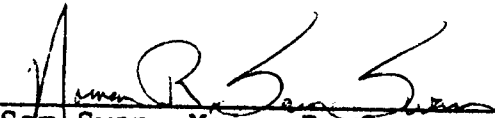
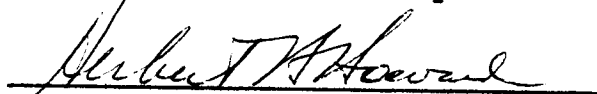


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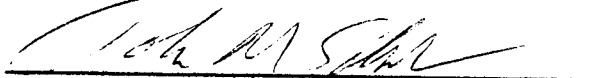
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Michael Timothy England entitled "Decision-making in television newsrooms: The rationale for live-on-the-scene reports." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communication.


Sam Swan, Major Professor

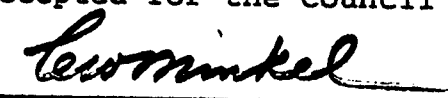
We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance.







Accepted for the Council


Vice Provost and
Dean of the Graduate School

DECISION-MAKING IN TELEVISION NEWSROOMS:
THE RATIONALE FOR LIVE-ON-THE-SCENE NEWS REPORTS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
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Michael Timothy England
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out why television news managers include live-on-the-scene reports in their newscasts when other story treatments are available. Live reporting from the scene of news events is made possible by electronic news gathering technologies, including microwave-equipped vehicles and satellite uplinks. Reporting live enables television stations to deliver news stories as they happen, but immediacy is not the only reason for going live. This research examined the television news decision-makers' rationale for including live reports in television newscasts.

The study employed a qualitative method of inquiry. Field research was conducted to provide the data needed to analyze how and why live technologies were used. Sixty-two news managers who worked for television stations in six markets were interviewed and observed. The news managers included news directors, assistant news directors, executive producers, news operations managers, assignment editors, managing editors, and producers.

The news managers who participated in this study said live reports were often included in their newscasts to create an illusion or sense of immediacy rather than actually covering events that were occurring or unfolding at the time of their newscasts. They said the coverage of breaking news

was limited to less than one-third of the live shots produced. Whereas, the news managers said immediacy and logistical considerations were important reasons to go live, they also based many of their decisions on competitiveness (e.g., to show viewers the station's presence in the community) and presentation (e.g., to improve the flow or pacing of their newscasts.)

This study lends support to past research that showed television news is shaped in large measure by organizational influences. Most television stations are fighting to survive in highly competitive marketplaces, and their survival is linked to attracting viewers. And many of the news managers who participated in this study said live-on-the-scene news reporting is an element of television newscasts that, according to the market research their stations have conducted, attracts and holds audience attention whether breaking news is being shown or not.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This is a study of how television news organizations use technology to take viewers by means of electronic signals to the scene of news events to show them in real time, live, what is happening. Television provides a window through which viewers can become vicarious participants in the events of the day. This ability to deliver news as it happens has value for both the viewers who receive it and the television news organizations that disseminate it.

Evidence of the value that viewers place on live coverage of news events is the ratings boost that television networks and stations experience when stories of high impact, interest, and/or significance are reported. Viewers turn to the medium because they can expect to see and hear events as they unfold; television is very often the medium of choice for those who want to learn quickly what is happening in their environment. Being perceived as the "first" to report stories is a goal of most news organizations, so they invest heavily in the technologies that make it possible to deliver news ahead of their competition. Electronic and satellite news gathering technologies now offer the fastest means for television to deliver both the sights and sounds of news

events from where they occur. This kind of news coverage is commonly referred to as spot news. "Spot news" is a term derived from "on-the-spot news," which refers to on-the-scene coverage of news events as they are happening (Gordon & Falk, 1967, p. 23).

In this chapter, the value of spot news coverage will be examined, as will the development of electronic and satellite news gathering technologies and their impact. The chapter will also review some of the criticism that has been written about how these technologies are used; addressed will be concerns about news content, editorial control, and the future of network news.

The arguments raised in this chapter for and against the use of "live" technology will lead to an explication of the current study's purpose and significance.

Television Builds Trust with Spot News Coverage

Coverage of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy is regarded by many historians as a turning point in the public's perception of television news (Sterling & Kittross, 1990, p. 407; Stephens, 1989, p. 282; Barnouw, 1970, pp. 235-236). The tragedy in Dallas propelled television news "to the forefront of the nation's consciousness" as millions of people turned to the medium to hear and see the latest developments relating to Kennedy's

death (Fang, 1985, p. 321). "Never before in history had such momentous news traveled so far so fast," reported Time magazine. "Never before had so many people stood almost immediate witness to a world-shaking event" ("Covering the tragedy," 1963, p. 84). Regular programming and all commercials were suspended on the television networks for four days from Friday afternoon, November 22, shortly after Kennedy was shot, until Monday, November 25, when he was buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

Much of the reporting during those four days in Dallas and in Washington was live and on-the-scene, including the shooting death of Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin of the president. Viewers who were tuned to NBC-TV on Sunday morning, November 24, saw Oswald's murder as it happened, and the three networks subsequently provided countless taped replays of the event throughout the day (Barnouw, 1970, pp. 228-236).

The television coverage following Kennedy's assassination and lasting until after his funeral had the effect of drawing the country together; an estimated 93 percent of the U.S. households with televisions watched the burial services at Arlington National Cemetery (Sterling & Kittross, 1990, p. 407).

America's trust in television news was on the rise in the early 1960s. Opinion polls in November 1963 showed, for

the first time, that television was the main source of news for most Americans, surpassing newspapers and radio (Barnouw, 1970, pp. 210-211). Television news was earning the viewers' trust because it could deliver the sights and sounds of major events with immediacy; manned space flights, the civil rights movement, the Cuban missile crisis, and the assassination of a president were transmitted directly to viewers' homes where they could see and judge for themselves.

The Value of Spot News Coverage

Over the past thirty years, Americans have come to rely on television to show them events as they unfold. Many of the nation's shared experiences have been delivered by the medium, and broadcasters and their audiences credit live coverage of these experiences with "exceptional" value (Dayan & Katz, 1992, pp. 5-6). Wood (1967) said "there is no doubt that live television adds to the tendency of people to look upon television as their most important source of news and to accord it loyalty and trust" (p. 30). Astronaut Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon in 1969, the Watergate hearings in the early 1970s, the attempt to assassinate President Reagan in 1981, and the Challenger space shuttle disaster in 1986 are just a few of the many news events that television covered live, providing viewers with information as it became available.

Ratings for such coverage show viewer acceptance, if not demand, for live reporting. For example, about ninety-five million people watched former football player O. J. Simpson being chased by police on the San Diego Freeway after he failed to surrender to police to face murder charges (McClellan and Coe, 1994, p. 20).

Since the Cable News Network (CNN) was formed in 1980, live coverage of major news events has been the norm; speeches, government hearings, trials, civil disturbances, natural disasters, and wars are reported live as a matter of course. The news channel was heralded as the "undisputed star" of news organizations for its early coverage of the Persian Gulf war (Zoglin, 1991, p. 69).

CNN was alone in providing live and continuous coverage -- albeit, voice transmission only -- throughout the first night of the allied attack on Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. The other networks lost their phone connections between Iraq and the United States during the initial shelling, but their correspondents were able to report live from Saudi Arabia and Israel, which faced possible Iraqi Scud missile attacks (Zoglin, 1991). Kellner (1992) described these live broadcasts -- when correspondents could be seen nervously donning gas masks to prepare for the Scud attacks -- as "genuinely thrilling" and the "most compelling TV drama of the Gulf war" (p. 114).

In a sense, the network correspondents in Saudi Arabia, Baghdad, and Israel provided the most engaging moments of live drama, rather than the combat troops, who were rarely seen. The correspondents under fire from Iraqi Scud attacks provided an illusion of audience participation in the drama of the war, and the fact that the TV personalities could actually be hit involved the audience in a new kind of live drama. (p. 114)

The combined efforts of the major television news gathering organizations -- ABC, CBS, CNN, and NBC -- attracted 118-million million viewers the first night of the war ("Ninety-five million saw O. J.'s odyssey," 1994).

The CNN broadcasts from Baghdad reminded those who were old enough to remember of Edward R. Murrow's World War II radio broadcasts from London. When Germany bombed England during the Battle of Britain, the story was told with sound. Americans could sense the war by listening to Murrow's voice along with sporadic explosions and anti-aircraft fire. Likewise, the description of the bombing of Baghdad was, during the initial stages, a sound-only affair; no live pictures could be shown as CNN's correspondents used an open phone line known as a "four-wire" to relay reports to their television audience in the United States and dozens of other countries (Hamblen, 1991). A CNN official, Robert Weiner (1992), wrote that Murrow probably would have loved the cable channel's efforts "to cover a war `live' ... in real time, from behind the lines ... from the enemy's capital!" Weiner

said he "could easily imagine ole Edward R. lickin' his lips at the prospect" (p. 17).

Murrow and his colleagues at CBS are generally regarded as having set the standard for reporting live and on-the-scene (Stephens, 1989, pp. 278-279; Sperber, 1986; Fang, 1985, p. 302; Gordon & Falk, 1967, pp. 26-31). The networks seldom allowed recorded news programs prior to and during World War II, so most reports were live anyway, but Murrow and his colleagues made a special effort to report from where the action was. They filed reports from the major capitals of Europe; they flew on bombing missions; and they toured the concentration camps (Sperber, 1986).

In Murrow's honor, the Radio Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) bestows its highest awards each year on the nation's outstanding broadcast news operations. One of the major categories for which stations can receive the Murrow Award is excellence in spot news coverage, to recognize news organizations that respond effectively to events as they unfold.

O'Brien (1993) reported in "Who wins the Murrows?" that the RTNDA's choices for spot news recognition indicate a "steady support for hard-edged news room decisions, particularly in the use of the live technology that [sic] is broadcasting's central strength" (p. 14). Likewise, the Society of Professional Journalists honors news gathering

organizations for spot news reporting; the 1991 winner in the television category was CNN for its coverage of the Persian Gulf war ("The big time in Baghdad," 1992). Spot news reporting is also often recognized by the Associated Press and the George Foster Peabody Awards; and, Broadcasting & Cable, one of the industry's major trade magazines, has occasionally published lengthy cover stories to highlight the spot news triumphs of broadcast stations ("Spot news," 1986; "Local TV journalism," 1983; "Local TV journalism," 1982; "The live one," 1978; "Television on the spot," 1977). In short, the broadcasting industry clearly has a high regard for spot news coverage.

Electronic News Gathering Technology (ENG) Arrives

Before the mid-1970s, the television networks and broadcast stations seldom had live reports from locations outside their studios (Yoakam & Cremer, 1989, chap. 1). The expense of setting up equipment at remote sites and transmitting signals over a telephone company's video circuits was prohibitive. When major, history-making events occurred, live and on-the-scene news reporting was more often the networks' domain because substantial resources were necessary to set up on location. But remotes were rare. At both the network and local levels, most stories reported visually, prior to 1975, were filmed. However, film was not

an ideal medium for reporting breaking news, because processing and editing it took a lot of time. To solve the problem of speed, electronic news gathering (ENG) technology was developed in the early 1970s (pp. 6-8). With this technology, stations could quickly receive video or have live reports from remote locations on a regular basis.

Several important technological advances made ENG possible (Yoakam & Cremer, 1989, pp. 4-5; Whittaker, 1993, pp. 258-261). They included: (1) lightweight and portable electronic cameras, (2) videocassette recording and playback units, (3) edit controllers to assemble taped segments as desired, (4) time-base correctors to stabilize the electronic picture, and (5) portable microwave systems. With ENG technology, a station can set up a microwave link with its crews at a news scene and have them relay video from the scene to the station electronically. Having this capability provides options. Because a station's news crews are no longer obligated to return to the station to write and edit their stories, they can stay at the scene and gather additional information, or, if desired, they can report live.

KMOX-TV in St. Louis was the first station to abandon film completely as a news gathering tool and adopt ENG technology exclusively. The year was 1974. Broadcasting magazine reported that "a new era in journalism" was dawning with the development of ENG, because it offered the "ultimate

in news delivery -- instant coverage" ("Portable cameras," 1974, p. 45). About a year later, the magazine reported that "a revolution" was underway in television news, as an increasing number of stations converted to ENG ("Minicams," 1975, p. 46). By the end of the decade, about 80 percent of the television stations in the country used electronic news gathering equipment, but only 30 percent regularly had live-on-the-scene reports (Rugg, 1980).

ENG's Impact

Stations adopting the new technology recognized several potential benefits: access to more stories ("Big changes in local news," 1974, p. 41), higher ratings ("Minicam as WBBM-TV weapon," 1974, p. 42), enhanced credibility ("Channel 5 news goes 'Live Action'," 1974, p. 14), and instant news coverage ("Minicams," 1975, p. 46). But, as news consultant Al Primo noted in a 1977 Broadcasting article ("End of the beginning," p. 38), breaking news events rarely occurred during regularly scheduled newscasts -- much to the chagrin of ENG owners. Primo said live reporting of news events had not been nearly as dramatic as stations had hoped.

In a 1982 survey of news directors, Smith (1984) found that ENG had definitely influenced the content of television news, with 86 percent of the respondents expressing that

view. And about 58 percent of them said the impact had been negative. The study did not offer an explanation of why news directors held this view, but Smith suggested that ENG may "have degraded news content and reduced the autonomy of news directors" (p. 99).

Satellite News Gathering Technology (SNG) Arrives

In the mid-1980s, satellite technology moved to the forefront as a news gathering tool, making it possible for many stations to broaden their coverage areas. Stations may now obtain news reports, including live shots, from virtually anywhere on earth -- thanks to satellite news gathering (SNG) technology. Signals sent via satellite cover much greater distances than those transmitted by microwave. With microwave technology, signals need a terrestrial relay point -- or possibly a relay point that is airborne, such as a helicopter -- to reach their destination. Microwaved signals can be sent about fifty to sixty miles depending on the terrain between the point of origination and the receiving end. On the other hand, signals transmitted or uplinked to a satellite, located in a geostationary orbit 22,300 miles above earth, travel greater distances and encounter fewer potential obstacles than microwaved signals.

With satellite technology, stations can obtain video from anywhere an uplink can be established. Satellite news vehicles (SNVs) are equipped to uplink signals, and they also carry the minicameras, the videocassette recorders, and, in many cases, the editing facilities that are used to gather and prepare news stories. SNVs enable stations to send their crews farther to get a story, but not every station can afford one.

Even if a station lacks an SNV or does not have one available to cover a particular story, it can still rely on the spirit of cooperation that is evident among stations with satellite uplinking and downlinking capabilities. A station with at least a satellite dish for receiving signals can often find stations in other markets willing to send stories via satellite. Also, national and regional video services, like CNN News Source and Conus, have been created to receive and distribute news programming by satellite. And the broadcasting networks -- ABC, CBS, and NBC -- provide regular satellite news feeds to their respective affiliates.

Clary (1986) observed that many television stations felt compelled to invest in satellite news gathering technology to remain competitive:

The stations are engaged in TV's version of the arms race, now escalating into outer space. As the latest Star Wars weapon, SNG looks to many broadcasters the way atomic energy did in the 1950s -- limitless in its potential, dangerous if abused, ultimately irresistible (p. 65).

SNG's Impact

The adoption of SNG technology has had a profound impact on television news, according to Time magazine ("The Sky's the Limit," 1989, pp. 72-73). The weekly news magazine reported that many local stations benefited from SNG because they had access to more news stories. The abundance of stories available from the major networks, from stations in other markets, and from a variety of video services allowed SNG-equipped stations to expand their news programs, putting more responsibility on the news departments to contribute to station profits (p. 72).

The abundance of stories also affected the relationship between the major networks -- ABC, CBS, and NBC -- and their affiliates. "The age of network paternalism is on the wane," reported Steve Daley in the Chicago Tribune ("Satellite wars," 1986, sec. 5, p. 5). Daley said the networks needed the local affiliates more than the local stations needed the networks to obtain news. The networks responded to the stations' growing independence by creating their own satellite newsfeeds, ABC NewsOne, CBS Newsnet and the NBC News Channel ("New at the network news services," 1994, p. 34; Puglisi, 1992, pp. 10-11).

A case study by Cleland and Ostroff (1988) of a television station in Jacksonville, Florida, found that the station's menu of stories had increased by its participation

in a consortium of Florida television stations which used satellite technology for sharing stories. In addition, the researchers found that SNG affected the way reporters and photographers did their jobs. The news crews usually had little time to prepare their stories, because they often reported, not only for their own stations, but others in the consortium as well.

Ostroff and Sandell (1989) looked at how changes in television news gathering technologies affected coverage of Ohio's gubernatorial elections in 1978, 1982, and 1986. The researchers observed three television stations in Columbus, Ohio, and found little evidence from one campaign to the next that the stations improved their coverage (p. 120). The study said the stations increased the number of campaign stories presented live between 1982 and 1986, but the overall coverage was "sporadic" and not very informative (p. 118).

A survey conducted by Lacy, Atwater, and Powers (1988) found that the attitudes of news directors toward news gathering technologies were more positive than Smith's findings earlier in the decade. Smith (1984) had found that news directors believed ENG's impact on news content had been negative, but the news directors who responded to the survey taken by Lacy, Atwater, and Powers said satellite news technology had improved the quality of their newscasts, particularly their stations' statewide coverage.

Omachonu (1989) examined whether news directors perceived a relationship between having satellite news gathering capabilities and their stations' newscast ratings. Although 55 percent of Omachonu's survey respondents (n=51) regarded satellite technology as valuable, they did not perceive SNG capabilities as a "sufficient means for achieving high ratings," except in situations where one station in a given market had SNG and its competitors did not (p. 155).

ENG/SNG's Role in Shaping News Content

Berkowitz (1991), who observed an Indianapolis station for seven weeks, found that most newswriters "saw electronic technology in its most visible form -- electronic or satellite news gathering -- as a relatively minor element of their decision-making process" (p. 249). To them, ENG/SNG equipment was simply a tool to augment stories that the decision-makers already wanted to air. However, an assignment editor interviewed by Berkowitz, disagreed, arguing that the station often showcased its technology "to promote the sophistication of the station's news gathering effort" (p. 250). The assignment editor also indicated that some news items, such as school board meetings and court trials, were not routinely covered because technology

dictated the selection of stories with more "visual potential" (p. 250).

