clearly stated, the booklet of the Denton Publishing Company provided to news staffers states,

This is a people-oriented organization engaged in a people-oriented business. Our role is to communicate. We report on and comment about people and the things they do and say. We serve as an essential communications link between businessmen, their customers and potential customers. We provide people with helpful information about new products, new developments and special prices to help them have a better life at a lower cost. We bring the news of the day to the homes of people of all ages, colors and creeds ⁽¹⁾.

How Do Staffers Learn News Policy

Most staffers said that learning news policy is a process that takes place over time. "You learn it just by being around," one staffer said. That is, the staffer tends to learn news policy through the informal processes of socialization. When a new staffer is hired, he usually is not told what the news policy is, nor is he ever told. Nonetheless, the staffer learns the news policy gradually and indirectly through various means.

The **Record-Chronicle**, like most newspapers, does not have a complete written news policy that can serve as a guide in diverse situations of news coverage. Some aspects of the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy are spelled out in a number of brochures provided to staffers, but the content of these brochures tends to emphasize more the technical aspects of the news policy than the news policy itself.

The **Record-Chronicle** also does not have a special training program for the staffers. Most staffers have either a college degree or newspaper experience or both. However, most new staffers were invol-

(1) Ibid, p. 1.

ved in what is called on-the-job training, whereby a new staffer is put under the supervision of an experienced one. During that period, the news staffer is socialized to various aspects of the newspaper's work. Most new staffers said that what they learned during that period was more related to the technical aspects of the news policy than to the news policy itself. For example, the new staffer learned what a typical news lead should be like and that a news story would be written in an inverted pyramid order where the more important facts precede the less important ones, so that when the paragraph is cut for lack of space the story is not affected. Some new staffers were trained to use the computer terminals (VDT systems) that speeds the process of writing and facilitates access to national stories, but this is not done frequently since most staffers who use the computer terminals are editors.

Although the process of on-the-job training tends to focus on the technical aspects of the newspaper work, the process itself serves as an opportunity for the new staffers to meet and know other staffers, and, thus, to be exposed to various aspects of the news policy. "You observe and learn certain conventions and you know what is expected from you," a new staffer said.

Another way by which staffers learn news policy is by reading the newspaper. Most staffers said they read the **Record-Chronicle** on almost a daily basis. Most read the section they write for. In many cases, the staffer starts by reading the article he wrote, then the section he is in, then the general headlines or stories on Page One. Most staffers said they read the editorial page only occasionally.

Reading stories on Page One and the editorial page may serve as a guide to the staffer as to the newspaper's news policy. The staffer learns which stories received more attention (on Page One) and which stories received less attention (inside the newspaper). He learns the newspaper's position on various issues through the editorial.

Also, the **Record-Chronicle** often holds staff meetings in which most staffers participate. A staff meeting may involve two staffers or all staffers, depending on the importance of the issue. However, staff meetings that involve all staffers are very rare, once or twice a year. Most of the other meetings are informal, usually involving two staffers. Discussions in these meetings usually focus on such issues as assignment deadlines, stories to be covered, simplification of complicated stories, using an active verb in headline, generating more stories during holiday seasons, and similar matters.

The **Record-Chronicle** occasionally holds meetings that involve the staffers and the publisher. Most staffers said that meetings with the publisher tend to focus on technical matters. In two meetings, the discussion was about the use of the VDT system and the question of overtime; staffers were given guidelines on the use of the VDT system and were asked not to work overtime. This may suggest that the publisher is more active when the issue is directly related to the newspaper's revenue than when it is related to other aspects of news policy. The publisher tends to hand to the managing editor and other editors the responsibility of implementing the news policy. This may insure implementation of news policy and prevent the publisher from direct criticism. The **Record-Chronicle** holds meetings once a year that involve the staffers and the newspaper's attorney. The attorney usually discusses how to handle controversial stories to help the newspaper prevent a law suit for libel. These staff meetings, whether involving the managing editor, the publisher, or the attorney, serve as a forum through which the staffer becomes familiar with the newspaper's news policy.

