

A PANEL OF GAINESVILLE SUN READERS' ATTITUDES AND
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE JUVENILE COURT BEFORE AND AFTER
UNSOLICITED EXPOSURE TO A SERIES OF PUBLISHED ARTICLES,

BY

FRANCES SNIDER HESSER

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

1973

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements iii

List of Tables v

Abstract vii

Introduction 1

Methodology 13

Results 43

Conclusions 64

Appendix A. 75

Appendix B. 87

Appendix C. 121

Bibliography. 130

Biographical Sketch 131

Signature Page. 133

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate Council
of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in
Journalism and Communications

A PANEL OF GAINESVILLE SUN READERS' ATTITUDES AND
KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE JUVENILE COURT BEFORE AND AFTER
UNSOLICITED EXPOSURE TO A SERIES OF PUBLISHED ARTICLES

BY

FRANCES SNIDER HESSER

June, 1973

Chairman: Dr. Harry H. Griggs
Major Department: Journalism and Communications

Florida's juvenile courts have been effectively closed to journalists by judges protecting the identities of juveniles. Although most judges are well qualified, some abuse the rights of juveniles. Because of a conviction the public needs to know about such courts, a research project was undertaken with the cooperation of the Alachua County Juvenile Court and The Gainesville Sun to see if the mass media can interest the public in the court. A panel of representative Sun subscribers were questioned before and after a series of eight articles about the court were published.

The results showed that few panel members noticed or read the articles. This led to the conclusion that a good public relations campaign might be a better means of informing the public about the court system.

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Reported Income Level of Respondents Answering Both Questionnaires	45
2. Education Level of Respondents Answering Both Questionnaires.	47
3. Number of Children in Families of Respondents Answering Both Questionnaires	49
4. Respondents' Comments About the Alachua County Juvenile Court.	50
5. Respondents' Comments About Their Friends' Opinions of the Alachua County Juvenile Court	52
6. Respondents' Opinions as to Racial Fairness of the Alachua County Juvenile Court	54
7. Respondents' Opinions on the Strictness of the Alachua County Juvenile Court When Handling Children Under its Jurisdiction	56
8. Respondents' Opinions on the Helpfulness of the Alachua County Juvenile Court When Handling Children.	57
9. Readership of Articles Printed in <u>The Gainesville Sun</u> during Research Project	58
10. Comparison of Correct Answers From all Respondents on Both Questionnaires for Section D.	59
11. Comparison of Correct Answers by the Sex of the Respondents on Both Questionnaires for Section D.	61

LIST OF TABLES (CONT'D)

Table	Page
12. Comparison of Correct Answers by the Race of the Respondents on Both Questionnaires for Section D.	62
13. Comparison of Correct Answers by the Economic Class of the Respondents on Both Questionnaires for Section D	63