The fact that television news content is shaped in large measure by the medium's emphasis on the visual has long been recognized. Barnouw (1970) said the scope of potential news stories for television was curtailed when the camera became an arbiter of news value.

The notion that a picture was worth a thousand words meant, in practice, that footage of Atlantic City beauty winners, shot at some expense, was considered more valuable than a thousand words from Eric Severeid on the mounting tensions of Southeast Asia (p. 43).

Barnouw said analysis, a staple of radio news in its glory days, was shunned by television for being non-visual.

The role of electronic and satellite news gathering technologies in shaping the content of television news will be explored further in Chapters Two and Three.

Live Technology's Proper Role?

Many television news critics, according to Smith (1988), hold the view that "television overdramatizes the news by going for the visual instead of the analytical, especially now that news gathering technology makes it easy to do 'live' coverage of otherwise unimportant stories" (p. 342). Smith's survey of news directors, producers, and reporters found that most reporters agreed with the critics'

assessment, while the producers and news directors were less inclined to agree. Smith concluded that perhaps the reason reporters were more critical of their craft was that they felt "relatively powerless" to change its perceived faults (p. 346).

Ron Powers, a newspaper columnist and author of The Newscasters, is a well known television critic who has taken aim at local television's use of live technology. In an essay for TV Guide, Powers (1982) complained that "a great deal of live-on-the-scene coverage consists either of stock, arranged in advance cliches (pickets, protests, press conferences, rope skipping contests) or of reporters standing forlornly at the scene where something exciting happened -- a while ago" (p. 20). Powers saw very little evidence of ENG technology being used to enhance journalism. In his view, live action-cams were simply the latest "toy" of television news (p. 20).

In Television News/Radio News, Irving Fang (1985) offered this opinion on how best to handle live technology:

The journalistic reason for doing a live report is that something significant or interesting is happening now. If an event is neither significant nor interesting, it does not belong in the newscast, a seemingly obvious fact but one which eludes newsroom personnel on occasion, especially when new equipment arrives (p. 138).

Goedkoop (1988) said most observers agree that spot news coverage is the most effective use of live technology. However, since there are not enough compelling, local stories of a spot news variety to cover on an everyday basis, stations use their investment to cover other kinds of stories.

"The question is whether some local television news departments are stretching the use of technology and their own grasp of events too far. If they do, does the technology become a show business gimmick used to promote higher ratings rather than a logical extension of news gathering tools? The answer is, as it has been in the past, "all of the above" (p. 154).

The temptation to go live for the sake of it, whether stories demand immediate coverage or not, was an issue addressed as early as 1965. Ed Bliss, a former CBS news editor, wrote in Now the News (1991) that Fred Friendly, president of CBS News during the mid-1960s, issued a memo urging his staff to use their access to Intelsat I, the world's first commercial communications satellite, for hard news items only; he did not want to see "bland features" bouncing off the satellite (p. 442). Bliss added that Friendly's instruction "could have been heeded with profit" by many network and local producers upon the arrival of ENG a decade later (p. 442).

Live Reporting and Editorial Control

The networks have also been scrutinized for some of their live reporting. For example, critics charged that news coverage of the Persian Gulf war lacked depth and context (Denton, 1993; Rosenberg, 1991) and too often served as a propaganda tool for the U.S. government (Kellner, 1992). Newspaper columnist Howard Rosenberg said:

TV has become its own Scud -- wildly hurtling through space, having burst through all journalistic restraints into some perilous, uncharted technological realm from which there is no return (p. 17).

What concerned Rosenberg was the networks' seeming willingness to report stories before checking the facts. His harshest criticism was directed at CNN for its live war coverage, saying it was too speculative, caused too much confusion, and often misled the public. Rosenberg called on the networks to take more time to double-check and evaluate the information they received before passing it along (p. 18).

Network news anchors Ted Koppel, Tom Brokaw, and Dan Rather have on separate occasions expressed concern about the lack of editorial control when events are broadcast live.

"The technological tail is wagging the editorial dog," Koppel (1994, p. 16) of ABC News told students at Harvard University. "Putting someone on the air while an event is

unfolding is clearly a technological tour de force; but it is an impediment, not an aid, to good journalism."

"We rush from event to event simply because we are able, too seldom pausing to reflect on what we have witnessed," NBC's Brokaw said ("Brokaw defends network mandate," 1987, p. 174).

Taking viewers to the scene of a news event is not enough, said Rather, managing editor of the CBS Evening News, in a Washington Post column (1992, p. a31). "We need to provide context, perspective and analysis."

The Changing Role of Networks

One concern of the major broadcast networks is that the importance of their national and international news coverage will diminish, if local stations find ways to obtain such stories on their own or from non-network sources. Katz (1990) questioned whether gathering national and international news from non-network sources would benefit local stations over time.

Isn't this really just duplicating one of the few remaining things network news divisions do best -- cover national and international news? Couldn't this technology, and the financial investment it requires, be better applied to being on the air longer, offering more enterprising local news? In the long run, will viewers stay with your stations because of your globe-trotting or because you're providing information viewers can't get on cable or on competing stations -- local news (p. 44)?

Jacobs (1990), though, argued that "the genuine pursuit of a local angle to a national or international story makes journalistic sense" when the networks cannot or will not provide such service (p. 26). But if the station is spreading its wings for no good reason except to follow a consultant's recommendations, then the effort is, in Jacob's view, questionable. Satellite technology should not be used simply because it is available, said Jacobs.

Summary

Americans trust television to deliver news quickly and accurately; they turn to the medium in times of crisis for immediate coverage of breaking news events. On the local level, viewers can depend on television to provide immediate and vital information when citizens riot, natural disasters occur, trains derail, planes crash, hazardous tanks leak, and traffic accidents kill. The electronic media have a long tradition of going to the scene to provide live reports of breaking news; Edward R. Murrow and his colleagues set the standard years ago when they covered World War II for radio. Their ability to report from locations outside the comfort and security of their broadcast studios won respect, and such coverage is still valued. Excellence in spot news coverage continues to be a pursuit of broadcast news organizations;

awards and acclaim often come to those who make the best effort.

Live-on-the-scene reporting of news events is now commonplace. Many television news organizations -- at both the network and local levels -- have the ability to report from virtually anywhere, at any time, due to advances in electronic and satellite news gathering technologies. The potential benefits to be gained from these technologies go beyond the ability to report stories quickly; broadcast stations have invested in ENG/SNG to gain access to more stories, to expand their newscasts, to boost their ratings, to enhance their credibility, to broaden their coverage areas, and to lessen their dependence on the networks. However, some news workers and critics see a downside resulting from how local stations use the ENG/SNG technologies.

One of the more common complaints focuses on the tendency of some stations to go live for the sake of it; this occurs when stations report live even though the story is not really breaking and there is nothing new to tell the audience. Another view is that live reporting should always have a hard news edge, that live coverage should be synonymous with spot news coverage. Anything less, such as the live reporting of features, is considered a waste of time.

Also of concern is the apparent lack of editorial control during live reports. Covering events live may leave little time for reporters to check and assemble facts, which can lead to inaccurate or misleading information reaching the public. When this happens, the credibility of news gathering organizations may suffer.

The ability of local television stations to go globe-trotting for stories raises yet another issue. When stations commit their own resources to report on the national or world scene, they may be neglecting or omitting news in their own backyards.

Purpose and Significance of this Study

The purpose of this study is to find out what motivates television news managers to include live-on-the-scene reports in their newscasts. Why would they choose to go live when other story treatments (e.g. voice overs, taped packages, graphics, etc.) are available?

The obvious answer to that question is the need for immediacy. Some stories demand instant coverage because, in the judgment of the television news managers, the public needs to or wants to know now what is happening. But immediacy is not always the paramount concern when the news managers choose live coverage. Many on-the-scene reports consist of, as Powers (1982) described, reporters reporting

live from a scene where something exciting happened -- a while ago.

The ideal use of live technology is to cover spot news -- those news events of significance or importance that continue to unfold as the reporters gather new facts and describe what is known. But broadcasters learned a long time ago that interesting or dramatic spot news events do not necessarily occur on a daily basis, and seldom do they ever occur within the time frame of a regularly scheduled newscast. Few ENG/SNG owners are inclined to have their expensive investments -- their helicopters and satellite-uplink and microwave-equipped trucks -- sitting idly by as they wait for that all-important, adrenaline-generating spot news story, so how do they use the technology in the meantime? Do they use live technology as a show business gimmick, as Goedkoop (1988) indicated? Is live technology perceived as a promotional tool, as Berkowitz (1991) found? Or, as Jacobs (1990) suggested, do consultants push for more live coverage as a marketing ploy? Do news managers perceive "going live for the sake of it" as a problem? And, is the proper balance, in their view, being struck between local and non-local news -- now that satellite technology makes it possible to get news from anywhere?

The significance of asking these questions is related to the points raised earlier in this chapter about trust.

Television news long ago earned the American people's trust; they can turn to the medium, and do so in large numbers, to see and hear for themselves what is happening in the world around them. To some people, live television coverage suggests that something is happening now and deserves special attention; they trust the medium to inform, not manipulate, them. This study looks at how television news managers use this sacred trust by examining their decisions to go live and on-the-scene. The basic question is: "Why go live?"

This study employed a qualitative method of inquiry. Data were derived from field research in the form of personal interviews and direct observations. Sixty-two news managers who worked for television stations in six different markets were interviewed and observed. A descriptive analysis of the news managers' responses and of the work that was performed during station visits will be presented in Chapter Five; the analysis will offer the news managers' perspective of how and why they use live technology. Chapter Four is a description of the methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter Three is a review of the theories and research relating to the content of television news, and Chapter Two offers an historical perspective by examining the evolution of electronic news gathering technologies. Chapters Two and Three provide a basis for understanding the decision-making process of television news managers and the manner in which

they have interacted with news gathering technologies over the years.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: THE TECHNOLOGIES OF ELECTRONIC NEWS

Overview

This chapter is a brief review of how technology has evolved over the past 150 years to the point where many news gathering organizations now have the ability to deliver to large audiences, in an instant, the sights and sounds of news events from virtually anywhere in the world.

From the telegraph to the telephone, from the wireless to television, from microwave to satellite -- the direction of communication technologies, in their application as tools for news dissemination, has been toward greater speed and mobility. The pages to follow will illustrate this point.

The Birth of Electric Communication

Instant communication over great distances was somewhat limited before the telegraph was invented. Beating a drum or blowing a horn may have served well to send messages from one point to another in an instant but could travel only as far as the sound waves carried. Lighthouses were also useful for point-to-point communication, but again limited, because their reach was only as far as the eye could see.

Samuel F. B. Morse was among the first to realize that an electromagnet could be used to transmit messages over a considerable distance. By interrupting the flow of current passing through an electromagnet, a sequence of impulses could be generated and transmitted from one location to another. The electrical impulses were received as a series of dots and dashes that could be translated into words and other symbols (Hunter & Gross, 1980, p. 10).

In 1844 Morse showed the world that his electromagnetic telegraph could send a message from Baltimore, Maryland, to Washington, D.C., a distance of about fifty miles. The message, "What hath God wrought?," was sent on May 24 over a line connecting the two cities. Earlier in the month, Morse had demonstrated the telegraph's utility as a disseminator of news. A telegraph operator stationed at Annapolis Junction, Maryland, transmitted news to Morse in Washington that Senator Henry Clay had received the Whig party's presidential nomination. The nominating convention was held in Baltimore, but Morse's telegraph line did not yet extend that far. Word of Clay's victory came from messengers on a Washington-bound train that stopped briefly at Annapolis Junction. The train and its message bearers arrived in the nation's capital an hour after Morse received the telegraphed news (Stephens, 1988, pp. 226-227).

Newspapers of the mid-19th century quickly seized upon the idea of using the telegraph as a means of gathering news from distant locations. Within eight years of Morse's Baltimore-to-Washington experiment, 23,000 miles of telegraph lines connected the nation (Czitrom, 1982, p. 6). Newspapers began to share information among themselves and formed the Associated Press (AP) to collect and distribute news. One result of this news gathering and distribution system was a standardization of format and style. To provide a service that was palatable to as many newspapers as possible, AP instructed reporters to write their stories from a neutral perspective, to avoid the appearance of political or personal bias. The telegraph contributed indirectly to newspapers becoming "objective" purveyors of "facts" rather than personal journals and political party mouthpieces (Altheide & Snow, 1979, p. 65). Also, newspaper reporters who sent information by telegraph were instructed to be as brief as possible to save money, since Western Union and other telegraph companies charged for the service. The telegraph played an important role in disseminating news during the Civil War providing newspapers with information from the battle fronts (pp. 65-66).

A prime example of how fast the telegraph diffused information was the rapidity with which news of Abraham Lincoln's assassination spread. Within twelve hours of the

April 1865 shooting, newspapers in every major city had printed details of the event -- details provided by the web of telegraph lines stretching across the land (Brown, 1989, p. 258).

Though news could travel great distances by telegraph, its dissemination to the public required mediation. The newspapers needed telegraph operators to translate the coded messages into information that could be published and then distributed to readers. News traveled faster and farther, but only the telegraph operators received it instantly, and they had to decode the message for it to have any meaning.

Telephone's Uncoded Messages

No such decoding was required, however, with the telephone -- a device patented by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876. Bell's invention used a continuous, or analog, electrical signal to transmit a person's voice over a line, unlike the telegraph's interrupted signals which were heard as dots and dashes. As a transmitter, the telephone converts sound waves into analog signals by reacting to variations in air density caused by the sound waves. These variations in air density are converted into an electrical current of varying intensity. As a receiver, the sequence is reversed whereby the analog signals are converted back into sound waves (Inglis, 1990, pp. 30-31).

For messages to be telephoned or telegraphed in the late 19th century, a wired connection linking the transmitting end to the receiving end was required. Because a physical link -- a wire or line -- had to be established and maintained between the points of communication, the telephone and telegraph were both limited in reach; the signals only went as far as the wires did. And though the telephone made message decoding unnecessary, the messages carried by phone were not intended for mass consumption, except on rare occasions. Telephones were developed as personal communication devices; usually only one person transmitted and received messages with one other person at a time. But telephones were used occasionally to provide large audiences with instant news.

Results of the 1896 presidential election were transmitted simultaneously to about seven thousand phone subscribers who listened to operators reading bulletins over special lines set up at 350 local exchanges in the New York area. Non-subscribers had an opportunity to learn of the election results almost as quickly; the election returns were relayed to several local hotels and clubs where operators posted them for waiting crowds to see (Marvin, 1988, p. 219). The network of phone lines steadily increased at the turn of the century enabling thousands more to hear the returns of subsequent presidential elections. In 1912, an estimated

half a million people received telephone returns in their homes and offices when Woodrow Wilson defeated incumbent William Howard Taft and former president Theodore Roosevelt (p. 220).

From Dots and Dashes to Voice: The Wireless

In 1897 Guglielmo Marconi received a patent for a wireless telegraph, a device that proved to be a practical application of James Clerk Maxwell's electromagnetic wave theory. Maxwell theorized that electromagnetic waves traveled through space. To Marconi and others, Maxwell's idea suggested that telegraph messages could be sent by air, which meant wired connections between two points of communication would no longer be necessary (Keirstead & Keirstead, 1990, p. 15).

Marconi's wireless telegraph made the headlines in 1899 when he arranged to have the device placed on two steamships in New York's harbor; aboard were telegraph operators who reported the progress of an international yacht race. The ship to shore signals were received at stations in New York and then relayed across the country and the Atlantic by wire. This was the first use of wireless telegraphy to cover breaking news (Douglas, 1987, p. 19).

Lee De Forest was also interested in wireless telegraphy and, in 1901, formed a company to explore its

possible uses. Two years later, De Forest publicized his wireless with a unique application: he equipped an automobile with a small transmitter and parked it near the New York Stock Exchange. From this location, De Forest transmitted stock quotations to a brokerage firm (Douglas, 1987, p. 93).

De Forest played an important role in the next logical step for wireless communication; he invented a three-element vacuum tube, called the audion, which increased the signal strength of the wireless receivers and made long distance voice transmission possible (Bliss, 1991, p. 4; Czitrom, 1982, p. 69; Hunter & Gross, 1980, p. 13).

Voice transmission over the airwaves had been a dream of Reginald Fessenden, among others. Fessenden believed that electromagnetic waves could be altered with the voice superimposed, using the same principles that made Bell's telephone work. Fessenden succeeded in his quest to transmit voice in 1906 (Keirstead & Keirstead, 19, p. 16). Two broadcasts, one on Christmas Eve night and the other on New Year's Eve night that year, surprised some shipboard operators, who expected to hear only dots and dashes while they listened (Douglas, 1987, p. 156).

The wireless, particularly in its application as a telegraph, was used mainly for ship to shore communication. After the British ship Titanic sank in 1912, ships licensed

in the United States were required to have two radio operators aboard for 24-hour watch and to have an auxiliary power supply for the wireless in case of an emergency. These and other requirements became law upon passage of the Radio Act of 1912. Interest in the wireless increased when it became obvious that many victims of the Titanic disaster could have been saved had ships nearby been alert to the doomed ship's distress calls (p. 233).

Radio Broadcasting

Following Fessenden's 1906 wireless voice transmission, several scientists, engineers, and other interested individuals attempted the same. Experiments continued and improvements were made by these "amateur" operators until the United States entered World War I, at which time the Navy Department took control of the wireless transmitters. After the war ended, control shifted from the Navy to the Commerce Department, which was authorized to issue licenses to those who wanted to transmit over the airwaves (Douglas, 1987, chap. 8; Sivowitch, 1970-71, p. 14).

The first station to broadcast after being issued a license was KDKA in Pittsburgh, and its initial broadcast was live coverage of the 1920 presidential election returns. By phone, the KDKA announcers received election results from the wire service of a local newspaper, the Pittsburgh Post. By

relaying the information to a listening public, KDKA's effort gave birth not only to licensed radio broadcasting, but also to the medium's role as a disseminator of news. KDKA's licensee, the Westinghouse Corporation, realized that wireless transmitters were not merely point-to-point communication devices but had the potential of reaching large audiences, an attractive target for a manufacturing company eager to create goodwill and to sell more products as a bonus (Stephens, 1989, p. 276; Bohn, 1968, pp. 268-269).