The **Record-Chronicle** is a member of The Associated Press (AP). Most national and international stories printed in the **Record-Chronicle** are AP stories. Most staffers said they value the AP highly for the reputation it established for the newspaper in covering national and international news. In general, the staffers do not question the reliability of AP stories. The AP may serve as a guide as to the types of story that needs to be covered. The AP reports on state, national and international news, but the staffers may give a local angle to the stories. For example, if the AP reports a national story concerning high turnover in high schools, the **Record-Chronicle's** staffer may write a story on turnover in Denton high schools and combine his story with the AP story.

Thus, learning news policy is a gradual process that tends to be diffuse and informal.

How the **Record-Chronicle's** News Policy Is Maintained?

Although learning news policy usually takes place through informal processes of socialization, the newspaper usually needs both formal and informal mechanisms by which it can maintain its news policy. Such mechanisms can range from the process of scolding the staffer or blue-penciling the staffer's story to the last resort of firing.

Informal mechanisms.— To the newspaper, informal mechanisms may be more efficient than formal ones; informal mechanisms

enable the newspaper to maintain its policy without being vulnerable to direct criticism. The staffers' functions at the **Record-Chronicle** tend to follow a system of hierarchy. In general, the new staffer is put under the supervision of an experienced one. Thus, supervision carried out by the editors and the managing editor serves as a mechanism by which the newspaper maintains its news policy.

Another control mechanism is beat assignment, which also follows a hierarchical pattern. A new staffer usually is assigned the least important beat. Thus, the new staffer is likely to perform functions that are not critical to the newspaper's news policy.

Most staffers said that the beats are very specialized and consume most of their time. Specialization may permit the staffer to know well his particular beat, but it also may cause the staffer to lose sight of how events in his particular beat are related to the general events in the community. Many new staffers said some of their stories are about uninteresting events and lack perspective. Furthermore, most staffers said they could not write on issues outside their particular beats because of lack of time. Thus, specialization and lack of time may help the newspaper maintain its news policy; the staffers are given little chance to write on issues other than those designated by the newspaper.

Although the beats are specialized, the beat reporter can be assigned to cover an event that falls outside his particular beat. Such stories usually are assigned by the managing editor. The managing editor can assign a story to the staffer who is likely to cover the event according to the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy; controversial stories, which are rare, usually are assigned to the more experienced staffers. Hence, the newspaper determines not only which events to cover, but also who will cover them.

Since pages one, two and five are considered the most important pages of the newspaper, it usually is the news editor and/or his assistant who lay out these pages. The lay-out process involves a set of techniques that make a page more appealing to the reader. However, the process itself involves self judgment as to what types of story should be placed on page one, what type of headline should be written, and so on.

Most staffers said their stories usually are edited. A story can be edited for style as well as for content. However, since most staffers' stories are not controversial, they usually are edited for style.

Formal mechanism.— Formal mechanisms can involve both rewards and sanctions. Editors usually are recruited from the ranks of reporters. Thus, the **Record-Chronicle** is likely to promote staffers who can perform their jobs according to its expectation. Staffers, through the process of socialization, usually are conditioned to write stories that do not conflict with the newspaper's news policy. However, some staffers reported having tried to write controversial stories that probably contradicted the newspaper's news policy. Such stories usually were rejected and were not printed. Thus, rejection of stories is another mechanism by which news policy is maintained. Firing is a rare phenomenon at the **Record-Chronicle**. Nonetheless, turnover is fairly high. Thus, it is possible that some staffers exercise self control by resigning and taking better-paid jobs elsewhere, usually in advertising industry.

Conformity and Conflict

Differences exist between new and experienced staffers as to what the newspaper's news policy is perceived to be, and what they think it should be.

New staffers.— To new staffers, the dominant news policy issue centers around the idea of whether the **Record-Chronicle** focuses upon local or national and international news. They suggested that the **Record-Chronicle** emphasizes local news.