Reporting of election results on radio did not begin, though, with KDKA's coverage of the Harding-Cox election. Credit, as perhaps the first broadcast journalist, should go to Lee De Forest who announced on his experimental station the returns of the 1916 presidential race between Woodrow Wilson and Charles Evans Hughes. De Forest signed off the air at 11 p.m. after declaring Hughes the winner. Those listening to De Forest would later learn that he had been wrong; Hughes actually lost the election and President Wilson won a second term (Bliss, 1991, p. 4; Douglas, 1987, p. 294; Leinwoll, 1979, p. 86; Bohn, 1968, p. 268).

The idea of wireless point-to-point communication that Marconi had advanced evolved into radio broadcasting; those who transmitted on the medium had the potential to reach large, undifferentiated audiences who could hear uncoded messages. These uncoded messages included news that could be

delivered at the speed of light. But early broadcast stations were slow to become news gatherers.

In the Beginning: Local Radio News

KDKA began regular newscasts less than a year after its inaugural broadcast, again using information gathered by the Pittsburgh Post. Newspaper-owned stations were the most likely to offer radio newscasts, usually a headline service that promoted both media. Some of the radio stations that offered news on a regular basis in the early 1920s included WLW in Cincinnati, WWJ in Detroit, Michigan; KOIN in Portland, Oregon, WJAG in Norfolk, Nebraska; WJZ in New York; and WOMT in Manitowoc, Wisconsin (Danna, 1975a, p. 338; Lichty & Bohn, 1975, 324; MacDonald, 1979, pp. 285-286).

Live-on-the-scene news coverage was rare, but a few stations did occasionally attempt it. In 1925 WGN Chicago carried live the Scopes "monkey" trial, which was held in Dayton, Tennessee, about five hundred miles from Chicago. On trial was a man accused of breaking a law prohibiting the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution. For the broadcast to be live, telephone lines were used, at a cost of \$1,000 a day, to connect the courthouse in Dayton to WGN's Chicago studios (Wesolowski, 1975; Danna, 1975a, p. 339).

WAIU in Columbus, Ohio, had dramatic, live-on-the-scene coverage of a fire at the Ohio State Penitentiary in

1930. Sounds of the fire and of the inmates screaming in the distance could be heard during the broadcast. More than three hundred convicts died in the disaster (Gordon & Falk, 1967, p. 69).

In 1931, bank robbery suspects trying to make their getaway in a car were observed from an airplane equipped for remote broadcasting. Listeners of WTAD in Quincy, Illinois, heard reports of a police chase that ended when the suspects were caught 100 miles from the robbery scene. (Danna, 1975a, p. 340).

In the Beginning: Network Radio News

The above examples were the exception, rather than the rule, in the early days of broadcasting. Most radio stations rarely gathered their own news; more often they lifted it from a wire service or from a local newspaper, or they received it from a radio network. An adversarial relationship developed between the press and radio, especially in cities where newspaper-generated material was used by radio stations not owned by local papers. The newspapers' resentment led to the "Press-Radio Wars" of the early 1930s when the wire services were forced to stop providing news to radio stations and networks. The newspapers did not want the wires -- Associated Press, United Press and the International News Service -- to provide

broadcasters with material that would scoop them, since radio could usually broadcast wire service stories before the newspapers could print them. Immediacy was clearly an advantage of radio (Bliss, 1991, chap. 5; Barnouw, 1968, p. 19; Fang, 1985, p. 299).

The radio networks responded to the wire service embargo by forming their own news gathering teams. Before the "Press-Radio Wars," news gathering had not been a priority of the entertainment-oriented networks, but, on occasion, they did provide a valuable service with their coverage of important speeches, national political party conventions, and election returns. In 1924 millions of Americans listened to election coverage provided by a network of 26 stations linked by the phone lines of American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T). AT&T owned the network's flagship station, WEAF in New York (Bohn, 1968, p. 270-271).

Whereas, news gathering was not a common feature of WEAF and other AT&T-linked stations, news commentary was. H. V. Kaltenborn was hired by WEAF as a commentator in 1923, and he later became one of radio's best known personalities (Sterling & Kittross, 1990, p. 75).

AT&T sold its broadcasting interests in 1926 but retained control of the telephone lines used to connect the networks that were formed by an alliance involving the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), General Electric (GE), and

Westinghouse. This corporate alliance created the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) which operated two New York-based networks, the Red and the Blue. Meanwhile, another fledgling network was preparing to take flight under the stewardship of William Paley; the United Independent Broadcasters became Paley's Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in 1928 (Bliss, 1991, pp. 21-22). NBC's Blue network became the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) in the early 1940s.

Within a decade of their respective births, NBC and CBS established their own news gathering organizations. Among the incentives for doing so were to provide a needed service for network affiliates, to make up for the loss of wire service material, and to benefit from the prestige associated with gathering and disseminating news. NBC's news director, Abe Schecter, quickly earned a reputation for his adept use of the telephone to talk to people who could provide material for Lowell Thomas' nightly newscasts. (Barnouw, 1968, p. 19). CBS had Ed Klauber and Paul White to put together its news gathering effort. The CBS news division soon had reporters or stringers in all of the major U.S. cities and a presence in several overseas locations as well (p. 20).

United Press and the International News Service ended their participation in the embargo against radio in the spring of 1935; AP waited another six years. During

those years, the networks became major news gathering organizations, rising to the task of covering major breaking stories of the day including the conflicts in Europe (Danna, 1975b, pp. 347-350).

For example, in 1936 the Spanish Civil War provided much drama for radio listeners who heard Kaltenborn, the news commentator, become Kaltenborn, the on-the-spot news reporter. A battle between the Loyalist and Rebel armies found the 58-year-old man in the thick of it. He and an engineer set up a phone line at an abandoned farm house between the two armies and reported the skirmish as it happened; the sounds of bullets whizzing by and artillery shells exploding could be heard during the live broadcasts, which were relayed to the United States by shortwave radio (Bliss, 1991, pp. 78-79; Sterling & Kittross, 1990, p. 176; Fang, 1985, p. 302).

Early Technologies for Remote Broadcasting

In the 1930s and '40s, the networks relied on phone lines to relay signals from remote locations stateside, and a combination of phones, mobile transmitters, and short wave radio to transmit from overseas. When new news gathering tools were developed or old ones refined, the networks -- with their more abundant resources -- were usually first to employ the technology. Hand-held microwave transmitters were

the breakthrough in 1936 when NBC used them at the national political party conventions. These portable transmitters were much less cumbersome than the backpack transmitters that had been used previously; the backpacks had required two people to operate, one person to report and the other to carry the transmitter. The new hand-helds gave the reporters increased mobility to roam the convention floors; their comments and interviews were picked up by temporary master control centers set up at the conventions and were then relayed by phone lines to the network (Sterling & Kittross, 1990, p. 181; Sperber, 1986, p. 93).

For many years NBC and CBS did not allow recorded material in their newscasts or entertainment programs; they took pride in their live presentations and believed their audiences would object if programs were aired any other way (Inglis, 1990, p. 96). Even if the ban had not been in place, recording breaking news would have been difficult with the technology available in the 1930s and early '40s. The two methods of recording outside a studio -- disks and wire recordings -- were bulky and not altogether dependable in field situations (Bliss, 1991, p. 157; Gordon & Falk, 1967, p. 95). But, on May 6, 1937, a disk recording made by a Chicago announcer resulted in NBC temporarily lifting its no-recordings policy. Herb Morrison's account of a deadly dirigible explosion in Lakehurst, New Jersey, could not be

ignored. Morrison was recording the Hindenberg's arrival for WLS Chicago when the explosion occurred. His emotional reaction to the tragedy, in which 36 people died, was the first recorded material allowed to be broadcast on a radio network (Bliss, 1991, pp. 36-38; Stephens, 1989, p. 278; Gordon & Falk, 1967, pp. 93-96).

Wire recorders -- containing steel wire with a magnetic coating -- were used during World War II. These machines had more portability than the disk recorders, but at a weight of 50 pounds or more were still too large to be moved easily from one location to another. Other problems encountered with wire recorders were difficulty in editing and inferior sound quality. However, without wire recorders, many sounds of D-Day, June 6, 1944, would not have been heard by radio listeners, because military censors prohibited live-on-the-scene broadcasts during the Allied invasion. While wire recorders were used to file most of radio's on-the-scene reports of that day, at least one correspondent used a film camera which had a sound recorder. ABC correspondent George Hicks' vivid description of the invasion was recorded aboard a communications ship that landed on the Normandy beaches. His report was later broadcast on all four U.S. radio networks of the time -- ABC, CBS, NBC, and Mutual (Bliss, 1991, p. 157; Sterling & Kittross, 1990, p. 217; Fang, 1985, p. 303; Barnouw, 1968, p. 199).

Radio Covers World War II

From 1939 to 1945, radio was in the spotlight as a disseminator of news. Stephens (1989) said of the era: "The Second World War gave radio news what the Civil War had given newspapers: a taste of the medium's power to bring news home" (p. 278). Americans kept abreast of the war listening to live-on-the-scene reports from the Philippines, North Africa, London, Paris, Rome and dozens of the other cities where the battles were fought; and they heard first-hand accounts of the German surrender at Reims, France, and the Japanese surrender aboard the U.S.S. Missouri (Gordon & Falk, 1967, chap. 9). Radio delivered the news intimately and dramatically, often direct from the news scene, and almost always live.

The networks were not alone in providing broadcast coverage of the war. During those six years, many local stations beefed up their efforts to gather news at home and abroad, with at least nine of them sending reporters overseas (Bliss, 1991, pp. 162, 171). These stations would remain committed to news after the war, but with a greater emphasis on local coverage (p. 181).

Also, after the war, radio would have a new competitor for the audience's attention: television.

In the Beginning: Local Television News

Fang (1985) credits an Iowa experimental station with having the first regularly scheduled television newscast. Starting on March 4, 1933, station W9XK -- licensed to the University of Iowa -- began offering short news items taken from the Daily Iowan newspaper. These newscasts had no pictures to accompany the stories; they were simply "talking head" productions with an on-camera announcer reading copy. A Los Angeles experimental station was apparently the first to show moving pictures in newscasts; W6XO began showing newsreels once a day in the late 1930s (p. 309). Newsreels were produced by the motion picture studios and shown in movie theaters as part of their entertainment schedules, and when the pioneers of television wanted video to show in their newscasts, they turned to the newsreels for help. As Stephens (1989) noted, most of the producers of early television news were veterans of radio, and one of the problems they encountered with the new medium "was how to fill the screen" (p. 280).

Covering breaking news was a challenge for television in those days, because it was an expensive proposition to equip vehicles for remote broadcasts and somewhat awkward as well, given the size of the cameras and transmitting equipment. Audiences were so miniscule before World War II that stations had good reason to believe the effort was

hardly worthwhile. Perhaps the first unscheduled news event covered live by television cameras occurred in November 1938 when a New York experimental station, owned by Dumont, happened to have its remote truck in the right place at the right time to show a nearby fire (p. 309). Within a year, NBC was also able to do remotes in the New York area with its two-bus combo -- one to carry the transmitter; the other to carry the remaining equipment (Hunter & Gross, 1980, p. 19; Barnouw, 1968, pp. 126-127). The first instant news special came on the heels of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. WCBW New York, a CBS owned and operated station, broadcast a nine-hour, in-studio report using dispatches from the United Press wire service (Nielsen, 1975, p. 421). Visuals to accompany the report were limited to say the least. Viewers saw an American flag waving in the studio, with a fan providing the necessary breeze (Stephens, 1989, p. 281).

World War II brought television's development to a virtual standstill. Between 1942 and 1945, the federal government issued no new licenses, the few stations that remained on the air operated with reduced schedules, and television sets were not manufactured (Barnouw, 1968, p. 127-128). Not until the war ended could the development of television resume, and news gathering would be part of that effort.

In the Beginning: Network Television News

In 1946 NBC and CBS launched their first regularly scheduled newscasts, but the programs did not air nightly. Network television's first nightly quarter-hour newscast was "The CBS-TV News" that began in August 1948 with anchor Douglas Edwards. Later that year ABC began airing its nightly news program, "News and Views," and in early 1949 NBC's "Camel News Caravan" with John Cameron Swayze hit the airwaves (Bliss, 1991, pp. 222-223). None of these programs relied on coverage of breaking news events to make a name for itself. For many years, the networks were severely limited by their reliance on filmed newsreels, which were difficult to obtain in a timely manner. Film crews were scarce; the equipment was heavy; and the film itself had to be processed, edited, and transported before any pictures could be aired. As a result, the newsreels tended to cover planned events and timeless features; viewers saw a lot of news conferences, ribbon-cuttings, fashion shows and ship arrivals (Stephens, 1989, p. 281; Hunter & Gross, p. 20).

Such coverage had worked well in the movie theaters once or twice a week but fell short of providing television's need for immediate visuals. When breaking news occurred, television in the early days usually had only a few visual aids (e.g. still pictures, charts, maps) to accompany stories that were read by the anchor, or filed by a reporter who used

the telephone to relay information from the scene. /Because moving pictures could not be delivered instantly, except in rare situations, television offered little more than radio when immediacy counted. The in-studio television newscasts were live, but moving pictures from remote locations seldom were (Fang, 1985, p. 311).

The television networks did cover news events live and on-the-scene when they could make arrangements well ahead of time. Bulky equipment had to be transported and phone circuits ordered to set up remote broadcasts. Ideal for advance planning were the national political party conventions. The 1948 conventions in Philadelphia were the first to be televised by the networks, giving viewers along the East Coast a chance to see the proceedings as they happened (Bliss, 1991, pp. 208-209; Sperber, 1986, p. 314; Bohn, 1968, 281).

By the time the 1952 conventions were held, the networks were linked coast-to-coast by coaxial cable, which provided a nationwide audience for the political parties and their nominees. Also, in 1952, television was fast becoming the dominant broadcasting medium. Network executives, sponsors, and the audience were paying considerably more attention to television. One reason they paid more attention was the increasing number of television stations going on the air following the federal government's decision

to start issuing licenses again after a lengthy allocation freeze.

In the early 1950s, the Senate hearings into organized crime, the Eisenhower presidential inauguration, and the Army-McCarthy hearings offered opportunities for television to deliver news as it happened (Sterling & Kittross, 1990, pp. 287-289). But, in each case, arrangements to cover these events began days, if not weeks, in advance. These events were given special coverage, preempting regular programming. Live coverage of breaking news events during regularly scheduled newscasts was difficult to arrange in those days, because television lacked the technology for speed and mobility.

Dependence on the newsreel companies ended in the mid-1950s as the networks assembled their own film crews, but delays in showing moving pictures of news events were still a problem because of the time required to transport, process, and edit film. One technique of delivering film to the networks in a more timely manner was to use the permanently-leased wide-band telephone circuits that linked the networks to their affiliates. Edited material could be transmitted over these phone lines, making same day coverage of news events possible, as long as the film crews had enough time to complete their shoot, drive to the nearest affiliate, and then process and edit the film. Stories delivered by this

method had to be fairly important, because the cost of transmitting one minute's worth of film was about \$3,000. Otherwise, the film was flown to New York for processing and editing and very likely would not air until the next day. Even the film shot in the New York area took at least three hours to prepare for broadcast (Fang, 1985, pp. 315, 318; Nielsen, 1975, p. 426).

Film at Eleven

Local television stations encountered the same delays as the networks. "Film at eleven" became part of the television vernacular as a way to encourage viewers to watch a later newscast, at which time film of a news event would be ready to air. Having pictures to show in a newscast was highly desirable, as was creating a sense of immediacy. Some stations, as early as the 1950s, began touting their "eyewitness" formats. One derivative of this format was to have the anchor introduce a reporter who had returned to the studio after covering a big news event. The reporter could provide a live -- in-studio -- eyewitness account of the event and show film shot at the scene (Fang, 1985, p. 317).

Technological Breakthroughs

Film technology began to give way to videotape technology in the late 1950s, although two decades would pass

before the takeover was complete. The first to use videotape on a regular basis was the CBS Television Network, which began taping its evening newscasts with Douglas Edwards in 1956. The newscasts were broadcast live in the Eastern Time Zone and later replayed on tape for stations farther west (Marlow & Secunda, 1991, p. 31).

The advantages of taping are many; among them: (1) electronic taping does not require processing, therefore, the taped material is ready for editing or airing upon rewinding; (2) videotape is reusable; and (3) it is easier to edit, although it was not when first developed.

Initially, videotape was not suitable for use as a news gathering tool, because the original recorders and playback units were enormous machines. To be practical for field use, the machines had to be smaller and more portable, and cameras had to be likewise. In the early 1970s, engineers were able to miniaturize the components of electronic news gathering (ENG) technology. Ikegami, Sony, Fernseh, and Akai led the way in developing lightweight cameras and portable videotape recorders. These new machines could be transported easily in trucks that were customized for field use and equipped with a portable microwave system for relaying electronic signals. At last, television stations had the technology necessary to record, or broadcast live -- with relative ease -- electronic pictures from

outside their studios (Whittaker, 1993, p. 259; Nielsen, 1975, p. 427; "Big changes in local news," 1974, pp. 41-45).

The network owned-and-operated stations were the first to be equipped with portable video cameras and recorders. The CBS station in Los Angeles, KNXT-TV, provided one of the first dramatic examples of live ENG reporting. The station broadcast live on May 17, 1974, a police shootout with a radical group calling itself the Symbionese Liberation Army. For two hours the station had live coverage of the gun battle, but the live pictures stopped before the shootout ended, because the batteries operating the camera ran down ("Live TV covers SLA's last stand," 1974, pp. 47-48). Later that year another CBS-owned station became the nation's first to use ENG exclusively. KMOX-TV St. Louis, which the network later sold, was the first to stop using film for news gathering purposes ("TV journalism," 1973, p. 19; "Portable cameras," 1974, p. 46). By the end of the decade, ENG had won wide acceptance in the television industry, and studies showed that the technology had clearly influenced local news gathering and presentation modes (Smith, 1984; Rugg, 1980).

The next step in news gathering technology was to find a way to transmit electronic pictures over greater distances, and the solution was satellites. The U.S. space program made it possible for satellite technology to be used for communication purposes. Telstar, launched for AT&T in 1962,

was the first communications satellite, but it had limited use because tracking stations were necessary to follow its non-synchronous orbit. The following year another satellite, Syncom II, was sent into orbit at an altitude of 22,300 miles. At this height, the satellite moved in synchronization with the earth's rotation, thereby remaining stationary relative to the earth's surface. Satellites in geosynchronous orbit are better for communications purposes because electronic signals can be transmitted continuously from a fixed position on earth and relayed to multiple receiving stations (Bliss, 1991, p. 441). The first commercial communications satellite in geosynchronous orbit, called Early Bird or Intelsat I, was launched in 1965 (p. 442).

The Vietnam War helped spur the use of satellite technology as a news gathering tool -- at least at the network level. The networks needed a way to obtain video from overseas that was less time consuming than air transportation. Communications satellites provided the means for doing so (Nielsen, 1975, p. 427). The networks' first significant use of satellite technology to gather news occurred in 1968 during the Tet offensive of the Vietnam War (Donovan & Scherer, 1992, p. 86). But local stations had to wait several years before they could use satellites

regularly, because the technology was cost prohibitive until the mid-1980s.

In time, the number of communications satellites orbiting earth increased, providing more opportunities to deliver news and entertainment programming from distant locations. In 1984 Stanley Hubbard of KSTP, Minneapolis-St. Paul, organized a news cooperative, called Conus, for local television stations to share news material by satellite. At the same time, he encouraged stations to buy vehicles customized for satellite news gathering, which his company manufactured. The Conus satellite news cooperative provided an impetus for many local stations to invest in SNG (Blum, 1991, p. 21). Since 1984 more than 100 satellite news gathering trucks and fixed uplink sites have gone on line, with many affiliated stations receiving help from their respective networks -- ABC, CBS, and NBC -- to defray the equipment costs. The broadcasting networks, along with Conus and CNN, provide a clearinghouse for receiving satellite feeds and retransmitting the material to others. An increasing amount of national and international news is customized for stations -- with local angles pursued, call letters mentioned, and interaction between a station's news anchors and on-the-scene correspondents allowed. (McConnell, 1994, pp. 37-40; Puglisi, 1988, pp. 10-17).

Summary

Timely information has value. Most people are eager to learn the latest news about the world around them. But, prior to communication by electricity, the only means of disseminating news instantly had very limited range; messages traveled only as far as the eyes could see or the ears could hear. To cover greater distances, messages traveled only as fast as the quickest means of transportation available -- whether it was by foot, horse, boat, or train.

The telegraph made instant communication over great distances possible. But the telegraph's dots and dashes required mediation. For the telegraphed news to be received and understood, the coded messages had to be translated before dissemination.

The telephone provided a means for voice transmission. But the telephone, like the telegraph, was designed for point-to-point communication; the messages were usually not intended for a large audience. However, there were some notable exceptions when the phone companies performed a public service by relaying election returns.

The wireless transmitter -- used initially to send telegraph messages and later to send voice -- was conceived as a point-to-point communication device but evolved into a mass media, radio broadcasting. Wired connections linking the sender to the receiver were not necessary to transmit

messages by radio; the medium was available to anyone who had a receiver tuned to the same frequency as the sender.

Radio provided a means for instant communication over great distances to an undifferentiated audience who could hear and understand messages without translation, assuming the sender and receiver shared a common language.

Networks were formed early in broadcasting's history to provide radio stations with needed programming, including news. These networks, recognizing the value of timely information, established their own news gathering organizations and sought ways to improve news delivery. The ultimate in speed and mobility was realized when these news gathering organizations delivered stories live from remote locations using phone lines, mobile transmitters, and short wave.

Live-on-the-scene news coverage was more of a challenge for television broadcasting. One of the medium's distinctive characteristics is its moving pictures, but for many years obtaining pictures electronically in locations outside a television station was difficult; the equipment was bulky and setting up remotes was time consuming. Film was used to provide most of the moving pictures seen in television news, which meant video was rarely available when immediate news coverage was desired. Delays caused by film processing and editing were a given.

The development of electronic and satellite news gathering technologies enabled television news organizations -- first the networks and later the local stations -- to improve their speed and increase their mobility. These technologies have made it possible for television to deliver in real time the sights and sounds of news events from anywhere a microwave or satellite link can be established.

This historical perspective of the communication technologies that use electronic signals shows a direction toward greater speed and mobility. News gathering organizations have embraced technologies that assist them in getting stories faster and from wherever news events occur. Do these technologies affect how news is defined? In the chapter to follow, theories and research relating to how news content takes shape, including the influence of technology, will be addressed.

CHAPTER THREE

MEDIA CONTENT INFLUENCES: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for understanding the decisions that help shape television news content. To understand those decisions, one must consider media content influences from within and outside of the news gathering organizations. Theories and research relating to media content influences are the focus of this chapter.

The outline of this chapter follows the hierarchical model designed by Shoemaker and Reese (1991) to explain the content of television news. Their model has five levels represented by five concentric rings (see Figure 1). The innermost ring represents the individual decision-maker; the second ring is the media routines level; third is the organization level; fourth is the extramedia level; and fifth is the ideological level. At each of these levels are influences that presumably have an impact on the decisions that lead to news content (p. 49).

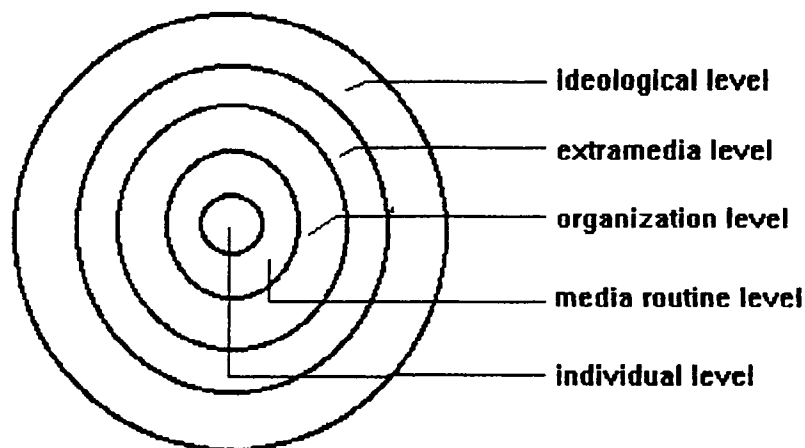


**Figure 1. Shoemaker-Reese Hierarchical Model
Influences on Media Content**

Ideological Influences

According to some media scholars (Kellner, 1992; Denton, 1993), ideology influences news content. American citizens generally support the capitalistic economic system, private property ownership, pursuit of profit, and free markets. Americans also generally believe in self-governance and strive for individual achievement. To the extent that television news promotes or perpetuates these beliefs, it is influenced by and contributes to ideology (Shoemaker & Reese, 1992, p. 184).

Kellner (1992) argued that ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN did not engage in neutral reporting during the Persian Gulf war. He cited several news stories that were broadcast during the build up to and subsequent execution of the war against Iraq that, in his view, clearly expressed an us-against-them

attitude, and he cited examples of news anchors and reporters rallying support for the American cause. In Kellner's view, the news content pertaining to the Gulf war was influenced by ideology; the national interest was on the line.

Individual Influences

The influence of ideology is represented by the outer ring of the Shoemaker-Reese hierarchical model while the middle or inner-most ring represents the influence of individual news workers (see Figure 1). Education and employment background, political attitudes, and religious orientation of the workers who gather and present news are among the personal characteristics that are thought to play an influential role in determining content. White (1950) found that a newspaper wire editor accepted and rejected potential news stories for "highly subjective reasons," which were based on the wire editor's own experiences, attitudes, and expectations (p. 386). But several researchers (Epstein, 1973; Johnstone, Slawski & Bowman, 1976; Berkowitz, 1990) believe the personal characteristics of individual news workers play only a negligible decision-making role in television news gathering organizations.

Berkowitz (1990) found that individual preferences of a single individual did not adequately explain television news content, because decisions made in a television news

room are the result of a group process. Berkowitz identified six individuals -- the news director, assistant news director, assignment editor, managing editor, the 5 p.m. producer, and the 6 p.m. producer -- who collectively made the key decisions that determined the news content at an Indianapolis television station (p. 57).

None of these individuals influenced news content on the basis of their personal characteristics. Better predictors, according to Berkowitz and others, are the roles or functions that key decision-makers perform and the routines they follow in those respective roles. The second ring of the Shoemaker-Reese hierarchical model is media routines (see Figure 1).

Media Routine Influences

Routines are the roles performed by news workers. To do their jobs effectively and efficiently, news workers are expected to follow certain procedures and to make judgments in accord with accepted norms and values of the news organization. Bantz, McCorkle, and Baade (1980) compared news work to factory production -- with the assembly line turning out newscasts and the stories contained within. They said producing newscasts required a "well-defined task structure, role specialization, speed, interchangeability of

personnel, and commonly held conceptions of what the product should be" (pp. 50-51).

Gatekeeping. One of the routine functions of the decision-maker in television news is to choose which stories to include in a newscast and which ones to reject. Tuchman (1977) said these decision-making routines "enable some occurrences to emerge as news but banish others from public consideration" (p. 50). These newsroom decision-makers are commonly referred to as gatekeepers. Shoemaker (1991) said:

Gatekeeping is an integral part of the overall process of selecting and producing messages. Not only is it impossible for everything to be transmitted, but it also is impossible to transmit something without in some fashion shaping it (p. 2).

The shaping of television news stories includes choosing among possible story treatments -- for example, whether to broadcast stories as either voice-overs or videotaped packages or live-on-the-scene reports. Shoemaker suggested that future gatekeeping research examine more closely the "shaping, display, timing, withholding, or repetition of messages" (p. 77). She said researchers should look beyond the mere selection or rejection of stories and consider the decisions made by gatekeepers after they have chosen which stories to cover.

News values. A much researched area under the media routines heading is news values. Gatekeepers are expected to make judgment calls about which stories to include and which to exclude from newscasts. That judgment is, in large measure, determined by the gatekeepers' sense of newsworthiness; they evaluate potential stories based on agreed-upon values. These agreed-upon values are described in many journalism textbooks.

Stephens (1993) cited six criteria for determining what is newsworthy: importance, interest, controversy, the unusual, timeliness, and proximity (p. 98). White, Meppen, and Young (1984) suggested in their textbook to consider the level of impact, interest, or information that a story offers when evaluating it for possible coverage (p. 20).

In a 1969 journal article, Buckalew identified conflict, high impact, proximity, and timeliness as the news values that television news editors considered most important when they decided which stories to use. Later when he (1970) compared news editors by market size, he found that proximity was a more important factor to small market news directors while timeliness was more important to large market news directors.

Value differences between small and large market news directors were also found in a study conducted by Carroll (1985) who looked at the types of news stories being covered.

Carroll found that large market television stations were more willing than small market stations to devote attention to stories of a controversial nature, and that small market stations depended more on planned events and less on enterprise reporting.

Issue-related stories and unexpected events took up significant amounts of newscast time, according to Wulfemeyer's (1982) analysis of San Diego's television stations. Wulfemeyer found that local newscasts "were not all sex, crime, violence, light-hearted features, and on-air joking" as critics had claimed (p. 486).

Several researchers (Dominick, Wurtzel, & Lometti, 1975; Ryu, 1982; and Hofstetter & Dozier, 1986) have looked at questions relating to sensationalism in television news. Hofstetter and Dozier suggested that television's tendency to report the sensational is not inherently detrimental to society. "While news of murder, mayhem, and the like may seem to provide little of value to the broader political process, such conclusions may reflect elitist aesthetic prejudices rather than more rigorous, theoretically useful analysis" (p. 853). Their content analysis of the Houston television market found that sensational coverage did not dominate local newscasts.

Making distinctions between sensational and non-sensational news, or between bad and good news, can pose

conceptual problems for researchers. Some stories can fit both ends of these dichotomies, forcing researchers who examine such issues to make arbitrary classifications. Stone, Hartung, and Jensen (1987) discovered this problem when they tried to assess the extent of good and bad news being reported on local television newscasts. They analyzed the news content of stations in three markets -- Syracuse, Memphis, and San Diego -- and found that local stations report less bad news than the major networks. Their explanation of the difference was that local news managers have fewer resources available to obtain video of tragic events. They speculated that "local newscasters might provide more bad news coverage than they do now if accompanying video were available" (p. 44).

Reliance on other media. A few researchers (Harmon, 1989; Welch, 1990; McManus, 1990) have investigated to what extent television news gatekeepers take the initiative in their daily routines to find new stories and new story angles. A criticism of television news has been its relative passivity, its lack of generating new story ideas and relying too much on other media, especially newspapers, for input. Harmon (1989) found that newspapers were the primary source of only seven of the 132 news stories that aired on three Cincinnati television stations that he observed. He said his

findings contradicted the assertion that television news departments were too passive as news gatherers (p. 860).

Welch (1990) analyzed the news content of the media in six markets to see if a relationship existed between stories published in local newspapers and stories aired on local television stations. Welch found that a little more than ten percent of the stories were shared between the two media, and he found no significant differences between stations with large staffs and stations with small staffs in terms of the number of newspaper stories used (p. 92). However, McManus (1990) found that station size does make a difference in how much effort television stations put into discovering news stories. He found that the greater a station's resources, the more active the discovery effort. But in either case -- whether the station was large or small -- the findings generally supported an economic model of inexpensive, passive discovery rather than the journalistic model of active surveillance. In McManus' view, the gatekeepers of television news tend to wait for events to happen or for information to be delivered by outside sources rather than actively seek new material by their own initiative (p. 672).

Events. Once a story idea is discovered, subsequent decisions regarding whether to pursue it are made. And, if the decision by the gatekeeper is to turn the idea into a

news story, then choices must follow regarding its placement in the newscast and treatment (e.g. whether to send crews to shoot video for later editing, to cover it live, to use file tape or graphics, or to have an anchor simply read a script, and so on). Tuchman (1978) said story selection and treatment are dependent on the news workers' classification of potential stories. Distinctions are made between hard news and soft news, between prescheduled events (trials, meetings, etc.) and unscheduled events (fires, earthquakes, etc.). Some stories are given higher priority than others; hard news, for instance, will often stand a better chance of being covered than soft news, if staff and equipment are available (pp. 53-55).

Format, story structure, and audience appeal.

Berkowitz (1990) found that "the structure of the newscast format had almost as much to do with story selection as did the news merits of potential news stories" (p. 66). In other words, stories that fit the "holes" in the newscast format on a given day were as likely to be used as other available stories, even if the others had greater news value in the traditional sense (p. 64).

Gans (1979) described the newscast format as a device to facilitate story choice. Certain stories are dismissed if they fail to meet the criteria of the station's news format.

The format calls for different kinds of stories and treatments, and the gatekeepers look for story possibilities that will provide the needed quota. Formats also communicate to the viewer which stories are more significant, because typically television stories are arranged in order of decreasing importance. Gans said, "Abandonment of the format signals news of utmost importance" (p. 160).

Epstein (1973) said the decision-makers of television news assume viewers find reports dominated by "talking heads" to be dull television. Preferred instead are action and conflict stories with interesting visuals, because they are expected to do a better job of holding the viewers' attention. And Epstein said the decision-makers believe a narrative form of storytelling -- with a beginning, middle, and end -- is the most effective means of reporting news (p. 263). But Altheide and Snow (1979) said this narrative construction often results in distortion, because the actual sequence of events is rarely followed in an edited report (p. 97).

Tuchman (1978) suggested that news workers who record news events and show an edited version later carefully structure their video packages to avoid the appearance of manipulating time and space. This effort, in Tuchman's view, gives viewers the impression that they are seeing facts presented, not interpretations (pp. 109-110).

Presentation, therefore, is a key element of the decision-making process in television news. Delivery and style are important criteria in defining an effective newscast. In their day-to-day routine of selecting television news stories and choosing how to treat them, the decision-makers must take into consideration the station's format for presenting news -- a format designed to attract and hold audience attention. According to Altheide and Snow (1979), these considerations are a logical extension of the commercialism with which television news is wedded; the rule of thumb is to attract the largest possible number of viewers, so that, in turn, advertisers will buy time in the station's newscast (p. 76). Harmon (1988) agreed and urged researchers to expand the list of traditional news values -- timeliness, significance, the unusual, etc. -- to include the journalists' expectations of audience interest in potential stories (p. 134). And the working assumption among most television journalists is that visually appealing stories serve best to hold audience attention (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, p. 93; Altheide & Snow, 1979, p. 76; Epstein, 1973, p. 146).

Organization Influences

Ultimately, the news values of television news workers and the routines they follow to put together newscasts are

defined by the organization. A station news philosophy is articulated and policies are set, either formally or informally, to serve the organization's needs. The basic need of a television news organization is economic survival. Gans (1979) regarded economic considerations as a constraint on news selection, because news workers have to be as mindful of the need to attract and hold audience attention as they are of their function to inform. Merely providing timely information is not enough; the information must also be presented in an interesting manner. Dimmick (1974) said, "The news organization's policy is perhaps the single most important determinant of which of the day's events are defined as news" (p. 14). Dimmick theorized that a well-defined station policy serves to help news workers overcome their uncertainties about which stories to cover.

Epstein (1973) and Altheide (1976) looked at news selection at the network level. Epstein found that organizational considerations -- the need to have interesting, watchable, easy to understand stories that are produced in time for the newscast -- shape much of the networks' presentation of news (p. 260). Altheide asserted that these news organizations have created policies that, for the practical reason of presenting news in a concise and entertaining way, tend to "obfuscate" rather than enlighten viewers (p. 173).

Local level organizational influence has been analyzed by several researchers (Powers, 1977; Smith & Becker, 1989; Berkowitz, 1993). Powers described local television news as having more to do with "show business" than journalism (p. 1).

No longer did the station manager judge a news program on the basis of how diligently it informed citizens of economic events and social development, or as a watchdog on government. The fashionable criterion for judging the sleek, antiseptic news "package" became the size of the audience it could attract to view the main event -- the commercial (p. 1).

Berkowitz found that news selection at local television stations is a precarious balance between "journalistic ideals and the imperatives of organizational life" (p. 5). The decision-makers were required to make compromises between the news they believed to be journalistically compelling and the kinds of stories that were sure to attract and hold an audience (an organizational imperative).