New staffers rarely question the newspaper's news policy. To them, the newspaper, by focusing on local news, plays an important role in informing its readers on what is going on in the community.

Most new staffers said that the **Record-Chronicle** is a good newspaper for its size; it focuses on local news; it has won a number of awards; it has a good reputation for the excellence of its photography department; it has a good design; and it is appealing to its readers. Most new staffers said they value highly the managing editor and have good communication with most of the experienced staffers. In addition, most new staffers said they were satisfied with their overall job at the **Record-Chronicle**.

Nonetheless, most new staffers complained about various aspects of the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy, mostly about the technical aspects of the newspaper's work. They suggested that functions within the newsroom are not clearly defined. In many cases, there is a lack of

coordination among staffers; for example, the **Record-Chronicle**, unlike most newspapers, does not have a city editor who can coordinate the staffers' functions.

Generally new staffers tend to conform to the newspaper's news policy. However, several factors may induce the new staffer to conform: (a) The new staffers' aim at the **Record-Chronicle** basically is to get experience. The new staffer does not look upon his job as permanent. "The newspaper is the right size for my career and anybody's goal is to move to a larger newspaper," a new staffer said. Thus, the new staffer is likely to be more concerned with the immediate details of his job than with the general news policy of the newspaper. (b) The new staffer has a sense of obligation and esteem for supervisors. Most new staffers were hired through someone they know at the newspaper, and thus, they are likely to perform their function according to the **Record-Chronicle's** expectation. (c) Although most new staffers said their goal is to move to a larger newspaper, many expressed a desire for mobility within the **Record-Chronicle**. Thus, the new staffer seeking promotion is likely not to function counter to the newspaper's news policy. (d) Most new staffers like to see their stories on Page One (which may be a good tactic for mobility). Thus, the new staffer is likely to report on stories he thinks may be on Page One, which means stories that fit the newspaper's news policy. (e) many new staffers referred to the pleasant nature of their activities. "It is a lot of work and a lot of fun," a new staffer said. (f) The fact is that news becomes a value, that is, stories have to be written even though nothing much has happened. Thus, much of the staffer's energy is channeled into getting news, and thus, he devotes little time to questioning the newspaper's news policy.

Experienced staffers.— To experienced staffers, the dominant news policy issue relates to whether the **Record-Chronicle** plays a passive or an aggressive role in the community. They suggested that the newspaper plays a passive role in the community.

Most experienced staffers suggested that the newspaper's news policy is poorly defined and is contingent upon the moment. If there is a general news policy, they suggested, it is to play down negative events in the community. "We play a passive and marginal role in the community, and the newspaper's goal is not defined. It is a frustrating situation for me," an experienced staffer said.

Many experienced staffers said the **Record-Chronicle** seems to

think it does not have competition from other newspapers whereas actually, they suggest, it does. Denton readers are as much interested in the Dallas newspapers as in the **Record-Chronicle**. The **Record-Chronicle's** perception that it does not have competition, they argue, makes the **Record-Chronicle** less competent and less motivated.

Because the **Record-Chronicle** has a high turnover, experienced staffers suggest, the **Record-Chronicle** does not have an adequate staff. They complained that new staffers are less competent and less motivated, "Reporters are younger, less experienced, not motivated; they do have a grasp of language and they think even worse," an experienced staffer said.

Most experienced staffers said that technically, the **Record-Chronicle** is a good newspaper, but it is below average in terms of content. Like new staffers, they complained about lack of coordination within the newsroom. In many cases, they argue, responsibilities are not defined.

Ways by Which Experienced Staffers Attempt to Bypass News Policy

There are various ways by which experienced staffers attempt to bypass the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy: (a) Many experienced staffers admitted they hand off material to other newspapers. A typical example is a staffer who reports on an event and discovers that the event contains angles that may interest other newspapers. In some cases, the **Record-Chronicle** is aware of that phenomenon, but it seems the newspaper does not object to writing to other newspapers. However, most experienced staffers said they hand off stories to other newspapers for financial reasons and news policy has little to do with their writing for other newspapers. (b) Most experienced staffers said they do not try consciously to keep out material consistent with the newspaper's news policy; they usually write according to what is expected of them. "You learn their conventions and you play by their rules," an experienced staffer said. (c) The experienced staffers may follow a tension-avoidance process by which they perform their jobs as long as it does not compromise their professional ethics. "As long as I get paid and perform my job as I want, I am staying," an experienced staff said. (d) Finally, although experienced staffers tend not to challenge the newspaper's news policy directly, resignation probably is the most effective way by which they can bypass news policy.