Extramedia Influences

Extramedia influences are those influences that are outside the media organizations. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) named five categories of these influences that may have an impact on news content: (1) information sources, such

as special interest groups and public relations campaigns; (2) revenue sources, such as advertisers and audiences; (3) social institutions, such as business and government; (4) the economic environment; and (5) technology (p. 147).

Since this study is mostly concerned with how electronic and satellite news gathering technologies are used by television news organizations, the focus of this section will be on technology as an extramedia influence on news content. Perceiving technology as an influence outside the media may be regarded as an arbitrary classification, since decision-makers -- in their daily routines of selecting, gathering, and disseminating news -- must take into consideration the tools they have available to do the job.

Have technological advances in broadcasting resulted in changes in news content? The findings are mixed. Television news organizations now have the ability to deliver -- with relative ease -- the sights and sounds of news events as they happen and from where they occur. ENG technology changed the way television stations gathered and disseminated news, because, prior to twenty years ago, most stations did not have the portable equipment necessary to tape, rather than film, news events, nor could they provide live-on-the-scene coverage. Therefore, having this ability was something new and different -- a change that lowered the quality of television newscasts, according to Smith (1984)

whose survey of news directors did not address the question of why they had a negative impression of ENG.

Smith and Becker (1989) observed that reporters and producers were performing in more specialized roles since the advent of ENG/SNG -- with producers serving more as managers than they had before. The researchers looked at whether news producers were different from television reporters in ways that might affect the journalistic integrity of television news. News producers presumably were more interested in the show-business aspects of television than journalistic ideals, but Smith and Becker found little evidence of reporters and producers disagreeing over how stories should be treated (p. 799). For example, the findings revealed that reporters and producers were equally likely to agree that many stories lacking journalistic merit were covered live because ENG technology made such coverage easy (p. 800).

Producers seem to be just as troubled as reporters by the discrepancy between their own values and industry norms for using "live" coverage. These findings suggest that misuse of "live" coverage should not be attributed to the show-business values of producers pitted against a more noble set of journalistic criteria used by reporters (p. 800).

Smith and Becker concluded that organizational influences would probably better explain the "shortcomings of television news" than the influence of any particular group of news workers (p. 800).

In the past ten years, SNG technology has brought even more changes to television news. SNG provides access to more stories (Cleland & Ostroff, 1988), enabling stations to lengthen their newscasts and reduce their dependence on the networks, but the technology has not been perceived as a sufficient means for achieving higher ratings, according to Omachonu (1989).

Lacy, Atwater, and Powers (1988) found that news directors believed their newscasts had improved as a result of SNG. They were especially pleased with the quality of their statewide coverage. However, Ostroff and Sandell (1989) found little evidence of improved election coverage.

Harmon (1988) found no support for his hypothesis that larger market stations were more likely than smaller market stations to feature live remotes in their newscasts. His hypothesis was based on the assumption that larger market stations had greater resources for live reporting in terms of personnel and available ENG/SNG vehicles. Berkowitz (1991), on the other hand, did find support for his hypothesis that decision-makers would regard news judgment as more important than electronic technology when content choices were made.

Comparing nine stations in three Texas cities, Davie and Lee (1993) investigated whether ENG and SNG technologies contributed to diverse or similar news content. They found that 54% of the stories delivered by ENG were similar to

another station's coverage in a given market. Satellite technology produced mixed results depending on whether network news feeds or local SNVs were used. Davie and Lee found that satellite news vehicles contributed to a greater diversity of news stories among stations in the same market, while network news feeds via satellite contributed to similarities. In other words, local television gatekeepers were likely to choose the same kinds of stories from network feeds, while finding dissimilar news stories to cover with their own satellite news vehicles.

Literature Summary

In this chapter, research literature pertaining to the content of television news has been reviewed, with a particular emphasis on local television news.

The content of newscasts may be explained by examining the influences within and outside of news gathering organizations. These influences have been presented as five levels of a hierarchial model consisting of the individual decision-maker, media routines, the organization, extramedia, and ideology.

Much of the research to date has focused on media routines and organizational influences, but a few researchers have examined the impact of technology, which Shoemaker and Reese (1991) regard as an extramedia influence. The findings

presented in this chapter and the two before it suggest that electronic and satellite news gathering technologies have affected the content of television news in several ways:

1. Greater speed and mobility.

- Electronic technologies have eliminated the time and space barriers to communication; news can be delivered to audiences in an instant from virtually anywhere. Television can show viewers events as they unfold.

2. Access to more stories.

- ENG and SNG technologies make it easier for television to gather and deliver a higher story count.

- ENG provided a giant leap forward in terms of news gathering, because portable microwave and electronic video systems eliminated the delays caused by transporting and processing film; it was no longer necessary for crews to return to the station to deliver their stories.

- SNG offers the same advantages as ENG and adds another: the elimination of geographical barriers. News content is now available from locations worldwide and is routed through a variety of channels, such as network newsfeeds and station cooperatives.

3. More independence and expanded services.

-- Television stations are less dependent on the networks to obtain national and international news, prompting the networks to expand their services and to offer more customized reports to their local affiliates.

4. Greater diversity.

-- With abundant news sources available, stations have the potential to offer a wider variety of news stories and to differentiate their news product from their competitors'.

5. Longer newscasts.

-- The abundance of news stories has also enabled television stations to lengthen their newscasts, putting more responsibility on the news departments to attract viewers and advertisers.

Economic survival is an organizational imperative. Television stations must attract viewers and advertisers to survive in the marketplace. And some studies suggest that it is this pursuit of ratings and profit that best explains the content of television news. The routines that news workers follow each day to gather and produce television newscasts have as a consideration these organizational demands. Story choices and treatments must fill a structured

format designed to attract and hold viewers' attention. A key format component is visualization; television news workers routinely look for ways to show their stories, preferably with moving pictures.

Another consideration for news workers is deciding which potential stories are worth pursuing given the amount of staff and equipment available to do the job. The research literature suggests that news workers, as a matter of routine, choose which stories to cover using "traditional" news values as their criteria. These values include importance, interest, controversy, timeliness, proximity, etc. Much of the research pertaining to local television news has examined the degree to which these news values are reflected in the actual news content. Berkowitz (1993) and Harmon (1988) point out that the content of local television newscasts is the result of decisions that strike a balance between traditional news values and the organizational imperative of attracting as many viewers as possible.

The purpose of this study is to find out how that balance is being struck as it relates to the use of live technology. What motivates a television news manager to include live-on-the-scene reports in newscasts? The literature, as reviewed in this chapter, suggests that the decision to go live is based on a news manager's sense of

newsworthiness and his or her expectation of attracting and holding audience attention.

Immediacy or timeliness is the news value most closely associated with live-on-the-scene reporting; stations have the technologies necessary to show breaking or spot news as it happens. But stations use their ENG and SNG technologies to cover much more than spot news, which may be the reason that at least two studies (Smith, 1984; Smith & Becker, 1988) have found news workers expressing a low opinion of the technologies' impact on television news. Chapter Five will be a descriptive analysis of how live technology is used -- based on interviews with more than sixty television news managers. Chapter Four describes the methodology employed to conduct this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA COLLECTION

Methodology

Field research -- in the form of personal interviews and direct observations -- was conducted at 17 television stations between June 7 and August 17, 1993. Sixty-two news managers who worked for television stations in six markets were interviewed.

The label "news managers" refers to news department personnel who have decision-making authority in terms of story choices and treatment. Titles vary from station to station, but news managers include news directors, assistant news directors, assignment editors, managing editors and producers -- as identified by Berkowitz (1990) in his case study of an Indianapolis television station. For purposes of this study, two other positions -- executive producers and news operations managers -- were included among those interviewed and observed, because they were identified by several news directors as also having decision-making roles within their news organizations.

Field research was the means of data collection for this study. Interviewing news managers and observing them in their workplaces provided the information needed to analyze how and why television stations use live technology.

Field research is a qualitative methodological approach, which permits the researcher to obtain information first-hand. Bogdan (1982) said of this research method:

Field work refers to being out in the subjects' world -- not as a person who pauses while passing by, but as a person who has come for a visit; not as a person who knows everything, but as a person who has come to learn; not as a person who wants to be like them, but as a person who wants to know what it is like to be them (p. 119)

Because decision-making in television newsrooms is a group process, it was felt that one-on-one interviews with several decision-makers and direct observations of their organizations at work would capture the group dynamics more effectively than other methodological approaches.

Interviews were chosen as the primary means of data collection, because open-ended questions gave the news managers a better opportunity to explain their motivations for live reporting than fixed-response questionnaires could have.

But field research has its limitations. It is highly dependent on the observational and interpretive skills of the researcher and is difficult to replicate and compare. Another potential drawback is the lack of generalizability since samples are not drawn randomly and results are not tested statistically (Singleton, 1988, p. 299).

Experimenter bias and reactivity are two other potential problems with field research. Experimenter bias occurs when the researcher unavoidably favors specific preconceptions of results, while observations to the contrary are ignored or distorted. Reactivity happens when the subjects being observed change their behavior or their responses because they are under study (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p. 142).

Sample

Television stations in six markets -- located in Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia -- were selected as a purposive sample. Three market levels are represented in the sample: Houston and Atlanta, ranked 1-25; Cincinnati and Louisville, ranked 26-50; Knoxville and Roanoke-Lynchburg, ranked below 51. The rankings were based on Arbitron's Area of Dominant Influence classification, as listed in the 1992 Broadcasting and Cable Yearbook.

In May 1993 phone calls were placed to all of the television stations in the six sample markets to determine which ones aired regularly scheduled evening newscasts and were equipped to provide live reports by microwave and/or satellite transmissions. Twenty-one stations in the six sample markets were identified that fit the criteria needed to be included in the study.

Letters were sent to the news directors of these twenty-one stations in two stages. Following approval of the project's methodology by the University of Tennessee's Committee for Research Participation, the seventeen stations within a 260-mile radius of Knoxville, Tennessee, were sent letters in early June 1993. The remaining four stations in Houston, Texas, were sent letters in August 1993. Within two weeks of sending the letters requesting interviews, a second wave of phone calls was made in an attempt to set up station visits that would include interviews with news management personnel as well as opportunities to observe for a day. The researcher's goal -- to have at least fifteen stations participate in the study, with five from each of the three market levels -- was reached. Of the twenty-one stations with live capabilities in the markets chosen for this study, seventeen allowed interviews and fifteen allowed direct observation of their newsroom activities (see Table 1). Sixty-one of the sixty-two news managers consented to the audiotaping of their interviews; and, of those who were taped, all but three consented to be quoted directly.

Table 1. Stations Participating in the Study

Market Level	Rank	Market	Station	Network
1-25	10	Houston	KTRK-TV	ABC
		Houston	KRIV-TV	FOX
		Houston	KHOU-TV	CBS
	12	Atlanta	WXIA-TV	NBC
		Atlanta	WAGA-TV	CBS
		Atlanta	WSB-TV	ABC
26-50	30	Cincinnati	WCPO-TV	CBS
		Cincinnati	WLWT-TV	NBC
	47	Louisville	WLKY-TV	CBS
		Louisville	WDRB-TV	FOX
		Louisville	WAVE-TV	NBC
		Louisville	WKXT-TV	CBS
51-	64	Knoxville	WBIR-TV	NBC
		Knoxville	WATE-TV	ABC
		Knoxville	WSET-TV	ABC
	68	Lynchburg	WSET-TV	ABC
		Roanoke	WSLS-TV	NBC
		Roanoke	WDBJ-TV	CBS

Declining to participate were independent station WGNX-TV Atlanta, NBC affiliate KPRC-TV Houston, ABC affiliate WHAS-TV Louisville, and ABC affiliate WKRC-TV Cincinnati. The news directors who declined either said they were not interested in participating or they were concerned about the amount of time their news department personnel would be involved in the interviews. The news director of WKRC-TV Cincinnati was willing to conduct a telephone interview, but to be consistent with the methodology of in-person, one-on-one interviews, the offer was declined.

Interviews

To give the interviews form and continuity, the questions below were asked; others, not listed, were added as time and circumstance allowed for purposes of clarification or amplification.

1. What is your name?
2. What is your job title at this station?
3. How long have you been employed at this television station?
4. How long have you held your current position with this television station?
5. How long have you been employed in television news?
6. Of the technologies used in news gathering that have come along since you've been in television news, which, in your opinion, has had the greatest impact and why?
7. To what extent is television news gathering "technology-driven"? In other words, how strong is the relationship between stories getting covered and having the technology available to cover them?
8. News managers often have choices to make in terms of story treatment. In other words, they could choose to have a story covered live, or have a videotaped package, or have the anchor read a script over graphics. What's taken into consideration when the decision is made to cover a story live? Why use live technology?
9. Excluding sports coverage, how many times a week, in your estimation, are news stories covered live and on-the-scene?
10. Live reporting is perhaps most effective when it's used to cover breaking news stories or events that are unfolding. How many times a week, in your estimation, do you have the opportunity for that kind of live coverage?

11. Some news managers might argue that including live reports in their newscasts is necessary because the competition includes live reports in their newscasts. To what extent is that a factor here?
12. What role does the general manager play, if any, in the decision to cover stories live and on-the-scene?
13. What role does the station's news consultant play, if any, in the decision to cover stories live and on-the-scene?
14. Some news managers might argue that including live reports in their newscasts is necessary because viewers expect it. To what extent is that a factor here?
15. To what extent is live technology used, if it is, to promote or enhance the station's news image?
16. Some critics of television news have questioned the merits of live reporting, stating that many stories are covered live for the sake of going live. To what extent do you believe that observation is a valid one today?
- [If the station has SNG, ask the following:]
17. Some critics might argue that satellite news gathering technology has enabled stations to broaden their news perspective to include more regional or even global stories to the detriment of local news coverage. To what extent is that true here?

The rationale for asking questions one-through-five was to obtain background information on the individuals interviewed. Question six was asked to give respondents an opportunity to identify which news gathering technologies they thought had had the greatest impact.

The intent of question seven was to have the news managers describe the role of technology in the workplace, to find out to what extent it enters the decision-making process.

Question eight was the key question: Why do new managers include live reports in their newscasts when other treatments are available?

Questions eleven-through-fifteen allowed the news managers a chance to amplify the responses they gave to question eight. Each of the questions presented a possible reason that live reporting is included in newscasts. Competing against other stations' news coverage, fulfilling viewer expectations, promoting the station's news image, and responding to the general managers' or the consultants' input are probable motivating factors for reporting live. The news managers' responses to questions eleven-through-fifteen provide a better understanding of how these possible factors are influential.

With questions nine and ten, the news managers were asked to estimate the number of live reports their stations aired in proportion to the number of breaking news events covered.

Question sixteen gave the news managers an opportunity to talk about their live coverage of non-breaking news events -- the kind of coverage that critics call "going live for the sake of it." And responses to question seventeen provided an opportunity for the news managers to talk about their stations' coverage of national and international news in relation to their coverage of local news.

Most of the interviews took less than twenty minutes to complete -- in keeping with assurances given to news directors when access to their stations was requested. But the interview format varied. Some interviews -- particularly with news directors -- lasted forty-five minutes or more. Many of them were very willing to share their news philosophies and allowed several additional questions aimed at clarifying or amplifying their responses. However, two interviews, one with a news operations manager and the other with a producer, ended rather abruptly because of their work-related duties. Their interviews could not be rescheduled, so data taken from these incomplete interviews are not included in the analysis in Chapter Five, which is based on a revised total of sixty interviews (see Table 2).

Table 2. News Manager Participants

Interview Date	News Manager Participants
6-10-93	Allman, Rob, news director, WLWT-TV, Cincinnati
6-9-93	Barthold, Brian, producer, WAVE-TV, Louisville
6-22-93	Benjamin, Rick, managing editor, WATE-TV, Knoxville
8-17-93	Bishop, Denise, news director, KRIV-TV, Houston
6-28-93	Bowman, Tom, executive producer, WLKY-TV, Louisville
8-16-93	Brown, Beth Blackstone, producer, KHOU-TV, Houston
6-11-93	Burns, Pat, asst. news director, WCPO-TV, Cincinnati
6-17-93	Carlin, John, managing editor, WSLS-TV, Roanoke
6-17-93	Clark, Cathy, producer, WSLS-TV, Roanoke
6-30-93	Clem, Roy, news director, WSET-TV, Lynchburg
8-16-93	Crouch, Lisa, producer, KHOU-TV, Houston
6-28-93	DeLosh, James, producer, WLKY-TV, Louisville
7-22-93	Dooley, Martha, assignment ed., WATE-TV, Knoxville

Table 2. (Continued)

Interview Date	News Manager Participants
6-28-93	Dulaney, Lee, producer, WLKY-TV, Louisville
6-9-93	Edwards-Gold, Susan, producer, WAVE-TV, Louisville
6-10-93	Ehler, Mike, assignment editor, WLWT-TV, Cincinnati
6-17-93	Fields, Matt, assignment editor, WSLS-TV, Roanoke
7-6-93	Fleisig, Jodi, executive producer, WSB-TV, Atlanta
6-17-93	Foy, Bill, news director, WSLS-TV, Roanoke
6-9-93	Freeman, Bob, asst. news dtr., WAVE-TV, Louisville
6-16-93	Gibson, Allison, exec. producer, WDBJ-TV, Roanoke
6-29-93	Godfrey, Ed, news director, WAVE-TV, Louisville
8-16-93	Goldberg, David, news director, KHOU-TV, Houston
8-17-93	Grant, Phil, news operations mgr., KTRK-TV, Houston
6-23-93	Hall, Richard, news director, WKXT-TV, Knoxville
6-10-93	Hargess, Tim, producer, WLWT-TV, Cincinnati
6-16-93	Kent, Jim, news director, WDBJ-TV, Roanoke
6-28-93	Kishkunas, Lou, assignment ed., WLKY-TV, Louisville
8-16-93	Lafleur, Karen, news oper. mgr., KHOU-TV, Houston
6-7-93	Lehmann, Kathy, exec. producer, WDRB-TV, Louisville
6-9-93	Lilly, Joseph, exec. producer, WAVE-TV, Louisville
6-17-93	Majewski, Laurie, producer, WSLS-TV, Roanoke
6-23-93	Masur, Cheryl, producer, WKXT-TV, Knoxville
6-28-93	McElfresh, Glenn, producer, WLKY-TV, Louisville
6-7-93	McGee, Kerry, assignment ed., WDRB-TV, Louisville
6-16-93	McKean, Joe, assignment editor, WDBJ-TV, Roanoke
7-6-93	Moore, Richard, news director, WSB-TV, Atlanta
6-22-93	Morford, Robert, news director, WATE-TV, Knoxville
6-25-93	Newborn, Laura, managing editor, WXIA-TV, Atlanta
6-21-93	Nichols-Gill, Margie, n. oper. mgr., WBIR, Knoxville
6-25-93	O'Shea, Kevin, assignment editor, WXIA-TV, Atlanta
6-30-93	Petersen, Erick, asst. news dtr., WSET-TV, Lynchburg
6-25-93	Pimentel, Mark, news director, WXIA-TV, Atlanta
6-21-93	Purifoy, Vicki, exec. producer, WBIR-TV, Knoxville
6-28-93	Sabato, Steve, news director, WLKY-TV, Louisville
6-10-93	Schottelkotte, David, exec. prod., WLWT, Cincinnati
6-10-93	Shapiro, Bill, news oper. mgr., WLWT-TV, Cincinnati
6-11-93	Sheerer, Stephanie, managing ed., WCPO, Cincinnati
6-25-93	Shipowitz, Steven, news oper. mgr., WXIA, Atlanta
8-16-93	Shumway, Jeanette, producer, KHOU-TV, Houston
6-17-93	Smith, Amy, asst. news director, WSLS-TV, Roanoke
6-25-93	Smith, Steve, executive producer, WXIA-TV, Atlanta
6-7-93	Stopfel, Hal, news director, WDRB-TV, Louisville
6-21-93	Swinehart, Jim, news director, WBIR-TV, Knoxville
7-7-93	Veazey, Bud, news oper. mgr., WAGA-TV, Atlanta
7-6-93	Volpicella, Frank, exec. prod., WSB-TV, Atlanta

Table 2. (Continued)

Interview Date	News Manager Participants
7-7-93	Walker, Darius, managing editor, WAGA-TV, Atlanta
6-30-93	Wierenga, Jay A., managing ed., WSET-TV, Lynchburg
6-9-93	York, Steve, managing editor, WAVE-TV, Louisville
6-11-93	Zarchin, James, news director, WCPO-TV, Cincinnati

The sixty news managers who were interviewed for this study had been employed in television news for an mean of 13.3 years (see Table 3). Interviewed were forty-one men and nineteen women. As a group, news directors had worked the longest in the industry averaging 19.8 years, while producers had been on the job for the shortest amount of time averaging 7.4 years. The time of service ranged from one year of employment for a producer to thirty-six years for a news director.

Table 3. News Manager Profile

Position	Total	Years at Current Station	Years in Current Position	Years Employed in TV News
News Director	15	4.7	3.2	19.8
Assistant News Director	4	4.3	2.0	10.0
News Operation Manager	6	6.7	4.1	15.7
Executive Producer	9	6.6	2.7	13.4
Managing Editor	7	4.4	2.3	12.1
Assignment Editor	7	5.6	2.8	10.9
Producer	12	3.0	1.6	7.4
Mean		4.9	2.7	13.3

Observations

Fourteen of the seventeen stations were observed for several hours leading up to and through the early evening newscasts. Two exceptions were KRIV-TV in Houston and WDRB-TV in Louisville which were observed in the late evening, at 9 p.m. and 10 p.m. respectively, when their main newscasts aired. All of the observations took place in the television newsrooms where the decisions regarding which stories to cover and how to treat them were made. At nine of the fifteen stations, the researcher was permitted to attend the news staff's planning sessions where preliminary decisions were made about the story menus of the evening newscasts.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

Overview

In Chapter Three, the influences that help shape the content of local television news were examined. These influences include (1) ideology or the prevailing political and economic structure within which the news media function, (2) the personal attributes of the people who gather and deliver news, (3) the work routines of those involved in gathering and delivering news, (4) the organizational imperative to survive in the economic marketplace, (5) and forces from outside the organization, including technology.

Chapter Two reviewed the development of communication technologies that use electronic signals to disseminate news instantly. Technologies have been developed to increase the speed and mobility of news gathering organizations in their quest to deliver timely information. For television news organizations, the ability to report faster and farther has been enhanced by the adoption of ENG and SNG technologies. These technologies enable television news gathering organizations to report stories live and on-the-scene.

In Chapter One, an argument was presented that spot news coverage is the ideal use of ENG/SNG technology. But breaking news seldom occurs in accordance with a television

news organization's regularly scheduled newscasts. Rare, too, are those breaking news events that are of such magnitude that entertainment programming is preempted, along with the commercials scheduled within, to provide live-on-the-scene news reports. Why then are live-on-the-scene reports a common feature of television news? The answer is: television news organizations have reasons other than spot news coverage to use live technology. What are these reasons? Why use live technology? Those questions are answered in this chapter from the news managers' perspective.

Who Decides? -- The News Managers

Several people must coordinate their activities for stories to be reported live. In the field are the reporters and photographers who set up the microwave or satellite relays and deliver the stories. In the television newsroom are the news managers who decide which stories to cover live and on-the-scene. The people who make these decisions have job titles that vary from station to station, and even though some job titles may be the same from one station to the next, the responsibilities they carry are not necessarily consistent. The news directors who agreed to participate in this study were asked to identify within their organizations the individuals who were involved in the decision to go live. These individuals, along with the news directors, were

interviewed and observed for this study; their job titles were assistant news director, news operations manager, managing editor, executive producer, assignment editor, and producer.

In only one of the newsrooms observed by the researcher did the news director make the decision to cover specific stories live and then coordinate the arrangements. The news director's involvement in that one case may be explained by the absence of the assignment editor who was on vacation. The news directors set the policies at all of the stations observed, but execution of those policies was left in the hands of other decision-makers.

Live Reporting and Breaking News

Stations equipped with either ENG or SNG technologies have the capability of broadcasting live from the scene of news events. The news director of WSB-TV Atlanta, Richard Moore, said, "If you look at that in terms of the evolution of news coverage from pencil-and-paper to film to videotape to live, live becomes sort of an extension of that same linear path of development."

The live capability is what makes television news compelling to James DeLosh, who produces newscasts for WLKY-TV in Louisville. DeLosh said "actually seeing what's

happening" is unique to television, because radio and the print media cannot deliver such coverage.

The television news managers in the very large markets of Atlanta and Houston estimated that their stations averaged 26.7 live reports per week (see Table 4). The large market stations in Cincinnati and Louisville had substantially fewer at 8.8 live reports per week, and the medium market stations in Knoxville and Roanoke-Lynchburg had fewer still at 7.2 live reports per week.

Table 4. Live Reports by Market Size as Estimated by News Managers

Markets	Number of Live Reports Per Week (Mean)
Very Large Market -- Atlanta/Houston	26.7
Large Market -- Cincinnati/Louisville	8.8
Medium Market -- Knoxville/Roanoke-Lynchburg	7.2

The greater abundance of live reports in the very large markets may be explained by two factors: (1) more potential news events occur in very large cities, and (2) stations in the very large markets have access to more staff and equipment to do live reports. For example, the Atlanta and Houston stations have -- on average -- bigger staffs and more ENG and SNG vehicles than the stations in Cincinnati, Louisville, Knoxville, Roanoke, and Lynchburg. Also, the

very large market stations have microwave-equipped helicopters at their immediate disposal, unlike their counterparts in the other markets which lease such services when necessary (see Tables 5, 6, and 7 for comparison).

Table 5. Very Large Market Profile

Markets 1-25	Station	Staff Size	Hrs of News per Day	#ENG Vehicles	SNG	Helicopter
Atlanta	WAGA-TV	85	3.5	5	1	1
Atlanta	WSB-TV	92	4.0	5	1	1
Atlanta	WXIA-TV	92	6.5	5	1	1
Houston	KRIV-TV	65	3.0	2		
Houston	KHOU-TV	101	3.0	3	1	1
Houston	KTRK-TV	90	3.0	4	1	1
Mean:		88	3.8			

Table 6. Large Market Profile

Markets 26-50	Station	Staff Size	Hrs of News per Day	#ENG Vehicles	SNG	Helicopter
Cincinnati	WCPO-TV	65	3.5	3		
Cincinnati	WLWT-TV	55	3.5	2	1	
Louisville	WAVE-TV	35	3.0	3	1	
Louisville	WDRB-TV	26	.5	1		
Louisville	WLKY-TV	51	3.25	3	1	
Mean:		46	2.75			

Table 7. Medium Market Profile

Markets 51-	Station	Staff Size	Hrs of News per Day	#ENG Vehicles	SNG Helicopter
Knoxville	WATE-TV	30	2.50	2	
Knoxville	WBIR-TV	47	3.50	3	1
Knoxville	WKXT-TV	15	1.33	2	
Lynchburg	WSET-TV	31	1.50	3	
Roanoke	WDBJ-TV	41	2.50	3	1
Roanoke	WSLS-TV	30	2.50	2	1 (shared w. sister station)
Mean:		32	2.31		

The disparity between markets -- in terms of staffing and equipment -- leads to disparities in news coverage, according to Susan Edwards-Gold, a producer at WAVE-TV in Louisville. Edwards-Gold said she believes her station lacks the tools necessary to provide the kind of live coverage she has seen in larger markets.

We're limited by the technology at this station, because we don't have a helicopter with live capabilities, so we can't fly over scenes and get pictures like that. There are a lot of opportunities during the day to be live, but there again it depends on how large of a city you're in.

In some markets, where a single station has a satellite truck and the competition does not, the equipment disparity can be an advantage for the station so equipped. WBIR-TV in Knoxville and WDBJ-TV in Roanoke-Lynchburg have such an advantage, although Roanoke's WSLS-TV shares a

satellite truck with a co-owned station in Richmond. WBIR and WDBJ can count on receiving signals from locations their competitors cannot, because the mountainous terrain of eastern Tennessee and western Virginia severely limits the reach of vehicles equipped only with microwave.

Our main competition [has] a satellite truck, which they have all the time. Ours, we share around the state. So it's kind of frustrating when you have this missing couple in Wytheville, which we can't get a microwave live shot out of. And we couldn't do a live shot because we didn't have the truck.

-Cathy Clark, producer, WSLS-TV, Roanoke

Geography is a factor in another way as well. Jay Alan Wierenga, the managing editor and evening anchor of WSET-TV in Lynchburg, said his station and its Roanoke competitors often encounter problems covering stories in the region simply because too much time is required to drive to late breaking news events and report them in a timely fashion.

Bud Veazey, the news operation manager of WAGA-TV in Atlanta, said his station looks for opportunities to go live whenever possible and it has the tools to do it: "If the news director had his preference -- with five ENG trucks and a satellite truck -- we'd have six live shots every night from somewhere," said Veazey. "Obviously, that's not practical just from a staffing standpoint, but we usually try."

Some of the news stories reported live are of events unfolding or breaking, referred to as spot news. The news managers offered several examples of their stations' live coverage of breaking news events, including stories about fires, traffic accidents, plane crashes, hostage situations, prison disturbances, evacuations, demonstrations, jury verdict announcements, weather-related emergencies, and government meetings.

In Atlanta, traffic jams are a common spot news story. Jodi Fleisig, who worked as a producer at New York's WABC-TV before joining WSB, said a traffic tie-up was not a major, breaking news story in New York, but "here it's huge." WAGA's Bud Veazey, on the other hand, said crime had often been the dominant theme of the market's spot news coverage:

I think the city has had the reputation, and even this station has had the reputation of: "If it bleeds, it leads." I think we've all got a little better perspective on things now ... so it's not all blood and gore. We've covered important issues also, but it's still difficult in television to dare to be boring. It's hard to do that.

If a spot news story offers the potential of great impact -- i.e., a lot of people may be interested in or affected by it -- many stations will not wait for their regularly scheduled newscasts to tell viewers about the story. There is a growing willingness among stations, according to WAVE-TV assistant news director Bob Freeman, to

interrupt programming to report breaking news:

We had a fire yesterday that had the potential of being a very explosive situation. It was a chemical reclamation garage. We did a live cut-in. A special report. Brought it to you live as it's happening. More and more stations are starting to do that. For a long time, the news came on at five and came on at six, came on at eleven, and that's when you got the news, and stations generally didn't say "Hey, let's do it now." We're starting to do that now. Live is playing a much bigger role.

Spot news occurs sporadically. Events do not necessarily break or unfold at the time of a station's regularly scheduled newscast, so the amount of spot news coverage a station reports will rarely equal the total amount of live reporting it produces, particularly if the station tries to use its live technology regularly and frequently. According to the estimates provided by the news managers who participated in this study, less than one-third of the live news reports that aired in regularly scheduled local television newscasts consist of what the news managers would describe as breaking news (see Table 8).

Table 8. News Managers' Estimates of Live Reporting
Relative to Breaking News Coverage

	Live Reports Per Week (Mean)	Breaking News Stories Per Week (Mean)	Percentage of Breaking News to Live Reports
Very Large Market	26.7	8.6	32%
Large Market	8.8	2.3	26%
Medium Market	7.2	1.2	17%

The reliability of these estimates may be questioned since the definition of breaking news may vary from one news manager to the next and because the estimates are based on the news managers' recall. No independent measurements were taken. A possibly more accurate measurement of the use of live technology would be derived by analyzing the news content of the seventeen stations that participated in this study, but such an approach was -- for time and financial reasons -- beyond the researcher's scope.

If, however, the estimates provided by the news managers can be accepted at face value, then one can see that a consistent pattern emerged from their responses: most live reports are not of breaking news events, unless the definition of breaking news is broadened to include, as WLKY-TV news director Steve Sabato described, the "gray areas" of the concept:

That's where you have stories which may have occurred earlier in the day, but occurred in a place where there is a location that you can front the live shot from. For example, let's say you were just doing a story on holiday travel. You might go to an airport. You might go to the interstate. You might go to the bus station. That's not really spot news, but there's something going on. People are getting on the bus. People are getting on the airplane. That I would call kind of the middle area, where at one extreme would be if you had maybe in-progress spot news that may be a matter of life and death. Easy call. Anybody can call that one. Somewhere in between you get these other types of stories where there is action in progress, but the story is really ancillary, or it's an issue-oriented story, and the live shot location is basically a place where there is something going on that has to do with the story.

These "gray areas," as Sabato described them, will be examined below. What purpose is served by reporting live and on-the-scene, if, as the news managers described, most live reports are not of breaking news?

Immediacy

The best use of ENG and SNG technologies is to provide immediate news coverage, said Denise Bishop, news director of KRIV-TV in Houston. "It gets the information, and it's up-to-the-minute information. That's the most compelling reason for doing it, and journalistically the most sound reason for doing it."

Fifty-two of the sixty participants (87%) in this study said immediacy was a reason they use live technology -- to provide the latest information and to cover breaking news (see Table 9). For example, Bob Freeman, the assistant news director of WAVE-TV in Louisville, said:

Spot news will generally always mean a live shot, because it's news happening right now. And I think that that's live at its best when you can bring something -- into the viewer's home, into their television set -- that is happening right now. And you can show it to them whether it's a fire, whether it's an explosion, whether it's a school board meeting. Whatever it is, if it's news happening now, that's when live is at its best.

Other reasons for using live technologies were to present stories in an interesting manner, to overcome logistical problems, and to be competitive (see Table 9).

Table 9. Reasons for Live Coverage

Reasons	Total (Multiple Responses)	Total (Exclusive Responses)
Immediacy	52 (87%)	8 (13%)
Presentation	43 (72%)	1 (2%)
Logistics	21 (35%)	3 (5%)
Competition	14 (23%)	1 (2%)

Competition

Depends on Market. Several news managers believe that the amount of live reporting a station provides is dictated by the level of competition in a market. Three perspectives, each from a different market level, are offered below to illustrate the point:

All of the major markets, even the minor markets, are very competitive, and everybody's going after the same stories, and everybody wants to be there first. Everybody wants to be there with the most, and woe be unto the assignment desk who fails to cover a breaking story or the story that the guy across the street is all over. So, I think there's an ongoing pressure to be first live, to take advantage of the technology that's available to us, to show the flag, so to speak.

-Bud Veazey, news operations mgr., WAGA-TV, Atlanta

I think that if you're in a market where everybody does live, and everybody does live all the time, then there might be competitive pressure to do those even when there's no reason to do it, just to keep up with the Joneses. There's not that pressure in this market.

-Pat Burns, asst. news director, WCPO-TV, Cincinnati

This is a market where I don't think people particularly expect to see anything live. It's a two station market, and one's dominant at this point, and I think what you choose to cover in this market is still more important than whether you do it live or not. In Huntsville, live was a lot more important than it is here. In West Palm Beach, it was critical. When I was the news director there, you had to go live, and if you didn't go live, you weren't doing news.

-Robert Morford, news director, WATE-TV, Knoxville

Observations confirmed what the news managers said concerning the amount of live reporting at the various market levels and under differing competitive situations. The stations observed in Atlanta and Houston had at least three live reports per half-hour newscast, except for the Fox affiliate KRIV-TV in Houston, which aired none. WAGA-TV in Atlanta also had reporters talk about their upcoming live reports with live-on-the-scene teases either at the beginning of the newscasts or preceding commercial breaks. KHOU-TV in Houston preempted regular programming at one point to show the aftermath of a gun blast atop one of the city's downtown skyscrapers. Pictures of the skyscraper's shattered window were shown via a microwave-equipped helicopter. Subsequent live reports of the incident were shown during the station's regularly scheduled newscasts.

At Louisville's WAVE-TV and WLKY-TV, two live-on-the-scene reports were shown during each of their respective newscasts, while Fox affiliate WDRB-TV aired none. WDRB-TV's news director, Hal Stopfel, explained that he saw no reason

to push for live shots since his station had "no competition at 10:00" -- the other stations in Louisville aired network programming at that time. WLWT-TV and WCPO-TV in Cincinnati had only one live report per newscast, respectively. During the 6:00 p.m. newscast at WLWT-TV, the live remote consisted of interviews with the first inductees into Cincinnati's Broadcasting Hall of Fame. The following evening, WCPO-TV's live coverage showed the aftermath of a ferocious thunderstorm.