Several factors may induce the experienced staffer to conflict with the newspaper's news policy: (a) Experienced staffers are expected to participate in implementing news policy, but they play little role in making it. "The editor has a lot to say, but the last saying is up to the owners," an experienced staffer said. (b) Many experienced staffers suggested that the staffer's power in the community is a reflection of his newspaper's power. Because the **Record-Chronicle** plays a passive role in the community, they argue, it has little power, and thus, its staffers have little power.

The Editorial Column and the Editorial Page

Both new and experienced staffers said they do not read the editorial column and the editorial page except occasionally, but for different reasons. New staffers said they lack time to read editorial columns; experienced staffers said the section is uninteresting.

Both new and experienced staffers suggested that the editorial page (with exception of the editorial column) is balanced. It includes columns from both conservative and liberal columnists, including columns by Ellen Goodman, Art Buchwald, Richard Reeves (liberals) and William Safire and William Buckley (conservatives).

However, new and experienced staffers have different views as to the editorial column. Although new staffers did not question it, experienced staffers suggested that it usually is about uninteresting things, such as trees, traffic, safety and the like. "The editorial column is poorly reasoned, not intellectually stimulating, and about uninteresting subjects," an experienced staffer said. Another experienced staffer said, "The editorial column is not persuasive. It has a lot of ambiguity and it uses a very carefully couched language to impress readers." Thus, new and experienced staffers differ as to the news policy expressed in the newspaper's news column.

New and Experienced Staffers' Perspectives

The difference between new and experienced staffers as to the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy may represent two different perspectives.

New staffers' perspective.— New staffers argue that the newspaper tends to emphasize local news, that only when nothing much is

happening in the community does the newspaper turn to national and international news. They suggested that the **Record-Chronicle** is a feature-oriented newspaper, emphasizing human interest stories and playing down negative and sensational stories. This, they argued, probably is a trend in the newspaper's plan to move away from sensational toward human interest stories.

Experienced staffers' perspective.— Experienced staffers argued that the newspaper does not emphasize local news. In many cases, they suggested, the newspaper carries no Denton stories on Page One.

Experienced staffers suggested that the newspaper actually has two news policies: one local and one national. The local one is passive and the national one tends to carry what AP sends.

They argued that the **Record-Chronicle's** news policy is inconsistent: passive on local events and not passive on national events. For example, the newspaper endorses state and national candidates, but not locals.

Experienced staffers suggested that the newspaper tends not to be passive on national events because such events already were reported through the AP and the news media in general. Thus, the **Record-Chronicle** does not have a risk of being accused of anything when printing controversial national news.

To experienced staffers, the newspaper should be aggressive and should be involved and participate in what is going on in the community. "The newspaper should establish its identity and its reputation by playing an aggressive role in its community and not by being a public relations-oriented newspaper," an experienced staffer said.

Most new staffers said they have good communication with experienced staffers. However, most experienced staffers said new staffers are not competent and not motivated, and that the **Record-Chronicle**, by being passive on local events, creates an atmosphere that makes new staffers passive, too. "New staffers are not curious of anything and they take things for granted. In fact, they are not encouraged to do anything," an experienced staffer said. Another said, "New staffers can be pushed or guided to do something, but that is not happening. We have a bunch of people with potential, but they are not used." Those who are motivated, they said, are self-motivated and usually do not stay at the newspaper very long.

Thus, both new and experienced staffers have different perspectives as to what the newspaper's news policy and the experienced staffers tend to be critical of and conflict with the newspaper's news policy.