No live reports were shown during the days spent at the Roanoke-Lynchburg stations nor at WKXT-TV in Knoxville. Knoxville's WBIR-TV had one live remote -- of a water aerobics class, and the following evening WATE-TV had two live reports -- one of a chemical spill and the other of a truck wreck.

Ratings. "The reason behind why it [live reporting] is done is ratings," said Bob Freeman of WAVE-TV. "We're all in this little race, and we're all running to the finish line to get the number one rating. And that's why you see live when you get beneath the surface." WAGA's Bud Veazey said live is part of a "never-ending cycle" -- news managers are convinced that live is what the viewers want to see, so it has become part of the routine. "We never really break out of the box," he said, "because we're constrained by ratings."

At some stations live reporting is seen as a marketing tool to help boost viewership. Kevin O'Shea, the assignment editor of WXIA-TV in Atlanta, said the station's reputation is, in part, built around "interesting live shots." WLKY-TV in Louisville counted the number of live reports it produced and then aired promotions proclaiming the station as the one to turn to to see news happening. News director Steve Sabato said promoting live reports was "an integral part" of the station's competitive positioning. Rick Benjamin, the managing editor and evening anchor of WATE-TV, said live reporting showed viewers that "we are a viable news operation" and a strong competitor in the Knoxville market.

"I think you want people to know and understand that if something happens, you are going to be there," said Margie Nichols-Gill, news operations manager of WBIR-TV in Knoxville. "You want to be the one they turn to when something happens. You want them to watch you every night, but certainly if there is a blizzard, if there's a tornado, we want to be the ones who give them that information."

Boosting viewer awareness was a concern of Roy Clem, the news director of WSET-TV in Lynchburg. He said live technology was sometimes used to report from various locations in the region to show viewers that, although it was a Lynchburg-based station, WSET-TV was interested in all of the communities of western Virginia.

Examples of regional coverage were observed at KHOU-TV Houston and WATE-TV Knoxville. One of KHOU's live reports described the water problems in Alvin, Texas, a small city south of Houston. WATE-TV Knoxville covered a truck wreck on Interstate 75 between Knoxville and Chattanooga. The station did not send a crew of its own but arranged to have a live satellite feed from a reporter who worked for Chattanooga's ABC affiliate. The truck was hauling explosives, but by the time the report aired live, the accident scene had been cleared.

Logistics

Field Editing. One-third of the news managers (see Table 9) said live reporting is often the best way to cover certain stories, especially when events occur close to the scheduled newscast and there is not enough time to return to the station to edit video that has been shot at the scene. The solution is to have a reporter do a live standup at the scene and then insert videotape using playback units in the microwave or satellite trucks. The practicality of handling stories in this manner is much improved now that many satellite trucks and a growing number of microwave trucks have editing capabilities on board, which means packages can be produced in the field. Live standups by the reporter can precede and follow the taped packages.

Here are views of three news managers from the different market levels to illustrate the point:

We've invested in live trucks that can edit on the scene, so that you can not only run to a fire and show pictures of it, you can put the whole ball of wax together in the field with an edit truck. And then once you have those trucks, and you've invested in them, you want to have people edit in the field as well as just get a live shot.

-Kevin O'Shea, assignment ed., WXIA-TV, Atlanta

I couldn't have done the Lucasville Prison riot frankly without a satellite truck. And we do have our own, and that makes a major difference. If you can go out, and if the drive cannot be made in enough time to get the story back here for preparation, then that's really where the technology comes into play.

-Rob Allman, news director, WLWT-TV, Cincinnati

Yesterday we had a story that this elderly couple had been missing for a week, an old minister and his wife. They had driven off a road down a ravine and died. And it was in Wytheville, which is an hour and a half, two hours down the road. No way to get a microwave signal out. We rolled the truck, got a live shot at noon. We were the only ones with that on. We did a live interview with the State Police at the scene, had pictures, and got it back here quickly.

-Jim Kent, news director, WDBJ-TV, Roanoke

Lacking field editing capabilities can be a drawback, according to Joseph Lilly, the executive producer of WAVE-TV in Louisville. Lilly noted that some stories are simply not feasible for his station to cover, because they cannot be produced in the field. Lilly said, "That's why we look at it [a story] and question: Is it worthwhile? Can we do it? Should we do it? And do we have the manpower to do it?" The assistant news director of WCPO-TV in Cincinnati echoed

Lilly's comments. Pat Burns said logistical considerations play a major role in deciding whether stories get covered. "If you've got a couple of stories, all things equal, one where you can get the story turned around in a day versus one that's going to take a couple of days, the story that's going to get turned around quicker will be the one chosen."

Availability of Staff. Another consideration in determining whether a story is covered live or not is the availability of crews to go to the scene. Stations at every market level must cope with limitations; they cannot cover all of the possible stories, and certainly they cannot cover all of the stories live.

We take the manpower issue into consideration. Do we have enough people to cover this story in a live format? How important is this story? Is this something that people are going to be talking about this afternoon, tomorrow, the next day?

-Phil Grant, news oper. manager, KTRK-TV, Houston

Unfortunately, manpower figures in in a big way oftentimes. Sometimes we just can't send the unit out. It happened to us once yesterday. We simply didn't have anyone to take the truck out.

-Joseph Lilly, exec. producer, WAVE-TV, Louisville

Here we're a little bit more limited in our staff and our capabilities, and so our decisions to do live are very judicious, I think.

-Amy Smith, asst. news director., WSLS-TV, Roanoke

Presentation

An adage that John Carlin, the managing editor and evening anchor of WSLs-TV in Roanoke, said he learned early in his television career was: "The gathering of television news is journalism; the presentation of television news is show business." Carlin made the point that the decision to go live is often based on news gathering and presentational considerations. He said all news managers find themselves occasionally in "a big muddy area right in the middle" of conflicting values: traditional news values versus the need to present stories that are interesting and watchable, what he called "television values."

"We're journalists and we do news," said Steve Smith, an executive producer at WXIA-TV in Atlanta, "but we also are -- it's inherent in the box -- primarily an entertainment medium. We are, in a lot of ways, an aberration. We have to be careful not to be too entertaining. It's communication. We use certain elements to communicate."

Forty-three of the sixty news managers (72%) said one reason they included live reporting in their newscasts was that it was an effective way of presenting stories (see Table 9). Such phrases as: "it adds pizzazz," "it offers a different look," "it creates excitement," and words like "cosmetics," "energy," "jazzes," "pacing" "showcasing," "visually appealing," and "window dressing" were used to

describe live technology's role in enhancing television newscasts. The rationale for using live technology in this manner was to attract and hold viewers' attention.

Visually appealing. "We're obviously in the picture business," said Bob Freeman, WAVE-TV's assistant news director in Louisville. "I think it goes without saying that the picture or video opportunities are a very big factor in what appears on your newscasts at night." Producers at each of the three market levels said potential news stories are often omitted if pictures are either unattainable or uninteresting.

Anybody will tell you, there are a lot of stories we don't do because they're not television stories. They don't make good pictures.

-Beth Blackstone Brown, producer, KHOU-TV, Houston

In television, the most important thing is the visual aspect of the story, and if you don't have the visuals to support a story, then you don't do it.

-Tim Hargess, producer, WLWT-TV, Cincinnati

It's everything. If we don't have video, I'll drop a story off the bat.

-Laurie Majewski, Producer, WSLI-TV, Roanoke

Managing editor Laura Newborn of Atlanta's WXIA-TV said even if a news event has already occurred, live reports work well when the reporters and photographers at the scene find a way to illustrate the story. WLKY-TV producer James DeLosh said, "I think it [live reporting] is just simply more

visual and a little more compelling and grabs someone's attention a little more at the very top of your newscast, as opposed to a copy story with no tape or something."

But John Carlin of Roanoke countered that live reporting is not as visually appealing as many producers believe it to be. "All reporters are taught that talking heads are boring, and then what do we do?" Carlin asked rhetorically. "We put up a live shot, and we send some reporter out there, and that reporter becomes a talking head." Carlin said live reporting can be a distraction when reporters are seen looking at their notes and squinting in the sun with the wind blowing and crowds waving behind them.

Production value. "Live has come more and more into play as a production value, for the look and the flow of the newscast," said Darius Walker, WAGA-TV's managing editor. I think every television station does that from time to time."

Matt Fields, the assignment editor of WSLs-TV in Roanoke said, "I think that it [live reporting] is a very valuable production element, the same way you'd use pre-production, or graphics, or charts."

"You've got to get them in the tent before you can convert them," said KHOU-TV producer Beth Blackstone Brown. "I just see it [live reporting] as a production value. I just think it's a more interesting broadcast."

"We try to do it [live reporting] to change the shows," said Karen Lafleur, KHOU's news operations manager. "We don't want the five [o'clock newscast] to look the same as the six, so sometimes a producer will say, 'Well, let's go back out there, and let's go live.'"

"We wanted live one day, because we just thought it would be good," said WAVE-TV producer Brian Barthold. "We had a string of packages, and we thought live would break it up."

Steve York, the managing editor at WAVE, said, "I'll be honest with you, there are some days, we need to kind of jazz up the show, and we'll say, 'Let's put the weather guy out somewhere.'"

Atlanta's WAGA-TV was observed doing a live weather remote just outside of its television studios. The station's weather forecaster proved that an egg cannot be fried on the street no matter how hot the air temperature is.

"We do weather live a lot," said Jim Kent, news director of WDBJ-TV in Roanoke. "That's one of the ways we satisfy the window dressing requirements where you just go out and do glamour shots."

"I would be lying to you if I said we never do live shots for purposes of theater," said Lou Kishkunas, assignment editor of WLKY-TV.

"It's a way of showcasing the story," according to WSB-TV executive producer Frank Volpicella, a way to let viewers know that "we think the story's important."

The senior executive producer at WSB, Jodi Fleisig, said: "I think that a story has a lot more energy and life to it, if a reporter is introducing it from the scene."

"We do it [live reporting] for pacing purposes," said Amy Smith, the assistant news director at WSLI-TV in Roanoke. "We do it to stretch. If we don't have enough news for the day, we think, 'Well, we can fill the rest of our show by putting this person on live and doing a Q[uestion] and A[nswer].'" The executive producer of Roanoke's WDBJ-TV had a similar observation. Allison Gibson said live reporting helps fill a newscast in smaller markets where "there's just not a whole heck of a lot happening on a daily basis."

What makes live reporting interesting to Roy Clem, news director of WSET-TV in Lynchburg, is when a good storyteller is on the scene and uses the opportunity to communicate with his or her audience. "That's the most important thing," said Clem, "helping the viewer understand the story." WAVE-TV's Joseph Lilly felt the same way: "Let's face it. Our job is to tell a story, and it's more interesting to see someone on the scene telling a story, regardless of when it happened, than to have the anchor tell it."

Anchor involvement. The studio anchorperson is typically an integral part of the live shot format. The anchor usually reads a lead-in introducing the reporter at the scene who, in turn, introduces a taped package or interviews someone live. Following the package or interview, the reporter and anchor often have an exchange or debriefing session; the anchor asks the reporter a question or two for additional information about the story.

WSLS-TV assistant news director Amy Smith said she almost always has a debriefing to end a live shot. "If there's no interaction between the reporters and the anchors, then your live is really for naught," she said.

"It gives you a chance for that anchor to interact with somebody live and on-the-scene," said WAVE-TV's Steve York, adding that it makes the show look better.

Debriefings allow reporters to insert the most up-to-date information available, said Mark Pimentel, news director of WXIA-TV Atlanta. Pimentel said if only taped stories were aired, information from a late phone call or a late conversation would probably not be reported.

Denise Bishop, news director of KRIV-TV Houston, said debriefings should be spontaneous and unscripted, otherwise "it makes it look like the reporter wasn't bright enough to put all the information in the package."

The news director of Knoxville's WATE-TV offered the same view, calling scripted interaction "one of the biggest rip-offs about live." Robert Morford said he expects his field reporters to know their material well enough to handle unscripted questions. But in defense of the practice of staging debriefing sessions, Pat Burns of Cincinnati's WCPO-TV, said reporters and anchors encounter many distractions during a live broadcast and neither desires to be put in the position of ever looking "stupid."

The sports anchor for WXIA-TV demonstrated the need to wear an IFB unit (Interrupted Feedback) or earpiece when reporting from a remote location. The studio anchor asked a question that could not be heard by the sports anchor who was doing his segment from the Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium. A few awkward moments followed until the field producer instructed the sports anchor to find his IFB and respond.

Audience involvement. Many of the news managers talked about how live reporting creates a sense of immediacy and gives viewers a sense of involvement in news events. Live reporting, it is believed, attracts attention because viewers feel as though they are participants in the events they see unfolding, or at least that is the impression that some news managers hope to create.

"It [live reporting] allows the viewer to actually be there with the story," said news operations manager Stephen Shipowitz of Atlanta's WXIA-TV.

"It brings the viewer closer to what's happened," said Martha Dooley, the assignment editor of WATE-TV in Knoxville.

Steve Sabato, WLKY's news director, said live reporting gives viewers a sense of control, puts them "in the driver's seat," because they can see the news events occurring and draw their own conclusions.

WXIA's executive producer Steve Smith said:

Live creates a presence, puts you at an event, at a situation, at the story. It lends a great deal of credibility to what the reporter's saying. And it also allows the viewer to take a look at exactly what's happening, albeit from only a couple of camera angles.

"I think viewers expect live in a newscast," said WATE-TV news director Robert Morford, "but they're beyond expecting to see the technology. It doesn't wow anybody any more."

Bud Veazey, news operations manager at WAGA-TV in Atlanta, said many stations make the mistake of trying to promote technology, since viewers already take live reporting for granted. "I think you get in trouble when you do the high technology stuff and you fail at it," he said. "Then, you're a klutz, and you're not as good as the guy across the street."

According to Ed Godfrey, news director of Louisville's WAVE-TV, the viewers only want information. "The most important thing we do is to inform," he said. "They really don't care how they get it."

Research. News managers' perceptions of the audience are shaped, in part, by market research that their stations conduct. In every market included in this study, at least one news manager said research clearly indicates a viewer preference for live remotes.

"Research shows that people like to see live shots," said Erick Petersen, assistant news director of WSET-TV Lynchburg. "Give the viewers what they want to see."

"We have audience research, and we know anecdotally, that audiences like to watch live reports," said assignment editor Lou Kishkunas of Louisville's WLKY-TV. "It [the live report] tends to center their attention on things."

Pat Burns of WCPO in Cincinnati said research also shows that people think that something must be "going on" when stations report live.

"They get more interested," said Phil Grant of viewer reaction to live reports, according to research conducted by KTRK Houston. "They feel the story is much more important than it would be if the same exact story were presented in a taped format."

KHOU news director David Goldberg said, "At least in Houston, Texas, 80% of the viewers say live is a compelling reason to watch TV."

Market research is often directed by paid consultants who offer suggestions on how to improve the television news product (see Table 10).

Table 10. Consultants of Participating Television Stations

Consultant	Station	Market
AR&D	KHOU-TV	Houston
	WAGA-TV	Atlanta
	WAVE-TV	Louisville
	WBIR-TV	Knoxville
	WLWT-TV	Cincinnati
Magid	WATE-TV	Knoxville
McHugh-Hoffman	WSB-TV	Atlanta
	KTRK-TV	Houston

"They normally tell us what the audience is attuned to," said KTRK's Phil Grant, "because they are the ones who do the research for us, who look at our videotapes, who ... look at videotapes from the competition here in our own market."

But consultants, according to the news managers who deal with them, have virtually no input on day-to-day news decisions. The consultants are heard from after the fact.

"Strictly in a review capacity," said WATE's Robert Morford. "We send him tapes and say, 'Here's a day, us and

them. What do you think?'" Morford said the consultant never offers advice on how many live shots are appropriate but does suggest how they can be improved.

WAVE-TV's Steve York said most consultants tell stations that live shots "are generally good things, if you've got something to show."

"Positioning" is the real value of what consultants do. That was the conclusion of two news managers in Atlanta. Bud Veazey of WAGA-TV said, "They help us position ourselves, and they can ask the kind of questions that determine what our position is in the minds of the viewers."

"We pour his ingredients into our little bowl and we mix it up with everything else," said WSB's Jodi Fleisig. "He doesn't dominate what we do. He doesn't tell us what to do. He makes suggestions as to what we do and how we might improve our product."

But KHOU-TV news director David Goldberg stated flatly that consultants do exercise too much control over some stations and some news directors, and the result is an "homogenization of product." He said, "All of the television stations look the same. They all have a graphic look. They all do the same kinds of stories."

Consultants are in the business to stay in business, said Goldberg:

They're not in the business of improving the quality of television in this country. I guarantee you. They're in the business of getting ratings for that general manager, who makes money. Because if that general manager doesn't make money, then that consultant isn't going to have a job. There isn't what I call a quality conscious consultant in the country; someone who says, "This is right for the public. This is good material for the public, and ultimately the public will come around to what you're doing, because they want quality in reporting."

Criticism and Caution. Some of the news managers criticized the way live reporting was handled by their colleagues in the industry. This was especially true at the two Fox affiliated stations that participated in the study.

"To me, it looks ridiculous to have someone at a scene that happened and was over five hours ago," said Denise Bishop, news director of KRIV Houston. "It's contrived. There are all these tricks that we use to make the viewers think that things are happening right there in front of them."

"I see people standing in front of bank signs on cold days to show what the temperature is," said Kathy Lehmann, executive producer at Louisville's WDRB-TV. "I see reporters standing out in three feet of snow, saying stay inside, keep warm, because you could get frost bite out here. You see a driving hail storm and a reporter standing out in the middle of it, saying take cover. It's ridiculous."

Some news managers of stations that use ENG and SNG technologies regularly and frequently also expressed a few

misgivings about live reporting.

"Live is an accident waiting to happen; it always is," said Bud Veazey of WAGA-TV. "It's working without a net."

The news director of WCPO-TV in Cincinnati, James Zarchin, said it can be "somewhere between uncomfortable to embarrassing to a station if the person they have attempting to report live isn't capable of doing it." He said if reporters cannot handle the responsibility, they reflect poorly on the station.

Zarchin and the other news managers expressed confidence in their own reporters' abilities. The key to successful live reporting, they said, was to hire people who could handle the pressure. "We've made a concerted effort to bring in reporters who are good on their feet and who are good at live television," said WLKY-TV executive producer Tom Bowman. "Someone who can tell the story, someone who can walk, talk, reference their background, why they're there, and so forth."

Too many live shots, according to Mike Ehler of WLWT in Cincinnati, will result in the technique having less impact. Ehler said: "If you're out doing live shots that for some reason don't deserve a live shot, when you do get a story that's breaking and you do a live shot, I think it ruins the effectiveness. People say, 'Oh, another live shot.'"

Darius Walker, the managing editor of WAGA-TV, said reporting live must be handled responsibly and sensitively: "Going live at a funeral of a kid who's been slain by some gangsters, I think, is a little insensitive. Other stations have done it. I would not."

There are times when live is inappropriate, according to WLKY's news director. Steve Sabato said a hostage situation would be a tough call for him, because he would fear the hostage-taker's reaction to live news coverage. Sabato said he is very wary of covering news events live in situations where a direct, adverse impact could result.

Going Live For The Sake Of It

All of the news managers were familiar with the phrase "going live for the sake of it" -- a criticism of local television news that has been around since the first microwave trucks hit the roads in the mid-1970s. However, most of the managers (68%) indicated they had no philosophical problem with live for the sake of it; they viewed live as an effective way of presenting news stories regardless of whether news events were ongoing or not (see Table 11).

Table 11. News Managers' Views of Live for Live's Sake

Critical of the use of live technology for presentational purposes	News Managers	%
Yes	12	20%
Sometimes	4	7%
No	41	68%
Don't know/No response	3	5%
	n=60	100%

WXIA's Kevin O'Shea said television news has always been live, but indoors. "Is there some pride in staying in your studio and having some middle-aged white guy sit there and read the news to you? That's where we started." O'Shea added that television news is better when reporters go out and gather information and then deliver it in a way that engages the viewers by showing them the environment where news takes place.

Margie Nichols-Gill, the news operations manager of WBIR in Knoxville, said, "I don't think it's a horrible thing [to go live for the sake of it]. You don't do anybody a disservice. It's not like you've hurt anyone. You haven't distorted the facts. You haven't made something bigger than it is."

"What's the downside?," asked Steve Sabato of WLKY. "You could argue that there would be cases where the reporter could be back at the station spending more time writing and editing ... but that's frankly the exception."

"Tell me what's wrong with it" was Richard Moore's challenge. The WSB news director said, "Live happens to be one of the tools that we think is effective in better showcasing our treatment of a story, of demonstrating to our audience that we have the live capability."

But a few news managers (27%) regarded "live for live's sake" less favorably (see Table 11). KTRK news operations manager Phil Grant said:

I think it is very true that there are some stations in some markets that have four microwave trucks, or three microwave trucks, and they feel that they have to be on the road every day or they haven't done anything. They haven't done their job unless they have that newscast completely full of live shots, as many of them as they can stick in there. I feel like that's very true. I don't know that that is necessarily bad, as long as your audience doesn't perceive it as just a way of trying to attract people.

The news director of WDBJ-TV in Roanoke said what he sees in some of the larger markets is "a shame." He said a lot of resources are wasted setting up live shots for "window dressing" when those reporters and photographers could be out covering additional stories.

What may have been a problem in the past is less so, according to James Zarchin of Cincinnati's WCPO-TV and Lou Kishkunas of Louisville's WLKY-TV. Kishkunas, the station's assignment editor, said the industry has matured in how it uses live technology. "We're not doing live for the sake of live nearly as much as we used to. It's still done, but I think the impact on the viewer is minimal now. It's passe."

Zarchin, the news director at the Cincinnati CBS affiliate, said satellite trucks are now being used much like the microwave vehicles were in the beginning; stations send them out because they can, rather than weighing the value of the news stories being covered. He said he expects the industry will mature soon and continue to improve the way it gathers and delivers news.

Global versus Local

Satellite technology introduced local television news managers to the world. They found an easier way to obtain video from their state capitals, from the nation's capital, and from anywhere an uplink could be established.

In the late 1980s, the major broadcasting networks seemed threatened by local television's increased mobility. And as some of the local stations ventured to greater distances more frequently, a criticism of the practice was raised: stations were accused of ignoring their own

backyards when they used their staff and equipment to go global. Satellite technology was purportedly detrimental to local news coverage.

However, most of the participants in this study (73%) who worked at stations equipped with satellite news vehicles rejected the assertion that local news had suffered because stations had access to satellites (see Table 12). The news managers said coverage outside their markets can be justified as long as a local angle is pursued and the stations can afford it.

Table 12. News Managers' Views of Local versus Global

Access to satellite technology can be detrimental to local news coverage	News Managers	%
Sometimes	12	27%
No, local news and angles always come first	32	73%
	n=44	100%

"I've done stories internationally, but we always tie it back here," said David Goldberg of KHOU-TV. "We were in Croatia before the world discovered Croatia. There were Muslims here who were going there, trying to help the children in Croatia. So, there was really a logical tie back into this market."

Bud Veazey said WAGA-TV sent a crew to Saudi Arabia during the Persian Gulf war, but the station did not cover the war itself, leaving that job to the networks. "We went there to cover the Georgia troops," he said.

WAVE-TV in Louisville uses its satellite truck to keep its viewers informed about Kentucky's powerhouse basketball teams -- the Cardinals and the Wildcats -- when they are tournament bound. And the station's managing editor, Steve York, said the vehicle has also been sent to Washington. "It's the Kentuckians going to the inaugural," he said. "We don't go just to cover the inaugural. We try to cover the local angle."

Some of the news managers said they have to make a strong case to send their satellite trucks to faraway places because of budget limitations.

"With satellites, you're talking about basically fifty to a hundred bucks a pop or more for a story," said WSB's Richard Moore, "so, that has its own inherent limitations."

The executive producer of the 11:00 p.m. newscast at WSB echoed the news director's comments. Frank Volpicella said satellite trucks are not traveling as far anymore because of a tighter economy and staff reductions at many stations.

James Zarchin of WCPO-TV Cincinnati said he expects many stations in the near future will reevaluate how and why

they cover stories away from home. "Just because we can get the shot in Waco, is it worth the time? Is it worth it to the community we're serving? I think those are discussions that will continue."

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Review

The purpose of this study was to find out why local television news managers include live-on-the-scene reports in their newscasts when other story treatments are available. A goal of this research was to provide a better understanding of how news content is influenced by technology. Shoemaker (1991) and others have suggested that research examining the shaping or treatment of news content is an area that merits further study. This examination of the local television news managers' rationale for live reporting is one such study. It is unique because the news managers who participated allowed their own words and descriptions be used to provide the basis for understanding the inclusion of live reports in television newscasts.

After engineers developed microwave and electronic news gathering technologies that were more compact and portable, some observers heralded the breakthroughs as revolutionary, as a new era in journalism, as the ultimate in news delivery, because television could, for the first time with relative ease, deliver the sights and sounds of news events as they happened. Satellite technology broadened the reach of local television stations even more by enabling them

to gather reports from virtually anywhere, and do so live, if they desired. With these technologies, television stations had the ability to deliver information with immediacy, and they could build their reputations, in part, on how they handled spot news coverage.

Viewers trust television to deliver information in a timely manner, and, in many cases, as it happens, but they cannot equate live reporting with breaking news. Very often news managers include live reports in their newscasts to create an illusion or sense of immediacy rather than actually covering events that are unfolding. According to the news managers who participated in this study, the coverage of breaking news is limited to less than one-third of the live shots produced. Whereas, the news managers said immediacy and logistical considerations are important reasons to go live, they also base many of their decisions on competitiveness and presentation.

Competition. Live technologies serve as a marketing tool at many television stations where they attempt to convince viewers that they are the ones to turn to for late breaking information. Live shots are included in the newscasts regularly -- whether news is breaking or not -- as a constant reminder that the technologies are available. Live shots are also a way to market the stations regionally. Some stations use their news gathering technologies to report

on events in neighborhoods and smaller communities to show viewers that they are interested in all of the areas their signals reach. The underlying motivation for stations to foster an image of readiness and awareness is ratings; television stations try to attract viewers in sufficient numbers to encourage advertisers to buy air time.

Presentation. Many of the television news managers said they included live-on-the-scene reporting for presentational purposes; live reporting made their newscasts seem more energetic and exciting, which they hoped would contribute to a more attractive news product that could hold viewers' attention. And such reporting was also seen as a technique to showcase reporters and anchors by having them interact with each other in live debriefings to show the audience of their interest and involvement in the stories being described. News managers were assured of the effectiveness of live reporting because market research confirmed for them that such coverage was what viewers wanted to see.

Most of the news managers who participated in this study said "going live for the sake of it" -- whether the live shot is for marketing purposes or just to make the newscast look better -- is not a problem for the industry. Research has convinced them that live reporting is an effective attention-getting tool, and they find little reason

to argue with success. However, one manager suggested that problems could arise if viewers ever felt manipulated by live reporting that was presented primarily to draw attention. And another offered the view that substantial resources were wasted setting up live shots that contributed little more than "window dressing." But, among the news managers who participated in this study, those critical of the industry's use of live technology were in the minority. This finding was consistent with Smith's 1988 study in which he found news directors and producers to be much less critical of television news than reporters.

The news managers also defended the industry's use of satellite technology to gather and deliver stories from outside their respective coverage areas. Most of the study participants said local news would remain the primary focus of their newscasts, even though they had the capability of reporting from practically any location. Live reports from afar, they said, would require credible local angles, because their stations could ill afford to chase stories that had little relevance to their viewers.

This study lends support to past research that showed television news is shaped in large measure by organizational influences. Television stations are fighting to survive in a competitive marketplace, and survival is linked to viewership. News managers feel they must use the tools at

their disposal to produce programs that viewers want to see, and their research tells them that live-on-the-scene reporting is an attractive element of television newscasts whether or not breaking news is being shown.

Conclusions

Live-on-the-scene news reporting is a common practice among television stations equipped with ENG and SNG technologies. News managers look for opportunities to go live to show viewers that their stations are leading the way in terms of news coverage. Immediacy is a news value held in high regard by most news managers. But in television news, events are often covered live whether or not immediacy is a paramount concern; much effort is expended to create an impression or sense of immediacy.

No harm is done, say the news managers who look for ways to use their tools not only to gather news, but for marketing purposes as well. They ask: Is it misleading to inform viewers that a report is live when indeed elements of it are? Is there any harm in including live reports in newscasts if viewers find such reporting more interesting? Perhaps not. But one may wonder if the effort is as effective as the news managers believe. They often cite their stations' marketing research as the source of their information about what viewers want to see, and the research

suggests to them that viewers enjoy live reports. But do viewers really react to the run-of-the-mill, almost standard live shot that has a live opening and closing, a videotaped insert, and the obligatory post-report debriefing? Or, when asked about live reporting, are viewers responding favorably to the concept because they remember the emotionally charged moments that have been captured live (the riots, the earthquakes, the car chases, the hostage situations, etc.)?

One has to ask if these kinds of distinctions are being drawn by the consultants who conduct the market research, because if the research finds that run-of-the-mill, ordinary live reports are lacking in effectiveness as a drawing card, then wouldn't it be logical for news managers to reevaluate their dependence on such reports considering the costs associated with producing them? Equipment is only part of the expense; stations must also maintain the equipment, purchase satellite time, and pay for the extra work of reporters and photographers who stay at the scene and of the technicians who insure the flawless relay of signals.

In an era of news staff reductions and increased competition, can stations continue to rely on live reports as a marketing and news gathering tool? The evidence presented by the news managers who participated in this study was not convincing; live for the sake of live, even though it's an industry norm, hardly seems worth the effort.

Future research

Extensive research has been conducted and published that has examined the impact of various presentational formats and treatments of television news. However, the impact of live-on-the-scene reporting has not been addressed. Researchers have looked at a variety of story and format treatments to find out how the presentation of news affects viewer recall (Housel, 1984; Gunter, 1980), learning (Graber, 1990; Brosius, 1989), and attention (Schleuder, White & Cameron, 1993; Drew & Cadwell, 1985). And they have looked at how presentation affects viewer perceptions of newscast credibility (McCain, Chilberg, & Wakshlag, 1977), and timeliness (Ksobiech, Tiedge, & Bor, 1980). Edwardson, Grooms, & Proudlove (1981) looked at how viewers comprehend stories differently depending on whether stories are presented with pictures or with "talking heads;" Drew & Cadwell (1985) examined the effects of video editing; Edwardson, Lent, Engstrom, & Hofman (1992) as well as Reese (1984) explored whether the audio portion of a televised news story affects viewer recall and attention; and Schleuder, White, & Cameron (1993) wanted to know if news bumpers and teasers have any effect. But, so far, little or no academic research has examined the impact of live-on-the-scene reporting, a topic that seems worthy of pursuit considering the stock that news managers place in it as a presentational

technique. The market research that tells them that live reporting is effective is not in the public domain.

What do viewers think of live-on-the-scene reports? Do they pay attention or learn more when reporters are on the scene and live? Do they even notice live reporting? Do they have a greater sense of participation or involvement when they watch such reports? Is there heightened anxiety when they see events live?

Future inquiries should also be made to discover how reporters can best be trained to deal with live situations. News managers are concerned about hiring people who can handle the pressure. And the responsibilities placed on field reporters are enormous -- given the limited amount of time they have to prepare their stories, the increased possibility of error in live situations, and the broader audiences they reach with satellite uplinks. What measures are taken to prepare reporters for these responsibilities, and how can training be improved?

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A
LETTER REQUESTING INTERVIEWS

[Sample Letter Requesting Interviews --
University Letterhead used on Actual Letters]

News Director
TV Station Call Letters
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear News Director:

I am a doctoral student in Broadcasting at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. I am working on my dissertation this summer before going to Southwest Texas State University where I have accepted a teaching position in the School of Journalism. The topic of my dissertation is the impact of television's ability to report stories live and on-the-scene. I would like to include your station in my study.

Reporting live is, of course, only one of several ways a television station can deliver a story. My examination of the issue will look at the factors news managers take into consideration when the decision is made to report live. The equipment needed for microwave or satellite transmissions represents a considerable investment for television stations, and, more importantly perhaps, it represents the quickest means possible of delivering information. I hope my study will provide insight into an area that has revolutionized the news gathering business.

I would like to have an opportunity to interview each of the following at your station: the News Director, Assistant News Director, Executive News Producer, Assignment Editor, and the Newscast Producers. It should take no more than 15 minutes with each individual. I hope to gather data at stations in six different markets. Other stations in [your] market are also being contacted.

In appreciation for your station's cooperation, I will provide copies of the results of my study upon its completion. Thank you for considering this proposal. I will contact you by phone within the next two weeks. If you wish to talk with me before then, my number is (615) ***-**** or you may reach me through the Department of Broadcasting, University of Tennessee at (615) 974-4291.

Sincerely

Tim England

APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS AND
WAIVER OF CONFIDENTIALITY

[Sample Consent Form for Interviews
and Waiver of Confidentiality]

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of technology on the news gathering process. In-person interviews will be conducted with news managers at 15 stations in six states, including other stations in this market.

Although this study may have no direct benefits to you at this time, it may provide scholars and others who choose to read the report with a greater understanding of how technology plays a role in defining what is news.

Your identity will be kept confidential unless you indicate below that confidentiality may be waived. In other words, with your permission, some of your statements may be attributed to you in the final report. However, if you choose to retain your rights to confidentiality, the researcher will take measures to protect your identity by not attributing statements to you. Your responses to the questions asked today will be kept in a secure place in the researcher's home; only the researcher will have access to the material.

If you have any questions about the research, either now or later, please contact Dr. Sam Swan, 333 Communications Building, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee 37996 or call 974-4291. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may refuse to participate.

I have read and understood the explanation of this study and agree to participate.

Name

Date

Signature

I have read and understood the statements pertaining to confidentiality and hereby waive my rights to the protection of my identity. In other words, statements made by me during the interview may be attributed to me in the final report at the researcher's discretion.

Name

Date

Signature

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIOTAPING INTERVIEWS

[Sample Consent Agreement for Audiotaping Interviews]

To expedite the interview, the researcher has available a portable audiocassette unit to record your responses. The sole purpose of recording today's interview is to transcribe your responses at a later time, thereby, saving time today and perhaps contributing to a more accurate report later. But audiotaping is an option that you have every right to refuse. If you object to being taped, then the researcher can write down your responses instead. If, on the other hand, you agree to being taped, you may at any time during the interview change your mind and have the recording stopped.

The audiotape of today's interview will be erased after a transcript of the interview has been completed. The researcher alone will have access to the recordings and transcripts. Materials collected for this research project will be stored at the researcher's home.

I have read and understood the statements pertaining to audiotaping the interview, and

_____ I consent to the taping.

_____ I do not wish to be taped.

Name

Date

Signature

APPENDIX D
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT STATIONS

General Information
About Station

ID Number _____
Call Letters _____
Market _____

A. What television network is your station affiliated with?

Network affiliation _____

B. Does the station have a news consultant? Yes No

(If NO, then skip to D.)

[C. What is the name of your news consultant company?]

Consultant _____

D. How many people are employed by the news department?

News staff size _____

E. How many hours of daily news programming is the news staff responsible for?

Daily news programming _____

F. How many ENG vehicles -- equipped for microwave transmissions -- does the station have available for news coverage on a regular basis?

ENG vehicles _____

G. For approximately how long has the station been equipped with ENG vehicles?

H. How many SNG vehicles does the station have available for news coverage on a regular basis?

SNG vehicles _____

I. For approximately how long has the station been equipped with SNG?

VITA

Michael Timothy England was a broadcaster for eighteen years before pursuing university teaching as a career. England worked as a news director, anchor, and reporter in Kentucky, Indiana, Virginia, and Tennessee and as a broadcasting instructor/assistant professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green. He is currently an assistant professor in the Department of Mass Communications at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos.

Concurrent with his professional career, England pursued the Bachelor of Arts degree in Mass Communication at Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green (1978), the Master of Arts degree in Telecommunication at Indiana University, Bloomington (1982), and the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Communication at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (1994).

The author is a member of the Radio Television News Directors Association, the Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication, and the Broadcast Education Association.

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